

Vol. XV No. 365.

July 26th, 1918.

Price One Halfpenny.

Dreamy Daniel, the Ladies' Man.



...and he might have known he was the first to do it, but what? The very next afternoon he was sitting in his study, along the front the city of all beholder.

[illegible]

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Collectors' Digest

MAY, 1960
Vol. 14, No. 5
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5. And that wasn't the end of it. You see, there was a lot of "nats" on the pier, and none of the girls would look at them while Doremy was around, and so they were all sitting on the pier. Then, when they saw the girls in distress, they were only too glad to come to the rescue. Shall this villain go unpunished?" they cried.



And make up! I mean, all a dream. Sorry, diplomats, but this one leak out!" Treasury - not a bad idea. (1990)

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The Collectors' Digest

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MAY, 1960

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE,
Excelsior House,
Grove Road,
Surbiton, Surrey.

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From the Editor's Chair

CRICKET - AND CHRISTMAS. This is a Cricket issue - at least, it contains several references to cricket, which seems a far cry from Christmas. Which brings us to the Annual. Even now, with a long, warm, sunny summer stretching ahead of us (we hope), the Annual is in its embryo stages. Preparations have commenced. Articles are coming in. The colour of the cover has been decided.

This year we may, to some extent, aim at shorter articles, and more of them, with plenty of variety. We hope that our expert band of writers have sharpened their pencils and brushed up their thinking caps. It's pretty certain they have. They never let us down.

THE WHO'S WHO. The Who's Who is now in its final stages. Very soon it will be going out to those who have ordered copies. The edition is very limited. If you have not already ordered a copy and you want one, you should send without delay, with remittance for 2/6, if you are to avoid disappointment.

WE'RE 'BARRING-OUT' THIS TIME. The Martin Thomas criticisms provided some interest and fun, which are always welcome in this sad life, providing they don't go on too long. In a current issue of S.B.L. Mr. Thomas renews his criticism of this magazine. The gist of the complaint seems to be that we held over the reviews of the December S.B.L's until March, and then only offered short notices.

Blakiana had nothing to do with it. It was a decision of this office, as the editor of the S.B.L. knew.

As a result of the printing dispute, the S.B.L. was behind with production. The notices of the December tales reached us in January, and were plotted into our February number. In the middle of January, S.B.L. published two further stories, and, eventually, Walter Webb rushed reviews of these to us. With a packed issue of C.D. prepared, we had no space to publish a double set of reviews. At some inconvenience, we took out the December reviews, replacing them with the more recent one. Then, in our March issue, we printed shorter, quite favourable, notices of the December stories.

It is something which would never have occurred but for the internal trouble at Fleetway House last year. The C.D. was in no way responsible for the printing strike.

The Sexton Blake Library is entitled to its own opinions. It is not entitled to dictate to this magazine.

THE EDITOR

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LOT - O - FUN

(We bring to you on our cover this month a reproduction of the charming old comic paper LOT - O - FUN. We have asked LEN PACKMAN, our expert on this type of literature, to give us some facts about it. This is what he writes. ED.)

At the time of the cover illustration (1912) Lot-o-Fun was in the top flight of ½d coloured comic papers.

The front page, printed in five colours (black, red, green, blue and yellow) on white background, featured DREAMY DANIEL - one of the most loveable and well-known cartoon characters - for nearly fifteen years. Poor old 'Dreamy' always woke up to find himself in trouble, but it never stopped him from dreaming again!

The back page, printed in black and red, featured PATRIOTIC PAUL, whilst the centre pages (black and white) comprised: TOPSY OF THE TEA SHOP, WINKLE AND BINKLE AT SWISHAN'S SCHOOL; FERDINAND; KRUMPIT, KING OF HAPPYLAND.

The stories at this time were as follows: THE WHISPERING NUNNY (a serial featuring STALLABRASS, the Detective), by Stephen H. Agnew; THE BOY MAGICIAN (serial), by Albert E. Bull; BEYOND THE HILLS OF MIST (serial), by Geo. C. Wallis. In addition there was a short complete story each week.

Lot-o-Fun was first published on 17th March, 1906 by James Henderson and Sons Ltd. In the year 1920 the paper was taken over by the Amalgamated Press Ltd., who kept it going for another nine years,

although it was never the same when DREAMY DANIEL'S familiar figure disappeared from the front page.

In all, there were 1196 issues, the last number being dated 16 February, 1929.

* * * * *

A UNIQUE REVIEW OF A STORY

By W. O. G. Lofts

On June 19th, 1927, readers of the staid "Sunday Observer" must have rubbed their eyes with astonishment when they turned to the newspaper review page, for there, reviewed at great length, was a story that had just appeared in the Boy's Friend Library (2nd series). The story was "Good Enough for England" by Richard Randolph, a pen-name used by that great author of cricket yarns, John Nix Pentelow.

The Reviewer was John S. Squire, reputed to be the best reviewer of all time. Later, he was knighted for, I am told, his literary work. The reader may well ask why on earth a Boy's Friend Library was reviewed in the "Observer." Here is Sir John Squire's explanation:-

BRIGHTER CRICKET

"Forgive the headline. I am not going to suggest wide stumps, a narrow bat, a two-balled over, no boundaries, or no pad play. The small ball has already been tried and found wanting. But after reading this work, I could find no other that would fit it. I bought the book at the railway bookstall on Godalming station. Up with the lark that morning, I had already exhausted the newspapers and I wanted to read something on the train. My eye was suddenly caught by a lurid cover, amid rows of lurid covers. The groundwork was red, the scene was just inside the window of a cricket pavilion, with a match progressing in the background....."

Sir John then gave a lengthy review of the story - a narrative which introduced such real-life cricketers as Jupp, Hobbs, and Tate, who were then in their prime.

Last year I actually wrote an article on this subject for Herbert Leckenby, who was so keen on cricket and Pentelow's works that he intended to enlarge on it for an Annual feature with his own comments regarding the players. Owing to Herbert's sudden death, this did not materialise, and my original manuscript must have been mislaid in the sorting of his papers. Eric Fayne, and that cricket enthusiast, David Harrison, recently asked me to find my notes on this review, and I am only too pleased to give the above data, brief though it may be.

I cannot recall a review of any other story from a boys' periodical, and it is pleasing to record that John Nix Pentelow probably achieved something more than any other author.

I still don't know whether Sir John Squire knew the real identity of "Richard Randolph" but Pentelow was a recognized authority on cricket, the editor of "Cricketer," and the writer of several official cricket books. He was also a member of several county clubs.

Sir John Squire died only a short while ago, at the age of eighty.

* * * * *

THE ROVER'S CHOICE

In our last issue we published an article entitled "CLICHE" in which the writer made reference to a boys' paper called "Rovering" which was on the market in the early twenties. One of our readers, L. S. Elliott of East Ham, has written to inform us that he is the proud possessor of a bound volume of the first ten copies of Rovering.

Mr. Elliott writes: "I took it off my shelf and read, for the first time in 36 years, 'The Rover's Choice'. I also re-read 'The Sword of Nippon' the serial that occupied pride of place and still as good as ever, by H. Radford Jones. You certainly started something, for I had work to do - and it wasn't done."

Our reader gives us the additional information that Rovering was published as a companion to "The Boy's Own Paper" with the same editor, A. L. Haydon. Rovering was a strangely adult paper for boys, and, at the moment, we do not know for how long it appeared.

Several Digest readers have written to ask us to reproduce the poem, and, because we believe that cricket enthusiasts will enjoy it, we are doing so. Here, then, is "The Rover's Choice":-

Deep in the heart of me, always a part of me
Quickens the vagabond spirit; I go
Far from the Motherland, seeking some other land -
Tropical splendours or glimmering floe.
But, if you ask me what scene is most dear to me
Whereon I linger, when day's work is done,
This, I will answer, is ever most near to me -
Home, and the cricket field washed in the sun.

Peaceful, and windy, and golden with sun,
Trode by the cricketers close to the school.
This, when the day and its labours are done,
Comes up before me at eventide cool.

Lift to my eyes, under far skies,
 Bat, wicket, ball and the murmurous trees -
 Dear to the heart of the vagabond, these!

Give me the joys of old, masters and boys of old,
 Watching, applauding, with ardour aflame!
 Give me the rival team, men to be feared they seem!
 Give me the thrill and the swing of the game!
 Give me the bowler; ay, he's the right stuff for me!
 Steady and purposeful, sure and serene!
 Watching the grip of his brown hand's enough for me -
 Nothing can equal my cricket field scene!

Give me the fieldsmen who steadily eyes the ball,
 Eager and ready, ne'er turning aside.
 Soaringly, easily, rapidly flies the ball,
 And the sure fingers its dark leather hide!
 Give me the batsman - the fine doughty smacks of him!
 Were I the ball, I would thrill to his stroke!
 Revel to feel all the buffeting whacks of him,
 Scorning the cautious who'd pat me and poke!

Thus do I see again, field, sport and trees again,
 Thus do I hear o'er the lapse of the years,
 Voices of boys I knew - sweet is the noise of you
 Heard o'er my shanty when twilight appears!
 And, like a trumpet call, rings through the shadow then
 Making my hand more strong, higher my aim,
 Simply the words that you tossed o'er the meadow then
 Urgent, inspiring, "Play up! Play the Game!"

Peaceful and windy, and golden with sun,
 Trod by the cricketers close to the school -
 This, when the day and its labours are done,
 Comes up before me at eventide cool.
 And may I e'er, far though I fare,
 Take it along with me, this for my aim -
 Still to be sportsman, still Playing the Game!

* * * * *

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Following Keith Chapman's excellent contribution "Murder at Site Three" (March C.D.), I have received another short article from him. This is entitled "Star of... ." and will appear in next month's Blakiana.

Until such time as Walter Webb's "Century-Makers" comes to a close, each month I shall endeavour to fill the remaining space with short articles and quota of "S.B.L. Titles and

Authors." Thus, this month we have a short article from Victor Colby, June will produce Keith Chapman's fine little effort as stated above, whilst July will include an interesting contribution from Bill Lofts entitled "And Yet Another Blake Author."

I shall be pleased to receive further contributions - and this of course includes 'modern' Blake, for I cannot conjure up the latter from thin air as a certain Mr. T. M. seems to think I can.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

CENTURY-MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB

INSTALMENT FOURTEEN

WAR YEARS AGAIN!

The early days of the war were anxious ones for the Blake reader who had seen the MAGNET and THRILLER go into liquidation and doubtless wondered how long it would be before the S.B.L. followed them. But it struggled on, though obviously a very sick journal, and, looking at the cover, we noted with anxiety the growing unhealthiness of its complexion, the pallid sponginess of its discoloured paper, so limp as to barely take the text of the story on its surface, and wondered - how soon would come the end?

Sorrowful days, too, for we had already lost by death old favourites and century-makers in G. H. Teed and Gwyn Evans. Early in 1940 John G. Brandon had passed away at Southend-on-Sea, and Robert Murray had died in a hospital in Sussex. On July 27th Ladbroke Black crossed the border, which, of course, meant that the name of Paul Urquhart would no longer be seen on the cover of an S.B.L. That was a total of six names which would never again be seen, but in that catastrophic year of 1940 more were to follow. Walter Edwards, another stalwart of past days, passed on, and then, for one reason or another Arthur S. Hardy dropped out, Allan Blair followed him, and Coutts Brisbane only six short stories of his century, sought fresh fields. A year or two later news of his death came about.

Hardy and Blair both died in or around the year 1940, and when last seen amidst London's blitzed and fire-ravished buildings, Blair was an old, lonely, and bewildered figure on a road which he obviously had reached the end of. An editor recalls him as a Scotsman and a gentleman, who was a sound writer, took his job seriously, and was at all times dependable. At times a bit heavy, he did a lot of good work for the A.P. Hardy, whom one imagines, was even older, was in similar circumstances when last seen, and the closing down of nearly all the boys' papers before the war placed him in sore financial straits. He is remembered as being something of a mystery. Very friendly with Hamilton Edwards at the time of that well-known editor's stay in office, he was well read, perfectly manners, well-dressed, and much devoted to music; if not a great writer, was a hard worker, somewhat exclusive, but liked generally. As before stated, he was an actor and at all times behaved like one. His record of stories is somewhat unique, for they stretch over a period of 32 years, in which time he could only muster up a total of 43 Sexton Blakes, of which twelve were contributions to the S.B.L. His performance can be likened to that of a batsman who goes to the wicket not so much for the purpose of scoring runs as to stick there in the grim determination of keeping his wicket intact - the Trevor Bailey of the team, in other words. Of course, at the rate he was progressing, he had no hope at all of reaching a century of stories, even if he lived to be a hundred himself. As the sixteenth author to be introduced in these records, he was the oldest surviving member of the Blake team at that time, for many who came after him had dropped out long before.

In addition to the ten names just mentioned, Donald Stuart severed his connection, but, in this case, the parting was voluntary; at least, the reason was not death as - so far as is known - he is still alive today. Similarly, Pierre Quiroule dropped out, but unlike

Stuart may not be alive today, for nothing has been heard of him for some time.

Twelve names obliterated from the records for all time in one fell swoop - a body blow under which the already weakened Library staggered and did not capitulate. It began in 1941 as it had left off in 1940, with two issues only per month, which has been the practice right up to the present day. But it had one agreeable and reassuring feature at least, for it saw in July the last of the reprints, save for one issue in October when two shorter stories were published one of which was a re-issue of an old Zenith 'U.J.' story. But at this stage, since so many names dropped out for all time, it will be as well to bring their records and those of the remaining leading authors up to date, so here are the details:

G. H. Teed (299); Gilbert Chester (145); Anthony Skene (122); Allan Blair (106); Robert Murray (103); Gwyn Evans (100); E. S. Brooks (97); Coutts Brisbane (94); Lewis Jackson (63); Rex Hardinge (62); John G. Brandon (58); Pierre Quiroule (53).

Despite several recounts in the hope that a single story might have been overlooked to give the late G. H. Teed his 300th contribution, nothing has come to light, so, poised on the brink, as it were, the old favourite must remain in just that tantalising position.

Into a battle-scarred field of utter devastation (117) CLIFFORD GATES made his debut and immediate exit, and chaos and destruction greeting his entry being due to the leaden hail of death hurled indiscriminately from the skies by Nazi dive-bombers, instruments of a war the young author was soon to die as a result of. And if all this talk of departures brings a despondent note to these records more were to follow, for, in August, Edwy Searles Brooks dropped out of the running, and to this day, nearly 20 years later, has not been persuaded to return to the crease. 98 not out was his score at this point, and today, still two short of his century, a warm welcome is assured for him should he decide to take up the pen again on Blake's behalf and produce the two novels necessary to include him in the little band of century-makers. As Berkeley Gray, he is busily engaged these days in recording the adventures of that swashbuckling character, Norman Conquest, a not entirely original conception, for the latter is built on too similar lines to Norman Conquest, the young boxer, who appeared in a series of stories written by Hylton Cleaver, and published in CHUMS in 1930, under the pen-name of "Reginald Crunden". With one more story by John G. Brandon published in 1941, to bring his total up to 59, that author's name never appeared again on a Library cover.

Blake was now rubbing shoulders with units of the A.R.P., the

A.F.S., and others belonging to Civil Defence; outcasts of German-Jewish origin, Polish airmen, and refugees from Budapest and Paris, in a London the like of which he had never previously pursued investigations, with its piled-up sandbags, the choking rubble of demolished buildings, the squirming snakes of fire-hoses stretching in long, irregular lines from thoroughfare to thoroughfare. Yet, despite the nightly excursion of the Luftwaffe over the capital, the morale of the average Londoner remained unimpaired. Its night-life went on as usual; Jack White's band at the Astoria was as a magnet to the soldier, the sailor, the airman, their girl friends and sweethearts; between the "alert" and the "all clear" the rhythmic softness of Carol Gibbon's piano was a soothing tonic; and Jack Jackson's band at the Mayfair was a popular attraction. Harry Roy playing hot music at the Embassy set many a pair of restless feet tip-tapping over its polished floor, whilst the Dorchester had a clientele large enough to keep its doors revolving intermittently.

And Blake? Without being quite the commanding figure he was in the twenties, the investigator was finding plenty of crime to occupy his waking thoughts between his war assignments (now being published for the first time by today's authors in the New Look S.B.L.) despite the passing of the many kings of crime who did battle right and royally with him when his star was in its zenith. This dearth in supporting characters was eased a little by the introduction of new creations. Anthony Parsons brought in secret service agents, Mademoiselle Yvonne de Braselieu and Belton Brass (obviously to compensate us in some measure for the loss of Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie) and Superintendent Venner and his long-suffering henchman, Sergeant Belford, of Scotland Yard. Maurice B. Dix continued with rare appearances of Punch Bennett; John Hunter all too rarely gave us an exploit of that tough skipper of the Mary Ann Trinder, Captain Dack; Stanton Hope introduced those likeable naval heroes, Joe Harman and Mike O'Flynn; and Warwick Jardine obliged with a story or two of that genial rolling-stone, Big Ted Flanagan. But, of course, none had the appeal of such old favourites as Huxton Rymer, George Marsden Plummer, Marie Galante, Vali Mata-Vali, Splash Page and the rest, and never so much as G. H. Teed and his so colourful coterie of characters missed as at that particular time.

With 75 novels for the S.B.L. by the end of 1941, interest was now centred around Gilbert Chester, who, by the death of G. H. Teed, was now leading the field with a gross Blake total of 150 novels. Could he emulate W. M. Graydon's achievement of writing a hundred S.B.L.'s, and so become only the second author to accomplish this feat?

Also, would he succeed in passing the late Andrew Murray's total aggregate of 165 novels and so move into the position at present occupied by that writer with the third highest aggregate of Sexton Blake stories?

To give a clearer picture, here are the aggregates of the four leading authors, past and present: G. H. Teed (299); W. M. Graydon (259); Andrew Murray (165); Gilbert Chester (150).

* * * * *

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

By Victor Colby

How often does one pick up a book or review dealing with detective fiction only to find that whereas the name of Sherlock Holmes is mentioned in awe, that of Sexton Blake is referred to in a somewhat patronising way.

How refreshing, then, to read the author's glowing foreword to U.J. No. 69, "Sexton Blake's First Case". He called his foreword a "Word of Explanation" and its purpose was to explain why Blake's first case was now appearing for the first time after so many of his other adventures.

It read in part as follows:

"If it had not been for the zeal and cleverness of our old friend Sexton Blake, the central character in the following extraordinary narrative, the terrible truth of that now long forgotten affair "The Lincoln's Inn Mystery" would never have been known, and a fiend in human form would, I am certain, still be wandering up and down our big provincial towns doing a fiend's work with a fiend's ingenuity and skill.

Yet, in spite of this, the detectives at Scotland Yard have kept as silent about the following very remarkable discoveries as does the grave itself. Even the journalists who have called on the C.I.D. and have asked for confirmation about Sexton Blake's work, have been requested not to pursue the subject, and told that the matter was so thorny, and so difficult, so cruel it had better be left alone.

Surely this can't all be the result of jealousy - jealousy of a smart resourceful lad who, knowing little of police laws, ways or methods, yet boldly took his life in his hands and struck a blow for justice that makes every man and woman and child in England and Scotland today his debtor for the term of their natural lives.

After all, remember Sexton Blake is not an imaginary person like Old Sleuth or Sherlock Holmes.

Today, in fact, there are few writers of detective stories who, knowing the truth as I set it down hereunder, do not believe that in

this very affair Sexton Blake actually proved himself to be, at the very start of his career, one of the most skilful and astute detectives that this or any other country has ever seen.

Here are the plain facts. Let the reader judge for himself whether it was right for this "Lincoln's Inn Mystery" to be kept out of the newspapers or not.

For my part, I say unhesitatingly that I consider it a shame that the affair has been buried in obscurity like it has been. And after all has been said and written, surely we need never be ashamed or afraid of the truth."

* * * * *

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No. 141	The Mystery of the Living Shadow (G. Grant and Middle Julie)		W. W. Sayer

LLING ALL "MAGNETITES" TO JOIN UP WITH—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

HAMILTONIANA

"I HAD A LITTLE NUT TREE"

By Vera Nicholls



I have just finished reading an autobiography entitled "I HAD A LITTLE NUT TREE" by Louis Battye, who is now living at the West Riding "Cheshire Home". Mr. Battye is a spastic, one who can never walk and who has considerable difficulty in writing as his palms are turned outward. However, he shows tremendous courage, and his story will interest many of our readers because, at the early age of eight, he became acquainted with Greyfriars and St. Jim's, an acquaintance which greatly influenced his boyhood. On page 97 of his book he writes:

"It was about this time that I discovered the works of that astonishing veteran Charles Hamilton. One of my uncles was an enthusiastic reader of the Gem and the Magnet and he began to send them to me.

At first I was quite bewildered by them. What sort of schools were these? I wondered. The schools I knew were dismal buildings to which children trooped every morning and afternoon for their lessons, but Greyfriars and St. Jim's did not seem like this at all. They were large, ancient and rambling and their pupils, who slept there, were all boys - at least, they were described as boys though they wore long trousers like men, and most peculiar collars and jackets. The teachers seemed very odd, too. They were men who wore square hats and long black cloaks.

What queer lessons were taught! What on earth was Latin? And the customs - flogging and fighting, the inexplicable moral taboos. Why was it bad to smoke, drink, and play cards? Quite nice people I

knew did it every day. I was baffled.

But I persevered, and eventually familiarised myself with the conventions of the form. I accepted Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, and the other 'decent chaps' as heroes. I learned to regard their standards as my own, even when I could not see the reason for them. I learned to hate the 'cads' and 'rotters' to laugh at Billy Bunter and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, to fear Mr. Quelch, and to respect Dr. Holmes.

I even began to wonder if the stories were actually true, and if they were, I rather wished I could go to one of these schools, in spite of the thrashings, kickings, and other personal violences I would have to suffer if I did. But which? Greyfriars or St. Jim's? Suddenly I weighed the advantages of one against the other.

I have dwelt at some length on this peculiar mythology, because it really did have a profound effect on my mental development. I continued to read the Gem and Magnet and from them I received what might be called the schoolboys' code.

When I went to Chailey this code was of great value in enabling me to settle down in what would otherwise have been a strange and bewildering world. True, Chailey was far from being a Greyfriars, but at certain points there was sufficient resemblance for what I had learned of public school life to apply. To a certain degree I knew what to expect and what would be expected of me. What would otherwise have been a terrifying ordeal was made quite bearable."

"I Had a Little Nut Tree" - an inspiring true story of a man's wonderful courage, is published by Secker and Warburg.

* * * * *

JUST SUPPOSE!

By Peter J. Hanger

What would the Magnet have been like had its career continued after May 1940? No doubt every Greyfriars fan has asked himself that question dozens of times and found himself in very dark waters. It is an impossible task, for we can only guess.

Even the last series, beginning with No. 1683 "The Shadow of the Sack" is difficult to evaluate. Was it to be another Harry Wharton, Rebel, series? They seemed to come in four-year cycles, so no doubt we were due for another in 1940. Undoubtedly, during the war years, the Famous Five would have rescued R.A.F. and Luftwaffe pilots from crashed aircraft. Bunter would have groused about the food shortage. I wonder what his reactions would have been to spam, snook and whale-meat. And what would have been Fisher T. Fish's gibes about Lend

lease and Marshall Aid?

Today, Bob Cherry would have been kidnapped by flying saucers and Sputniks. Perhaps, even, Bunter's postal-order would have arrived by now.

(Editor's note: With his own collection of Magnets, Peter has used his imagination and drawn up a list of about 200 titles which he thinks may well have appeared in the Schoolboy's Own Library. It makes fascinating reading, though we have not the space to publish the list. We fear, too, that we should be besieged by excited readers, all anxious to know from whence they could obtain such a wonderful collection of S.O.L's.)

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

No. 38. UP, THE SCHOOL

Critics of Charles Hamilton's school stories have, on occasion, suggested that he was not strong in his descriptions of games. Though I have played a great deal of cricket in my time, it is probable that I am not sufficient of a sportsman to be able to pass an authoritative opinion on this matter.

As one who loves cricket dearly, with only a mild interest in other sports, I would say that I always found his sporting descriptions completely adequate. There were three great cricket series in the Magnet - the Lancaster series, the Stacey series, the Bertie Vernon series. These, especially the first two, must surely figure among the finest school stories ever written. In all three I found the cricket sequences entirely delightful. Whether the actual descriptions of the games were first-class I should not like to say, but they suited me. To my taste, the atmosphere of the game was perfectly presented, and I asked for nothing more.

I cannot see that there is any necessity for a writer of stories



One Year of Greyfriar's school days

of this type to be able to pen the type of description which must appeal to experts at the game. I would, in fact, query whether it is desirable. Too prolonged and detailed a description of the game might tend to obscure the plot of the story, however attractive it might be to the keen cricket enthusiast.

In white cover days there appeared in the Gem a long series of stories concerning a sports contest. Each story contained detailed descriptions of various sporting events. These accounts may have been extremely well done, from the sportsman's point of view, but they left me cold. My impression is that it takes more than a brilliant account of a game to make a good story. In my view, Charles Hamilton's sporting descriptions are always competent and adequate, though they may not be brilliant.

The old jingle tells us that "The game is more than the players of the game; the ship is more than the crew." For a school story I would reverse that sentiment. Far more important than the game is the characterisation of the players and the atmosphere of the narrative; and Charles Hamilton never fails with either characterisation or atmosphere.

It's just my point of view! What's yours?

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 36. THANKS FOR THE MEMORY.

FRANK RICHARDS. I like very much the article "Thanks for the Memory." Remarque's remarkable remark couldn't be more inexact. Memory is the continuity of life. So far from ageing us, it keeps us young. There are, of course, especially in a long life, painful recollections that we might be glad to lose. But the man who can live his youth over again in memory will never grow really old.

When one reaches the armchair state of existence, pictures from the past take the edge off Father Time's scythe. At seventy or eighty, who would choose to live wholly in the present and never in the past? Who would like to be heard saying, "Oh dear, oh, dear, this rheumatism!" rather than "What a jolly day that was when I pulled up to Staines in 1885."

Let us keep up to date by all means, and find what pleasure we can in income tax and H-bombs and atomic fall-out. But if we want to

live long, and like it, let us keep our memories green.

TOM PORTER: I note that "Let's be Controversial" is now 3 years old. I have always followed this section of C.D. with great interest, though I don't often break into print. Frequently I find myself, at all sorts of odd times, recalling something you have written, or something written to you, reflecting on its justice and wisdom, and also on its comprehensiveness. You always say "I give my own views superficially". If this is so, it is surprising how many comments and reflections you pack into one short article.

Regarding "Thanks for the Memory" if we apply Remarque's quotation to the hobby I agree wholeheartedly with your conclusion that he was talking through his hat, though I would like to know the context of his quotation. It would probably make better sense there. As applied to the hobby, I should think that one would grow young again through the memory. Surely this is the sense of many of Wordsworth's wonderful lyrics - and what about our own Frank Richards? Old in years, who is younger in spirit than he, with his rich store of memories?

"Nostalgia" has always struck me as one of those words which is changing its meaning. Its original meaning is "melancholia, morbid memory," but it is not much used in that sense now. Today, for many people, it summons up a feeling of tender, wistful pleasure for a happy past, and we are only wistful because it is a past that will never return. Many more "Controversials" please!

ROBERT STORY: I opine that as regards "one grows old through memory", Remarque is right - and so are you. Let's look at it in this way. We, in our old boys' books, recapture youth in all its glorious episodes; we live through happy times of bygone days, and really become rejuvenated in spirit. On the other hand, we should feel really old if we just brooded and sighed for days gone for ever. In the first instance, we cannot grow old from a wonderful relived memory. But if we allow our memories to bring us sadness because all our delightful past has gone to join thousands of yesterdays, we feel that we "are not so young any more." There are two different approaches for reliving memories.

DON WEBSTER: I am in entire agreement with you that nostalgia forms the basis of our hobby. How wonderful it has been for me in recent weeks, with time on my hands, to re-read some of the Gems and Magnets of my youth. What a thrill I got from reading "Bought Honours" in which Levison impersonated Gussy, to win the Greek prize. Furthermore, what a pleasure it is to recapture memories of our youth when we see those covers and illustrations we cherished when we bought our copies yesteryear. "Morbid melancholia" - what nonsense!

A BELOVED ARTIST'S BIRTHDAY

From the "Daily Mail" of mid-April.

"Charles Chapman, who used to illustrate those hilarious tales of Greyfriars in the Magnet, was 81 yesterday. He celebrated by going for a two-mile cycle ride near his home at Caversham, Oxfordshire.

"I'm good for another 20 years," he chuckled. "Billy Bunter has kept me young."

He and Frank Richards, Bunter's creator, meet regularly to chew over old times. 'Frank wrote the situations and I pictured them,' said Mr. Chapman. 'We were a great team for more than 40 years.'

Billy Bunter is immortal. Despite the time lapse, Mr. Chapman received nearly 100 birthday cards from fans."

WANTED: GENS 313, 315, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322, 328, 331, 332, 333, 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 376, 385, 386, 387, 392, 457, 459, 493, 773, 935, 946, 948, 950, 951, 953, 954, 956, 964, 967, 968, 970, 976, 977, 979, 980, 984, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 325, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 411, 417, 469, 717, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 868, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 936, 940, 942, 943, 944, 946, 948, 949, 950, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 370, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 466, 474.

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

THE EDITOR IS SEEKING a few copies of COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1959, for overseas readers. Can anybody oblige?

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library - 1st series - 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219; 2nd series - 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667, Boy's Friend Library - 1st series - 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series - 396. Union Jack - 689, 690, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 721, 722, 725, 727, 732, 733, 736, 740, 743, 746, 749, 751, 752, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1388, 1390.

MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: B.F.L. 351 "Black Battle Axe"; also any B.F.L.'s containing historical stories. THURBON, 29 STRAWBERRY HILL ROAD, TWICKENHAM, MDSX.

15/- each offered for the following Magnets - Nos. 648, 740, 742, 768, 771, 773, 920, 921, 933, 952. LOFTS, 56 SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by JACK WOOD, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

My recent complaints seem to have produced results, and this month we temporarily suspend Charles Churchill's series for another of Jim Cook's letters from St. Frank's. The series will be resumed next month and for July I have two interesting short articles in hand.

FROM YOUR ST. FRANK'S CORRESPONDENT

By Jim Cook

The main topic of conversation recently has been Fullwood's strange behaviour. He has been associating with Study A.

One day he was unusually moody, for on the previous evening he had received a severe caning from the Head - a punishment he did not deserve. He had found a bottle of petrol in the bicycle shed, and was using it to clean his cycle. The petrol belonged to Fullerton, the scamp of the Third, who had bought it for the purpose of making a petrol bomb. This is dangerous, because it is so simple - you cork the bottle with a length of rag, light the end of the rag, and throw the bomb. As the bottle bursts, a violent sheet of flame roars out. The danger to anybody near by can be imagined.

Fullerton came into the cycle shed, spotted Ralph Fullwood using his petrol, and went berserk. Fullwood, the cycle, and Fullerton became one swirling mass, and one of the handlebars poked into the Third Former's eye. And at that moment Mr. Pycraft and Mr. Goole of the East House were strolling peacefully outside, and they were aghast at what they saw - Fullerton, with a hand clasped to his damaged eye, being hotly pursued by Fullerton who still gripped the empty bottle.

To his humiliation, Fullwood was marched to the Head's study. He was not allowed to give his version of the affair, and left the study after receiving a lecture and six strokes.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood went to his study, and was glad that his chum, Clive Russell, was not there. Sure and humiliated, he sat down and rested his head in his arms on the table. He had not really got over a bad attack of flu which had put him out for the important soccer match the previous week. The thrashing he had just received tumbled his spirits to their lowest degree.

When Clive came in, he advised Ralph to go to bed - and Fullwood meekly submitted to his chum's demand. As I said, he felt too weak to

argue. The strong friendship between Ralph and Clive had blossomed after Fullwood saved the life of the Canadian junior, some terms ago during a holiday abroad. Clive had known nothing of Fullwood's earlier ways at St. Frank's, but Ralph had changed under the healthy attachment of Russell, and since then he had been seen more often in the company of Nipper and Co., Handforth and Co., and other who believed in clean, decent living. I think another reason for Fullwood's improvement was the sister of Reggie Pitt who boarded at Moor View School. If at any time Ralph's thoughts were on the old days of gambling and smoking, the influence of Winnie Pitt must have deterred him.

After Fullwood went to bed, Clive Russell was worried. He felt that his chum's trouble was more than the aftermath of flu. Clive shared the same little dormitory with Ralph, and when he went there he found Fullwood asleep. But, to Clive Russell, it seemed an uneasy sleep.

The next morning, after breakfast, they made their way to the Ancient House lobby. There was a letter for Ralph, but before he could open it, the bell went for lessons. When he opened it later, he extracted ten pounds.

What happened during the rest of the day I have no idea, but, in the Junior Common Room that evening, several of the fellows remarked on the anxiety that Clive had shown at not finding his chum. Teddy Long, the sneak of the Remove, suggested that Fullwood might be in Study A, playing banker. Earlier in the day, according to Hubbard, Gulliver and Bell had been seen talking to their former leader, and the rumour spread that Fullwood was going back to his old ways.

Then, when evening came, Fullwood was missing. It strengthened the gossip about Fullwood's escapades after lights out in earlier days. In his dormitory, in the moonlight shining through the windows, Clive waited in deep anxiety. When eleven o'clock struck, from the school clock, he could endure it no longer.

He dressed, and slipped out of the school, scaling the wall to drop into Bellton Lane. A sharp frost covered the ground, making the countryside look cold and eerie.

But when Clive reached his destination, the White Harp, Fullwood was not there, so miserable and alarmed, he returned to St. Frank's. He almost shouted with relief when, reaching his dormitory, he found Fullwood asleep in bed.

With a sigh, Clive went to bed himself, and soon fell asleep, but he was awakened by the sound of Fullwood shouting. He jumped out of bed, and hurried across to his chum.

"What is it, old man?" whispered Clive.

Fullwood looked at him in alarm. "What was I saying? Did you hear?" He gripped Clive's shoulder. "Tell me."

"You were saying something about fifty pounds" said Clive miserably. "Won't you tell me what the trouble is, Ralph? I'm worried sick. Why do you talk of fifty pounds?"

Fullwood seemed to be struggling with himself. Then he said: "It's all over now. I had to get fifty pounds for a very special reason, and I'm sorry if I've seemed to be acting a bit queerly. It won't happen again."

The next day was a half-holiday. When Fullwood announced that he was going for a walk and missing the soccer match with Helmford, Clive became suspicious, and decided to follow him.

When his chum turned left after passing through the school gates, Clive was puzzled, for that way led to Bannington Moor and the Moor View School. Had Fullwood been his old self, he would no doubt soon have realised that he was being followed, but now he kept on without turning round. At a junction of the lanes, Fullwood halted. From a hedge, the watching Clive saw a schoolgirl come over the hill and Fullwood hurried to meet her. It was Winnie Pitt. After a while he saw Ralph hand the girl a packet, and very shortly afterwards they parted. Suddenly Russell made up his mind.

Surprisingly, Fullwood was not dismayed to find that Clive had shadowed him. Rather a look of relief came over his face when Clive suddenly stepped out into the lane.

As the affair is now all over, I have Fullwood's and Clive's permission to tell. But I first saw Winnie Pitt and sought her permission, for it began when she went to her box and found that £50 belonging to the School Sports Fund had disappeared. It was the money entrusted to her as treasurer of the club. Somehow, Joan Tarrant and her friend Maudie Royce got to hear of the theft and took delight in passing on the news to Ralph. At once, the implication of the missing money became urgent. It had to be replaced before tongues started wagging, and Fullwood decided to set about replacing it. He was going to make his ten pounds work for him. He took some off Forrest and Co., a little more of Kenmore and Co., a sessions at the White Harp brought in a bit, and a win on the horses almost made up the £50. The final £5 almost drove him crazy.

At the country fair near Bannington, the proprietor of a boxing booth was willing to give £5 to anyone who could put his "young Ern on the floor."

Fullwood put Young Ern on the floor in the first round, so great was his strength and fury. He won the £5.

The total sum of £50 was in the packet which Clive saw him give Winnie Pitt the following day in the lane.

The missing Fund money remains a mystery. Either an intruder gained access to Moor View School, or somebody in the school stole it.

That Fullwood did go back to his old bad ways is true, but it was an honourable move. The very thought of repeating the feat of obtaining £50 in a limited time makes him go hot all over. He had his reward when he saw the light that danced in Winnie Pitt's eyes when he handed her the money.

Forrest and Co. are perplexed. Fullwood just ignores them. Which seems rather strange to the cads of Study A since Ralph Leslie took a few pounds off them at cards.

To me, it would be extremely interesting to see a challenge for the leadership of Study A, Fullwood and Forrest pitting their wits against each other. Gore-Pearce I don't count, although he has a streak of cruelty in him that would soon find the surface in any battle.

WANTED: The Popular: 127-135, 137, 138, 141-145, 147-159, 181-163, 166, 169-171, 174-184, 186-188, 190, 191, 193-201, 203-205, 207-211, 220-229, 231, 311, 313, 314, 316-318, 320-322, 325-334, 336-343, 345-347, 349, 350, 353-357, 359-161, 380, 381, 388-398, 404, 406, 411-415, 418, 428, 449, 451, 452, 454-456, 459-463, 465, 466, 469-488, 499, 518, 544, 545, 547-551, 556-558, 560-566, 568-571, 572, 577, 578, 581, 591, 596-599. S.O.Ls - 60, 68.

DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

WANTED: To COMPLETE SET. S.O.L. 58. Also Boy's Friend Green 'Un - 762, 764, 780, 1042, 1257, 1264, 1294, 1295, 1296, 1297, 1298. Nelson Lee 2nd New Series - 151 and Old Series most numbers before 132.

T. W. PORTER, OLD FIELDS, CORNGREAVES ROAD, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

WANTED: Chums Annuals, Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Boy's Friend, Sexton Blake, Champion Libraries, Magnets, Gems, Union Jacks, Populars, Boy's Friend weeklies, Puck, etc. State Price.

Apply: The Advertiser, No. 30, Beech Road, Wycombe Marsh, High Wycombe, Bucks.

WANTED: S.O.L's: 42, 65, 66, 162, 257, 258, 259. Nelson Lee Old series 236, 291. Your price plus postage paid. The advertiser has some S.O.Ls Nelson Lee, Gems and Magnets for exchange only.

BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

Sexton Blake Today

NEW S.B.L's REVIEWED BY WALTER WEBB

APRIL - 1960

CONFLICT WITHIN (No. 449)

DESMOND REID

Femininity is strongly represented, no fewer than six attractive members of the fair sex being featured. This apart from Paula and Marion, not to mention the ageless Mrs. Bardell.

Concerns a series of robberies in which post and jewellery offices and sundry other buildings are broken into. A policeman intervening in one raid is run down by a car driven by one of the gang. When he dies it is a murder hunt that Sexton Blake becomes involved in.

Quite well written and with sustained interest, it is, however, no more than a cut-to-pattern murder mystery. The killer of the publican Kelsey and the jeweller Brasby will not prove too difficult to discover. With so many women crowding the stage it had to be one of them.

Rating Good.

BULLETS TO BAGHDAD (No. 450)

PHILIP CHAMBERS

It's quite a time since we heard anything about that notorious world-wide confederacy, the Organisation.

In penetrating to its nerve centre in the Middle East, Paula finds herself involved in the slave traffic. It nearly involves Blake in a bitter quarrel with Craille and results in a commission which taxes to the utmost his physical and mental resources. To find Paula.

For the honey-blond secretary has found real trouble out there. Having succeeded in the task she had set out to accomplish, that of discovering the identities of the men who had planned to seize power in Baghdad, the strength of the Arabs massing on the Iraq frontier, details of arms shipments, etc., she is in the bait which will lead Blake into their hands.

When Blake and Tinker step into the political ferment, action on a cinemascopic scale is fast and furious. Rating Very Good.

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GENERAL COMMENTARY

COVERS: Bright and attractive as usual. In portraying Paula with reddish brown hair. Mr. Jacoby leaves himself open to criticism by Blake fans who like their characters drawn according to the author's

conception of them. And that patch of pale green above and at the side of the girl's left eye will be bound to provoke comment. Perhaps it is intended to be a portion of the background, but looks for all the world as if Paula is sprouting freshly green locks to herald the arrival of spring.

MAILBAG: Highlight this month is Len Packman's defence of Blakiana policy and Martin Thomas' counter-offensive. It is rather surprising to learn that so many as 80 per cent of C.D. readers are only interested in the past. As one who is interested in every milestone of Blake history (including that particular period which has so aroused the ire of Mr. Thomas), I can assure them that they are missing some of the most engrossing Blake novels ever written. Plots on the average are better constructed than ever before, loose ends secured more tidily, characterization is sound whilst certain links with the past remain unbroken.

For example, in No. 449, Mrs. Bardell reverts all too briefly to her Bardellisms of the Gwyn Evans era; we still have that grand old warrior, Chief Inspector Coutts and one or two other old-timers are on the retained list.

Our old friend, George Marsden Plummer, seems to be popular with the fair sex. Two lady readers warmly welcome his reinstatement in the Library this month and hope he will not be allowed to stray away again. And so say all his admirers. But Plummer playing a lone hand was never so interesting as when partnered by his glamorous female associate, Vali Mata Vali, known as the Bird of Paradise. The inference is obvious. Bring back Vali, too.

COMMENT: Welcome to new author, Philip Chambers. He has an exceptionally good story to tell and puts it over with strong, dramatic effect. Certainly one of the discoveries of 1960. I have assumed in the Reviews that the notorious league of criminals which he refers to in his novel as the Organisation is, in fact, the same confederacy which other authors before him have referred to as the Syndicate. Surely there cannot be two separate organisations on the same identical lines?

SALE: 28 Nos. of C.D. 6/- lot. Album of stamps £2. D. Coke's 'Bending of a Twig' 3/-. Prices include postage. Would exchange.
65 BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

WANTED: Magnet and Gem double numbers before 1920.
G. H. RANSON, 207 BASINGSTOKE ROAD, READING, BERKS.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLANDS

Meeting held 28th March, 1960.

A new member, Mr. Holland, introduced by Jack Corbett, had a hearty welcome from the twelve members who assembled in Room No. 5, Chambers of Commerce. After a discussion on the annual re-union with Northern at Chesterfield in June, we got down to a very interesting programme. Item number one was a quiz on mixed subjects. Devised by myself, it was more difficult than usual, and only Tom Porter had any success.

Next followed Joe Marston's selections for his sojourn on a Desert Isle. These were (1) Magnet Hiking Series. (2) Courtfield Cracksmen Series. (3) Vanguard, circa 1925. (4) Tom Merry Annual of 1949. (5) C.D.A. containing the article on Red Magnets. (6) Dick, the Penman, series of Magnets. (7) Nelson Lee No. 179. (8) Frank Richards' Autobiography. We congratulated Joe on his selections, and also were grateful to him for the gift of twelve eggs which were up for raffle in connection with the library. These were won by the Treasurer. The usual Library Raffle was won by George Shatham.

As a change from the orthodox, the next item was a talk on Sherlock Holmes, given in his usual whimsical but excellent style by John Tomlinson. The first story of the great detective, "Study in Scarlet" appeared in Beaton's Annual. This was followed by "The Sign of Four". Then the Strand Magazine published 12 stories, including "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "Memoirs of Holmes," "Hound of the Baskervilles," "Valley of Fear" "Empty House," "Dancing Men." Sir A. Conan Doyle got tired of Holmes, and "liquidated" him. However, he had created too popular a character for that sort of thing, and public demand compelled him to reincarnate him. "His Last Bow" found Holmes as a master spy in the 1914-18 war. When Conan Doyle died in 1930 his son, John Duncan Conan Doyle, in collaboration with an American writer, republished some of the detective yarns.

A very fine talk, Jack Tomlinson, well deserving the reception it received. After the interval, Madge Corbett read one of the Midland 1958 Cup entries - a St. Frank's Xmas yarn entitled "Handforth Investigates" by yours truly.

Next meeting, Monday, 25th April, the last we shall hold at the Chambers of Commerce. It is fairly definite that our new home will be the Hope and Anchor Restaurant, Edmund Street, Birmingham, opposite the University and next door to the Public Library. That is, from the May meeting onward.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

Those who were able to get along to Cahill's Restaurant, Sydney, on Friday, April 8th, found it one of the most enjoyable meetings to date. The election of officers resulted in Syd Smyth and Bette Pate being returned to office as Chairman and Secretary respectively, with Ernie Carter the new Treasurer, replacing Bill Hall, who has been unable to be with us for some time on account of his out-of-town work.

Main topic of interest was the club magazine and Syd Smyth had brought along the reproduction to be used in printing the cover. All being well, the magazine will be ready in two weeks' time, and copies may be obtained direct from Syd Smyth, 1 Brandon Street, Clovelly, N.S.W., Australia, for a cost of 4/- (English? post free. It is hoped to produce the magazine each quarter, featuring overseas talent as well as local contributions. We feel sure this publication will be enjoyed by all those interested in the hobby.

Correspondence dealing with the Martin Thomas article in the February S.B.L. was

then discussed, and members expressed their keen disapproval of the article. Members wish to record their appreciation for the sterling effort put into Blakiana by Josie and Len Packman, and feel that the New Look is receiving a fair share of the space by having a page allotted for Walter Webb's reviews which are always excellent.

Then members settled down to the really pleasant part of the evening's proceedings, the reading of the letters from our good friends overseas. From Eric Payne, as always, all the latest news together with a most interesting newspaper article on the Bunter Show; letters from our good friends in the four Clubs, viz. Ben Whiter, Ron Hodgson, Harry Broster, and Frank Unwin. And last, but not least, the ever-popular News Letter and Foghorn.

Discussion for this meeting centred around the famous Billy Bunter, with Syd Smyth and Bruce Fowler, two staunch Hamiltonians, crossing swords in defence and attack. It was so good a debate that even the Blake enthusiasts felt that there may have been something worth reading beside the Union Jack after all. (Sorry, chaps!) Poor old Billy's character was rent asunder in a most interesting debate with honours slightly in favour of Bruce Fowler who was upholding the Bunter of early days.

We gathered up the pieces about 8.30 separated the hysterical Hamiltonians, and declared the meeting closed until Friday, May 6th, when battle may be joined again.

B. PATE - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Sunday, 10th April

It was with deep regret that we received the news of the death of one of our oldest members, Mr. Switzer. He joined us in March, 1953, and was a regular and valued member until the last year or two when ill-health made it impossible for him to attend. His jocular references to Dick Turpin caused many a chuckle at the meetings. His death occurred at the age of 79. The Chairman opened the discussion on the Greyfriars Cup Competition. Agreement was reached as to how this year's competition will be formed.

A quiz based on the Greyfriars Holiday series was then given by Frank Unwin. This was a novel idea, for blank maps of England were handed out, and from a series of questions we had to deduce the route taken by the Greyfriars Juniors. Bill Windsor came first, followed by Don Webster. During the interval a message was received from Pat Laffey. He is still undergoing hospital treatment, but hopes to be back with us soon.

A four-part quiz was then given by Don Webster. Split into four groups, we had to answer a series of questions on four subjects - sport, Dickens, Old Boys' Books and detectives. Jim Walsh won, the writer of these notes being second. The last quiz was also by Don Webster. Two teams were formed, one led by Jim Walsh, the other by the Secretary. Each group received a bag of counters, each counter having a letter of the alphabet stamped on it. From the pile of counters we had to make up names of the characters from the four schools. This was harder than it seemed, as there was a remarkable shortage of 'E's. Jim Walsh's team won by thirteen points to ten.

This ended the three and a half hour meeting which was enjoyed by all. Present were Don Webster, Norman Pragnell, Frank Case, Jim Walsh, Bill Windsor, Bill Greenwood and Frank Unwin. Next meeting, Sunday, 8th May, 6.30 p.m.

NORMAN PRAGNELL - Secretary.

NORTHERN

9th April at 239 Hyde Park Road.

It was the Annual General Meeting and the 10th Anniversary Meeting of the Club. Chairman, Bill Williamson, said a few words to mark the occasion, and remarked that

three of the original founder members were present that evening - Gerry Allison, Harry Barlow and himself.

The Balance Sheet presented by the Treasurer, showed the Club to be in a sound financial position with no worries of any kind.

Bill Williamson retired as Chairman to become Vice-Chairman and Geoffrey Wilde was elected as Chairman for the next twelve months. The other officials were re-elected en-bloc.

After business, we settled down to a game sent us by Don Webster - "Do you spell like Bunter?" which caused much laughter and scratching of heads. I think some of the answers would have made even Bunter blink.

Gerry Allison then gave a reading from the July 1959 S.P.C. "Red Dawn over Sunny Bay" - a satire by Arthur Moyse.

During the course of the evening the winning "Schoolboys Herald" had been passed round and the only thing missing from another grand meeting was the Greyfriars Cup. However, I'm happy to say that this has now arrived and will be in the place of honour at the May meeting.

R. HODGSON - Hon. Secretary.

LONDON

A good gathering of 29 members assembled in the "Rag" at Wood Green for the April Meeting. Guest of honour was Ray Hopkins, home from Seattle, U.S.A. He was given a warm welcome by the Chairman and all those present.

Official business disposed of, the Chairman, Len Packman, started the social side with a short quiz. Eric Lawrence won this, with Bob Whiter in second place. Millicent Lyle read an excerpt from Magnet story "The Boy from Baker Street." Great was the merriment roused by this reading.

Eric Fayne conducted his quiz, a two-team one - School House captained by Roger Jenkins and New House captained by Bob Whiter. The New House won by 15 points to 14, novel prizes being awarded to the winning team.

Laurence Morley was applauded for his selection of Desert Island Books. Finally, Len Packman read a chapter from Herbert Leckenby's "Memories of Old Boys' Books", entitled "An Amazing Pair" - the Magnet and Gen. This was much enjoyed, and with votes of thanks to the hosts, Bob and Eileen Whiter, the meeting terminated. Next gathering Sunday, May 15th, at a venue to be decided.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NOW. An Australian-produced O.B.B.C. magazine. It is felt sure that readers of the C.D. will be interested in the GOLDEN HOURS MAGAZINE. The first issue is available NOW, price 4/- post free. Articles on Sexton Blake, P.G. Wodehouse, T. B. Reed, "School for Slackers" and a big budget of news from W. O. G. Lofts in his inimitable manner.

It is hoped that THE GOLDEN HOURS MAGAZINE will be a quarterly paper. In fact, the June issue is being compiled now, with articles by T. W. Twyman and G. R. Samways in view as well as other readable efforts by names well-known to everyone. Send subscriptions to SYD SMYTH, 1 Brandon Street, Clovelly, N.S.W., Australia.

THE LONDON CLUB LIBRARY HAS FOR SALE: Double Number Magnet 461. 15/- . Gems 571 - 585 Billy Bunter at St. Jim's series complete (except for No. 581) 50/- . WANTED TO BUY - certain Magnets, Gems and Schoolboy's Owns prior to 1932. Top prices paid. ROGER JENKINS, "THE FIRS", EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

WANTED: Really good binding copies of MAGNETS 1257, 1258, 1262, 1263, 1267, 1268, 1269, 1270, 1277, 1279, 1310, 1313, 1350, 1382, 1440, 1453, 1454, 1455, 1456, 1556, 1561, 1585, 1593, 1597. My own (not very) inferior copy and other exchanges available. C. H. WILDE, 145 WENSLEY DRIVE, LEEDS, 7.

CUP CONTEST

(Last month's story in this series was written by Winnie Partridge of the Midland Club. Here is a London entry. We shall disclose the name of the writer next month. ED.)

THE CASE OF THE MISSING TREATY

by Peter Todd

It was a cold cheerless morning in Shaker Street. Fog lapped round the windows and made it dark without, whilst the lack of the necessary shilling for the gas-meter made it dark within. Sholmes was in one of his reveries: having taken his usual overdose of hashish, he lay in his customary attitude of elegance, with his feet reclining gracefully on the mantelpiece as he played a melody of heart-rending sadness on his jew's harp.

"No more, I pray you, Sholmes," I exclaimed, as the tune rose to a shrill crescendo, "you have already touched the very depths of my being with your music. In any case I am worried about the loss of my Post Office Savings book and I cannot settle down to enjoy the melody.

"So be it, Jotson," he replied, laying down his instrument in the coal-scuttle (which fortunately happened to be empty, owing to our recent difference of opinion with the coal merchant about an outstanding account). "That loud knocking at the street door tells me we have a client."

"How ever in the world did you deduce that?" I exclaimed in astonishment. "It might be only a tradesman."

"The reasoning is simple, my dear Jotson," he explained. "We have exhausted our credit in the neighbourhood. The tradesmen have given up calling for orders, and they have also despaired of collecting the money we owe them. Therefore it can only be a client who calls."

I remained silent, struck dumb with admiration and awe of the penetrating intellect of my friend. The silence was broken by the arrival of our client who fell over a footstool as he entered the room. "A light, I beg you, Mr. Sholmes," exclaimed our visitor, who was none other than M. de Trop, the French Foreign Minister.

"I regret, monsieur, I dare not light the gas. Enemies are watching for me everywhere," was Mr. Sholmes answer. "Allow me to guide you to a seat on this comfortable chesterfield. If you avoid the broken spring and the nails projecting from the arm, you will be perfectly at ease."

A slight squeal from our guest as he punctured himself on some

jagged metal caused a wry smile to glide over my features. How soft all foreigners are, I thought.

"I have come to you, mon cher Sholmes, on a matter of the utmost importance to our two countries," said M. de Trop, as soon as he had recovered from his anguish. "But first of all, may I speak freely? I fancy I hear the stertorous breathing of a third person in the room."

"It is only my old friend, Dr. Jotson," was Sholmes' assurance. "Both his mind and his intellect are of a decidedly limited nature, and so you may speak freely."

"Well, as everyone knows, the secret treaty of Dover has just been concluded between England and France," resumed M. de Trop. "Not all the newspapers are aware of the terms of the treaty, and it is therefore vital that it should remain a secret indefinitely - or at least until the evening editions of the newspapers. I require your assistance, for I am being shadowed by an agent of a foreign power who wishes to obtain my copy of the secret treaty which I have in my breast pocket - Helas! It is gone!" said our visitor, breaking off with a shrill cry of dismay.

"You may leave the matter safely in my hands," replied Sholmes. "Return here at lunch-time today, when the secret treaty shall be returned to you. Come Jotson," he added to me as soon as our visitor had stumbled out, moaning, "the game's afoot!"

I marvelled at the keenness of his expression. All his languor had dropped from him like a cloak, and his nostrils dilated like a blood-hound's as we rushed round to our first port of call, the Shaker Street Post Office. At Sholmes' request I stayed outside and kept watch. He soon emerged, jingling some money in his pockets.

"Here's my first discovery, Jotson," he said with a smile, as he handed me my Savings Bank Book. "But we are too late. The balance of 7/6d was withdrawn this morning."

All my enquiries about how he had found the book and where he had obtained the loose change in his pockets he refused to answer.

"You must allow me some little mysteries of my own, my dear Jotson," was all he would say, and knowing Sholmes as I did I knew the matter would have to rest there.

We then returned to our apartments, where Sholmes inserted a shilling in the gas-meter and lit the gas. I had to shade my eyes, which were quite dazzled with this unusual brilliance, and when I had grown accustomed to the light I saw Sholmes rising from his knees by the footstool over which our visitor had stumbled earlier in the morning. In his hand was an official document.

I had no time for speech, for M. de Trop was already back with

an anxious look on his face.

"Here is the treaty, monsieur," said Sholmes, with his customary negligence. "Any service I have been able to render your country is not, of course, requiring to be paid, but - " he added hastily as our visitor turned to leave - "there are of course, certain out of pocket expenses which your Embassy will doubtless wish to disburse."

A French banknote changed hands, and Sholmes politely showed our visitor out. He returned gleefully.

"Low as the French franc stands on the Exchange at the moment, Jotson," he remarked, "yet I fancy that this banknote is not entirely worthless. Come, let us away to the Mile End Road, where I know a stall at which we can purchase winkles and ginger-pop for two for this very sum."

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GREYFRIARS CUP COMPETITION 1960

1. A magazine of 5 foolscap pages, folded to form an issue of 20 pages - the size of C.D. monthly.
2. The title to be "THE NEW POPULAR".
3. Contents to be 3 short stories, one of which MUST deal with Sexton Blake, the other two may be School Stories of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Rookwood or St. Frank's.
4. No specified number of pages to each story, but magazine is NOT to exceed 20 pages.
5. All entries to be typewritten.
6. No illustrations whatever, but the main title may be printed in ornamental lettering.
7. All contributions MUST be written by members and be anonymous.
8. Closing date - 30th NOVEMBER, 1960.
9. Any entries not observing these Rules will be disqualified.
10. All entries will be marked with a distinguishing symbol which will be issued to all Clubs at a later date, together with address to which complete entries are to be sent.
11. The name of the judge will be announced as soon as his consent has been received, and his name will be published in C.D.

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ODDS AND ENDS

by Gerry Allison

THOSE QUOTATIONS. Don Webster once said how much pleasure one gets in recognising the many literary and classical allusions which appear throughout the writings of Charles Hamilton. A letter I have just

received from Tom Hopperton says the same thing.

Tom writes: "I have just spent a month on my back, and during that time one of my amusements has been in cogitating Hamilton quotations - not for the first time. I can identify pretty nearly all of them, but three stood out as baffling. I knew that "urge the flying ball" lurked somewhere at the back of my mind, but I could not bring it to the front. It has now dawned on me that it is from Gray's "Distant Prospect of Eton College."

"The other two, both pre-war, still stump me. Edwardian juniors continually chortled "bye-bye, Bluebell" and crude proletarian types addressed Bunter as "Fat Jack of the Boneyard." "Bluebell" suggests a song; "Fat Jack" possibly - a dreadful, but I dunno! Can you cast any light?"

Well, I found "Fat Jack of the Bonehouse" in Partridge's 'Dictionary of Slang.' It dates from 1850, and merely means a very fat man, but no source is given. I cannot trace "Bye-Bye Bluebell" which was a phrase continually tootled by Tired Tim, and wuffed by Weary Willy. Anybody any wiser?

Incidentally, I have often wondered whether Frank Richards or Billy Bunter was at fault when the latter described himself as 'Kindest friend, and noblest foe.' Tennyson's 'Princess' seem odd reading for Billy, and it is not a likely subject for Eng. Lit. in the Remove. The correct rendering is:

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Called him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe:
Yet she neither spoke or moved.

* * * * *

UNTRUE! by W. O. G. LOFTS

I read Gerry Allison's little piece with great amusement last month; and his claim to be able to tell a genuine Hamilton story in ten words. If Gerry can indeed do this he must be a very clever fellow. In answer I should like to quote a short extract from a 'Magnet' assumed by leading Hamiltoniana writers to be a genuine Charles Hamilton story.

'Magnet' No. 841, March 22nd, 1924. 'Fishy's Treasure' - Start of Chapter 2.

'Git!' Thus Fisher Tarlton Fish a few days later in study No. 14 at the end of the Remove passage.

Is there any great difference between this phrasing and the Rockwood yarn piece which he quoted last month? I could say quite a lot about the Rockwood yarns and authors - but this is not the time to do so - certainly there is no proof at the moment that 'Lovell's Luck' was written by anyone else than Charles Hamilton. Editorial subbing can do plenty to alter a story!