

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

INSIDE! A SCHOOL STORY BY FRANK RICHARDS!

Vol.
23



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Registered at the G.P.O., Sydney, for transmission by post as a periodical.

No
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THIS IS AUSTRALIA'S FAMOUS MAGAZINE FOR BOYS!

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 23

No. 269

MAY 1969

Price 2s 3d



The Man of the Wheel.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE

Those words often head advertisements in this magazine, and I have wondered sometimes which is the more successful of the alternatives. A reader told me recently that he would never sell his papers; he would only exchange. "The papers are of ever-increasing value," he asserted stoutly, "but what are a few pounds in the pocket? Nothing!"

His argument was really cast-iron. On average, according to a current newspaper report, the shilling of 1910 would be the equivalent of £1 today. And today's £1 is worth only 12/6 compared with 1960. Constant inflation has made us all cynical with regard to the value of money, and, as

Mr. Buddle once noted, there is no end in sight.

All the same, I have never found the "exchange" system a very satisfactory one for my own purposes. I have been collecting for so many years that my back instinctively bends when I think of them. Nowadays I have several volumes in my bookcases. For a long while I amassed a

large number of duplicates, with the idea that by offering "very liberal exchanges" I might tempt somebody to part with certain copies I was seeking.

Rarely if ever did it work as I hoped. Usually the vendor lacked the very copies I was seeking, or else, in spite of my mass of duplicates I lacked the very copies which would tempt the owner to part with something I wanted. Fate is a fickle jade in such matters. No doubt plenty of collectors have had quite the opposite experiences to mine.

Also, it makes a difference if one is trying to aim at a respectable "set" of some paper or other as opposed to someone who merely wants to read a few stories before changing them for others.

Papers which are changing hands constantly tend to deteriorate and show signs of wear, eventually becoming junk. Nowadays, before I pass on any items of quality, I have them bound, thus making sure that they have a good chance of lasting for some future generation of enthusiasts. It adds a little to the cost, but it is worth it in the long run.

TIME CHANGES EVERYTHING

From time to time we have all come upon those people - we have euphemistically termed them "intellectuals" - who are appalled when they think of the harm done to British youth by those old papers, the Magnet, the Gem, and the like. None of the old traditions is immune from the slanderous satire of those who aim at a cheap laugh or a bit of sensation from the denigration of things once held dear. What they can't denigrate they underplay - anything from Religion to the British Empire, from Patriotism to the Boat Race, from Decency to the Victoria Cross.

One would have thought that Churchill would have been safe for a few years longer, but a recent play proved otherwise. It's not true, they said, but it's good theatre.

A new British film has been highly acclaimed by the critics, and I have no doubt that it is first-class. But two British soldiers, Sir Douglas Haig and Field-Marshal French, are gayed and denigrated in the film. "Grossly though the film maligns Sir Douglas Haig --" writes one critic. Another refers to the farcical horror, Sir Douglas Haig, a steely, blue-eyed fanatic, and adds that the funniest of all is the "randy Field-Marshal French.

Fifty years ago those two men were heroes to Britain. It is a question whether the producers of the film really know anything more, truly to the discredit of those men, than people knew fifty years ago, but what they don't know they make up. It is possible that members of some other countries may be on the receiving end of the satire, but I don't suppose they are. Britons normally only kick their own country.

The new film is a monument to the ordinary soldier, and it is right that it should be so. But in war, as in civil life, there must be Authority, though so many seem to blind themselves to that fact nowadays. It is wonderful that another great British film is going out to the world. But it seems a mild pity that some officers, once remembered as great, should have their memories smeared on the journey.

OUR LONDON CLUB HAS THE KEY OF THE DOOR

Our London Club has reached its 21st birthday, and has suitably celebrated the event with a luncheon at a London hotel. Congratulations to London, the mother of all our clubs, and to those splendid people who started it all and who for so long have remained at the hub of affairs. Here's to the next twenty-one years.

THE EDITOR

WANTED: Magnets, Gems, Populars, Monsters, Bullseyes, etc., pre-war comics, science fiction, etc. Pulp magazines. All offers welcomed, some for sale.

WALTON, 41, WOODLAND ROAD, MANCHESTER, M19 2GW.

THE CAPTAIN: Vols. 27, 31, 35, 50 required. First class condition only. Publishers binding. Extremely generous price paid for MINT copy of "SCHOOLBOY GRIT" by Gunby Hadath.

REG GUEST, 35 THORNSETT ROAD, LONDON, S.E.20.

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

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

DANNY'S DIARY



When Danny was a boy, 50 years ago, stills were seldom used to advertise films. Outside most cinemas, were boards on which were pasted posters, all executed in glowing colours. The most popular size was a 6-sheet, which was of about the proportions of an average "front door" to a house. This month we bring you the reproduction of one such poster. Danny probably eyed it before seeing the film. Watch Collectors' Digest for some more of these posters from the old films.

MAY 1919

The Penny Popular has come off my list of regulars. For several weeks the editor has been blaring that all new stories are to appear in the paper, and how Messrs. Richards, Conquest, and Clifford have given up their holidays so that they could write these new tales. I was very nervous about it when I first saw it announced, and my awful fears were realised.

The new tales aren't by Messrs. Richards, Conquest and Clifford at all. But even if they were I would rather have the old yarns. In the Greyfriars series the chums are going over Britain playing cricket in the different counties, and it all leaves me cold. No more Penny Pops for me.

I am taking instead a new paper "The School Friend" which started in

the middle of the month. It contains long complete tales of Cliff House by Hilda Richards, about Barbara Redfern, Marjorie Hazeldene, and Bessie Bunter. I like the stories quite a lot. The first three tales are "The Girls of Cliff House," "The Rivals of the Fourth," and "Bessie Bunter's Busy Day." Of course, Bessie is just an out-and-out copy of Billy, but she is quite funny.

There is a serial in the paper called "The Girl Crusoes" by Julia Storm. I expect that Julia Storm is Duncan Storm who is writing in the Boys' Friend.

Doug does some sneering about my buying a paper about girls, and he started calling me "Matilda." I told him very plainly that if he didn't stop I should go round and see his girl friend, Esmie Ponsford, and tell her a number of points from Doug's secret past. He snarled at me, but he hasn't called me "Matilda" since.

Even though only one of the stories was not by the regular writer, the Magnet has not been all that hot this month. The two opening stories formed a pair which starred Napoleon Dupont, and I am not really so keen on the tales which put the lesser characters in the lead. Bolsover starts his bullying again, and the provoked Dupont attacks Bolsover with a rapier. To avoid all the trouble which came about, Dupont caused himself to disappear from the school. The titles were "Foes of the Remove" and "Missing From School."

There are some tales which are, perhaps, not all that badly written, but which have very silly foundations. "His Majesty, the Major" was one of them. A Major Thresher comes to live near Greyfriars. All of a sudden the Greyfriars playing fields are put out of use to the school, owing to the fact that the cricket pitches have to be relaid. Now that sort of thing is awful piffle. As if any school, let alone one like Greyfriars, would leave the relaying of its pitches till the middle of the summer term. At any rate, the boys are obliged to use a field adjoining Major Thresher's house and garden, and the Major cuts up rusty.

The next two tales made another pair in which Bunter found a hidden hoard of silver. Fishy arranged an auction to sell off the silver, but it turned out that it was the loot from a robbery at Sir Hilton Popper's home. Not so bad, this couple. The titles were "Treasure Trove" and "Bunter's Auction."

We have had some pretty good times at the pictures this month, and blood oranges are in the shops again. They are three a penny, and not very large, but very sweet and juicy.

There is a new Pathe serial at the Empire. It is "The Mystery of the Double Cross" and stars Mollie King.

Marion Davies was good in "Runaway Romany." We saw a lovely Hepworth picture called "Coming Through the Rye," starring Alma Taylor, Stewart Rome, Chrissie White, and Violet Hopson. George Walsh was very good indeed in "The Kid is Clever." At the Cinema there was a Selig film entitled "The Crisis." It was from a book by Mr. Winston Churchill, who is quite well-known in parliament. My mum's favourite star, William S. Hart was excellent in "Selfish Yates."

My pocket money has gone up to tuppence a week. This is not really too bad, as Mum pays for all my weekly papers for me - when I buy one the newsagent puts it down on her bill - and I always get treated to the pictures.

The Gem has been good this month, with a four-story series which I enjoyed. Mr. Ratcliff's nephew, Bartholomew, came to St. Jim's, and he turned out to be a horror. There was plenty of fun and excitement before the finish, when Bartholomew got the order of the boot. The titles were "Ratty Junior," "The Sneak of St. Jim's," "By Ratty's Command," and "The Order of the Boot."

Final tale of the month was "Riding to Win" which was rather rough in the saddle. Lumley-Lumley rode in a horse-race in place of an old friend of his - Steve, a jockey.

There is not quite so much austerity about the papers as there was. They still only have the war-time number of pages, but the illustrations are larger and the paper seems a bit better quality.

The first Rookwood tale in the Boys' Friend this month was "Lovell's Great-Aunt!" which was too far-fetched. Then came a tip-top new series about a strike of the prefects. Opening tale of the series was "The Fall of Bulkeley" in which Putty Grace and Raby arranged a booby trap for Carthew - and Bulkeley walked into it. He lost his temper with Raby, just as the Head walked in. So Bulkeley is no longer a prefect or captain of the school. Then came "The Strike of the Prefects" in which all the other prefects resigned in support

of Bulkeley.

In "The Blackleg of Rookwood" Carthew broke the strike and decided to put up for election as Captain. To show their disapproval, the juniors put forward Tubby Muffin as a Captain, and he was elected. Final of the month was "Captain Tubby Muffin" which was great fun. In the end, the Head took a hand and swept Muffin aside and appointed Carthew captain without an election. A grand series, with more to come.

There is a new serial in the Boys' Friend. It is called "Skull Island" by Duncan Storm. There is also a fine series of cricket articles by Wilfred Rhodes of Yorkshire, George Gunn of Notts., H. Strudwick of Surrey and others.

Cedar Creek has been very good all the month. First two stories were a pair in which Frank Richards was in a feud with a Mexican boy named Ricardo Diaz. These were "The New Boy at Cedar Creek" and "The Outcast." Then another tip-top pair - "The Heathen of Cedar Creek" and "Yen Chin's Last Chance" in which Frank Richards & Co. try to guide Yen Chin the way he should go. Yen Chin is always good fun. The final tale of the month "Condemned by the School" was excellent. Frank Richards is accused of sending an ill-mannered letter to Molly Lawrence. Good serious drama, this one.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Seen in retrospect, the decision to replace the old stories in the Penny Popular with new tales of the three schools by substitute writers is one of the most remarkable in the history of the A.P. The Penny Popular, which had always been a reprint paper, had been about the last of the old papers to be suspended during the war, and it was the first to make its return, very soon after the war ended. Surely that was evidence of the success of its policy.

The change was all the more astounding because, by the end of May, the editor was already beginning to bleat about the falling circulation of the Gem. Surely he must have been intelligent enough to link that fall in circulation with the large amount of substitute tales published in the Gem. Yet, with masses of old Hamilton tales available, he introduced new substitute tales wholesale to the Penny Popular, with heavily increased production costs involved.

Had the editor, when the decision to present new sub-stories was taken, been the much-maligned Pentelow, there is little doubt that later Hamiltonians would have condemned it as an anti-Hamilton act. But the editor was, in fact, Hinton, who has always been regarded as a Hamilton bloke.

For months Hinton played up the "wonderful new stories" and concocted all sort of reports and letters to prove how Messrs. Richards, Clifford, and Conquest were coping with the extra work. Concerning some of the St. Jim's tales, newly written for the Pop, Hinton made the absurd statement that they were the best to come from Martin Clifford's pen since the early Talbot tales in the blue Gem.

The whole thing remains a mystery even today, and one feels that the Pop must

soon have felt the draught. A Hampshire reader - letters were always suspect in Hinton's chats though this one sounded genuine - condemned the new plan and asked for a return to the old policy. Hinton remarked that under no circumstances could he comply with this reader's request.

All the same, the new Rookwood tales did not last long. Very soon the early Rookwood yarns were back. A little later the new St. Jim's stories were replaced by two serials. Only Greyfriars made a good showing and the new tales carried on for nearly two years.

"Lovell's Great-Aunt," mentioned by Danny this month, was only the eighth Rookwood substitute story since Rookwood began over four years earlier.)

SALE/EXCHANGE for Hamiltonia. Dreadnoughts 1912/13:- 29 good, 3/- each; 5 roughish, 2/6 each; 9 cut, 6d. each. OR 95/- lot. Chums annual 1936/7, 8/-; Chums volume 14, B.O.P. volume 35 (rough bindings), 7/6 each. "Pip and Squeak" annuals 1924/6, 6/- each; "Radio Fun" annuals 1953/4, 2/6 each; 7 B.O.P's 1934/5, 7/6. Postage extra. S.A.E.

NORMAN WRIGHT, 9 MILL FARM CLOSE, PINNER, MIDDLESEX.

FOR SALE, BOUND VOLUMES: Boys vols. 1 + 2, 1893/4. Fine leather bindings. Boys of the Empire, fine leather, 1902. Comrades, vol. 3, 1890's; Union Jack (Henty) 1883; Champions, various; Boys Monster Weekly, 1890, vols. 1 + 2; British Boys 1898; Captains vol. 1 to 48; Scout, 1920, 37, 43, 51; Chums 1917 to 1941; B.O.As., 1879 to 1940 and many others. ALSO WANTED all Hamiltonia, U.J's, Lee's Bullseyes and most pre-war magazines and annuals. Some available for sale.

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

ANNUALS FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Oojah, 1937; Felix; Tiny Tots; Bobby Bears, 1933; Teddy Tail, 1934 to 1939; Nisters Holiday Annual, 1892, 1907; Playbox, 1915, 1923, 1922, 1921; Playtime, 1927; British Legion, 1933; Tiger Tim, 1933, 1934, 1937, 1939; Rainbow, 1936, 1937; Schoolboys Annual; Modern Boys Book of True Adventure; Daily Mail Annual; Pip & Squeak, 1923, 1935, 1937, 1938; Golden Annual, 1932; Schoolgirls Own, 1926; School Friend, 1929.

VERNON LAY, 52, OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.2

HILLSIDE 6490.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I am happy to say that several good friends have responded to the S.O.S. sent out for material on Sexton Blake. This means that Blakiana (so far as I am concerned) will be able to carry on for the next couple of months. The general situation, however, is still far from good. For some time this section of the magazine has only been filling about half of its allocated number of pages, and at the present time it is difficult to do even that!

By next month (June) I shall have been conducting Blakiana for sixteen years. Would some of you like to celebrate that little 'birthday' by sending me a contribution, thereby bringing about a more wholesome situation where our beloved detective is concerned?

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

BLAKE DISGUISED!

by Cyril Rowe

The times our favourite sleuth has obtained his evidence and trapped his man by the use of disguise since his birth in 1893 are probably uncountable.

One hesitates to say that he was Leon Kestrel - the Master Mummer - after all, but he certainly had as great a protean ability.

This note however relates to authors disguising him for their own ends, and ends with a query as to why he was disguised on certain other occasions.

Over the years our great man has appeared in hardback completely disguised to the uninitiated.

I refer to the times when the U.J. and S.B.L. tales have re-appeared in hard covers with another name substituted for Blake.

The C.D. has reported in many instances these being done by G. H. Teed, John Hunter, John G. Brandon and Anthony Skene.

There may be others unknown to this writer. I have an idea that it has worked the other way also, for I have in mind certain early

appearances of John Drummond in the S.B.L. which to me savoured very much of rewrites and adaptations of thrillers he had originally written under his own name of John Newton Chance. Unfortunately long since, I gave away my collection of S.B.L.'s (before I returned to the O.B.B.C. fold) and cannot now refer to them definitely by name. I still possess the J. N. Chance tales however.

I turn now to a query, something others may have observed, though I have never seen but one reference to it in the C.D. over the years.

And this is how often was Blake disguised as someone else in A.P. papers?

The once occasion I recall was how "The Faker's Secret," which ran in the Nugget Library with Blake as the protagonist, reappeared in the B.F.L. (new series) No. 511 with Nelson Lee and Nipper as the detectives.

The author was given as A. Cartwright.

Some months ago I bought B.F.L. (new series) No. 254, an anonymous tale "The Terror of Tibet." It was immediately recognizable as by G. H. Teed and just as immediately that Blake was investigating and having the adventures. The villain was the Black Abbot of Cheng-tu. The famous Wu Ling appears, and Hsui Fsi has a considerable part.

How well Sir Gordon Saddler, in this Chinese semblance of his, is depicted! All these are Teed characters, and friends and opponents of Sexton Blake. Incidentally, the story refers back to previous events which occurred in earlier Blake tales in the U.J., tales which appeared in the 'twenties.'

All the characteristics of a Teed Blake were present, as was the depiction of China and Tibet. The behaviour and the dialogue was genuine Teed and genuine Blake.

The detective however was Ferrers Locke, with Jack Drake as his assistant.

On page 62 however the game is given away! I quote:-

'But I need something urgently, Sir Gordon,' went on Blake in a low tone.'

Do we count it in the Blake saga? Does it put Teed in possession

of one more title compared with the other chroniclers?

How many times did Blake appear as Ferrers Locke (or some other 'tec?); and what was the purpose of this editorial (?) disguise?

Can someone who possesses the relevant material have a look for evidence of a pseudonymous Blake.

The first theory one assumes is to look for a detective who is a typical Blake as portrayed by the more notable authors (more notable by style characteristics); the second would be to find known opponents of Blake, either by name as Blake had encountered them, or disguised but recognisable by their character (or lack of it).

Who can go to it?

* * * * *

I MEET SEXTON BLAKE

by Raymond Curé

For every individual there is the day he contacts something for the first time in his life. He becomes aware of something or someone. Not all these occasions can be called to mind, but for myself I certainly recall my first meeting with Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro.

I was very young, just progressing from the picture comic stage, and had read a few boy's magazines of the six short stories and a serial type, but had never attempted a longer novel.

Every year my father and I travelled from Blackpool to Leeds at Christmas time - by rail. In those days it meant a four hour journey. While the outward journey was eagerly looked forward to (a fortnight's holiday with Grandma) the return journey was not so eagerly anticipated.

One day early in the 1920's we entered the station to catch the homebound train. The real old steam engine type (none of your diesel or electric drawn coaches then). My father, always a big reader, called at the platform newsagents and purchased a book to wile away the time on the long journey. He looked at me and then picked up what proved to be a "Sexton Blake Library" monthly. The coloured cover depicted a train rushing through a snowbound countryside and two men in fur hats clinging to the side - their feet on the footboard.

I thumbed the pages and noted only one small picture on the title page. I groaned a little - and we boarded the train. My father commenced reading his book immediately. I think I sat for half an hour

gazing through the window, till sheer boredom forced me to open the pages of my book.

It was marked at 3d. or 4d., but what a monster four-penny worth - it contained more reading than a present day 3/6 paperback.

Before long I was deep in the story. The train stopped at various stations while an odd passenger or two entered or left our coach. I read on. At one station there was time to visit the railway refreshment room for a cup of coffee. I took my "Blake" with me and read on.

After all, when you are young and somewhere in the Balkan States (I don't think I knew they existed till then), with spies being counter-spied by a world famous detective and his assistant, Tinker, this becomes your world, and the real world lies all around you - forgotten.

I had finished my story before the end of the journey. I thumbed the pages through again, and I was proud; proud that I had read through a story of such length for the first time. I think my father was proud of me too.

But the great thing was I had met Sexton Blake and Tinker for the first time. Before that day they had never existed for me; but through the passing of the years they have become part of my life. They have popped up again and again in the monthly library (4 copies a month), the weekly "Union Jack" and "Detective Weekly," and lately in the new book-form series. Dear old Sexton Blake and Tinker and Pedro, how dull that life must be that has never shared your adventures.

A little later I was to become an ardent fan of the "St. Frank's" boys in the "Nelson Lee," but it is always in my mind that I launched into "big-time" reading in the company of Sexton Blake, for that day on a cold platform station in Leeds I had met the great detective for the first time.

* * * * *

MORE ON THE T/V TIMES ARTICLE

by W. O. G. Lofts

I was interested in Gordon Swan's comments on that T.V. article (March Blakiana). I, too, was amazed at the inaccuracies.

In regard to the statement that Leslie Charteris had written Sexton Blake stories, I was in personal contact with Mr. Charteris when it appeared, and I suggested to him that he write to the T.V. Times denying the report. However, he was called to the U.S.A. rather suddenly, so, with his permission, I wrote on his behalf (also hoping to get a 'plug' about a book I have just written on the subject).

Unfortunately they did not print my letter; but I did receive a reply from them couched in a rather reproving style which annoyed me greatly, for it was worded in the manner of someone trying to humour a small child. Although I wrote again, this time more strongly, I have not received any further communication from them to date.

I'm afraid it is the same old story of a writer penning an article on a subject of which he knows very little, such scanty knowledge as he has having been gleaned from previous articles which, likewise, were also inaccurate.

Quite definitely - as my book to be published in September will show - Leslie Charteris, Peter Cheyney, Edgar Wallace and Sax Rohmer never wrote any Blake stories. If these professional writers will persist in this sort of practice, I would suggest that they first make sure they have valid and conclusive supporting evidence before putting their words to paper.

I have never met Ross Richards, but I have been told that he was a crime reporter on the Daily Mirror and is now a free-lance. It is correct that he has penned five Blake stories. Four of these were under a nom-de-plume which will be revealed at a later date.

* * * * *

REVIEW

DRIVEN TO KILL

Rex Dolphin
(Howard Baker) 16/-

They've made a gentleman out of Sexton Blake. In other words, this book is noteworthy as the first appearance, between stiff covers, of a new Blake novel. And with a striking and dignified dust-jacket.

Early in the book, Blake sits, with Pedro by his side, in his favourite armchair at the Baker Street apartment. The detective, in a couple of pages which are clearly aimed at those with memories, muses

over all the various criminals with whom he came to grips in days gone by. Beyond that, however, there is not much link with the old days, and, in fact, Tinker does not feature in the story at all.

Publishers have an uncanny knack of knowing what their public wants, and they have to try to please the majority. It is likely that some readers with longer memories may find this novel too tough in language and, in places, too ugly in incident. Which is a pity, for it has a first-class, original plot, and the mystery is well hidden until nearly the end. The basic theme is carnage on the roads, which a strange organisation named Samba is dedicated to check, introducing its own macabre method of punishing the guilty. Sexton Blake has the task of discovering who is the sinister individual behind Samba.

The novel will please all who enjoy tough thrillers.

IMMEDIATE DELIVERY from stock Magnet facsimile Egyptian Series; send cash with order to Vernon Lay, 52, Oakleigh Gardens, Whetstone, London, N.20. Price retail 42/-; 32/6 plus 3/- packing and postage to bona-fide club members.

WANTED: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1940, 1941. Magnets, any, but particularly Nos. 1187 to 1220.

SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals. Most years. Billy Bunter titles. Nelson Lee's. Greyfriars Prospectus.

JAMES GALL, 1, CHAPEL COURT, JUSTICE STREET, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, AB2 1HW.

BEST OFFER, full series 1936 Magnets (less five), 47 in all.

HAIGH, 6, ROWAN DRIVE, KEYWORTH, NOTTS.

FOR SALE: Magnets Nos. 713, 716, 719, 720, 721, 727, 728, 731, 732, 733, 734 at 7/6 each. Nos. 903, 905, 918 and 788 at 8/6 each. Postage extra. Also B.F.L's Nos. 104 and 205 "The Sport-Shy School" by Gordon Maxwell and "The Rollicking Adventures of Jack, Sam & Pete." Excellent copies but no covers. 2/6 each plus postage. Write first.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES
THE "BOY'S FRIEND"

By Bob Blythe

(continued)

March 17th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I enclose a Frank Kingston yarn and illustration as promised.

In answer to your queries I estimate, roughly, the length of the "Iron Island" was 235,000 words, and the "Brotherhood of Iron" (The sequel, R.B.) 175,000 words.

With kind regards, etc.

When I think of how this article is being written, it makes me break into a sweat contemplating such figures!

However, back to 1910 and the "Boys' Friend." Mr. Marshall replied on the same day.

Fleet St., 27th Sept., 1910.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

The enclosed synopsis gives promise of an acceptable yarn and I would be pleased to give my best consideration to a story on the lines suggested. As I am very full up just now, however, I must ask you not to submit the tale until after October.

Yours faithfully, etc.

This of course refers to the stage story.

Eventually November arrived, and what must have been the most exciting week for your young author.

Brockley Rd., Nov. 9th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Thank you for the copy of the "Boys' Friend" received this morning; I was pleased to see my story "Hurled through Space" included in its contents. As it happens the first instalment of the very long serial (about 15,000 words) I am writing for Mr. Griffith also appears this week in the "Gem." It is called the "Iron Island" and is occupying the bulk of my time. Nevertheless, I will let you have the MS of "Stage by Stage" within the next few days. I would have sent it before only you told me you did not require it before November. It is also my intention

to submit further synopses from time to time, as ideas, which are likely to be suitable for the "Boys' Friend," occur to me; retaining, as I do, a keen ambition to become a fairly regular contributor to the pages of your special journal.

Trusting to have the pleasure of meeting you again soon and with kind regards.

Faithfully yours, etc.

The MS for "Stage by Stage" was duly sent but in spite of this promising start, it was four months before Marshall decided to do anything about it.

Fleet St., Feb. 14th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

At last I have been able to read your story "Stage by Stage." I must apologise for the delay in dealing with the matter, but the reasons I explained to you the other day.

Generally speaking the story is quite good, but it is weak in grip. The incidents need to be written up in a more exciting way and there are one or two places where the yarn drags. What I would suggest is that you cut the story to 9,000 words, which will have the effect of brisking it up considerably; at the same time you could warm up the incidents.

I should be glad if you would do this and if the tale is then satisfactory it shall be hurried through.

Yours very sincerely, etc.

As usual Edwy was amenable to suggestions.

Brockley Rd., Feb. 21st, 1911.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Thank you for your letter received a day or two ago, with which you enclosed the MS of "Stage by Stage." I have noted your remarks, and am glad that you think the story is, generally speaking, likely to be of use to you. I will make the alterations you mention, and let you have the MS back as soon as possible - which will be within the next few days.

Kind regards, etc.

However a month went by before he actually returned the MS, but when one realises that, at this period, he was writing 10,000 to 15,000 words

every week to keep his serial "The Iron Island" in the "Gem" on the go, it is not surprising.

Brockley Rd., Mar. 23rd, 1911.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

I really must apologise for having kept the enclosed MS so long. My only excuse that I have been so busy with other matters. Mr. Griffith has kept me full up lately and all my time was fully occupied. Please do not think that I am grumbling - on the contrary, I am highly gratified - but I am annoyed with myself for having kept you waiting so long.

I have cut the story down considerably - have taken out every word I thought unnecessary, in fact - and trust the result will be to your liking. As there was something crossed out or altered on nearly every page of the original MS. I have retyped it.

Sincerely yours, etc.

You will notice that last sentence. It's worth reflecting upon! They must have had plenty of material on hand, for it was not until July that Edwy had any more news of his story.

Fleet St., July 4th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Just a few lines to let you know that I have been able to accept your theatrical story and that it is now being illustrated in readiness for early use.

I regret to say I cannot ask you to do anything else for me at the moment, as I am greatly overstocked; a little later on, however, I shall be pleased to hear from you again.

Yours sincerely, etc.

There was at this time an enforced lull in E.S.B's. output. The "Iron Island" and the "Brotherhood of Iron" had come to an end in the "Gem" and a serial he was writing in the "Boys' Herald" was finishing, so Marshall's letter could not have been cheering news. This lull lasted only a short time but it lasted long enough for Edwy to try new papers for his stories. However, I shall be writing about these in due course. Anyway, Brooks tries not to be too despondent.

Stoneham Parva, July 8th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Thank you very much for your letter of recent date, and for

accepting the story of stage life. I am sorry you are too full up at present to give me more work to do, as Mr. Hinton, now that the "Brotherhood of Iron" has ended, cannot give me anything else at present; and I am nearing the end of a serial I am writing for the "Boys' Herald."

However, I must thank you again for your intimation that I may do something for you later on, which I hope to have the pleasure of talking over with you before many weeks have past.

I am, Dear Mr. Marshall, etc.

And with that, rather abruptly, the correspondence between E.S.B. and Marshall ends.

"Stage by Stage" was eventually published in No. 534, dated 2/9/1911 under the title "From Call Boy to Junior Lead."

I have discovered two other short stories by E.S.B. in the "Boys' Friend" for which there is no correspondence. These were "Trespasser will be Prosecuted" in No. 613, dated 8/3/1913 and "At Four Minutes to Three" in No. 633, dated 26/7/13. It is because the letters referring to these two stories are not amongst Edwy's papers that makes us realise how lucky we are that so much is still available to us.

As you have seen, there was quite a bit of correspondence between E.S.B. and Marshall, but it didn't exactly make him rich. After all it only added up to four stories accepted!

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The Story of ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY - New Boy - over 62 years ago.

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins suddenly. "Who's that ragged merchant?"

A boy was standing in the road looking intently at the column of schoolboys. He was a decidedly ragged and unkempt youth. His clothing was in tatters, his hair was a tangled mop, his face was caked with dirt and patched with court-plaster. He stood with his hands in his pockets regarding the boys as they passed.

"Well, he's a beauty!" said Fatty Wynn. "See how he's staring at D'Arcy. Looks as if he knows the swell of the School House." The ragged youth suddenly started forward.

Before a hand could be raised to stop him, he had flung himself upon the horrified Arthur Augustus, and clasped him round the neck.

"My cousin Arthur!" he sobbed. "Oh, Arty -- Arty! 'Ow glad I am to see yer again!"

D'Arcy struggled to free himself.

"How dare you!" he cried indignantly and excitedly. "How dare you, you howlid person! You are spoiling my waist-coat! Get away!"

"Arty!"
"You are wumpling my tie; you are dirtying my collah!"

"Wot's a tie, wot's a collar, compared wiv famerly affection?" cried the stranger. "It can't be, Arthur, that you won't reckernise your own cousin 'cos you're along o' these young swells."

"I nevah saw you before in all my life."

The stranger dug a grimy knuckle into his eyes. "Oh, Arty, how can yer? I never thought it of yer - I never did, really."



The ragged youth flung himself upon the neck of the horrified swell of St. Jim's. "Oh, Arty, Arty, 'ow glad I am to see yer again."

Oh, Arty, your own cousin Bob, wot played wiv yer in childhood! Oh, Arty!"

"Go away!"

"Not till yer tells me yer glad to see me, Arty. Ain't yer ashamed of yer 'ard-'eartedness, Arty? Ain't I good enuf fur yer swell friends?"

"There is some dweadful mistake," gasped Arthur Augustus, in dismay and distress, while the others stared in sheer amazement. "I assuah you, upon my word, that I nevah set eyes upon you before, my good boy."

The stranger wept copiously.

"'Is own flesh and blood!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Arty!"

Mr. Lathom was hurrying to the spot.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed, adjusting his spectacles and staring at the ragged youth. "Who are you, boy?"

"Me? I'm Bob, I am - this bloke's cousin."

"His cousin? Absurd!"

"Many's the time," said the ragged stranger, "that 'im and me 'ave played marbles in our alley, afore his pa made 'is money and sent him to a class school."

"Impossible!"

"It's not twue, sir!" gasped D'Arcy. "He is waving!"

"What do you mean? What is he waving? I cannot see him waving anything."

"He is waving mad, I mean, sir."

"Oh! Boy, there is some mistake --"

"There ain't no mistake, sir," sobbed the youth. "I know 'im well. Ain't 'is name Arthur Augustus D'Arcy? How should I know it if he wasn't my cousin? He's got a mole on his left arm just above the elbow."

The Fourth Formers stared at one another.

This was proof convincing to the most sceptical. If the stranger was not what he claimed to be, how could he possibly know anything about the mole on Arthur Augustus's left arm just above the elbow?

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Have you such a mark, D'Arcy?"

"He has, sir," struck in Percy Mellish maliciously. "I saw it when he had his jacket off in the bike shed one day."

"He has," a dozen others bore witness.

"Then this lad's tale appears to be

true. However --"

"It is not twue!" wailed D'Arcy. "I haven't a cousin named Bob. I never saw this beastly boundah before in my life."

"Shame!" rose from the crowd of schoolboys.

Arthur Augustus glared round wildly. "I tell you I never saw the beast before!"

"Shame!"

Some of the boys were serious, but most of them took the affair as a huge joke. Arthur Augustus had put on so much side since coming to St. Jim's that all enjoyed this terrible fall to his pride - especially the New House boys.

What a come-down for the swell of the school to be publicly claimed as a relation by this terribly ragged and dirty wastrel of the slums!

"If this is true, however," resumed Mr. Lathom, almost convinced and wholly astounded, "you must know, my good boy, that you have no claim upon Master D'Arcy. If you have any idea of extorting money --"

"Who wants 'is money?"

"I -- I imagined that --"

"I don't want to look at 'is money. I only want to see 'is dear face again, and to 'ave him own up to me before his friends. I never was ashamed of 'im. Wot does he want to go for to be ashamed of 'is own flesh and blood for?"

This was a clincher.

If this stranger did not want money, no further proof could be asked of his genuineness.

"This is most unfortunate," said Mr. Lathom. "It would have been more to your credit, D'Arcy, if you had been more frank to Dr. Holmes with respect to your relations."

"My welations!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "I tell you he isn't a welation of mine. He is a dirty howwid boundah! I nevah saw him before - nevah!"

"I can hardly believe that in the face of the proofs he has advanced."

"You can ask my papa! Ask my aunties! Oh, that I should be insulted like this!" moaned Arthur Augustus. "It is too, too dweadful. I shall nevah wecovah from it. I know I shall not! And the howwid boy has quite spoiled my waistcoat!"

"My good boy, whatever relation you

are to Master D'Arcy, you can see that he does not desire your presence --"

"Oh, Arty, Arty, 'ow can you?" sobbed the stranger.

"Go away, you beast! I don't know you."

"Yes; go away, my boy," said Mr.

Lathom soothingly. "Go away, please, like a good little boy. Here is a shilling for you."

"I don't want your money, sir," said the outcast. "I've tramped down from London to see my cousin, wot used to play marbles with me before his pa made his pile. He won't own me! Wot is the good of a shillin' to a breakin' 'eart?"

"Stickin' plaster would be better," said Percy Mellish.

Mr. Lathom frowned at him.

"That is a heartless remark, Mellish.

I hope you all feel for an unfortunate boy brought up in such deplorable circumstances, so much less fortunate than your own. Most of all, I should expect his cousin to feel for him, D'Arcy."

"He isn't my cousin. I nevah --"

"That will do. Unfortunately there appears to be no doubt of it. I ---"

"Oh, Arty!" cried the stranger, in an uncontrollable burst of emotion. "Oh, Arty! Gimme a kiss before I leaves yer for ever!"

And he rushed upon Arthur Augustus again and clasped him round the neck. Beside himself with indignation, D'Arcy gave him a punch which sent him flying.

The boys broke into a shout:

"Shame!"

D'Arcy glared round him.

"I swear he is not my cousin," he said feebly. "Blake, don't you believe me?"

Blake was silent. Overwhelming evidence was against D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus saw the disbelief in Blake's face, and he gave a groan. If Blake wouldn't believe him, he was sure not one of the others would.

"Own up, D'Arcy!" said Mellish. "Own up! It's clear enough."

"Clear as daylight," said Figgins.

"Fancy a chap being cad enough to disown his own relation. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, D'Arcy!"

"The swell of the school!" jeered another. "Good old swell! We know now

where he comes from, and how much his side is worth. Good old School House!"

The strange youth was sobbing bitterly, his face hidden in his hands. He was shaking from top to toe. Blake looked at him curiously.

A peculiar thought had come into his mind that the stranger's emotion resembled merriment rather than grief, and that his hands were put to his face to conceal laughter not tears. Was it possible that it was a trick, after all?

Blake stepped quietly towards the ragged youth and jerked his hands suddenly away from his face. The ragged stranger sobbed violently, and his face was twisted up into an expression of suffering.

But Blake did not think it genuine. He was sorely puzzled.

If the ragged boy's tale was not true, who and what was he?

"Let him alone, Blake!" exclaimed Mellish. "Haven't you got any heart? I say, chaps, the swell ought to give him something. D'Arcy, give your cousin a fiver at least. That's the very least a decent fellow could do."

"I won't give him anything. He's an impostah! I never saw the howwid boundah before in my life."

"Oh, chuck that! Nobody believes you. What are you grinning at, Blake? Where are your giddy feelings for misfortune in distress?"

"I must say good-bye to Arty!" cried the ragged youth. "I'll go, but I must say good-bye to Arty." D'Arcy tried to avoid him, but the youth seized him in an embrace, from which this time he could not escape. "Oh, Arty, Arty! How could you? But I forgives yer!"

And then the outcast's lip approached Arthur Augustus's ear for a moment, and he whispered rapidly and then released him.

Many saw the action and wondered what it implied. The effect of that whisper upon Arthur Augustus was astounding. He staggered back, his jaw dropping, his eyes wide open in amazement, and a look of mingled wonder and relief on all his features.

He stared at the ragged youth blankly. The latter moved away, leaped through a gap in the hedge, and disappeared.

Astonished as the Fourth Formers were, they would have been still more astonished if they could have heard what the stranger whispered to D'Arcy. For these were the whispered words:

"Now I'm even with you, you beast!"

And Arthur Augustus had recognised the voice! A voice he knew! The voice of Kerr! And then the whole trick had dawned upon him.

"This is a most painful incident," said Mr. Lathom, "We will now proceed with our walk, and I trust, D'Arcy, that we shall not meet any more of your relations."

To the surprise of the others, D'Arcy laughed. The master of the Fourth looked at him with extreme severity.

"I am pained and shocked to see you laugh, D'Arcy. This is certainly not a matter for laughter."

"I beg your pardon, sir; but he is not a relation of mine."

"You need say no more on that point," said Mr. Lathom stiffly. "I have my own opinion about that, Master D'Arcy."

"I mean, sir, he admitted it just now. He gave himself away," said D'Arcy eagerly. "It was all a joke. It's a fellow playing a trick upon me!"

"Indeed! You have acquaintances, then, if not relations among the class that unfortunate youth belongs to?"

"Nunno, sir. He was got up like that. It was part of the joke."

"Hem! And the person's name, D'Arcy?" D'Arcy was silent.

"Follow me," said Mr. Lathom, with a disdainful glance at D'Arcy, whom he evidently suspected of departing from the path of truth. "Follow me, boys."

And he marched on. Eager whispers showered upon Arthur Augustus.

"I say, was that true?"

"Who was it, then?"

"I believe Blake knows. What's he grinning for like a Cheshire cat?"

Blake gurgled. "Hear me smile! Of course, I know who it was. I recognised

him just before the finish. Oh, my hat!"

"Look here," said Figgins, "if you know who it was, spout it out."

"Do you mean to say you don't know, Figgy?"

"I? Of course, I don't!"

"Then he didn't tell you what he was going to do?"

"Tell me! How could he tell me?"

"Well, I thought the 'Co.' generally didn't keep secrets from Figgy."

"The Co.! What do you mean? You don't mean to say that it was -- was --"

"Kerr!"

"Impossible!"

"Fact! Only don't let on to the Lathom ass, or he'll get played for this. Didn't he do it well? I was taken in at first."

"Kerr! Great Juggins! Was it Kerr, D'Arcy?"

"Yes. I didn't know till he whispered in his natural voice at the end," said D'Arcy. "I shall punch his head for his impertinence when we get back to St. Jim's."

"Will you? I expect Kerr will be there when the punching begins," said Figgins disdainfully. "Good old Kerr! So that was the wheeze he wouldn't tell up about, Wynn! He's a born actor. What a jape! Blessed if I don't let him take Hamlet's part instead of me when we bring off the play."

The whole line were giggling, and Mr. Lathom cast many severe glances behind him when he heard the - as it seemed to him - untimely merriment.

But Arthur Augustus, relieved as he was to find that the claimant to kinship was only a joker in disguise, was extremely indignant at the liberty that had been taken with him, and he repeated that it was his intention to visit chastisement upon the offender as soon as he returned to the college.

(THIS MEMORABLE STORY WILL BE
CONCLUDED NEXT MONTH)

WANTED: Very early Penny Populars Nos. 1 - 12 to replace items lost.

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

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 134. THE GOOD AND THE BAD OF THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.

Everybody connected with the hobby knows that the most sought after paper today - and, of course, the one which will fetch the highest prices for those who have copies to sell - is the Magnet. But very close to the Magnet runs the Schoolboys' Own Library, especially the Greyfriars section thereof.

For many years I had every copy in my collection, and every one of the Hamilton items I had purchased myself during the years I was being transformed from a grubby small boy to a smug young man. In recent years I have let some of them go, for certain items had but little interest for me. In other cases I may have been tempted by the high prices offered by those anxious to secure certain issues. It seemed a bit absurd to have so many books taking up so much space while I still had the same story, usually more attractive in complete form, in the Gem, Magnet, and Boys' Friend.

In the past year or two, however, I have been getting plenty of them bound, and they make lovely little books on any bookshelf.

In appearance, the S.O.L. was enormously attractive. When in new condition, the covers in red, white and blue, with royal blue predominating, had an irresistible charm. The bugbear was the pin which held the pages together, - a pin which would almost inevitably rust and rot away the surrounding paper. A S.O.L. with pristine covers and sadly rusted interior reminds me of a smart car which, nevertheless, has all-destroying and ever-spreading rust as a canker at its heart. It is a question whether the rust-prone pin is to be preferred to the modern, pinless paperback which disintegrates into various loose sections in one's hands unless one is very careful indeed.

The size of the S.O.L. made it ideal for reading in bed, or on a journey. But probably the greatest delight of all was that it enabled one, before it became normal to read and re-read the originals, to meet with stories we had never seen before or to renew acquaintanceship with tales which we had read a few years earlier and then cast aside.

But, for all its obvious charm and character, the Schoolboys'

Own Library was an abominably edited production. In the hands of someone who knew his job and who had imagination, it could have been superb. As it was, it was left in the hands of someone who just saw his work as ramming so much reading matter into books of equal size, irrespective of what harm was done to any author's work in the process.

As we have stressed before in this column, many of the old stories would not have suffered unduly from a gentle overall shrinkage. But gentle shrinkage was an unknown art to the A.P. surgeons. Possibly they had not the time to spare on anything of the sort. Their operation consisted of the removal of lumps wholesale.

It was quite ridiculous that every S.O.L. had to comprise the same number of words. More often than not it meant either that chunks of a story had to be slashed away or, in the case of a shorter tale, a few quite irrelevant chapters from another tale were tacked on. The wastage of Hamilton material was terrific. There is not much doubt that the Popular came to an end when it did because the S.O.L. was eating up so much of the old material and wasting a great deal more in the process.

"Judge Jeffries" which was S.O.L. No. 13 comprised sections from no less than 5 Magnets. A series which would have easily filled two S.O.L.'s was squeezed into one. The one issue was a shadow of what it might have been, and the waste was deplorable.

"The Kidnapped Cricketers" consisted of 4 Magnets cut down to fill one S.O.L. It would have made two fine S.O.L.'s. The story was spoiled, and the waste colossal.

The six-Magnet caravanning series occupied only one S.O.L. Here there was not so much cutting, but three tales were omitted completely.

It was not only in the earlier issues that this stupid, wasteful mutilation of stories took place. The 5-story Mick, the Gipsy series was pulped down into one S.O.L. The "Ragged Dick" series, 4 Magnet was also compressed into one S.O.L. The story of film stars and Wingate's love affair filled 5 Magnets. It boiled down into one S.O.L. It was nothing to write home about in the Magnet. In the S.O.L. it was a poor thing.

St. Jim's and Rookwood suffered from having chapters tacked

on, from some quite different tales. "The Mystery of Holly Lodge" was of ideal length for a S.O.L. But because it ran a few pages short for the conservative S.O.L., the whole effect of the Holly Lodge tale was spoiled by the tacking on at the end of a short chunk from some quite irrelevant source.

As I see it, there was no reason in the world why all the S.O.L's had to consist of about the same number of words. Publishers all over the world deal with the variations in story length by using type of varying sizes. In fact, this was done time and time again in the Sexton Blake Library. "Holly Lodge," set in slightly larger type, would have filled a perfect S.O.L. And the Mauleverer Towers S.O.L., if set in slightly smaller type, could have avoided the stupid cut which removed an essential item in the plot.

But, in any case, why was it necessary for each S.O.L. to comprise the same number of pages? If some had been a few pages shorter, others could have been a few pages longer. So what the A.P. lost on the swings it would have gained on the roundabouts. And few readers would have noted the difference, though we should have had better stories as our reward.

Like you, I have considerable affection for the Schoolboys' Own Library. But I think its editor was a Philistine.

I think it likely that the Boys' Friend Library is wide open to similar criticism. Certainly it is, so far as the Rio Kid stories are concerned. Too many separate Popular tales were crammed into one B.F.L. so that some of those tales were cut to make them weak shadows of the originals.

No wonder Charles Hamilton, was never enthusiastic over the reprinting of his old material, though whether he looked at it from an aesthetic viewpoint is possibly doubtful.

Unfortunately, a great deal of the post-war reprinting has come from the Schoolboys' Own Library, and already-pruned tales have been subjected to still further cutting.

While it is admitted that Himilton's finest work is to be found in the series, he wrote scores of single-story yarns which would be amply long enough to make splendid Merlins or Armadas. And a good single tale would be infinitely preferable to mutilated chunks from a long series.

Such 1931 single tales as "Billy Bunter's Hat Trick" and "A Dog with a Bad Name" would surely be ideal for the purpose. The unhappy idea that only Billy Bunter counts has ruled out St. Jim's, but it is clear that there were plenty of tales in the blue Gem - for instance, "Bought Honours," "The Flooded School" and heaps more - which would make delightful reprints for a new generation, and no cutting or editing would be necessary at all.

* * * * *

THE EGYPT SERIES LIVES AGAIN

BILLY BUNTER IN THE LAND
of the PYRAMIDS

FRANK RICHARDS
(Howard Baker Ltd. 42/-)

Here again, as in the case of the re-print of Magnet No. 1, we have the ideal representation of Charles Hamilton's work. This volume is truly magnificent. It contains the entire Egypt Series as it appeared in 8 separate Magnets in the summer of 1932. Here we have faithful facsimiles of those much-loved papers, and you may be excused for thinking this even better than the originals, for it is now printed on high-quality paper, neatly bound in stiff covers, with a heart-warming dust-jacket.

The volume is further enhanced by the glorious drawings of Leonard Shields at his best. He illustrates every story with the exception of the final one, which is in the capable hands of Charles Chapman.

Though the Egypt Series is not the most popular of Charles Hamilton's holiday stories, it comes from the Golden Age of the Magnet when the famous author was at his brightest. This is what Roger Jenkins had to say about the series, some ten years ago:

"The Egypt Series commences with a striking story which is full of excitement and development of plot, and then it tails off into stories which tend to be somewhat repetitive versions of the original theme - an unscrupulous villain in pursuit of property which does not belong to him. Konstantinos Kalizelos is pursuing Mauleverer in order to obtain the golden scarab of A-Menah which contains the key to a fortune. The Egypt Series is, however, distinguished by fine portraits of two different kinds of Egyptians - Hilmi Maroudi, the millionaire, and Hassan, the dragoman. The scenes describing the power of Hilmi

Maroudi are almost sufficient to recall the best of the China series, though the Egypt Series does not sustain this high level throughout."

Apart from the main story, which is about 240,000 words in length, there is plenty of other reading matter in addition to the superb illustrations already mentioned. The whole thing is a wonderful job, and Mr. Howard Baker, the originator and publisher of the enterprise, deserves the utmost success.

Even if - and it seems unlikely - you do not want a copy of this fine volume yourself, we need hardly remind you that it will make a magnificent and everlasting gift to some young friend.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th March, 1969

In addition to the two very enjoyable programme items, there were several other interesting and important other matters to be considered.

One of these was that Mr. Chapman is 90 in April. All present at our meeting signed a birthday card sending our very cordial good wishes on this happy occasion. Another interesting item of news was that the London Club, which is three years older than ours, attains its 21st anniversary in April. We send our hearty good wishes to them.

Coming now to the affairs of our own club, the post of Secretary has been vacant for some time, but as the writer now felt able to volunteer he did so, and was duly elected by the members. I am very pleased to be able to help the Club in this way, although as older members will recall, it is really only getting my old job back again, having been Secretary from 1952 to 1956.

Correspondence during March has been of unusual interest, and had included a splendid subscription of £5 from a Black Country enthusiast, Pat Hughes. We very greatly value the interest and support of quite a number of people who find it impracticable to attend our meetings, but who are often in touch.

The two programme items both concerned Greyfriars. In Bill Morgan's quiz we had to fit names to the magic word "Greyfriars." Thus G for Gosling, (or Green), and so on. Congratulations to the winner, Jack Bellfield who had 8 out of a possible 9. No names are known for the latter "Y."

But the highlight of the evening was a provocative but most enjoyable talk on Greyfriars by our Treasurer, Norman Gregory. A keen Greyfriars enthusiast such as myself would disagree profoundly with much that was said, although I like to think that much of it was not meant to be taken too seriously! The following are some of the interesting and thought-provoking points made:-

Intended for 10½ to 12½ year olds. More intelligent boys after that age graduated to "Boys' Own Paper," "Captain," "Chums," etc. Greyfriars was a weird sort of establishment. No chapel, choir or organ; although there is a musical genius, Hoskins. The Head not only took the sixth but wrote his own letters, paid the staff, etc. Prout was a bore. Quelch strict and humourless. What on earth did you do to make him smile? Masters mainly oldish, non-smokers and non-drinkers. The very numerous and over large Remove a mixed bag; really a UNO headquarters. And why the Famous Five? Famous for what? Poor old Gossy did all the donkey work.

But I cannot bear to quote any more of Norman's heresies, although one would agree with much up to a point anyway.

Of course Greyfriars is something of a fairy world of eternal youth. But the stories are so skilfully written that older readers enjoy them and also realise how much they hold up a mirror to Life. The late Tom Hopperton of Scarborough spoke very aptly of the "enduring magic." Charles Hamilton himself has said that "Alice in Wonderland" delights a child of seven and is still good reading at seventy. Here again human nature is perceptively depicted. Political cartoonists have found endless inspiration in the story, and there are plenty of "Mad Hatter's Tea Parties" in real life.

Anyway thanks very much Norman, for a talk which was greatly appreciated by all present.

EDWARD DAVEY, Chairman and Secretary.

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 12th April, 1969

It was the Annual General Meeting and Vice-Chairman, Jack Wood, presided over us as Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde was in Manchester, where, we were sorry to hear, his mother had just died.

The Minutes of the last meeting and a short report of our year's gatherings were given by the Secretary, and the Treasurer-Librarian, Gerald Allison, gave his Annual Balance Sheet. Gerry also told us that Jim Jeyes had made a very generous donation of many copies of First Series Sexton Blake to the Library, which gesture was much valued by all there. Gerry, too, had bought a good number of Magnets, new to the Library, and both these additions will be very popular with our borrowers.

The re-election of the present officers for another year was proposed and seconded and, as the 'team' would be happy to serve again to the best of their ability, this was passed.

A discussion on summer programmes now followed: recordings, reading, quizzes, and a new series of writings by our members will take place we hope. For the last item several volunteers were forthcoming, and an attempt is to be made, for the entertainment of our members, to give our version of the completion of the Magnet Series which broke off so abruptly in 1940.

A 20 Questions Session followed and the team - Myra Allison, Ron Hodgson, Jack Wood and Tom Roach scored three hits out of five items. The objects were spread a little wider than usual, and the two lost were "Sherlock Holmes's Violin" and "The Mousetrap."

After a break for refreshments we settled down to see a film show put on by Harry Barlow. The first films were taken in South Africa and featured Jack Roberts and Mrs. Roberts (not forgetting the dog!) on their visit to their daughter. After our long, cold winter it was a tonic to see the hot sunshine and gorgeous flowers, avenues of jacaranda trees in full bloom, with Jack and Mrs. Roberts and family relaxing by the swimming pool. There were also some delightful shots taken in an Animal Reserve (from a car) of close-ups of lionesses and cubs, giraffes, monkeys and many other excellent natural actors. Harry finished with his Fantasy Film - which transports viewers to a large Public School which could (almost) be Greyfriars, and also some scenes from his Newquay Holiday.

And so another Meeting came to its close when these colourful films ended.

Next Meeting, Saturday, 10th May, 1969.

M. L. ALLISON, Hon. Secretary.

LONDON

The 21st Anniversary Luncheon Party meeting took place at the Rembrandt Hotel, Kensington, London, S.W.3., on Sunday, April 20th. For this unique occasion there was a pleasing gathering of 45 members and friends. On the top table was the Chairman, Don Webster, ably supported by the President, John Wernham and the three Vice-Presidents, Len Packman, Bob Blythe and Eric Fayne. All the past Chairmen were present with the exception of that stalwart research worker, Bill Lofts, who was unavoidably absent. All

the other officers of the club were present and a full list of their periods of office were given on the excellent menu cards, kindly provided by the President, John Wernham.

To celebrate the occasion, the wines consumed were provided by Len and Josie Packman, the former being one of the two co-founders of the club. Thus the company got off to a good start with the usual glass of sherry to whet the appetites and even the much maligned G.P.O. were in good form as a very fine greetings telegram, sent by Gerry Allison on behalf of the Northern Leeds Club, was read out ere the first course was served. Chairman, Don Webster, welcomed one and all and expressed the wish that all would thoroughly enjoy themselves. Then followed an excellent repast and it fell to the lot of our worthy programme organiser to propose the Loyal Toast to the Queen. This was Bill Hubbard and well he acquitted himself. The next toast was given by Len Packman who proposed the toast of the Old Boys' Book Club.

After the luncheon, the company adjourned to the adjoining room where, thanks to Frank Vernon-Lay, copies of the facsimile Magnet Egyptian series were available. Then as the luncheon room had been cleared, the party returned for a short informal meeting. About a dozen or so members related how they first contacted the club, Ben Whiter read the passage from the 1969 issue of Wisden relating to Greyfriars, the Magnet and Frank Richards. Bill Hubbard displayed a copy of the current issue of Journal of The Cricket Society with the article by Irving Rosenwater, entitled "J. N. Pentelow - A Biographical Enquiry," part of which the writer gave in a talk at last October's Leytonstone meeting.

Many short talks and anecdotes were enjoyed and the time passed all too quickly. One must mention the guest of honour, Miss Edith Hood, who had travelled up from Kingsgate, Tom Porter ably representing the Midland Club and all the others who had travelled long distances to be present.

The venue of the May meeting was announced as Hume House, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22, on the 18th., and then followed the votes of thanks to all concerned in the success of the meeting and this included the banqueting manager of the Rembrandt Hotel. And thus homeward bound with another milestone in the history of the club passed.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

NORMAN WRIGHT (Harrow): Thank you for another very interesting C.D. I hope it will be possible for you to print another rare piece of Hamiltonia when "The Swell of St. Jim's" is finished. I haven't read the story yet; I am waiting until I have every instalment, then I will read the story as a whole.

Bob Blythe's articles on the early struggles of E. S. Brooks are very interesting.

J. RANDOLPH COX (Northfield; U.S.A.): To aid Mr. Giles in his query about Burt I. Standish (Gilbert Patten) ... I don't recall seeing him mentioned in C.D. or the Annual either and assumed that it was because he was little known beyond America. He, of course, wrote the Frank Merriwell stories that appeared in TIP TOP WEEKLY from 1896 to 1915 and then stayed on newstands and book shelves in paperbound reprints, 3 or 4 stories to a book, until the 1930's when the stories seemed to have lost their appeal ... except to collectors, and to those who had made him a part of American folklore. Today, long after the books have been out of print, I still find sports writers refer to Frank Merriwell when they speak of some outstanding football or baseball player. I'm no sports fan myself, but I even get a thrill out of reading about a 9th inning homerun or last minute touchdown if it is Merriwell who is doing the honors. Patten's AUTOBIOGRAPHY called FRANK MERRIWELL'S "FATHER" makes fascinating reading ...

One thing about C.D. impresses me greatly: the gentlemanly quality of debates, even those that seem to be conducted between Mr. Sutton and Mr. Lofts over authorship. I read so many "fanzines" and other publications for those interested in science fiction,

cont'd on Page 32

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comic books, and mystery stories, and too often there will be discussions which read as though someone had ripped his typewriter ribbon in typing his complaints and comments. The editors must need material very much to let some of it be printed. C.D. is always tasteful, literate, and professional. Perhaps this says something for the type of stories and writing that are being collected and discussed. The influence of Charles Hamilton, E. S. Brooks and others in forming tastes and attitudes might be worth exploring some day.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): Mr. Tierney's Cliff House article interested me greatly. His indignation I think, mirrors what all of us have felt who have perused copies of School Friend in vain for mention of Harry Wharton and Co. His confusion would have been the greater had he gone further into the Cliff House saga and read the further adventures as they appeared in The Schoolgirl beginning in 1932. There he would have found that Lanchester had apparently vanished from mortal ken and the Cliff House girls' boy friends were all now located at Friardale Boys' School, and Jack Tollhurst and Co. of Lanchester had been supplanted by Jimmy Richmond and Co. Further new relatives of the Cliff House girls had been invented and so we were introduced to Ralph Lawrence, Marjorie Hazeldene's "Black Sheep" cousin; Keith Redfern, cousin to Babs; and Jack Trevlyn, brother to Clara.

MRS I. M. LEES (Canterbury): What nostalgic memories C.D. brought back. 'When I was very young' Dicky Nugent was my hero. But I soon graduated to the higher forms! Then discovering the "Gem" I never bought another Magnet, much preferring St. Jim's and the Saints. 'Martin Clifford' was the best writer of them all, I thought, and the illustrations - so much better - so much more natural. (Sorry Charles Henry Chapman!) Many things puzzled me though - discrepancies in character and facts. M.C. must suffer from loss of memory sometimes, I thought. Then the horrible shock to find out later that Charles Hamilton wrote all the books, and my suspicion grew that he must have helpers - ghost writers in fact. This I now discover was quite true.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): Last week I obtained for my son, a volume entitled "Cigarette Cavalcade" by A. J. Cruse. Under the heading of 'Issues by Periodicals,' I discovered the following:-

RAILWAY ENGINES were issued with the "Scout," while the popular juvenile weeklies "Pluck," "Adventure," "Rover," "Skipper," "Triumph," "Champion," "Boys' Friend," "Magnet" and "Gem," issued a large number of sets. The cards illustrated exploits of the 1914-18 War - MOTORS, FOOTBALLERS, CRICKETERS, SPEEDWAY STARS, FLAGS, FAMOUS LINERS and WONDERS OF THE WORLD.

Two popular issues were "MONARCHS OF THE RING" and the "WORLD'S POLICE," given away with the "UNION JACK," and no doubt remembered by those who in their early youth, devoured the weekly adventures of SEXTON BLAKE AND TINKER.

LEN WORMHULL (Romford): I was very sorry to learn of the passing of Granville T. Waine. Although I never met him, I had dealings with him in 1965, and found him to be a generous and most trusting person. At this time he was disposing of some 3,000 papers prior to his retirement, and said that he preferred genuine collectors to dealers. He once sent me, on trust, a parcel of rare items to choose from. His pricing was most reasonable, and today I can hardly believe that I turned down the complete set of Holiday Annuals at £15. As Len Packman said, he treated his papers with loving care, each copy sold bearing his own personal stamp and requesting the reader to cherish it.

ARE YOU WRITING SOME FOR COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

FOR 1969? TIME FLIES!