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2^D



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RICHARDS'
CHRISTMAS**

By Martin Clifford

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THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

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* * * *

THIS MONTH'S COVER

For our cover picture in this Christmas issue, we bring you a reproduction of the old "Green 'Un" - the year 1917. The artist was Robert Strange.

The story
"Frank Richards'
Christmas" was one

of the Cedar Creek series - a story reprinted in the 1924 Holiday Annual under the title "How Father Christmas Came to White Pine."

The Rookwood story in this issue was "Jimmy Silver's Guest", the said guest being Lattrey, who repaid Jimmy's kindness by leading Algy, Jimmy's cousin from High Coombe, along the murky road to ruin.

The serial was "Boys of the Bombay Castle" by Duncan Storm, and a novel feature of the issue was two complete stories of, respectively, Cecil Pankley & Co. of Bagshot and Rupert De Courcy of Highcliffe. Both, possibly, by the same substitute writer, the first-named is the only story we can recall ever to have been written exclusively of the Bagshot chums.

FRANK RICHARDS' CHRISTMAS! This cover touches a chord in our hearts, for if ever a man deserved a wonderful Christmas, Frank Richards does.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST wishes **FRANK RICHARDS**, who has brought us so much real happiness over so many years, the grandest Christmas of all time - and many, many more to come.



HAMILTONIANA



FAMOUS SERIES - No. 2

Above we reproduce the title picture of the first Christmas story of the Lamb series, the Magnet's last Christmas, 1939.

The chums spent their Yuletide at Wharton Lodge, but poor Mr. Quelch was in durance vile, a captive of the criminal, Slim Jim.

The longest series the Magnet ever presented, and one with many splendidly-written sequences.

Christmas doesn't seem like Christmas without a visit to Wharton Lodge. Frank Richards hasn't sent the famous chums there this year. So we have looked out a Wharton Lodge story from the Greyfriars Cup Contest - and we hope you will enjoy it as "Paddy, The next best Thing."

MINUS BUNTER-ALMOST!

Billy Bunter opened the door of Study No. 1 on the Remove passage at Greyfriars, and looked in. That celebrated apartment presented a festive appearance, and was warm and inviting. A bright fire was burning in the grate, and the bunches of holly which decorated the walls indicated that Christmas was near.

The Famous Five were at tea, and they all looked up at Bunter as his fat face came round the door, his large glasses reflecting the electric light.

"Buzz!" said Bob Cherry.

"Scud!" added Johnny Bull.

Bunter neither buzzed nor scudded. He came into the study, closing the door behind him. He looked lugubrious and forlorn, and Harry Wharton eyed him curiously.

"How the heck did that fat freak know that we have toast for tea?" asked Bob reflectively. "He must have a nose like Sexton Blake's dog, Punchinello."

"Pedro," corrected Frank Nugent, grinning.

"Whatever the fike's name is, Bunter's got a proboscis like it. But it's Christmas time, so sit down, Fatty," said Bob, good-naturedly. "We'll make it a thanksgiving feast, you men."

"Giving thanks for what?" demanded Bunter.

"We break up tomorrow, so we shan't be seeing you again for nearly a month. It's an occasion for thanksgiving."

"Beast!" Billy Bunter cast a lack-lustre eye over the mountain of buttered toast and the stack of slices of plum cake on the table, but he did not sit down for a moment. He said: "Some fellows think of nothing but grub."

"They do," agreed Bob, "and you're one of those fellows."

"Pull up a chair, and pile in," said Harry, hospitably; "make room for the honoured guest, Johnny."

Bunter sat down at the table, but without the alacrity he usually showed when food was in the picture. He took a thick slice of toast and covered it with jam; then, to the amazement of the juniors, he sat staring morosely at his plate, and made no attempt to eat.

Harry Wharton spoke with some concern. "What's up, Bunter? Don't tell us you're not hungry."

Bunter shook his head dolefully.

"I've lost my appetite, you fellows. I've had awful news, and it's taken away even the small appetite I usually have."

"Ye gods!" murmured Nugent.

The meal was forgotten for the moment. If Bunter had received news so bad that it made him disinclined to eat, something serious must have happened, and the Famous Five were prepared to be sympathetic.

"What's the trouble, old fat man?" enquired Bob.

Bunter blinked and sniffed. He drew a letter from his pocket.

"My mater's ill," he explained. "I knew she hadn't been well for some days. The afternoon mail came in late, while you chaps were on Little Side - and I had this letter from my father. I want you to read it Harry, as you're my best pal."

At any other time Wharton would have renounced his claim to being a pal of Bunter's, but he said nothing now. Silently he took the letter, and his brows knitted as he read it.

Headed "Bunter Villa, Reigate," it ran as follows:

"Dear William,

I regret to tell you that your mother is no better, and it seems that she has a return of her gastric trouble. She will be under medical care for a time, and under these circumstances I have arranged for Bessie and Samuel to spend Christmas with your Uncle Carter at Folkestone. For some reason, your uncle is not prepared to receive you as well, but this house of sickness is no place for you. As you informed me that your friend, Wharton, has requested your company for Christmas, it will be advisable for you to go to his home immediately Greyfriars breaks up for the vacation. No doubt he will be delighted.

Your affectionate father,

W. S. BUNTER."

Harry Wharton was frowning, and he spoke restlessly: "Look here, Bunter ----" "Let the other fellows read it. I want them to," said Bunter.

The other fellows read Mr. Bunter's letter in turn. Frank Nugent whistled, Bob Cherry grinned faintly, and Johnny Bull snorted. Hurree Singh murmured, "The sorrowfulness is terrific."

"So I came to break the news to you," said Bunter, pathetically.

Harry Wharton stared at him fixedly.

"You fat freak, I'm sorry your mother's ill, but I never asked you to my home for Christmas - and you know it."

Bunter shook his head reproachfully.

"I told you that I'd turned down a pressing invitation from D'Arcy of St. Jim's to go to his ancestral home. Maully begged me to go to Mauleverer Towers, but I wouldn't. I'd promised you. I assured you that I would turn up for Christmas at Wharton Lodge ----"

"And I assured you that if you did, a dead porpoise would be found on the doorstep," snapped Wharton.

Bunter sat in silence for a few seconds, and the juniors were startled to see a tear roll down a fat cheek. Bob Cherry shifted uneasily on his chair.

"Don't blub, old fat man," he said. "Things are never so bad as they seem. Your mater will soon be better ----"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips - he felt that he was placed in an invidious position. But the fattest fellow at Greyfriars had another surprise to spring.

"I rang my father up this afternoon - Quelch let me use his phone," said Bunter, rubbing a grubby hand across his face. "I told my father that when the mater is ill, my place is at home. Maybe I can cheer her up a bit, and do a few things to help about the house. Of course, we keep an army of servants, but still ----" He broke off, and as nobody made any rejoinder, he went on: "So I shall have to disappoint you, Harry, old chap. I can't go home with you for Christmas after all. My father came round to my point of view, but I should have gone home in any case."

"OH!" murmured Harry Wharton, blankly.

Hurree Singh reached out a dusky hand, and patted Bunter on the shoulder. He said, softly: "The sentiments of the esteemed Bunter are praiseworthy, and, as the English proverb says 'A kindful heart is of more value than an unkindful coronet.'"

Bunter looked woefully at the untouched slice of toast on his plate. He blew his nose violently, and another tear rolled down his cheek.

"You fellows won't believe it, but I've been a bit selfish at times," he mumbled, while the Famous Five gazed at him in wonder. "But now the mater's ill, it's different. I'm her son, after all, ain't I? My place is near her when she's ill, ain't it?"

"It is, old man," said Harry Wharton, heartily. "You're doing the right thing, of

course."

"The doctors work wonders these days," put in Nugent.

The Co viewed Bunter with a respect they had never felt for him before.. It was a change to see him thinking of anyone but William George Bunter.

"I know how disappointed you feel," said Bunter.

"Um!"

"But you understand, don't you?"

"Of course," Harry Wharton rose manfully to the occasion. "Maybe, some time in the future, when your mother is better-----"

Bunter shook his head.

"I can't think of anything like that just now, Wharton. I must be getting along. I'm not hungry, and so long as you don't think I'm letting you down-----"

"Not at all," gasped Harry.

"That's all right then," Bunter rose to his feet. "I'll just take this slice of jam and toast with me, but I'm going to bed now. Quelch has given me permission to go home early in the morning-----"

"Good for you, old bladder of lard," said Bob.

"Perhaps I'll take a chunk of cake, too --- but I've really got no appetite."

Bunter seized the slice of toast in one fat paw, and a large piece of cake in the other. Hurree Singh opened the door, and the Owl of the Remove left the study. After the door had closed behind him, the Famous Five stared at one another in something like awe.

"Did you ever?" breathed Frank Nugent.

"Hardly ever," agreed Bob. "My friends, somewhere beneath his tons of fat that benighted bloater has a streak of decency. It seems too good to be true."

"It probably is," grunted Johnny Bull.

* * * * *

It was evening, three days later. Dinner was over, and the Famous Five were decorating a Christmas Tree in the lounge at Wharton Lodge, when Wells came to them with his stately tread. There was a glimmer in his eyes.

"Master Harry, there is a visitor for you. A stout young gentleman by the name of Bunter ----"

"Bunter!" Five voices spoke the name in unison.

"I say, you fellows."

Billy Bunter rolled in. He was beaming. He put down the small suitcase he was carrying, and peeled off his overcoat.

"I found I was able to spend Christmas with you after all," he announced, breezily. He turned to the butler. "I am ready for a meal, Wells, after my cold journey. Nothing much - just a cold chicken, a pound of ham, some pickles, some pate de foie gras, and a dozen mince pies - plus coffee. I'll have something more substantial later."

"I will give instructions for a meal to be prepared for you, sir," gasped Wells. He swam away, the glimmer more pronounced in his eyes.

"In the midst of all the festivities at Bunter Court I remembered your pressing invitation to me," pursued Bunter. "My parents were very disappointed, especially as we have a host of visiting nobility, as well as two of the princes, at my home. But I felt that I couldn't disappoint my old pals. So here I am."

Wharton was gazing at him like a fellow in a dream. He said, helplessly: "But what about your mother?"

"The mater's better now, thank you, Harry - so I feel justified in spending Christmas under your humble roof." Bunter waved a pogy hand in the air. "I recalled your last words to me. You said 'As soon as your mater's better, you must come to me at Wharton Lodge.' I hope I'm not the fellow to forget such an appeal from my best pal. Your crusty old Uncle is just paying my taxi fare from Winford station - in my haste, I left my note-case on the two-hundred-guinea television console at Bunter Court. I :

came away just as I stood, but you men can lend me some clothes. I've seen the old frump ---"

"What!"

"I mean, I've seen your dear old Aunt Amy. She wept a little when she saw me. She said to me 'Thank goodness you've come, my dear Bunter. Harry will have a happy Christmas after all. God bless you, boy!'"

Bob Cherry threw himself into an armchair, and kicked his heels. He burst into a roar of laughter.

Wharton's frown relaxed. He grinned, the grin became a laugh, and in a moment he was echoing Bob's roar of merriment. Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurrée Singh joined in, and the old rafters of Wharton Lodge rang with boyish mirth.

"Look here, you fellows, I don't see anything to neigh about."

Billy Bunter snorted with indignation.

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes.

"That fat bluebottle will be the death of me," he gurgled. He dissolved into a fresh paroxysm of laughter. He was still laughing when Wells came to announce that Bunter's meal was ready in the dining room.

And, whether because of or in spite of Billy Bunter, it was a very joyous Yuletide at Wharton Lodge.

* * * * *

OUR CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

We invite you to print the letters of the words W H A R T O N L O D G E on a postcard. Then, using each as the initial letter for an adjective, write down the twelve adjectives which you consider most suitable to describe Harry Wharton's home. For examples, you might give WELL-BUILT for your W; HOMELY for your H; ARTISTIC for your A; and so on, using every letter in "Wharton Lodge."

Mr. Frank Richards's himself has sent us the 12 adjectives which he considers the most appropriate, and Mr. Richards' list is locked in the Editorial desk. The reader who sends in the greatest number of adjectives as used by Mr. Richards, will be adjudged the winner.

FIRST PRIZE: The newly-published Guinea edition of "Board and Table Games" by R. C. Bell.

SECOND PRIZE: A splendid high-gloss photograph, 9" x 6½", suitable for framing, of the picture on the cover of this Christmas number. A lovely souvenir you will value.

The Editor reserves the right, in the event of a tie, to amend the prize-list or add to same. You may send in as many entries as you wish, but no alternatives are permitted in any single entry. One clue to help you: Mr. Richards has used a hyphenated word for his "W" and for his "T". Please, postcards only, and don't forget to write your name and address on same. Only one attempt should be made on each postcard, but entrants who make more than one attempt can enclose all the cards in one envelope. CLOSING DATE: December 18th.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER UNIQUEBy W. O. G. Lofts

Greyfriars fans who are fortunate enough to possess large collections will no doubt be turning once again to the Xmas Numbers to read during the festive season. Early ones were "Billy Bunter's Christmas Dream" (1909) and "Bunter's Bust-up" (1910). A little later we had "The House on the Heath" (1916); and all these stories are proved to have been written by Mr. Charles Hamilton.

"The Greyfriars Christmas Party" (1918) was written by John Nix Pentelow, the war-time editor, while a story with a Christmas setting, "The Mystery of Wharton Lodge," written much later in early 1928, is regarded by some collectors as a non-Hamilton tale, and the actual authorship is awaiting confirmation by myself from official quarters.

These are just a few of the Xmas stories which we have enjoyed reading in the past, but I wonder how many readers will turn to the issue for Xmas 1920, No. 672, entitled "Harry Wharton's Trust." The editor described this as a 20,000 word Xmas school story, and I cannot recall the tale ever being mentioned before in any collecting magazine.

In the 1949 C.D. Annual, that expert on the works of Charles Hamilton, John Shaw, included Magnet No. 672 in his list of substitute stories, but I fear that John was wrong in stating that this story was not by Mr. Hamilton. Events have proved that it was penned by the real Frank Richards.

Even the most reliable Roger Jenkins, in his article in the 1955 Annual, entitled "Those Blue and White Magnets," did not think it worth mentioning this story. He may have been misled by John Shaw's list, or he may not have had a copy of the story available for reference. In any case, Roger did not claim to review every story that was published.

A former chief editor of the Magnet, on the staff in 1920, told me he could remember this number quite well. He read the proofs of "Harry Wharton's Trust," and it was certainly a Hamilton tale. Memories can be faulty of events of 40 years ago, but I have since received official confirmation from Fleetway Publications.

The reader may wonder how an expert like John Shaw could be misled in this case, but several reasons are possible. First, it was rather a run-of-the-mill tale. Secondly, and I think the most likely reason, is that John was misled by a Greyfriars story in the Popular of that week. This was "Christmas at Bunter Court" (No. 101, new series), written by G. R. Samways - but the editor added the following

paragraph at the end of this story: "So the juniors left for Wharton Lodge, never dreaming of the adventure that was to befall them ere they saw Harry Wharton's home."

This piece was added obviously to give the impression that this story and that of the Magnet were by the same writer.

The opening chapter of "Harry Wharton's Trust" shows the Famous Five and Bunter in a railway carriage on their way to Wharton Lodge, presumed (though not mentioned) to have come from Bunter Court. The train is wrecked, though the juniors are not hurt, except for the normal lamentations of Bunter, which prove to be false. An injured man gives Wharton some valuable papers to deliver to Mr. G. F. Kerr of Edinburgh. A rogue in the plot makes several attempts to steal the papers. After a series of adventures, Harry Wharton, accompanied by Bob Cherry (the rest of the Co. had gone to Wharton Lodge) safely delivers the papers to Mr. Kerr, who turns out to be the father of Kerr of the St. Jim's Fourth. Figgins and Fatty Wynn are also introduced into this tale, which takes the reader through Carlisle and the north of England to Edinburgh, where several famous landmarks are mentioned. A theme of which Charles Hamilton was fond - to educate as well as entertain, his readers.

Another interesting point at the end of the story is the mention that Wharton, on his way back, has to pick up Jack Drake and Dick Rodney of the Benbow. The next genuine Greyfriars story to appear in the Magnet was No. 682 "Thin Bunter," in which Drake and Rodney played substantial parts. They had spent Xmas at Wharton Lodge, and later arrived at Greyfriars in stories written by Mr. Hamilton in the separate "Greyfriars Herald," though readers of the Magnet who did not read the Greyfriars Herald must have wondered how they arrived at Greyfriars.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: "The Mystery of Wharton Lodge," to which reference is made in this interesting article, is the story of Ralph, the gipsy, mentioned in this month's "Let's be Controversial.")

We, ourselves, are surprised to learn that any reader has ever doubted that this was written by Charles Hamilton. We, also, have always recognized "Harry Wharton's Trust" as a genuine story, though, as Mr. Lofts points out, it was just a little pot-boiler. It was a period of pot-boilers for Greyfriars and St. Jim's. For the time being, the stream of Mr. Hamilton's best work was turned away from the Magnet and the Gem.)

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. 45. CHRISTMAS AT WHARTON LODGE

Frank Richards must love Christmas - Christmas of the real old-fashioned kind, with snow thick over the meadows, holly and mistletoe and paper garlands in profusion indoors, plum puddings and mince pies in the dining room, a blazing log fire in the grate of the ancestral hall, warmth and kindness in the family circle, and, in the heart, thought for the poor and lonely at the season of good-will - an ever-present remembrance of the deeper meaning of Christmas. Only a man who loves Christmas could write about it as Frank Richards has written of it.

While we glow when we recall those wonderful Christmases at Cavendale Abbey, Mauleverer Towers and Reynham Castle, I think that most Magnet readers loved Christmas to be enjoyed at Wharton Lodge. There was something about Wharton Lodge at Christmas time - something festive and real and delightful.

The first really traditional Christmas at the Lodge - and the first of the Magnet's really great Christmases - came in 1927, following Bunter's "Christmas Carol" adventure. Bunter befriended Ralph, the gipsy, in a grand story, and the holiday party was still at the Lodge for the opening sequences of the Eric Gilmore series. Wells had not then been introduced. The butler was Wadham.

Two years later, Christmas 1929 was spent at Wharton Lodge, in the middle of the Courtfield Cracksman series. The incomparable Wells now took his place in the hall of fame. Christmas 1929 fully established Wharton Lodge as a place for a wonderful Christmas, and the atmosphere of the snowy season was brilliantly presented. Who can forget that delicious moment when Bunter yawns loudly during the progress of the eerie ghost story which Colonel Wharton is relating in the flickering light from the fire?

Now a gap of three years brings us to Christmas 1932. Wharton has just ceased being a rebel, and Mr. Quelch has graciously accepted an invitation to pass a few days of his vacation at the Lodge, thereby providing the necessary setting for the start of the Jim Valentine series.

Next year, 1933, another merry Yuletide at the Lodge, with

Bunter, no longer a welcome visitor, hiding in the attic. A brilliant series with superb atmosphere and characterisation.

The Magnet presented two more Christmases at Wharton Lodge - 1938, when a peculiar cigarette case provided an element of mystery, and 1939 with the sinister Mr. Lamb hovering in the snowy background.

Those, then, are the Wharton Lodge Christmases, and it is more than likely that many of us look them out each year to enjoy again at Christmastide. They can be read again and again, always fresh and full of joyousness.

Once or twice, since the war, Frank Richards has given us a Christmas at Wharton Lodge, the most memorable being the 1959 story "Bunter Comes for Christmas." This year, sad to state, he has not given us a Christmas story. Maybe we shall be luckier next year.

For me, at least, there is no Christmas like a Wharton Lodge Christmas.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 43. FULL CIRCLE

HARRY BROSTER. I agree with you that Rookwood is the most suitable of all the schools for presentation in Knockout. I have always liked the Rookwood yarns, because I reckon Jimmy Silver is the best drawn schoolboy leader. He has all the qualities possessed by Tom Merry, Wharton, Courtney, etc., and, besides, has a well-developed shrewdness and sense of observation. Knockout seems an excellent comic, as, apart from Rookwood, there are items reminding us of the old-time comics. I agree that there is not much difference between Knockout of 1960 and a comic of 1913. My only complaint is that the Rookwood stories are too short. Will they catch on? With us, who love the yarns we read many years ago - yes. With the present youthful public - I have my doubts.

ANDREW LANGMAN. You comment that sprinkling clots and twerps through a Rookwood story is gliding the lily with cheap gilt. How true! In any case, the expression "twerp" is pretty old-fashioned in 1960, and it never was a very choice term. It lowers the tone of the stories without achieving any purpose.

GEORGE SELLARS. I think Knockout is the best of today's papers. It reminds me of some of the old pre-war papers - Comic Life, Lot-O-Fun, etc. I believe that the Rookwood stories will be a success. I look forward to Wednesdays now for Knockout, as, years ago I looked forward to Wednesdays for the Gem.

TOM PORTER. In "Full Circle" you write: "It depends a good deal on how Rookwood is presented." Very true! The success of the experiment also depends on how we of the Hobby advertise and boost the Knockout. If we buy it ourselves, if we talk about it, if we tell our children about it, if we write to the Editor about it...I could go on, but I think you will perceive what I am getting at. You yourself wrote again and again to another editor years ago - and aren't we glad and grateful for your campaign then. There may be some who will be grateful to us in 1990 for what we do today. We have an

365
opportunity which we should seize. Let's not see these Rookwood reprints fade away like the Goldhawk books.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

Mr. Hinks and work were complete strangers. They had not been associated for many years. Under happier auspices, Bill Hinks might have been a Cabinet Minister or an ornament of the Civil Service, but as a matter of sad fact, he was neither. He was a tramp!

(Sent in by Don Webster, Liverpool)

* * * * *

The cool wind blew on his face as he came into the street. It refreshed him, after the heat and excitement of the casino. He walked down the street, glad to be alone. Where he was going, what he was going to do, he did not know; only he knew that he was not going back to the Vernon-Smith's Villa - he was done with Vernon-Smith.

This was his Christmas, and it was his own fault, and he knew it now. In far-off England Nugent and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh were perhaps thinking of their absent chum, sorry for his absence, sorry for the headstrong temper that had caused it; wondering perhaps, how he was getting on with the Bounder. And this was Harry Wharton's Christmas!

* * * * *

(Have you a favourite GEM OF HAMILTONIANA? If so, jot it down on a postcard and send to the Editor, stating the source of the extract. Book souvenirs are awarded for all items found suitable for publication in this column.)

NEWS ITEMS

"PUNCH" has been making its own Cabinet, various celebrities giving their views of how they will carry on their new responsibilities. Frank Richards, selected as Minister of Education, contributed a delightful article, illustrated by C. H. Chapman, in the issue dated November 9th. Clever and witty, bubbling with humour, it made clear in every effervescent line the fact that scholars, all over the country, will welcome, with open arms, the new Minister of Education in the person of the famous author.

* * * * *

For three weeks, from mid-November, there is a display of Old Boys' Books, organised by the Victoria Palace Bunter show, in one of the windows of Foyle's in Charing Cross Road. The display is greatly enhanced by the addition of some of those wonderful cut-out figures, constructed by our own Robert Mortimer, of the Greyfriars characters. It is attracting many sightseers in these pre-Christmas weeks.

* * * * *

Don't forget that our party visits the Victoria Palace on Saturday afternoon, January 7th, to see "BILLY BUNTER'S SWISS ROLL." Seats can be booked through the Editor of this magazine, and cost 12/6d. Come along and join the fun.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM GREYFRIARSBy Edward DaveyWILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER

"I always like to be kind and generous to people who, through no fault of their own, are not wealthy and aristocratic like me, so long as they are not cheeky; and so I wish you all the best for Christmas."

NOTE. Billy Bunter, the "Fat Owl" of Greyfriars, variously described as a "Bloated Burglar," a "Fat Fraud," a "Podgy Pirate," and at times as a "fat, fooling, funky freak." Often referred to as "Old Fat Man."

WUNG LUNG - The Chinese Removite.

"A velly melly Chlistmas. What you tinkee?"

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH

"May the merriffulness of the absurd and ludicrous Christmas be terrific; and even more terrific the happiffulness of the esteemed and execrable New Year. It is a longful lane which has no honourable and ridiculous turnings; and may those in the New Year be many and gladful."

Also may the glowfulness of the radiant and beauteous Summer Suns over Land and Sea be terrific."

NOTE. The Indian Prince Schoolboy, who learnt his English under the best native tutors in Bhanipur. Nowadays known as "Inky" but formerly "Jampot" and at least once "Hurry Jampot Inky Darkness."

GOSLING - "Gossy," the School Porter; elderly, crabby and workshy.

"Wot I ses is this 'ere, I wishes you a merry Chrimass; but its a dog's life I lead 'ere. Wot you folks see in this blinking school I can't think; nothing but work, work, work from morning to night, with a lot of young rips who orter bin drowned at birth, a plaguing of a man's life out of 'im all the time."

BILL LODGEY'S tip for a prosperous New Year -

Purple Peter for the 2. 30 at Wapshot.

Magnet No. 1486. "The Rascal of the Remove."

NOTE. Bill Lodgey is a beery bookmaker with headquarters at the "Three Fishers," a frowy and disreputable

riverside Inn near Greyfriars. Strictly out of bounds, but visited surreptitiously by the "Bad Hats" of the school, who risk disgrace and expulsion for dingy blackguardism, usually by breaking dormitory bounds in the late evening.

JACK JOLLY & CO. of ST. SAM'S would wish you will have a grate time at Xmas, with lots of terkey, plum pooding, and sham pain.

NOTE. St. Sam's is almost as farcical as "Whackol!"
The stories contained many breathtaking puns.

WANTED: "MAGNETS" 398-404, 406-410, 412, 413, 415, 416, 418-420, 422, 423, 428, 429, 433, 435, 441, 447, 453, 455, 461, 470, 482, 485, 491-494, 496-498, 501-505, 532-534, 536, 537, 539-541, 543, 551, 558-561, 563, 568-570, 578, 582, 586, 589, 590, 600, 617, 619, 682, 705, 708, 709, 723, 737, 739, 748, 760, 761, 763, 779, 808, 899, 960-963, 1011, 1013, 1027-29, 1035, 1112, 1130, 1139. "LEES" 384, 389, 379, 457, 459, 545, 551, "MONSTERS" 1, 2, 3, 5, 6. S.O.Ls. 149, 169, 170, 198, 206, 224, 226, 228, 230, 234, 258, 268, 272, 317.
FOR EXCHANGE: "MAGNETS" 424, 566, 594, 595, 603, 607, 635, 639, 658, 711, 713, 778, 780, 791, 939, 955. Would swap Feud Series 247-254 for good offer from above wants. THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST, 14.

MODERN BOY wanted: 2 - 4, 115, 118, 145, 147, 148, 150, 152 - 157, 159 - 164, 166 - 181, 183 - 192, 194 - 198, 200, 202, 203, 207, 208, 212 - 237, 239 - 244, 337.
DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROADFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.I.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries. 1st series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Union Jacks Nos. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 820, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.
MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22

WANTED: S.O.Ls 42, 65, 66, 162, 257, 258, 259. Your price plus postage paid. The advertiser has some S.O.Ls, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only.
BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

WANTED: Gems, Magnets, Populars, in binding condition. Keenest prices to YORKE ROBINSON, CLIFF PAVILION, HERNE BAY.

WANTED: Magnets, S.O.Ls, of Greyfriars, Rookwood, Grimsdale, St. Frank's. For Sale 2 vols. of the English Illustrated Magazine 1898, Green Room Book 1906. 2/- each plus postage extra. 65 BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

COLLECTION of 883 Magnets for sale. Years 1906 (14 only), 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1939, 1940. Condition excellent (apart from about 50 which could be described as "good") Complete lists on application. Will NOT sell separately. Price 1400 dollars. BEASLEY, 1244, ESQUIMAULT STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA.

WANTED TO BUY: Bound volumes pre-1936 re-print CERS. State price. Write Air Mail. CHARLES VAN RENEN, BOX 50, UITENHAGE, SOUTH AFRICA.

BLAKIANA

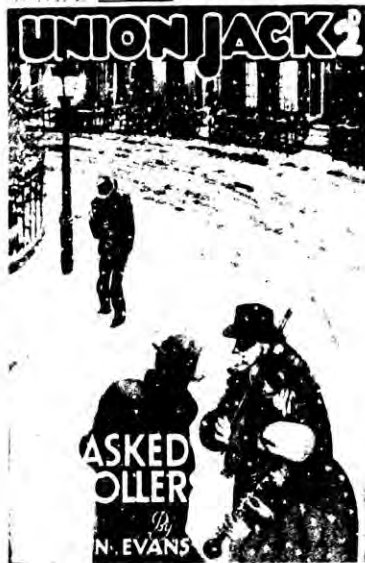
Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.

SEXTON
BLAKE

is a small, unobtrusive, English

Enlarged Christmas Number



THE

MASKED CAROLLERS

This seasonable story, with illustrations by Eric Parker, is written by Gwyn Evans at his best. In it, in company with Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro, we find our old friends Splash Page and Julius Jones playing a prominent part. Mrs. Bardell too, is well to the fore with plenty of her delightful 'babblings'. Indeed, the spotlight can be said to be well and truly on dear old Martha Bardell! Incidentally, in this issue Mrs. Bardell is featured as No. 4 of the U.J. Portrait Gallery - excellently drawn by Eric Parker.

I regret I haven't the space at my disposal to describe the plot of the story, but those of you, who, like myself, enjoyed Gwyn Evan's work in the U.J. and S.B.L. are missing some-

thing if you haven't read The Masked Carollers.

I take this opportunity to thank those of you who have supplied me with material for Blakiana throughout the past year, and also to wish all my readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE'S CHRISTMAS CASE

By Eric Payne

In October Blakiana, Keith Chapman suggested that, with the introduction of the "new look," the Sexton Blake Library shed its juvenile affiliations and became an adult paper. There is truth in Keith's contention, though, in my view, the S.B.L. was never a children's publication. In the old days, it could possibly have been described as a boys' periodical; but, I should have thought, boys over 14 years of age.

I admit that my knowledge of the S.B.L. is superficial, but I have read many Blake stories in the past which could hardly fail to entertain an adult who liked a good detective story. The Pierre Quiroule stories had clever plots, and were well-written. In my view they would have been over the heads of youngsters under 14.

The change, as I see it, is that some stories are less of crime detection today, and more of general adventure and intrigue. The sex, perhaps, is more highly spiced, but that is merely the trend of the time in which we live.

I have just received a most welcome gift from New Zealand reader Geoff Hockley - a generous gift of the Union Jack Christmas Double Number for the year 1909. This remarkable issue, priced at 2d. consists of 60 pages, and contains an 80,000-word Blake story. The length of the story - twice the length of the average modern S.B.L. novel - is something at which to wonder, when any publisher today looks askance at a story of more than 50,000 words from any but a well-established and popular author.

That 1909 Blake story is entitled "Sexton Blake's Christmas Case," though I have no idea who wrote it. Possibly Blakiana can enlighten me.* I have read it - and, to my surprise, greatly enjoyed it. It is a wordy story, shamelessly padded, but the padding chiefly concerns Christmas, and does not bore. But what class of readers read the Union Jack at that time? I find this an insoluble puzzle. The story is a romance, pure and simple. Sentiment is heavy and lush. ▲

story of marriage and inter-marriage. Really exciting action is negligible. Melodrama unashamed.

Certainly no child ever read it, and I can't imagine any school-boy, of any age, reading it beyond the first page. Like the Lyceum dramas of years ago, I think that young women or matrons would have adored it for its love story, its pathos, its heroes and its villains.

But who did read the Union Jack in those days? I can find no answer to the question.*

*Sexton Blake's Christmas Case" U.J. No. 321 dated 4.12.1909, was written by 'Maxwell Scott' one of the most popular and prolific writers of that time. J.P.

+Some years before the last war I asked my father (who had been an avid reader of the U.J. from the days of his childhood) this very question. He told me adolescents of both sexes of that time "lapped up" this sort of story. Len P.

* * * * *

THE WIND OF CHANGE

(Part Two)

By Margaret Cooke

Although many Scotland Yard men have played their part in the Blake Saga, only Detective Inspector Coutts has survived the change from old to new-look S.B.Ls with all his respect and loyalty to Blake intact. Blake's relations with Scotland Yard were somewhat strained in the early days of the new-look owing to the appointment of a Commissioner who despised private detectives. For a while Coutts found himself in the unhappy position of having to refuse information and help to one who had always been most generous in aiding him. Those days soon passed, however, and Blake now works in perfect harmony with Coutts, and with Superintendent Arthur Grimwald, a stern disciplinarian and a very fine type of policeman. He is, in every sense of the word, a credit to the Force. Shrewd, efficient, austere, relentless in pursuit of criminals but essentially a humane person with many of the attributes of the old Blake, Arthur Grimwald neither seeks nor needs Blake's help in solving his cases. On the contrary, he has been known to resent Blake's "interference" in a case when his services have been retained by one of the interested parties concerned; and to forbid Blake to continue an investigation if he considers that the latter's unorthodox methods will place him in extreme danger. He believes that the organised forces of Law and Order can do the work better than the best private detectives and does not mind saying so to Blake. Despite his stern manner, however, he takes a fatherly interest in Sexton

Blake Investigations Ltd., and has a deep affection for all its members. He was grieved and troubled when circumstances forced him to arrest Tinker and Marion; worried enough to jeopardise his position at the Yard by setting them free to help Blake to prove them innocent of murder. In the main Blake and Grimwald work well in double harness, each respecting the other's intelligence, integrity and devotion to the cause of Justice.

While it is true to say that the modern authors have failed to create a great criminal they have created several great characters, of whom Arthur Grimwald is one and Eustace Craille another. This old, withered, chain-smoking Head of British Intelligence Services, who keeps the secrets of his own and other countries locked in his own prodigious memory rather than in the dusty documents which litter his office, is probably the most generally admired of all the new-look characters. Like Kirby he has an eye for feminine beauty and has a succession of lovely secretaries, none of whom is allowed to stay long enough to learn his real business. Craille has a finger in every international pie and agents in every quarter of the globe. He knows that in asking agents to work for him he is signing their death warrants, yet his personality is so strong, his grasp of any situation so sure, his organisation so wide-spread, and his agents faith in him so complete that they never refuse to take the risks involved. He employs Blake and Tinker wherever and whenever the need arises. He introduced Blake to Louise Pringle during war-time when, unknown to herself, Louise was suspected of betraying a group of French resistance workers. Whilst finding the real traitor and proving her innocence Blake gave Louise, now his company Secretary, the most exciting 48 hours of her life.

Craille and Blake have a great respect for each other. Only once has the latter questioned Craille's actions - when he learned that after borrowing Paula Dane for secretarial work Craille had sent her on a dangerous mission involving the Slave Trade. No-one was more relieved than the old man himself when Blake rescued Paula from the Slaver's yacht minutes before it was bombed out of existence when Craille and Tinker smashed the organisation concerned. One of Craille's saddest moments, and he has had many, came when he had to tell Blake that his once ne'er-do-well but now reformed brother Nigel, also a Craille agent, had lost his life in an attempt to save Sexton's own.

Many characters have come, played their appointed roles, and gone again from the pages of the S.B.L., but those of us who are old and tried readers never expected to see the day when two old favourites departed - Mrs. Bardell, Blake's worthy housekeeper and Tinker, the

assistant who was a very part of Blake himself. The realisation of our loss left us stunned. I can't say that it left us speechless because, in common with other readers, I had a great deal to say against the change. Mr. Baker assured me, however, that Tinker was not lost - merely resting for a while. Blake seemed a pale, weak travesty of himself without these two great friends by his side. Tinker, we were told, now had his own flat, lived his own life and had complete charge of all Blake's cases in the north of England; yet when, after six months absence, he did return, he seemed so out of touch with Blake and his affairs that we hardly recognized our former favourite. During the last two years, however, the authors have made a fine character of our Tinker and I hope to do justice to their work in another article about Edward Carter - detective. I feel that the present Tinker fulfills all the promise of his early youth, has become one of the great characters of the new-look age and can become greater still, given time and opportunity. Mrs. Bardell, whose weird and wonderful use of her native tongue gave me many hours of pleasure, was absent from the pages of the S.B.L. for a very long time. Blake lived alone in a service flat in Baker Street, a luxurious pent-house apartment which, despite its grandeur, seemed a poor substitute for the 'home' which Mrs. Bardell made for him and for Tinker in the old Baker Street house.

In the old days this respectable, buxom and garrulous widow used to inform Blake that clients had come to 'insult' him; indeed, on one occasion she announced that "a perished man had come to insult" him. Today clients are ushered into his private office in Berkeley Square by Blake's lovely young receptionist, Marion Lang. Marion is an integral part of Blake's organisation - Mrs. Bardell always remembered that she was a servant, that between herself and her keen-eyed, reserved master existed a wide social gulf which could not be crossed and was not crossed until the day she disappeared from view in 1956.

Then in July, 1957 Sexton Blake heard a voice in Berkeley Square which did not resemble that of any nightingale, and, throwing all reserve to the wind, raced downstairs two steps at a time to welcome Mrs. Bardell back into his circle of associates as beloved friend and esteemed helper. Mrs. Bardell, freed from the burden of caring for an aged sister, was equally pleased to resume "the most congenial occupation" she had ever had - as daily help this time, not resident housekeeper. And as such she has remained, reliable, capable, humorous, understanding, loving and loved by them all; her presence in his flat restoring that sense of a settled background which the old Blake possessed and the new Blake lacked. This is a younger Mrs. Bardell, human enough to read

Blake's paper over his shoulder while she serves his breakfast, to be an ardent admirer of a popular singer, and ready at all times to join in the frequent celebrations held at Blake's flat. In addition to 'doing for' Blake and Tinker she has taken threatened witnesses into the safety of her own home, and has acted as assistant to Blake by trailing a woman suspect with all the skill and success of a professional detective. A woman of many parts this Mrs. Bardell, loyal and discreet about Blake's affairs yet taking a friendly interest in all those whom she meets. In fact, friendliness and goodwill to all people is the motto of the new Blake organisation. The outstanding quality of the new-look S.B.L. is the strong bond of affection which exists between the members of the Firm, and which their friends and associates outside the organisation feel for them too. What finer quality can man give to man than goodwill?

To lovers of Blake tales all over the world I send sincere greetings and wish them 'Good Reading'. To the Editor, Mr. W. Howard Baker, and the authors whose works have given me so much pleasure during this year, to Jack Trevor Story whose faith in my ability to write encourages me to do so, to the "two of us" who have become "two of them" - Martin Thomas and Rex Dolphin - whose works (on which much of this article is based) are such a happy blend of the old and new styles; to the Editorial staff, artists, printers and all those connected with the S.B.L. I wish long life, success and happiness in all they do.

To every reader of the C.D. I wish peace and prosperity, and wish that He who is the eternal sun shining in earth's darkness may illumine their heart and home through all the years.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE

(Reprinted from JOHN O'LONDON'S, dated 27th October, 1960
and kindly sent to me by Mr. J. L. Jukes)

What memories were evoked for me by Alexander Gibson's letter (October 6th issue)! I saw a dramatised version of one of Sexton Blake's exploits at the old Princesses Theatre in Glasgow, more than 50 years ago.

On that never-to-be-forgotten evening the theatre was packed to capacity. We waited breathless for the curtain to rise. Then the glory of it all, there was Sexton Blake in the flesh, with "Tinker" his page-boy and real magnificent bloodhound, "Pedro!"

The crook had a thin time of it, poor man, he hadn't a chance

right from the beginning, his doom was sealed.

His entry was invariably greeted with jeers, boos and hisses. We were all one big family that night, audience and actors alike, the footlight barrier just didn't exist. When our hero appeared, his every move was watched with rapture, but the real high-spot of the evening was the great chase. The crook, on the run, made off through an open window on the stage. Then Sexton Blake, hot on the scent, entered the room accompanied by Pedro. Shouts of "He's out through the window" didn't disturb the equanimity of the great detective, or deflect him from his careful examination of the room. Then Pedro got the scent and with a great bay he leapt through the open window followed by his master. Pandemonium broke loose in that theatre which I can still hear after all these years. We stood up and shouted ourselves hoarse. The sales of the UNION JACK LIBRARY must have gone up by leaps and bounds after that classic performance. Surely no screen drama could ever give the thrill we experienced on that memorable occasion.

W. L. CAMPBELL (Mr.)

ODDS AND ENDS

by Gerry Allison

THOSE CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBERS! I have just been looking at my collection of Comics, and wondering what pleasure a boy of ten today can have to compare with the joy we got in times past from those wonderful Xmas Double numbers. What happy memories they evoke.

We children always received our 'Saturday Pennies' on Friday evening - after Father had finished his tea. "Come on, Gerry, let's fetch our comics!" So spake my brother Arthur, aged 9, on Friday evening December 17th, 1915.

It was a cold night, and we each took a 'winter-warmer' to hug to our chests in gloved hands. Mine was a clay stove, which burnt touch wood, whilst Arthur had a perforated tin, full of smouldering cotton waste. To bring this into flame, the tin was whirled around on a string. Both were real heat givers, and stank deliciously!

We soon arrived at Mrs. Heald's paper shop, the side window of which was full of comics, all folded to display the snowy titles. We stamped our feet and hugged our warmers, whilst our eyes roamed from Double Number to Double Number. "Comic Life," "Chips," "Puck," "Comic Cuts," "Rainbow," "Lot-o-Fun," etc., etc. Oh, blissful sight!

I bought "Lot-o-Fun" and my brother "Illustrated Chips," and home we ran, soon to be gloating over the delightful adventures of Dreamy Daniel, Patriotic Paul, Weary Willy and Tired Tim and The Casey Court Nibs. The last named were usually on the snowy rooftops, their pet goat disguised as a reindeer. All the pictures were thick with snow and happened at night, so that the black sky, heavily studded with falling snowflakes enhanced the frozen scene. What a joyful foretaste of Christmas these comics were. And, of course, we both swapped our copies for two different ones, and so got double value for our money!

BACK IN CIRCULATION SOON. Just to let you know that I am home again, and getting on well. I have received over sixty letters, and will reply to them all. And I mean to attend our Christmas Party at Hyde Park Road on December 10th. A Merry Christmas to Everybody!



NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

As this is once again the festive season of good cheer, may I sincerely thank all the readers of this Column for their interest and support in the past year, and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Charles Churchill, in the last of his present series of memorable "singles," writes from a West Country desolated by floods even worse than those which rocked St. Frank's many years ago. How he must have wished for Handy's famous ARK! Charles recalls a very seasonable episode in the life of the old school.

FIVE-STARRED SINGLES OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

No. 6. "THE SCHOOLBOY SANTA CLAUS."

I would like here, to remind Lee fans of a Christmas story for which I have always had a soft spot, as it was most unusual for a school story, having a strong human interest as well as being seasonable. It was the first Christmas story after the advent of the Moor View Girls, numbered 446, entitled "The Schoolboy Santa Claus" - Xmas 1923.

The story opened with drama. Handy had received permission from

his father to invite a dozen friends home for Christmas. On the last day of term, within an hour of departure by train, Handy had insisted on a short stroll over the snowy countryside, accompanied by his faithful "Co." To his chums' amusement this led in the direction of Moor View School for young ladies. Handy hoped to catch a glimpse of the fair Irene Manners, and to brace himself up to the task of inviting her to his party on Boxing Night.

Reaching the edge of the Moor, which was on a lower level to the road, Handy, with his usual recklessness, stepped to the edge of the road, slipped on the treacherous snow and plunged over. To the horror of his chums, he rolled over and over down the sloping cliffs and finally disappeared in a deep snowdrift at the bottom. Church and McClure rushed down where the slope was not so steep and feverishly dug, but no Handy was to be found. McClure then decided to go for help and luckily found Nipper and Co., Pitt and some others in the lane. They all rushed to the spot, but were startled by a shout from the cliffs top. There was Handy, apparently unhurt and indignant that they would lose their train!

Actually he was bruised and shaken. Unseen by his chums he had rolled clear of the snowdrift and had managed to reach the cliff top by another route. He started for St. Frank's hoping he would not meet Irene in this state, but naturally he did! She came tripping along, looking most attractive, and became full of sympathy on hearing of the accident. When saying goodbye, she casually mentioned that she and her two chums were staying at school for Christmas her parents being abroad. Later Handy and his guests repaired to the station, where he received a telegram saying the party was off owing to a fire which had broken out at his home. As it was getting late they returned to St. Frank's where Dr. Stafford offered the hospitality of his house over Christmas if they cared to stay. After some discussion, they decided to stay until after Boxing Day when they were due to go to Tregellis Castle. The fact that Irene and Co. were stopping at school for Christmas, was, of course, an added inducement.

After supper news came of trouble in Bellton. Snow, which had been falling heavily, had drifted against a row of cottages near Holt's farm and the inhabitants were in danger of being overwhelmed. The juniors immediately set out to the rescue. After some hard work they released the cottagers, who were all employees of Farmer Holt. All appeared terribly poor and sadly lacking in human comforts owing to such low wages being paid by their employer. The juniors were horrified and felt determined to do something to brighten the lives of the cottagers.

When returning up the lane they found another small cottage nearly buried in snow and set to work to clear it. When this was done they realised it was occupied by an old lady - a Mrs. Hewitt, a widow, who eked out her existence by dress making. She appeared confused when the juniors knocked at her door, saying she expected her son who had been away for years, and who had promised to return rich at Christmastime. Seeing she was more or less all right the juniors then returned to St. Frank's, feeling that they had done some good turns.

Next morning, Irene Menners was walking down the lane to the village when she was accosted by two rough characters who attempted to snatch her handbag. At this crucial moment a poorly dressed individual came up and attacking the first two succeeded in putting them to flight. Handy and Co. arrived and Irene explained what had happened. Irene's rescuer introduced himself as John Hewitt - the long awaited son of old Mrs. Hewitt the juniors had helped the night before. Hewitt explained that he had returned at last, not too prosperous. He intended to get a job locally and remain with his mother in future.

That day, true to his word, Hewitt, made a round of the village, seeking work. He had a mixed reception. Some, like Mr. Spence the stationmaster and Dr. Brett, welcomed him, but others like Mr. Sharp the ironmonger, spurned him. Worst of all, he ended up by being arrested by P. C. Sparrow. Farmer Holt, meeting Hewitt in the village, berated him and losing his temper, slashed him with his stick. John, hitting back, was seen by the constable who immediately took him into custody, egged on by Farmer Holt.

The juniors were very concerned when they heard of this, and next morning went to the court and bailed Hewitt out, as he had been remanded in custody. Returning to Bellton with him, they were walking through the village when a superb limousine drew up and a well-dressed gentleman alighted. He proved to be a Mr. Doyle, a rich gentleman, who had recently bought Bellton Chase. He seemed pleased to meet Hewitt, saying he had employed him as valet years before in Australia, and when John mentioned he was looking for work, immediately offered him the same post again. The juniors, and of course, Hewitt, were delighted, especially as Mr. Doyle undertook to see the police court case put right.

That evening there was much excitement in the homes of Farmer Holt's impoverished employees. Decorated cards had been found in each door saying "Look out for Santa Claus tonight." All the children were agog, despite their parents' warnings to take no notice (thinking it was a hoax.) However, just on bedtime, bells were heard and to the

children's delight and their parents' amazement, a great decorated sleigh drove up. Father Christmas was in the driving seat and it was drawn by an assortment of animals. Furthermore, it was loaded to the hilt with parcels of all descriptions. As the grown-ups soon saw, the "animals" were juniors with grotesque headpieces representing animals, and Santa Claus, of course, was Nipper. But the children cared for none of this as Santa proceeded to distribute parcels galore to all and sundry. It was the juniors "good turn" to the poorly paid cottagers and their families. Having unloaded, Santa Claus remounted and with a crack of his whip, the sleigh moved off, leaving the children happy and joyous and the parents full of thankfulness.

The last chapter of this most enjoyable story gave us another denouement, but more dramatic. Mr. Doyle of Bellton Chase, gave a big party on Boxing Night and issued invitations to all the leading characters of the village, the St. Frank's party and the Moor View Girls.

Just when all were sat down to dinner, he smilingly stood aside from the head of the table and a much changed John Hewitt took his place. John was now attired in spotless evening dress and with the air of a master - not a servant. To intense amazement, he stated that he and not Mr. Doyle was the owner of Bellton Chase. He explained how he had become wealthy during his travels and had decided to return to Bellton apparently "broke" to see what reception he would get. He now knew the genuine friends from the false ones. In future he would live at the Chase with his mother. He regretted neglecting her for so long but would now make up for all her hardships and repay her faith in him, for she had always averred he would return one Christmas a wealthy man.

And so the party proceeded. Mr. Doyle, who had acted as John Hewitt's agent, became one of the guests. Afterwards all declared it was one of the jolliest and happiest parties in their memories.

I will now end, as Nipper did in that Christmas story of 37 years ago, by wishing all readers the Compliments of the Season.

FOR SALE: Collectors' Digests 83 - 166 (two missing). Any reasonable offer. Nelson Lee New series 64 copies between 4 and 178. Good condition £3. Gems between 1098 - 1556 (36 copies) Gems between 1572 - 1662 (20 copies) Any reasonable offer.
M. ENGLAND, 2 HIGH STREET, PRESTIGE-UPON-LUGG, RADNORSHIRE.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

These are trying times. Many of us have to do without the things our old folks never heard of.

Sexton Blake Today

INTERESTING CHARACTERS FROM THE MODERN S.B.L.

By Vic Colby

No. 2. Police-Constable Lullinderhawke (nicknamed Lulu)

Six feet three inches of bone, muscle, and brawn, there was nothing in the least effeminate about "Lulu".

However, something had to be done about that cumbersome surname. Alternative contractions of the name, which suggested themselves to fellow members of the Essex County Constabulary had been "Hawk" or "Hawkeye" but after one searching glance at him it was evident that they would be inappropriate. He might look nothing like a "Lulu", but he was even less like an alert, keen-eyed and watchful bird of prey. He resembled a hawk not at all; neither in appearance nor in temperament. He was, in truth, just about as quick-witted and fast-moving as the uniformed effigy of a constable which stands at the entrance of Madame Tussauds. Put the two side by side, and there was more than an even chance that Tussaud's policeman would have been voted the most likely to succeed.

* * * * *

THE LATEST NOVELS IN THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

Reviewed by Walter Webb

CONTRACT FOR A KILLER (No. 163)

DESMOND REID

In view of the Presidential Election, which has focused the eyes of the world on the United States, the setting of this novel is quite appropriate. From New York the action moves to Florida, with Blake playing a lone hand to avenge the murder of one of his closest friends, a fellow-detective, named Bill Mackenzie. His objective is Victor Karsh, a hoodlum and racketeer, the killer, or the guiding hand behind the killing of his friend. Beacon City is being run by Karsh, who has gained his position of power by a campaign of bribery, murder and fear, and is being resisted by only a handful of stout-hearted residents, who have set themselves up in opposition. Until Blake crossed the Atlantic, Victor Karsh had travelled unopposed along the crooked road of criminal prosperity. With Blake on his trail, Karsh begins to lose his bearings, and finished up on a different road altogether. The road to eternity.

Strong meat this, well served in the varied style of Desmond Reid.

Rating _____ Very Good.

THE BIG STEAL (No. 164)

JACK TREVOR STORY

It has been sagely remarked that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. But it was Tom O'Brien's experience that a rare and substantial knowledge of certain things can not only be dangerous, but fatal too. As for instance, in the highly-skilled art of safe-breaking. Had O'Brien's knowledge of human nature been on the same level as his knowledge of safes he would not have gone to prison. As it was, his simple faith and trusting nature made him not only the perfect answer to the conman's prayer, but the despair of his young and pretty wife, Anny, as well.

A novel which tugs gently at the heart-strings, with the warmer side of Blake's nature turned protectively towards the girl, it is yet again demonstrated that in the comedy-drama department Jack Trevor Story has the Blake field entirely to himself. Unhesitatingly recommended.

Rating _____ Excellent.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held October 25th, 1960

Only nine members were present at this meeting. We were hoping to make final arrangements for the proposed Xmas Dinner, but, under the circumstances, this could not be done. It was felt that George Chatham's idea of holding the Dinner at some other venue and on some other date would suit members more than the night first suggested - i.e. the fixed club night, Monday, 19th December. It was decided to put this to the meeting on November 29th.

Jack Corbett's quiz, 12 Greyfriars questions, was a stiff one, so much so that the winner, Tom Porter, got only six correct. There was some doubt about what Jack said was a "catch" question:- "In what story did Mrs. Bunter play a prominent part?" The answer "The Second story," presuming that Billy Bunter was born at Bunter Villa. It would naturally be the second story??

Norman Gregory gave his selections for his second visit to the Desert Isle. Eight books were handed round for our approval. These were - 1. 1920 Holiday Annual. 2. Talbot Baines Reed's "Cock House at Fellsgarth." 3. 1928 Magnet Barring-out series. 4. As a contrast the Nelson Lee 1923 Barring-out. 5. Desmond Coke's "Youth! Youth!" eleven school stories illustrated by H. M. Brock. 6. "The Shadow on the School" by Frank Elias. 7. Vol. of Union Jacks, July to December 1930. 8. Rider Haggard's "King Solomon's Mines."

An interesting word puzzle from - Tom Porter was won by Norman. Win Brown was the winner of the library raffle. The main item was one of George Chatham's rare talks. This was on Rookwood. He gave us his reasons for preferring Rookwood - originality, less repetition, and something refreshing and natural about the characters and settings. This talk started off a pleasant little discussion. George clinched the matter by giving a reading from "Rivals of Rookwood" which was agreed to be one of the best, if not the best, of all Frank Richards' post-war tales.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

November Meeting

This meeting, well-attended, was noteworthy for two reasons, good and not so good. The first was that this was our tenth annual general meeting and it was a source of pleasure to all present to realise the section is still going strong after a decade of association with the hobby, in which we have had our share of ups and downs. Thanks are due to the loyal members who have made our present position so firmly entrenched, and we look forward to our next ten years with high hopes!

The not-so-pleasant feature this month was the news that our Chairman, Don, must definitely leave us, due to circumstances which are unalterable; Don has never missed one meeting since the inauguration of the section, and it will take us a long time to get used to his absence. We wish him every happiness and we at least have the knowledge that we can look forward to his promised visits to us with pleasure. Our loss is London's gain!

The officers for the next twelve months are Chairman - Frank Unwin, Secretary - Frank Case and Librarian - George Riley and each will do his utmost to ensure that the Club will be at least as successful as over the past years.

Most of the time at our disposal was spent in going over the rules, and making revisions, not all, perhaps, to everybody's approval. One proposal gave rise to a lot of discussion, that of an earlier start and finish to the meetings, but, no matter how elastic the arrangements, it is generally difficult to suit every member, for a variety

of reasons. The financial situation is satisfactory, and the library is adequate for our needs.

The meeting ended with an absorbing game set by Frank Unwin, in which speed was as important as knowledge, and the winner, Don was far from lacking in either; it was most appropriate that he should leave us with a practical reminder of his prowess as a quiz competitor. Our next get-together will be in the form of a Christmas Social on 11th December at our new venue, 5 Thorndale Road, Waterloo, commencing 5.30 prompt.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

NORTHERN

12th November at 239 Hyde Park Road.

Berry Allison was still absent from the meeting, but we were very pleased to hear that he is now at home and progressing favourably.

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde, had his plaster removed and is practically fighting fit again.

After the business had been dealt with, I had to announce, with regret, my resignation as Secretary, due to a transfer at work necessitating my moving to Mansfield in the new year. Frank Hancock volunteered to fill the breach. We still hope to be able to attend most of the meetings, but from the other side of the committee table.

This being November, it was the turn once again of J. Breeze Bentley to give his annual talk. This year Breeze gave us "Frank Nugent". An excellent talk with a wonderful imitation of Frank Nugent's father in a rather high temper. After the refreshments we had a quiz by Geoffrey Wilde, on extracts from Magnets, in which we had to give the speaker, to whom he was speaking and the series in which it appeared. Jack Wood was the winner, followed by Bill Williamson.

Next month is the Christmas Party, when we hope for a bumper attendance.

R. HODGSON

AUSTRALIA

Working on the maxim that a change is as good as a holiday, the Club Members decided to substitute a discussion and lecture evening in place of the usual tea-meeting at Cahill's Restaurant. So, on Thursday, November 17th, Syd Smyth opened proceedings by announcing that No. 2 of the Golden Hours Magazine is now ready, and copies may be obtained by contacting him direct. Another piece of news imparted by the Chairman is that former Blake author, Stanton Hope, is in Australia. We hope to contact him and extend a cordial invitation to join us for dinner at Cahill's.

Letters from Ron Hodgson, Ben Whiter and Harry Broster were read, and the Midland Newsletter and the Merseyside Foghorn were passed round. Treasurer, Ernie Carter, made his report, and members discussed the forthcoming Christmas Party.

Members then settled down to enjoy a four-part lecture and discussion with Victor Colby, who opened with an unusual theme, "Battles Royal," which left us wondering how Blake and Tinker have managed to survive to the present day after so much mayhem on their persons. The next two parts of the lecture comprised readings from Sydney Newspapers, both of which referred to the Baker Street pair. A lively discussion followed. Victor Colby brought out the highlight of his lecture "Sexton Blake stories in The Champion." Syd Smyth seized this for a future issue of the club magazine.

When the meeting ended, members voted it the most enjoyable they had spent, and we keenly anticipate our next lecture evening in January, 1961, when the speaker will be Stan Nicholls.

B. PATE - Secretary.

LONDON

The November meeting was held at Leytonstone, and our hosts, Reuben and Mrs. Godsave, saw to it that we had a very happy time. Ably assisting were Eric Fayne, with his "Missing Words" contest, Don Webster with his "How's Your Memory" quiz, Laurie Sutton's reading choice, ably read by Bob Whiter, two fine eliminator quizzes, Len Packman giving the information of the progress of the compilation of the Gem catalogue, able helpers being Charlie Wright and Bill Lefts.

Roger Jenkins gave a good report of the progress of the Hamilton library, and treasurer, Bob Whiter, also gave a sound report. The Club entries for the Greyfriars Cup Competition are to hand, and Len Packman and Frank Lay will select those to be sent in.

Christmas Meeting, December 18th, will be held at Hume House, 136 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, and an excellent programme has been arranged. If attending, please inform Len Packman, phone NEW Cross 7449, during evening hours.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * * * *

EDITORIAL



FRANK NUGENT
Editor



JEREMY WRIGHT
Editor



NEIL J. HARTON
Editor



ROBERT C. SMITH
Editor



JOHN L. SMITH
Editor

How do you like to think of Christmas? Do you like to picture old England in the grip of the frost, stinging white roads and a pale blue sky, with scarlet hips and haws bobbing in the bare hedges, and the ring of the skates on the village pond, while from far away across the valley comes the clash and crash of the Christmas bells?

When we were younger we liked to enjoy and take part in that kind of Christmas. Nowadays, maybe, we just like to think about it, to read about it in our old papers, without actually experiencing it.

Do you love the soft, mild Christmas, with Spring whispering at the door? Unseasonable, of course, but rather pleasant when we become a little too mature to keep ourselves warm snowballing and tobogganning.

Whatever the weather, I hope that this Christmas Number of COLLECTORS' DIGEST will help to make your Yuletide bright. Hard upon the heels of this December issue will come COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960, and this, I trust, will make your Christmas even brighter still. For many, many months, countless hours of hard but happy work have gone into the presentation of this yearly volume. Now, I can only wait, with my fingers crossed, until I hear from you with your verdict as to whether the work has been worthwhile.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR. With our next issue, the price of this magazine rises to 2/-, and I have been not a little moved by the masses of letters of encouragement and support which have come from our loyal readers, understanding and even welcoming the increase.

Our first issue of the New Year will be a memorable one. It will have special appeal for those readers, and their name is Legion, who remember the old comic papers with affection. Also, in January, will commence our great new photographic series "How They

Began,* bringing to you reproductions of the Number Ones of many of your favourite papers of the past.

YOUR EDITOR ON MERSEYSIDE. Recently I travelled to Liverpool and attended a Merseyside Club Meeting. I was given a warm, wonderful, right royal Lancashire welcome - and I spent an unforgettable time with my friends up there. Thank you, Merseyside. I shall never forget my first visit to your friendly Round Table.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS. Finally, my very best wishes to all our readers all over the world for a real, old-fashioned Christmas. May this Yuletide bring you and yours everything you would wish yourselves.

THE EDITOR

QUANDA

(This is our Question and Answers column. If you have a query you would like answered herein, jot it on a postcard, and send to QUANDA, c/o the Editor. We shall get one of our experts on the job.)

JOHN TOPLINSON (Burton-on-Trent) "Can you tell me the title of a Gem story about 1925, the cover of which shows Jack Blake striking D'Arcy?"

REPLY. The story was "Chums at Loggerheads" a substitute effort published in March, 1925.

F. C. MARTIN (Brixton) "How did Sexton Blake come to possess Pedro?"

REPLY. The bloodhound's original owner was a certain Rafael Calderon, an ex-president of a South American state. On his first meeting with the man, Blake knew him as Mr. Nemo. In recognition of services as related in the 100th issue of the 1d Union Jack (September, 1905), under the title "The Dog Detective" the strange Mr. Nemo made Blake a present of the sagacious animal.

FOR DISPOSAL: Young Britain - Nos. between 51-128 (1920-1); Boys Mags - 159-620 (1922-4); Boys Realms - new series, Nos. 2 to 40 (1927-8); Pilot, Nos. between 1-95 (1935-6); Champions, Nos. 30-111 (1922-4); Champions, odd nos. 32-129, 27-140. Thriller, between 286-499 (1934-8); Modern Boys, 4-409, old series, 27-85 new; Parcels of assorted papers made up of the above and others. 35/- for 50, 70/- for 100. Post Free. Bound volumes Union Jack, Henty's, 1883, vol. 4. Comics - Rainbow, Jan.-June 1920, July-December 1925, Jan.-June, 1930. Tiger Tims Weekly - Jan.-June 1921. Puck, Jan.-June, 1939. S.A.E. Details - J. SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, W.10.

FOR SALE: Strand Magazines Volumes 1 to 7 well-bound and in excellent condition. Offers - or would consider exchange for Holiday Annuals or other Hamiltoniana. THROCKMORTON; Waterloo 2345.

REVIEW: "WILLIAM, THE EXPLORER" Richmal Crompton. Newnes 10/6d. This is the latest of the William series, and the best for some years. Miss Crompton, whose art of exploiting contrivance and coincidence on behalf of William amounts to genius, gives us eight rollicking tales to keep us chuckling. The portly Mrs. Bott makes a welcome reappearance and William's adventures range from finding the Abominable Snowman to chivvying a nudist. Don't miss it.

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The MODERN BOY



yarns, the "troublesome Twins," and quite a lot of the Wycliffe and Haygarth stories? There is much humour in those school tales - they weren't all on a pattern with "Very Gallant Gentlemen."

F. STURDY (Middlesbrough) I am most impressed at the extent of which the Digest has brightened up, and the inclusion of more illustrations. Allow me to congratulate you on the excellent format. One regret, however; there has always existed in the Digest a less than adequate attention to the comics, particularly the stories contained in them. The three schools and the two detectives have always had the best of attention. Could new fields be explored? A very good article on T. B. Reed appeared recently in John O' London's Weekly. I wonder if our circle read it.

W. RAYNER (Clare) I particularly like the reproductions from the old papers, e.g. old covers, title illustrations, etc., especially of the Hamilton papers.

**YOURS
SINCERELY...**
(Interesting items from
the Editor's Letter-bag)

RAYMOND TAYLOR (Wolverhampton) So the Digest will cost us a few coppers more in the New Year. Please do not apologize. Never did an extra sixpence a month buy so much joy as my precious Digests. I wish you to know that the Digest gets better each month. I have them all here, also the Annuals and I shall keep them and love them for ever. And what would Xmas be, without the Annual? It does not bear thinking about.

MRS. M. JARRETT (Brislington) I see there is a comment in **SEXTON BLAKE TODAY** (C.D. Oct. 1960) to the effect that the inside pictures in the Sexton Blake Library add to the attractiveness of the books. I don't agree. I think it cheapens them, and I hope they are discontinued.

VERA NICHOLLS (Leeds) Coker is, to my mind, the funniest of all the characters. He seems so realistic.

HARRY BROSTER (Kinver) Why does Bill Lofts say Pentelow had no sense of humour? Not the type of Frank Richards, certainly, but to say that he had no sense of humour is stretching it. How about the Johnny Goggs