COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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WRITE TO ME ABOUT IT.

WE'VE GOT THE KEY OF THE DOOR:

Last month we came of age, and it is fairly certain that never before has any issue been so highly acclaimed as our special double number issued to mark our 21st birthday. Not even concerning our previous double number to mark the 200th issue, or the Memorial Number to Frank Richards, did readers ever use so many varied superlatives. All this month letters have just poured in with every post. Your editor is deeply grateful, even though his hats are now too small for him.

It is a thought that Collectors' Digest, still going stronger than ever, has lasted many years longer than plenty of the periodicals which it perpetuates.

NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH:

This is a term which is sometimes used by reviewers. What actually does it mean? Is it a warning? Is it an excuse? Is it an advertisement? Is the word "squeamish" used as a contemptuous reference to reasonably decent-minded people who detest catchpenny nastiness?

When television hit the music halls, they turned to nudes to save them. The nudes attracted a certain clique, but drove away what

remained of the family audience.

The cinemas, in their turn, have been hit by television. They have turned to the X-certificate to save them, though whether, in the long run, the X-certificate will be more successful than the nudes remains to be proved. Even the sleazier section of the public tires and hardens itself quickly, and sex and sadism have obviously got to get riper and riper if they are to continue to titillate the people who get a kick out of watching it all in cinemas or reading about it in books. But the ripest of fruit becomes rotten in time.

Possibly the effect of prurient muck in cinemas, theatres, or books is not lasting. But it sickens me to see young people hardened to beastliness in order that theatre and cinema box-offices may keep busy and book sales kept at a high level.

Not for the squeamish, says the critic. What the dickens does he think this country has come to?

CAN ANY "GEM" COLLECTORS HELP?

Long years ago I came across a poem which commenced as follows: "Tom Merry, oh, Tom Merry, how I love your cheerful face." I was much taken with it at the time, though I daresay it was doggerel, and I thought I would reprint it in C.D. or the Annual for the benefit of others who might like it. But for several years I have searched for it without coming across it.

It was sent in to the Gem by a reader, and I feel fairly certain that it was printed, either on the "storyette" page or in the editor's chat. My impression is that it appeared in an issue published somewhere in the period 1913 - 1916. Yet I have searched through all the Gems of that period without coming upon it.

Does any reader recall it? Can anyone tell me in which issue of the Gem I can find it?

Is there anything more irritating than to have something niggling in the memory and to be quite unable to trace it?

THE ANNUAL

The 1967 Annual is rapidly taking shape, to provide you with first-class reading matter from all your favourite hobby writers during the Christmas season. The supply of Annuals will be limited. Make sure you order your copy in good time.

THE EDITOR

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FOR SALE: Picture Show Annuals 1928 - 29 - 31 - 32 - 33. All 15/- each & postage. Film Pictorial Annual 1935 - 10/6.

L. MORLEY, 76, ST. MARGARETS RD., HANWELL, W.7.

AN OPEN LETTER TO C.D.

FROM ALEX PARSONS

My dear C.D.

Many congratulations and good wishes on your 21st birthday. This is a great day for you and for we, also; and we sincerely hope that you will go on for many, many years to come.

It is a common belief that an old head can't be put on young shoulders, but, in your case, this is entirely untrue. Twenty-one you may be in time, but in wisdom and knowledge of the Lore of Old Papers you are, at least, sixty years old - probably much more.

Although I've only known you since you were fourteen years old, you have been consistently interesting and have absorbed always any ideas and suggestions put to you by we older folks. This in itself is a rare quality. But you have many more. Precious space prevents me from listing them.

I hope you will excuse me for saying this, but you must know that you are very, very lucky having such a tremendous crowd of loving Aunts and Uncles who are continuously pouring their knowledge into your wise young-old head. But, the latter, thank goodness, has never been turned by all this affection, and you have accepted it very graciously, even from the most humble of us. Your ears have been willing even when we grumble and seem a little cross. You have learnt a lot in twenty-one years, but have taught much more; for this we are grateful. As a very dear old friend of yours and ours would have said - what you don't know about the Lore of Old Papers could be written on a postage stamp; but what you do know - well, I won't say it would fill the British Museum, but it is surely helping to do just that.

Through the years you have proved more than once that if you have any politics, they are gently, firmly, and unconsciously democratic. We love to think of you as something unique and intensely British. And, if this doesn't mean much to the world today, it means a great deal to us. If there is another twenty-one year old - or a hundred-and-twenty-one year old, for that matter, - who has been as consistent and as much loved as yourself, then we would like to hear of it.

We look forward immensely to your monthly visit, and only wish you could come more often. But we understand that time, space and money are the basic measurements of today, unfortunately. However, we are not grumbling, and are very pleased to see you every four weeks, and hope fervently that we will continue to do so for many years to come.

Well, dear C.D. I could go on like this for hours, as you must know, but really must close now or you will be thinking that I've got a touch of the proverbial sheep's head. You'd be right!

Once more wishing you many happy returns of the day, and looking forward to seeing you again.

Yours affectionately,
Alex Parsons

P.S. Don't forget your special Annual visit.

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REVIEWS

THE MERLIN BOOKS (Greyfriars) — FRANK RICHARDS (Paul Hamlyn 2/6 each)

These four books are excellent value for money, and anyone who enjoys good school stories should make sure to buy them. "BILLY BUNTER & THE MAN FROM SOUTH AMERICA" is a delight, and is probably the most successful of the four in this particular format. It is a complete story formed from two Magnets of from as far back as 1910. The fact that Johnny Bull is not with the Famous Co. is a pointer to the date. The stories were then entitled "Billy Bunter's Trials" (No. 114) and "The Juniors' Enemy" (No. 115).

The other three Merlin titles all come from the Golden Age of the Magnet, and show Charles Hamilton at his very best. "BILLY BUNTER'S BIG TOP" comprises the opening stories of Hamilton's greatest circus series - the Whiffles Series of 1928. "BILLY BUNTER & THE SCHOOL REBELLION" comprises stories from the fine High Oaks Series of 1928. "BILLY BUNTER & THE SECRET ENEMY" is part of the magnificent Da Costa series, and it is splendidly written.

It is probable that all these four Merlins came from single Schoolboys' Own Libraries. While anyone must admit that they provide tip-top reading matter, it is a pity that sections of the really great series should be issued in this way. It is hard to see why the publishers did not issue a whole series in two or three Merlins, for anybody securing one story of the series would certainly wish to get hold of the rest.

No criticism on this score could attach to "The Man from South America," which fits snugly into the format. There must be plenty of Red Magnet or Blue Gem "doubles" which could be used in the same way, and which would probably be more generally satisfactory than the publication of parts of long series.

All the same, most Hamiltonians will welcome the opportunity of purchasing these fine tales, and they are well worth having. The illustrations and printing are first-class.

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GIVE A DOG A GOOD NAME

Marjorie & Antony Bilbrow
(Hutchinson. 21/-)

This is a charming collection of short stories. The hero is a shaggy dog named "Worthington," who is occasionally joined in his adventures by a remarkable parrot named "Gladstone," not to mention two secondary humans named Marjorie and Tony Bilbrow who, naturally enough, play second fiddle to the stars. "Worthington," of course, is well-known to radio listeners, and he has an immense following. Marjorie, when she is not joining "Worthington" in an adventure, takes feminine charm to the meetings of the London O.B.B.C., who know her as Marjorie Norris, while her brother Tony makes the close of day happy for those of us who watch him on Late Night Line-Up on B.B.C. 2.

But enough of the unimportant humans. Back to "Worthington" and his further adventures in this delightful collection. We wish you the very best - and there can be nothing better than a nice fire, an arm-chair, and a copy of "Give a Dog a Good Name."

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28 Public School Stories, by Avery, Goodyear, Farrar and others, 2/6 to 4/- each. Three volumes "Young England" 1909-10, 1914-15, 1923-24, 3 Vols. 30/-. Boys Adventure Stories by Kingston, Stables, Westerman and others, 3/6 each.

WOOD, 13 LONGLEY LANE, LOWERHOUSES, HUDDERSFIELD.

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W A N T E D : Pre-war Wizard, Skipper, Hotspur, Rover, Adventure Card Inserts, particularly "Famous Feats," "Boys of All Nations," "Punishment Cards." Also "Battles For the Flag," postcard size. All letters answered. - CUNLIFFE, 24 HAMMERSLEY AVE., CLOCKFACE, ST. HELENS, LANCS.

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W A N T E D : in good condition S.O.L. Nos. 145, 147, 149, 151, 167, 169, 170, 171, 173, 177, 181, 186, 189.

PHILIP TIERNEY, 6, ABBEY PARK ROAD, GRIMSBY.

. . . . . .

W A N T E D : ROVERS, CHAMPIONS, HOTSPURS AND TRIUMPHS FOR PERIOD 1940 - 1945. WILL BUY AT REASONABLE PRICES.

Write Box 'O', Collectors' Digest, Excelsior House, Grove Rd. Surbiton.

BLAKIANA

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

My request for contributions having been "unfruitful," I am afraid BLAKIANA is very reduced this month. Indeed, had it not been for "ANON" friend, there would have been no Blakiana at all!

The situation will be the same next month, for I have no 'copy' at all in hand now.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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RESEARCHING THE SUBJECT

By "ANON"

Back in the twenties and thirties, schoolboys, I am sure, never gave any thought as to how the stories appearing in the "Union Jack," came to be written. Now, more than 30 years later, those now grown-up schoolboys re-reading these Sexton Blake yarns, still probably give no mind as to their origination. If asked to express an opinion on the subject, I am sure the majority of them would say that the author got an inspiration, sat down, typed out the story and that was that.

In a large percentage of cases this would probably hold true.

Then an occasional real life topic would be utilised with a fictional story written around it, for example, G. H. Teed used the Sino-Japanese affair in Manchuria as a background for part of his Mlle. Roxane series. Again, in May 1929, there appeared a story entitled "One Hundred Years After," specially written as a tribute to the Metropolitan Police who were celebrating their 100th birthday that year.

Finally, a factual subject would suggest itself which would require some research to give an air of authenticity to the fiction written round it. Such was the case in the series known as THE LEAGUE OF THE ONION MEN, evolved by that ace writer of Sexton Blake yarns - Gwyn Evans.

"Do you remember the onion men - those bronzed, stolid, jerseyed Bretons with strings of onions suspended at either end of the poles they carry across their shoulders, as they penetrate inland from the coast to the most unexpectedly remote places?"

That is how the Editor opened his announcement of the forthcoming series.

He then went on -

"Have you ever realised what a story there might be in the lives

of these little-known folk? Perhaps, and perhaps not."

The Editor revealed how he and Gwyn Evans had conferred on the possibilties that these sturdy Breton onion-sellers offered as a theme, and were in mutual agreement that here was an exciting new field.

"We believe in doing things thoroughly on the 'U.J.,' he continued, "and as this promising theme demanded proper care and study, the author and I were prepared to give it just that. We were glad we did so, for what we discovered about these wandering Pilgrims from Brittany was not only interesting in itself, but it was obvious that a perfectly wonderful series of Sexton Blake yarns was waiting to be written, with the onion men as the background to exciting events.

"Getting to know them and their ways was the first essential, and the only way to do this was to learn their language and mix with them in their daily lives.

"Well Gwyn Evans did both.

"The language was not pure French but a 'patois' that is a direct descendant of the ancient tongue spoken in the Middle Ages when Brittany was a Duchy, independent of the then Kingdom of France. Mr. Evans discovered it resembled his own native Welsh in many ways and it was not long before he and the onion-sellers to whose headquarters we penetrated, were literally on speaking terms.

"We learned a lot of their outlook on life, quaint superstitions, and of the adventures they met with. Their comments on English life and customs, conveyed to us as we sat with them in the railway arch that is their headquarters and meeting-place after the salesmanship of the day, was sometimes amusing and always interesting."

Thus the Editor concluded his dissertation on the research that went into the lives of the onion men, for a highly entertaining and original series of stories.

I doubt, however, if these onion men would have been very pleased if they'd known they were destined to be the villains in the stories, hatching plots in their sinister railway arch headquarters and stabbing a policeman with the sharpened end of a pole which carried the strings of onions.

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THE ROUND TABLE

When the Sexton Blake Library came back to the bookstalls with a fanfare of trumpets, the preliminary publicity led us to believe that there would be at least some catering for those readers who prefer the Sexton Blake, Tinker & Pedro set-up. We were promised the occasional reprint of one of the pre-war "classics." So far, the only one has

been "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs."

We have never been told whether the latter issue was a success, but presumably it was. We hope it is not impertinent to suggest that another Pierre Quiroule reprint would be extremely welcome.

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Sexton Blake on television seems to be well done, but the time of day it is screened is quite absurd. It would certainly attract a wide audience if put out later in the day.

Laurence Payne, if not exactly dynamic, is dignified and convincing as Sexton Blake. Roger Foss, though a modicum too cockney, is excellent as Tinker. He strikes absolutely the right note when he says "Guv'nor" and absolutely the wrong one when he says "Guv." Pedro cannot help being splendid. Mrs. Bardell is the only unhappy piece of casting.

Backgrounds and general production are of good quality, and generally speaking, the whole thing is a winner.

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WALTER WEBB writes: The comments by Bill Lofts on the Man From Persia story leave me astonished. It is admitted that Ladbroke Black wrote the original story, that "Lewis Jackson" copied it, received a cheque for doing so, and must therefore be credited as the author. If Ladbroke Black received a cheque for the original and Lewis Jackson received a cheque for copying the story, then there is only one interpretation one can place on the whole affair. To put this story down as Jackson's work and to explain that the poorness of the story was due to his age is the most incredible summing-up I have ever seen published in the columns of Blakiana.

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S.B.L. REVIEW

STAR CROSSED (No. 41) — MATT MEAD

Anglo-American relations are a bit strained at present - in much the same way as the credulity of the Blake fan will be when he reads the startling admission of one, Matt Mead. To use his own particular brand of Americanism, Matt is quite a likeable guy. Albeit, he is - or was, for he is quick to learn - a pretty ignorant one as well. Representative of an Insurance Protection Association in New York, he is told by the secretary of the company to make arrangements to travel to London, where he will co-operate with Sexton Blake in the firm's interest. 'Never heard of the guy,' replies Matt. Reckoned to be one

of the best insurance investigators on the other side, and never heard of the world-famous Sexton Blake! Unimpressed from the outset, and inclined to be sourly derisive, I resigned myself to the fact that this out-of-touch with home affairs Yank was going to prove more of a liability to the Blake Organisation than an asset to it. But, as the case proceeded towards its logical conclusion, I found myself warming to him.

Blake finds himself pitted against that ruthless organisation, the Mafia. Matt Mead proves himself a fine lieutenant. Told from his viewpoint, and with rather more modesty than one might expect from the average Yank - that is, if the story was actually written by one, of course, which is doubtful - the dialogue, which is slick and entertaining, has somegood lines. Matt follows the usual pattern of American investigators. Although he unceremoniously crowds Paula and Marion out, it is not to imply that he has no use for girls. In his more relaxed moments, there is Jennifer. Confined to bed with a nasty wound sustained in a melee with the Mafia, he itches to hurl himself into the fray again. Aided by her attentions, his recovery is rapid, though with a girl like Jennifer around men like Matt Mead might view a slower recovery as preferable.

There will probably be many who will enthuse over this story, but it mis-fired with me. There was so much missing. So many of the things I have come to look forward to in the S.B.L., and rarely been disappointed at not finding them. A lack of tension. Of characterisation. The build-up towards an exciting climax. This flimsy affair was all too casual, probably stemming from the fact that it was written in the first person, which has disadvantages I find it difficult to overcome my dislike of.

Walter Webb

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FOR SALE: Holiday Annuals 1921 (25/-) 1928 (22/6). Moderate copies. Gem Christmas Double 1916 "In The Seats of the Mighty" 10/- (Moderate). Gems 1496, 1510, 1508 5/- each. Good copies. Magnet Christmas Double 1914 "Return of the Prodigal" without covers and time-worn 7/6. Magnet Nos. 141 and 145 without covers 6/- each. No. 393 8/6 No. 251 10/- No. 391 10/- No. 322 12/6 No. 827 7/6. Postage extra on all items. Most of the above are not binding copies, but sound for reading.

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

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30/- each offered HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1920 1921.

VICTOR GILES, 6 ST. PAULS ROAD, BARKING, ESSEX.

HAMILTONIANA

DO YOU REMEMBER? By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 67 - Gem No. 407 - "A Stolen Holiday"

The grand era of the Double Number was coming to its close by 1915, as the threat of the paper shortage drew nigh. The custom lingered on a little longer, and after the war it spluttered into life again for a brief time, but by then its heyday was past. So it is particularly pleasant to look once again at the Gem volume for 1915 and to open it at the Christmas Double Number, with its 32 pages of St. Jim's story. We are taking a glimpse at a vanished world, in more senses than one, but what a fascinating world it was!

More than half the story took place at St. Jim's, but this prelude was no irrelevancy. Mr. Ratcliff had a German visitor, now a naturalised Briton, called Mr. Kranz. He was secretary to D'Arcy's uncle, Sir Pulteney Vane, who lived on the Essex coast at Southcliff House. Sir Pulteney had written to D'Arcy, inviting him to bring a party of scouting friends to spend the vacation in Essex with him, as there was a spy in the neighbourhood, signalling to German Zeppelins as they crossed on raids to London. It was thought that boy scouts would not attract the attention that police would. Mr. Kranz had come to attempt to persuade D'Arcy to refuse the invitation, and he also fell foul of Figgins & Co. whilst staying in the New House, but the party eventually left for Southcliff as planned.

Charles Hamilton at his best could write a very exciting story, and it is particularly pleasing to note that this tale was restricted to the older characters, Kerr playing the leading part, as was customary, and Talbot being deliberately excluded by the author. The menace posed by Germans who were allegedly pro-British was referred to by Charles Hamilton on many occasions (including a famous Herlock Sholmes story), and the flashing of lights on the Essex coast inevitably brings to mind a spy story of the following war, in the Magnet volume for 1940. But "A Stolen Holiday" was original enough in invention to rank with some of the better Double Numbers. It cannot be classed with "The Mystery of the Painted Room" (and, indeed, what could?) but it is a worthy runner-up. And despite all the editor's references to the Roll of Dishonour for those who attacked the Companion Papers, Gem No. 407 must have considerably brightened the winter for those readers who were becoming depressed by an apparently unending war. One could,

perhaps, have wished that the Essex adventures had been a little prolonged, but it is the essence of a good artist to leave his public wishing for more.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 117. THE PAPERS MADE THEM STARS

We hear sometimes that certain film and television artists object to being "typed." Artistically, no doubt, they are correct in feeling this way, but it is often regrettable when a star deliberately turns his or her back on the particular character which has made him or her world-famous. Some television series, in particular, have been spoiled, at any rate for a time, when a leading character has withdrawn to seek a change of role. Often, they merely drop from the public notice entirely. Plenty of them would never have become well-known, but for the fact that they became part of a series which the public loved.

Some of the artists at the Amalgamated Press were destined to become world-famous from their association with the long-running Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. It is not to belittle their work in the slightest when I suggest that Messrs. Chapman, Macdonald, and Wakefield would never have become household names but for the fact that they were the regular illustrators of the Magnet, Gem, and Rookwood respectively. They were superb artists, but it was the Hamilton schools which made them famous.

This, of course, does not mean that the schools did not owe something to the artists. A good artist, drawing regularly to illustrate a particular school, helped enormously in stamping vividly the individuality of that school. When, as happened occasionally, the regular artist was missing for one week, the paper seemed all wrong. So far as I know, Charles Hamilton never admitted to owing anything to the artists. He held what was largely true - that the story itself was the only thing which mattered.

Nevertheless, a good regular artist - one to be associated in a reader's mind with a certain paper - was a great asset to that paper, and, indirectly, to the author. I think it probable that the Lee may have been handicapped by the lack of that very asset.

J. Abney Cummings was a fine artist, but he is remembered almost solely now because he illustrated Jack, Sam, and Pete. And as Jack, Sam and Pete had no lasting popularity, Cummings has never received quite the acclaim which he deserved.

Dodgson drew for various papers from early in the century. He never achieved notice till he became associated with the Cliff House tales in the School Friend.

Wakefield was a distinctive artist who had the flair for drawing attractive people. He drew prolifically for many papers, including plenty of the comic papers. Readers found his work striking and appreciated it, but it was not till he became the regular artist for Rookwood that his name became world-famous. When we think of him today, we think of Rookwood and not of his other first-class work.

Brian Doyle, in his excellent Who's Who of Illustrators, comments about Wakefield as follows: "He illustrated practically all the Rookwood stories in the Boys' Friend." This is not strictly accurate. Rookwood had been running for 3½ years before Wakefield became its regular artist. Rookwood commenced in February 1915, and it was not till the end of October 1918 that the first Wakefield drawings accompanied it. But Wakefield gave Rookwood an individuality which no other artist achieved. It may even be that Rookwood owed more to Wakefield than any of the other schools owed to their main artists.

Macdonald illustrated Rookwood from February 1915 till August 1916. He also illustrated the Christmas story in 1916, which certainly suggests, along with the theme of the tale, that "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party" had been written quite a long time before it was published.

From August 1916 till October 1918, Rookwood was illustrated by P. J. Hayward. He was moderately successful with Rookwood, but there was certainly a vast improvement when Wakefield took over. There seems to be little evidence of Hayward work outside the Rookwood sphere He may have followed Macdonald into one of the fighting forces.

I can't find much trace of Hayward, either before or after Rookwood, and I wonder what became of him. Recently, while browsing over a Tiger Tim's Weekly of the early nineteen-twenties, I came across some illustrations (to a serial) which I feel fairly sure were drawn by Hayward.

The Gem, of course, owed a good deal to Macdonald. It was not until he became the regular artist for the Gem that the world became interested in him, but he had drawn prolifically for the Marvel, Pluck, and some of the girls' papers before 1910. Hayward almost always signed his work, but Macdonald, Chapman, Wakefield, and Shields seldom added their names to their work in the boys' papers. Yet most of the boy readers knew the names of their favourite artists.

Macdonald's work was distinctive, and he had no great flair for variety. Possibly it was because he had so impressed his personality

on the Gem (he was the first artist to be "typed" in this way, probably) that it was something of a handicap to other series when he illustrated them. While he illustrated Rookwood, from early 1915 till August 1916, he linked Rookwood too much with St. Jim's. The same thing happened when he illustrated serials like "Sports of St. Clive's" in the Friend, or the Benbow stories in the Greyfriars Herald. He made his drawings of boys approximate too much to the St. Jim's characters. Yet, in my own view, nobody could illustrate the Gem as he did. I freely admit that Warwick Reynolds was a fine artist, but I am ashamed to admit that I never cared a lot for his work in the Gem. In fact, I never cared for anyone but Mac illustrating the Gem.

Yet I disliked Macdonald's work elsewhere. It was a blow for the Gem when Macdonald entered the navy, but it was the best thing in the world that could happen for Rookwood.

Both Chapman and Shields had done plenty of illustrating of earlier papers, including the girls' weeklies in which George Gatcombe was the star performer with the pencil and brush. Yet neither achieved more than passing notice till they reached the Magnet. It was the Magnet which made them famous. Shields' work, of course, was nothing to write home about in earlier times, but he improved beyond all bounds as time went on, and he was at the height of his powers by the time the Magnet claimed him. He did some splendid work for Morcove in the Schoolgirls' Own, but he would never have been remembered as he is today, but for the Magnet.

He had one other advantage. The time when he was handling the Magnet drawings on his own happened to coincide with the Golden Age of the paper.

There were plenty of great artists on the payroll of the Amalgamated Press down the years. The really famous ones, with names which will never be forgotten, were Chapman, Macdonald, Wakefield, Shields, Reynolds, and Hayward. And their fame came, not from their unquestioned talents, but from their association with the Hamilton schools.

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INFORMATION ON THE SPRING BOOKS

By Jack Hughes

Mr. Wadham of New Zealand draws attention to the post-war Mandeville and Spring books. I thought my list of these might be of interest for reference purposes to C.D. readers who might care to seek these titles if they do not possess same.

"Tom Merry and Co. of St. Jim's" by Martin Clifford published by Mandeville 1949.

"The Secret of the Study" by Martin Clifford (St. Jim's) Mandeville 194
"Rallying Around Gussy" by M. Clifford (St. Jim's) Mandeville 1950.
(The first three titles illustrated throughout by Macdonald.)
"The Scapegrace of St. Jim's" by Martin Clifford, Mandeville 1951. (No illustrations)
"Tom Merry & Co. Caravanners" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's) published by Spring Books about 1956. (No illustrations.)
"The Rivals of Rookwood" by Owen Conquest. Mandeville 1951. (No illustration.)
Later Spring Books published this title with illustrations.

The following titles were published by Spring Books:

"Tom Merry's Triumph" by Frank Richards)
"Jack's The Lad" by Frank Richards) I don't have these
"Jack of the Circus" by Frank Richards)

The following are all illustrated; undated volumes so cannot now say what order they originally appeared: all published by Spring Books.

"The Secret of the Study" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's)
"Cardew's Catch" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's) 1959
"Down and Out" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's)
"Trouble for Tom Merry" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's)
"The Disappearance of Tom Merry" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's)
"Through Thick and Thin" by Frank Richards (St. Jim's)

All the above volumes had coloured illustrated dust wrappers.

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THE GEM'S FINAL FLUTTER

By O. W. Wadham

In 1939 The Gem was nearing the end of its often brilliant career. At that period it must have been the most uninspiring boys' weekly on the bookstalls.

The St. Jim's story in each issue only ran to a page or so of half the magazine's 36 pages. The yarns must have seemed decidedly "scrappy" when compared with those of former years.

"Variety" was apparently the slogan of The Gem in that eventful year of 1939. But it was not variety away from the realm of schoolboy fiction, for The Gem at that time had three school yarns - and all written by Charles Hamilton!

For five or six pages each issue Martin Clifford gave the adventures of Frank Richards and Co. in the Canadian Backwoods. For five or six more pages Owen Conquest contributed the stories of Jack Blake and Co. of the school ship, Benbow.

The Benbow, of course, had a fat schoolboy character rejoicing in the name of Rupert de Vere Toodles, better known as Tuckey Toddles to his school mates.

I doubt if ever Tuckey Toodles even left a slight ripple in the Hamilton saga. Unlike Bunter, Baggy Trimble and Tubby Muffins, Tuckey Toodles has been dead since 1939. I fancy this is the first time his name has ever appeared in Collectors' Digest.

The Gem in 1939 had no Editorial Chat. Page two had a feature "Blake Answers Back!" Queries were invited "as candid as you like," and Jack Blake would answer all. Photos of readers were also asked for. About five or six questions were answered every issue.

One question in Gem dated August 12 might interest readers of St. Jim's yarns in these old numbers.

"R.D. of Coates: I don't think Lowther is a bit funny.
The only person who ever made me laugh is Gussy."

Apparently someone appreciated that queer talking "toff."

The remaining feature in those 1939 Gems was a page per issue of Pen Pal requests.

About half of those requests came from girl readers. Maybe the boys were finding their Gem had lost its lustre.

At any rate, as events transpired, the old paper had but a few months before it died suddenly.

As Tedd Thomey said of the sudden demise of Errol Flynn:
"Simply stopped breathing."

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MAGNETS (mostly Blue/Gold), Greyfriars S.O.Ls., Holiday Annuals (1932, 1933, 1938) available for exchange. MY WANTS INCLUDE MAGNETS 874-877, 879-888, 925-931, 958, 959, 975-979, 995, 1007, 1012, 1013, 1038, 1043, 1071, 1084-1086, 1110, 1133, 1134, 1255-1261, 1264, 1265, 1669, 1271, 1273-1275, 1307; Rio Kid's Goldmine B.F.L. 569(or 275); St. Jim's S.O.Ls. 196, 214, 258, 260; King of the Islands B.F.Ls. 602 (or 365), 442, 489, 589; Rovers 718, 719, 726, 727, 732, 740, 742, 758, 763, 764, 765.

The above list represents my special wants. If you can offer from it you can name your own terms. Other wants (at more quittable rates of exchange) are as follows: Rookwood S.O.Ls. 308,317,368,380,389; Cedar Creek 3d. B.F.Ls. 417,465,469,473,481,485,493,497,509; Cedar Creek S.O.Ls. 142,178; Highcombe S.O.L. 290; Grimslade S.O.L. 232,28, 242,248.

P. J. HANGER, 10, PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

Amongst the many secondary characters in the St. Frank's stories invented by E. S. Brooks was the excellent one of James Brett, the village Doctor. In old series No. 142 dated 23/2/18 he was starred in the story "A Mystery of the Night or The Doctor's Ordeal."

This was a very pleasant little story which opened with Nipper and Tom Burton discovering the dead body of a man in a ditch, whilst out on an early morning run. They decided to tell Nelson Lee as a first step. Upon hearing their story, Lee phoned the police and then went with the boys to the fatal spot.

Very soon Inspector Jameson arrived and on examining the body discovered a bad wound at the base of the man's skull, so it seemed obvious that he had been murdered. In his wallet Jameson found a card identifying him as Stephen Ford of Twickenham. There was also a cheque signed by Dr. Brett so Jameson decided to call on the Doctor for further information. Jameson, of course, was not then aware of Nelson Lee's real identity, merely knowing him as Mr. Alvington a Housemaster and was inclined to treat him with contempt.

The first person they met at Dr. Brett's house was Williams, the chauffeur. Jameson, high handedly, proceeded to question him and elucidated the fact that a visitor had called the previous evening and had had a quarrel with the Doctor. The latter had later driven the stranger to the station but had quickly returned and said that he had had a further row and had dropped "the brute" down the road.

After interviewing Dr. Brett, who explained that the cheque was part repayment of a loan, Jameson arrested him on suspicion of murder and marched him away, ignoring all Nelson Lee's protestations. Lee then returned to the scene of the crime, determined to do his best to clear Dr. Brett and secure his release. Nipper and Burton returned to the school.

Nelson Lee learned that Jameson had taken away a spanner found near the body. He then spent some time closely examining the ditch and found signs of someone having forced their way through the hedge. He slowly traced these tracks along the ditch until he reached the edge of the old moor quarry. This took some considerable time, of course. The marks on the ground showed that someone had slithered over the edge and so Lee assumed the fugitive had misjudged the ground in the darkness and slipped over. Just then Nipper & Co.

returned from St. Frank's after morning lessons. At this moment a man was spotted at the bottom of the quarry so Lee and the boys made their way down only to find the man climbing up the other side. The fugitive attempted to hurry only to miss his footing and come hurtling down and finish up inert at the foot of the slope. The man was conscious and Lee accused him of the murder. The man, who said his name was Simmons, fervently denied this and averred that he had come upon Ford, found him dead, and merely rifled his pockets taking a purse, watch and chain and so on.

Nipper was sent for the police and arrived back with Inspector Jameson. The latter took some convincing that Simmons was the culprit but in the end realised the truth. The man was conveyed to Bannington where his injuries were examined by a doctor and here comes the twist in the plot! The doctor declared that Simmons was utterly incapable of wielding a spanner hard enough to kill as his arms had recently been broken in an accident and were appallingly weakened. Lee's case had crashed to the ground. The Police therefore decided to hold Dr. Brett for the time.

At the police station, Lee, thinking this over, idly picked up a newspaper and as he glanced at it a possible solution flashed into his mind. A line of type had given him a clue. He borrowed a police car and proceeded to the spot where Ford had been found. Nipper & Co. managed to get into the rear of the car without his knowledge. The detective gave the murder spot a further "going over" and ultimately, to the boys' amazement, climbed a tree to examine the higher branches.

Coming to ground again he returned to the car and they all proceeded to Bannington police station where Lee borrowed the famous spanner and then set off again. He drove to the outskirts of the town to a large military camp there and interviewed the Colonel. The latter was able to confirm that the spanner was a special type which had been lost overboard the previous night from an airship which had been cruising in the district at a very low altitude. The officer in charge of the craft, when called, confirmed the time and approximate place of the incident and so confirmed Lee's suspicions of how Ford was killed.

Nelson Lee had first thought of the solution when reading in the paper that an airship cruise had taken place and remembered the unusual type of spanner. He took the airship officer to the police station and after hearing what the latter had to say they could do nothing but release Dr. Brett, to his great delight and relief.

The doctor became a fairly regular character in the St. Frank's tales from then on. He became a valuable ally of Nelson Lee on all

sorts of occasions, ranging from holiday trips abroad with Lord Dorrimore to the special cases of Dr. Stafford's "madness" and the "death" of Church.

* * * * *

SECONDS OUT!

Two Points of View

Jim Cook of New Zealand writes: Why oh why do we get these pedants breaking into our nostalgic calm with their dogmatic assertions every now and again? Len Wormull talks of microscopes, stage-setting and comparisons in that order in his confused analysis of Edward Oswald Handforth. Looking at the St. Frank's characters through adult spectacles he can state the reason for the finish of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY from a purely self-opinionated viewpoint by assuming Handforth to be the responsible character.

Nobody has ever really discovered why the N.L.L. came to an end - no, not even Mr. Brooks himself could give a definite reason - but weird and wonderful have come the suggestions and assertions as to why it collapsed.

Obviously the circulation fell to such an extent that the paper was no longer a profitable proposition, but to try and pin-point the reason why so many thousands of readers gradually failed to maintain interest in the Old Paper calls for a more detailed investigation than a mere summing-up of one particular character.

Handforth was in the very first St. Frank's story and remained as a principal character for nearly a thousand issues afterwards yet here we have a neatly packaged verdict on him from a comparative newcomer to the hobby who strays from the particular to the general.

Your added list of adjectives Mr. Wormull to Handy's character is a very interesting catalogue....."Bombastic, self-opinionated, lacking warmth, somewhat arrogant....." your words, old chap, not mine.

John Tomlinson of Burton-on-Trent writes: Hoorah! for Len Wormull and his remarks about Handforth, that exactly co-incide with my own. Handforth has spoilt several St. Frank's series for me, notably the China-series of 1926, which would have been a rattling good tale if 'Handy' had not hogged the stage all through, with his ill-manners, bluster and bravery-by-accident.

My own St. Frank's favourites are Fullwood and Russell, Pitt and Grey, De Valerie, and Browne, and when these are either ignored or very much in the background and 'Handy' perpetually pops-up like the nuisance he is, I feel like putting the 'Lee' on one side in

exasperation and turning to Rookwood, where there is no-one (even Lovell) with whom one could get so thoroughly 'fed-up.'

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"ANOTHER BRAND FROM THE BURNING"

(Part of a letter from Philip Tierney of Grimsby to the Northern O.B.B.C. Librarian)

"The two St. Frank's serials I have had from you have caused me to change my opinion of the quality of Edwy Searles Brooks' stories. Almost the only St. Frank's stories I had read before had been the S.O.L. reprints which I didn't realise at the time were such early stories. I always enjoyed them, but never regarded St. Frank's as being anywhere near the same level as Charles Hamilton's schools.

Apart from being so incredibly far-fetched I thought the characterisation was clumsy and overdrawn and some of the situations quite nonsensical. I thought Handforth was utterly ridiculous and annoying. And we seemed to be expected to regard his idiotic and sometimes brutal conduct as rather lovable somehow.

But he was a much more tolerable character (to read about though not to know) in the two serials you loaned me. Mainly because his faults were clearly shown as faults and not as delightful eccentricities.

For instance, when he tears up Church's imposition we are made to realise that this is the kind of spiteful childish fit of temper to which he is subject. In earlier days we should be expected to laugh at this sort of thing and think there was something rather nice about it somehow.

However you will know far more about the subject than I do, so I should like to know whether you agree with me."

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W A N T E D : Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 960, 967, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 427, 433, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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

DANNY'S DIARY

NOVEMBER 1917

I keep singing the praises of the Boys' Friend, but it really is a wonderful paper these days. I look forward to it the most of all, for it is the most reliable to contain tip-top tales.

The first Rookwood story this month was "In Another's Power," and it wasn't bad, though in some ways it was a bit odd. Knowles, the Modern prefect, knocks into the river a rascally bookmaker named Jorkins. Another rascal named Barton accuses Knowles of murdering Jorkins, and blackmails the prefect. It was a put-up job between Jorkins and Barton.

"The Schoolboy Author" was the story of Frank Richards' School-days in the same issue. Frank writes a short story for a competition in a Frazer newspaper. Gunten, whose father handles the mails, steals the story from the postbag, and substitutes his own name and wins the prize. He isn't allowed to keep it long.

In the second Boys' Friend of the month there started a new series entitled "King Nadur's Diamonds" by Maurice Everard, introducing Dick & Frank Polruan, and Joe Tremorne. The Rookwood tale was "Gentleman Jim's Secret." Gentleman Jim was the criminal who, some time ago, first took Erroll to Rookwood. In this new tale, Old Mack, the school porter, is given leave of absence for health reasons, and his place is taken by a new man named Brown. Lattrey, by spying, discovers, that the new porter is really Gentleman Jim.

The Cedar Creek tale was "A Borrowed Identity." Mr. Slimmey, the master at the school, has a twin brother who is an escaped convict. The twin kidnaps Mr. Slimmey and takes his place at the school.

In the third issue of the month there started another new series, replacing the stories about Bob Travers of Redclyffe. The new series is entitled "Tales of the Dormitory" and each one is supposed to be a tale told in the dormitory by a different Rookwood boy each week.

The Rookwood story was "The Impostor's Downfall" and it was grand. Brown, the new porter, has learned about 'Erbert being the long-lost heir of the Mornington estates. Brown kidnaps 'Erbert, with the idea that Morny will then get the money, and he, Brown, will get a nice chunk of it. But Morny is not so bad as all that, and, mainly through Erroll, Gentleman Jim is foiled and 'Erbert is saved.'

The Cedar Creek tale was "Laid By the Heels" in which Mr. Slimmey is saved, and his rascally twin gets his just desserts.

Final Rookwood tale of the month was "A Fool and His Money." Adolphus Smythe was given a £50 note as a birthday present. He gambles with it and loses it to a rascal named Bunce. But Erroll has recognised Bunce as an associate of Gentleman Jim, and Erroll makes Bunce cough up the money out of which he swindled Smythe.

"Saved From a Crime" was the fine Cedar Creek tale. A hold-up man sets out to kidnap Bob Lawless and hold him to ransom. But Vere Beauclerc knows that the hold-up man is his own father, and he saves Bob.

The war seems to have taken rather a serious turn. Russia has asked Germany for a separate peace. Lenin and his Bolshevists have been given an armistice, and the Germans are pleased, because all their forces which were previously facing Russia on the Eastern front are now being brought across to fight the Allies on the Western front.

The liner "Apapa" has been torpedoed with the loss of 79 lives, and 50,000 aircraft men at Coventry have gone on strike for more money. I wonder what they would do if all our soldiers and sailors went on strike.

The Gem, like me when I had scarlet fever, is patchy this month. Some of it has been all right and some of it has been all wrong. The first tale "Pepper's Gold" went on with all the dry stuff about the St. Jim's parliament, and it was also a sequel to the business about Mr. Pepper who is a miser. Grundy feels it is unpatriotic of Pepper to be hoarding gold in war-time. Tom Merry & Co take a hand, and Mr. Pepper banks all his sovereigns. It never gets interesting.

Different altogether was the next story, and "The St. Jim's Pacifist" is very funny and kept me giggling all the way through. Skimpole is the pacifist, though he changes his tune when there is a daylight air-raid at the finish. Not a terrific story, I suppose, but the best for quite a while.

Then came the Gem Christmas Double Number, double size and double price (2d). It had a coloured cover by Warwick Reynolds. The story "The Shadow of the Past" was fairly good. It brought back Valentine Outram who was so splendid in those earlier tales "Under Gussy's Protection" and "A Strange Secret," though this new story is not really a patch on those. Outram, who had gone to High Coombe School after he left St. Jim's, has run away after attacking the German master. He comes back near St. Jim's and hides in Pepper's Barn, and he makes people think the barn is haunted. It works out all right in the end, without ever being very exciting. This issue of the Gem also contains The St. Jim's Who's Who.

Last tale of the month was "Ratty's Legacy," and if there has

ever been a more rotten tale in the Gem I can't remember it. Mr. Ratcliff has been bequeathed a safe by his late Uncle Hezekiah (why do these people always have such weird christian names?). In the end, Ratty and Trimble get locked in the safe, and so a hole is bored in the top. Mr. Railton pours beef-tea through the hole and Ratty gets it in the ear. That's meant to be funny, of course, but the tale made me weep.

In fact, the best part of the Gem at the moment is the Editor's Chat. Sounds mad - but, in fact, the editor is telling the history of the Gem in short instalments and its fearfully interesting. But it does make one realise how the Gem has slipped in the past year or two.

Another new serial has started at one of our cinemas. This time it's Eddie Polo in "The Grey Ghost." I suppose the serials must be very popular for so many to be running.

We have seen some quite good programmes, too. Mae Murray was the star in "At First Sight" and I liked this, but Pauline Frederick in "Sappho" was a bit much for me. I enjoyed Antonio Moreno in "The Magnificent Meddler," and also Gerald Ames and Violet Hopson in "The Ragged Messenger."

All the girls fall in love with William Farnum, and he was very good in "A Tale of Two Cities," though it was a sad picture.

I had the Nelson Lee Library this month. It was called "The Mystery of the Pink Package." Nelson Lee and Nipper are still at St. Frank's as Mr. Alvington and Dick Bennett respectably. The tale is told by Nipper and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. Nipper, Tommy, and Sir Montie are invited to a party given by Sir James Massington to celebrate his daughter's birthday. But a young woman named Doris Martin approaches Monty and wants him to get back the love-letters which she wrote to Sir James's nephew. These letters are in a pink packet, tied with blue ribbon, in Sir James's safe. Actually, Doris Martin and her father are criminals planning to steal some very valuable jewels. An interesting tale.

I went to see the Lord Mayor's Show on November 9th. It was a naval and military show. Mr. Bonar Law was the guest of honour, and he said, later on, that there is no short cut to peace.

There was a tragic happening when 15 women were burned to death in a fire at Crumpsall Infirmary.

The Magnet has been of a pretty high standard this month. "Coker the Rebel" was a scream. Coker, encouraged by the success of the Remove against the tyrant, Jeffries, thinks he can bring Mr. Prout to heel by the same methods. Coker's idea is that prefects should be selected from the Fifth Form.

Next week "A Gentleman Ranker" was one of those stories best forgotten quickly. It was about a new boot-boy named Jack Brown who was a real gent at heart.

The next two stories, "An Old Boy at Greyfriars" and "Saving the Bounder" were about a visit to Greyfriars by Ernest Levison, who was to play in the Greyfriars v. St. Jim's footer match. Skinner, who had laid bets on the game, crocked Levison, but Frank Levison had come over with the team, so was able to play instead of his brother, and helped to win the match. Oh, Ernie! In the second tale, Levison, who had stayed on at Greyfriars to recover from his crockery, was able to save the Bounder from the blackmailing of Jerry Hawke. Good tales, these.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "In Another's Power," mentioned this month by Danny, was apparently only the third substitute story of Rookwood to appear in the Boys' Friend.)

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A PIECE OF BIRTHDAY CAKE

from Ray Bennett

Congratulations on the 250th number of "Collectors Digest" - for me the highlights were a brilliant editorial worthy of the issue and a most interesting contribution by Mr. C. A. J. Lowder which provided food for thought. It will doubtless increase your post bag and I await members' observations through your columns re this provocative article. Personally, I felt it let in a breath of fresh air though perhaps many would want to shut the door in order to keep out the draught! Permit me to briefly state my own views.

Firstly, I am an unashamed diehard and enthuse chiefly over Hamiltoniana, St. Frank's and pre-war Sexton Blake, regarding present boys papers as "not what they used to be."

However, I trust I am not bigoted and absolutely agree with Mr. Lowder's comments in the first two paragraphs on C.D. page 18, although I would have reservations about par. 3 regarding the future aims and ideals of our mag: preferring to keep it as it is, but if this is to be, the Editor must inevitably be prepared to accept a gradual decline in circulation as age takes its toll, as apart from one or two young new readers the present generation is not very interested in pre 1940 papers (including my son for example), and who, after all cannot be expected to any more than I can over the Victorian or present day books. Also what of the O.B.B.C. - ? Delete the word "Old" and what have you - I can't imagine many of our club members going into raptures at our meetings over some of the periodicals which grace our

bookstands.

Anyway, I found the article most refreshing, having over the years purchased a copy or two of all the papers mentioned by the writer (depositing them in the waste paper basket after perusal with the following exception).

When the Lion came out nearly 16 years ago I bought No. 1 and thought it was the best publication for some years, and I am therefore no stranger to Sandy Dean's Tollgate, and wait for it - I still buy this paper and have every copy from No. 1 although I haven't read a number for over 10 years except to shudder at the somewhat lurid cover page and have a laugh at the exploits of the priceless puss at Crummy Castle, when printed on the back page.

Why do I still buy it? - the collecting bug has always bitten me I suppose, and the ulterior motive of the thought that I might be able to sell the whole lot for cost when the paper ceases publication, but as the new Champion has recently been incorporated with the Lion, it would appear that I shall have to find more space upstairs to the dismay of my wife who would dearly love to get rid of the numerous parcels containing now several hundred issues!

And so Mr. Editor on to No. 251 and unlike my pride of Lions, my copies of the C.D. from No. 1 upwards will not be offered for sale - at any price.

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- - A SECOND HELPING OF CAKE

from J. McMahon

Many thanks for the double number of the Digest. Like Gerry Allison, I wish I were a poet, so that I could express my feelings about the C.D. and the wonderful people who are responsible for producing it. I enjoyed reading Christopher Lowder's piece in the C.D., but I can't agree with his prognosis on the Digest. Personally I find no sentimental attachment to the 'Magnet,' 'Gem' etc., for the simple reason that I never read any in the past.

I was eight years of age in 1940, at that time I was reading comics only i.e. 'Beano,' 'Dandy;' I then graduated to the 'Wizard,' 'Hotspur' papers.

Five years ago I saw an advert in the Exchange & Mart, offering some old papers for sale. When I read this advert I was stung with the nostalgic bug, I was thinking of the papers I had read in my boyhood. Anyway I received a parcel containing 'Wizards' and 'Adventures' and a few 'Magnets.' Now I did get some pleasure from looking at the Thomson papers, but I was really delighted with the 'Magnets,' the first I had ever read. The outcome of this was my finding out about

the C.D. and joining the Northern Section of the O.B.B.C. with the object of getting as many Magnets as I could. Sorry if I have been a bit long-winded in saying that I read the 'Magnet' simply because I love the stories, no nostalgia involved at all. Why do I read the 'Collectors' Digest?' I can think of quite a number of reasons, the main being the sense of friendliness about the magazine, and as my collection of C.Ds. grows, so does my number of chums.

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th September, 1967

There was an attendance of only eight members, the smallest for some time. There were a number of apologies by letter and quite an amount of correspondence to deal with. Bill Morgan, Ian Parish, W.N. Hall and Stan Knight had all written to the club.

Deep sympathy was expressed on behalf of Jack Bellfield who had lost his mother and the chairman was asked to write to him a letter of condolence on behalf of the club.

Final arrangements were made for the Chesterfield visit. It was expected that about 10 members would be present. The venue was the Portland Hotel as before on Sunday, 15th October.

Tom Porter's item the Anniversary number was Magnet 1231 dated 26th September, 1931 - 36 years to the day and the unusual Collector's item was Gold Hawk No. 1.

Bill Morgan was unable to attend but sent along Collector's Digest No. 157 and asked that someone might read Eric Fayne's "Let's be Controversial" No. 34 "Straws in the Wind," and this was admirably done by Win Partridge.

Ian Bennett then gave a magnificent talk on The Modern Boy and Captain Justice which he very aptly illustrated with readings. George Chatham, our chairman very thoughtfully taped this fine talk so that members who were absent may have the pleasure of hearing it.

The raffle, the book prizes which were kindly donated by Stan Knight and Bill Morganwere won by George Chatham, Ted Davey and Win Partridge. Another gesture on behalf of the club was Ivan Webster's presentation of Magnet No. 1388. He was cordially thanked for this. George Chatham also in generous mood presented Ted Davey with a railway number plate.

The next meeting will be entirely in the hands of club treasurer

Norman Gregory and is on 31st October at the Birmingham Theatre Centre.

J. F. Bellfield

Correspondent.

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L O N D O N

It was quite appropriate that the Leytonstone meeting, held on Sunday, October 15th, should have a strong flavour of Nelson Lee lore. Bob Blythe, after discharging his library duties, produced quite a number of Edwy Searles Brooks' manuscripts. This augers well for the next meeting at Bob Blythe's home at Dollis Hill on Sunday, November 19th, when it is to be hoped, more mss., will be shewn.

The host of the meeting, Reuben Godsave, read a couple of humorous chapters from a "Monster Library" story entitled "St. Frank's on the Spree," or "The Housemaster's Double." Truly two items of Nelson Lee going down very well with everyone present.

Len Packman read passages from the club's 3rd newsletter. The potted personality was John Geal, who used to get the duplicating done when the club was in the lower forms.

Bob Blythe conducted a quiz, two teams led by Ben Whiter and Don Webster respectively. The winning team was the former by 43 points to 41.

Excellent reports given by both the librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe.

The successful Maidstone finances were given by the secretary and were adopted.

Chairman, Don Webster, then produced an idea of "How one came into the hobby and got to know of the book club." Ben Whiter set the ball rolling, telling of the first individual meetings, East Dulwich, Lordship Lane, Greenwich and the first meeting at Surbiton. The old names of original members etc., the various adventures and happy happenings. Then as time had simply flown, it was decided to carry on the discussions month by month.

Excellent study feed was enjoyed and it was the general opinion that it was a very happy and successful meeting. With thanks to Reuben and Mrs. Godsave the first of the autumn meetings terminated.

Uncle Benjamin

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N O R T H E R N

Meeting held Saturday, 14th October, 1967

Almost with the feelings of ship-wrecked sailors sighting land do

Northern members converge on the Club Room after a five week interval. But as Chairman Geoffrey Wilde pointed out in his opening remarks what an exciting five weeks it had been for the Hobby, with Sexton Blake featuring on radio and television, and the great Coming of Age Edition of the C.D.

After the Secretary had read the minutes, Gerry Allison gave his Treasurer's report. On the day after our meeting our President would be 86 years young. (Like Charles Hamilton, 'old' is a word which just cannot be applied to Mr. Wodehouse.) On behalf of us all Gerald had sent a card with our very best wishes. Appropriately he had chosen a picture of a Pekinese, knowing our President's interest in this Royal strain and indeed his love for all animals. Letters from other members and friends included Cliff, and Nichol Lynn and Ben Whiter. (The last named had an interesting account of the London Club's outing to Maidstone.) Vice Chairman Jack Wood had welcomed back "Wooster" on T.V. and reading us extracts from "Wooster's World" soon had us chuckling.

After this exchange of news and views, Ron Hodgson now took the chair and read us his instalment of the Greyfriars serial. Greyfriars? Ron, that ardent St. Jim's man, neatly slipped in a chapter featuring Figgy and Co. making Fatty Wynn snatch the T.V. part from under Bunter's very nose! And Wibley, at Ferrers Locke's instigation, first by writing spoof data and then doing one of his famous impersonations, is helping materially to foil the spies. We now await the final curtain from Harry Barlow next month.

Tom Roach now took the stage and gave us a completely new competition. Tom has a vast store of tape recordings of singers, speakers, politicians, actors, etc., going back over 40 years, and he had compiled a tape with recordings of 20 voices. Each ran about half a minute, and they were arranged alphabetically. We had to guess who they were. Varying from Julie Andrews and Marjorie Bilbow to Rudolph Valentino and even Hitler it was an intriguing task. We had two runs through and then broke for refreshments. A final hearing and then Tom gave the answers. Ron Hodgson, Geoffrey Wilde, and George Riley had 11 correct each, and John Roberts, Keith Balmforth, and Myra Allison 10 each. Thanks to Tom for his ingenuity and labour in giving this novel entertainment.

This brought the evening to a close, and we look forward to the next meeting on Saturday, November the 11th, 1967.

M. L. Allison

Hon. Sec.

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MIDLAND & NORTHERN CLUBS' RE-UNION on Sunday, 15th October, 1967. Held at the Portland Hotel, Market Sq. Chesterfield.

After a lapse of more than two years the two clubs met once again at the old rendeavous. It was somewhere near ten years ago since Gerry Allison and I arranged to meet here at Chesterfield. The meeting was eventful for me for apart from meeting Gerry for the first time Herbert Leckenby and Jack Wood made up a foursome. From this happy meeting the idea of a club get together was conceived and all the O.B.B.C. world know the successful and happy gatherings held beneath the "crooked spire." It was only a small gathering last Sunday. Fifteen of us. Maybe next year in perhaps warmer weather we can hold a get together which will surpass all the previous ones. Despite bad treatment by British Railways we managed to assemble for an enjoyable lunch at 1.0 o'clock. There was no cause for complaint here as there was last time. The session which followed was equally enjoyable. With George Chatham in the chair, Molly Allison on his right and myself on his left it looked like old times.

The first item was a talk by Mollie Allison bringing in a few of her favourite characters (and ours) D'Arcy, Mauly and Coker. This was followed by her giving an idea of her own - "a summing up" of the Hamilton characters from an unusual angle. Then we were treated to one of John Tomlinson's own inimitable contributions. How he can do it all without pausing for breath and no notes at all. From one character to another; from one school to another. Yes and from one author to another. We had Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks - Irene Manners' birthday, a skirmish between Bob Cherry and Skinner & Co., St. Jim's was not forgotten with one of Bernard Glyn's inventions which gave us some amusing situations to say the least. Rookwood and Muffins completed the Tomlinson menu. In itself more than a feast. Ian Bennett also of Midland gave an interesting talk on Science Fiction as we had it years ago in the 'Modern Boy.' Ian is a keen Captain Justice fan and the 'Modern Boy' did not lose any marks in popularity as the result of his contribution to the afternoon's session. It was not all talks - Gerry Allison had sent along two very amusing word games. These were presented by Mollie and Harry Lavender. Tom Porter who had much success in both these two games, promoted one of his own - Greyfriars Bingo. This is always popular and can be enjoyed by others besides the experts. Tom also gave an intriguing talk on the highly dramatic stories by Charles Hamilton, especially "Nobodys Study" from the Gem and The Captain Bladger series from the Rookwood saga. Also an example of the highly dramatic from the Magnet and from the Nelson

Lee Library. Completing a mixed bill of fare was an amusing reading by Ivan Webster. A conversation over the phone from a Rookwood tale - involving Mr. Manders and of course - Lovell. Apart from all this interesting afternoon entertainment there were many old books - Magnets, Gems, Lees, Modern Boys - on display - for exchange, for sale and if someone did not sell or swap as expected, everyone enjoyed looking them over. Tea was on the same standard as lunch and round about 6 o'clock the latest Chesterfield get together between Midland and Northern Clubs was brought to a close. Once again we sadly wended our way home to Birmingham and Leeds - bravely bearing the "good" service served up by the British Railways - . Later than usual but a day well spent. We look forward to next year.

Harry Broster

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THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

FRANK CASE (Bramcote): I anticipated the Double Number would be a good one, but did not expect to find it so first-class; a really splendid effort for which both yourself and your contributors deserve the greatest thanks from your fortunate readers. Like Beecham's Pills, worth a guinea a box! Roll on, the next bumper number.

LES TODD (London): Thank you very much for the double number of the C.D.

I was very interested in the article by Charles H. Matthews.

I too had a Brixton childhood, and I too used to frequent that stall, buying up past "Magnets" and "Gems" and S.O.Ls. However, it wasn't quite where he said it was: there are no stalls in Water Lane, and never were. The stall was at the arcade entrance to Brixton Station and the market is in a turning called Brixton Station Road. Water Lane had a roller skating rink, but no station. I often would pass from the second-hand book stall to the newspaper-stall a few yards away, on the corner of the main Brixton Road, and buy the new "Magnet" or "Gem" after a disappointing visit when there was nothing I wanted to buy.

I can vividly remember my first Magnet. I got it at a newsagent's (we called them paper-shops) in Coldharbour Lane, by Luxor Street, and I can see myself now, standing there by the big greengrocer's, too entranced to move on, lost in the magic of word and illustration. Twenty-seven years later, I wrote to Tom Porter, asking him what Magnet it had been. I knew the title, "The Bounder's Good Turn" the story of

his sacrifice to save Wingate Minor for the sake of George Wingate, and I even recalled the illustration of Smithie climbing down the drainpipe after dark, on his way to the pub. Tom kindly looked it up for me in his collection, and said there was no cover matching a title like that, but when I did get hold of it, five years on, I found that this picture was on the inside of the cover, exactly as I remember it. The date is June or July, 1933, two months before my eighth birthday. I never missed a Magnet or Gem after that, until the War when I suddenly found the shops were no longer stocking them.

RONALD A. NICHOLLS (Whitchurch): Would it be possible to have an article in the "C.D." about "Little Folks" published by Cassell about 40 years ago?

E. N. LAMBERT (Chessington): The 21st birthday number of C.D. exceeded all expectations. It was a pleasant surprise to find a Buddle story at the end.

I found the article on "Frank Richards and the Isle of Thanet" very topical, having recently spent a holiday at Cliftonville. Whilst there I took the opportunity of visiting Charles Hamilton's house at Kingsgate. This is wonderful Greyfriars country and one could almost identify the scenes of the Kent countryside so vividly described in the "Magnet,"

CHARLES CHURCHILL (Exeter): Congratulations on the splendid special number - one of the best C.D's I have ever read for allround interest. I was very pleased to meet Mr. Buddle again.

I was intrigued to read Gerry Allison's article, and to see he has at last found a Lee he can read right through. It always seems extraordinary to me that so often people who are not keen on the Lee always seem to pick on one of the later issues. Any Leeite could inform them that the later Lees were poor. It is well-known that the old series were superior.

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MYSTERY AUTHORS - and OTHERS

By S. Gordon Swan

During the long career of the Boys' Friend Library there are to be found several instances of mysterious or unexpected authors appearing among the ranks of the regular contributors. One of the earliest of these is No. 90. The War Lord, by Detective-Inspector Coles.

This is a story written in a very adult style about two young detectives, Bob Dawson and Harry Fairfax. Throughout the story an occasional first person appears who is supposed to be the author, Detective-Inspector Coles. An examination of Pluck during 1909 brings to light several stories featuring these same characters.

There is little doubt, judging by the style, that the Scotland Yard man who is

credited with writing these yarns was better known under the name of Michael Storm, creator of George Marsden Plummer, who was writing Sexton Blake stories during this period.

Another mystery author is Lawrence Miller, whose name appears on the title-page of No. 135, The Mystery Man. I have not been able to trace this name elsewhere, although it is possible it was used again at some time among the many periodicals that flourished in the early part of the century.

One does not have to read very much of this tale to penetrate the pseudonym of Lawrence Miller to the real identity that lies beyond. The very theme of the brother and sister detectives, Morton and Vera Steele, is at once reminiscent of their prototypes, Kit and Cora Twyford. This similarity, combined with the style of writing, inevitably brings one to the conclusion that E. W. Alais penned The Mystery Man.

We pass now to a later period in the history of the Boys' Friend Library, the late twenties. In 1928 were published anonymously a number of Ferrers Locke stories which had previously run as serials in the Magnet. In an old C.D. Annual most of these were credited to Hedley Scott. He did write some of them, but in the case of No. 147, (New Series) The Brotherhood of The White Heather, I venture to differ.

On the title-page it is stated to be by "X," but it is written in the unmistakable style of the creator of Carlac and Kew - Andrew Murray - and it seems to be the only time he wrote a Ferrers Locke story.

Another anonymous tale of Ferrers Locke is No. 155 (New Series) The Phantom of the Dogger Bank. The nautical knowledge displayed in this book, plus the style and the use of a particular word, bring me to the belief that David Goodwin wrote this yarn. The unusual word is 'scending' and the phrase "the scending deck" is one I have encountered only in this author's work.

During this same period of the late twenties a number of unexpected authors were featured in the famous library. The anonymous Crooked Gold, of course is now well known to be the first Saint story, by Leslie Charteris - The Saint Meets The Tiger. But there were several other authors who, while not coming under the heading of "mysterious," would not normally be expected to appear in a library of boys' books published in England.

Most of these were American writers who were popular at that time. There were about four stories by J. Allan Dunn, a well-known adventure writer, two about a character known as Secret Service Smith, by R. T. M. Scott, and one sea story by Albert Richard Wetjen. It seemed strange to see these names among those of the regular writers such as John Ascott, David Goodwin, Robert Murray and the rest, particularly as one had already encountered some of the same tales in hard cover novels, notably the Secret Service Smith tales, which were published under different titles.

Mention should be made of No. 156 (New Series) The City of Strife, by Gwyn Evans. The hero of the story was an old friend of Sexton Blake readers, one Splash Page. On reading this one is surprised to find that the night news editor of the Daily Radio was called Julius Blake, instead of Julius Jones, and that the League of Robin Hood was led by an American.

Having read this yarn, one realises that it must have been written prior to Splash Page's debut in the Union Jack, which explains why the editor's name had to be changed from Blake to Jones. As to the leadership of the Robin Hood League, Gwyn Evans must have decided that it would be more appropriate for an Englishman to be the chief of this organisation, as, indeed, it was.

There are other points worthy of note but not within the scope of this article. Whether by writers well known to the general public or by the stock writers, the standard of stories in the Boys' Friend Library was a high one. In conclusion one can only express the regret - which must be echoed by many other of my contemporaries - that there is no such publication flourishing to-day.

FOR SALE: Volume "The Scout" 1929 (mint) £1. Bunter, St. Jim's, Rookwood, hardbacks 3/6 each. 4 vols of Bandwagon (show biz mag) 1946 - 48 (Norman Kark pub.) £2.10s. Postage extra on all. L. MORLEY, 76, ST. MARGARETS RD., HANWELL W.7.

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