

2'6

**GOLDEN LEAGUE**  
 GROUP No. 11.  
 1920-1921.

Born May, 1925

5. But when he and Captain Gault had done all the customers the 1st July and still more, the crowd got angry and started after them. But this was where our lucky 1 made their escape, with the things or' all. They'll be here again next week.

ENLARGED NUMBER

1-70-1  
L. E. M. C. S. D. F. F.

**12<sub>3</sub>p**

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by

W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by

HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 25

No. 290

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## A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER



### EVERYBODY OUT!

Last month we wondered lazily whether our favourite old writers could have written convincing school stories in 1971.

I'm not sure that Roger Jenkins hasn't carried it a step further in a letter which he wrote me recently. Concerning the Buddle story in the new C.D. Annual, Mr. Jenkins wrote: "I fancy I have come across headmasters like Mr. Scarlet in real life, but, of course, in state schools, teachers don't stand in danger of such arbitrary dismissal."

Though the Buddle stories are written in modern times, they are purposely set back in time. The actual time is uncertain to some extent. The reader can place it to please himself.

In the old "Raffles" stories, and in Priestley's "Laburnum Grove," the reader sympathises with the criminal and hopes he gets away with it. (If the reader happened to be the burgled, the cheated, or even the coshed, his sympathies would reverse in startling fashion.) The writer of "The Buddle Pavilion" was obviously morally unbalanced, for he artfully slanted his story so that his readers disliked Mr. Scarlet the wicked Head, and sympathised with Mr. Buddle who bent the rules to suit himself. Buddle fans were happy that he got away with it.

Yet, in fact, Mr. Scarlet was right. Mr. Buddle was wrong. Presumably, he knew the rules of the school before he took the well-paid position which he valued so much. If he didn't like them, he should not have taken the job.

Even in 1971 there must be someone in authority, if wheels are to turn smoothly. A couple of dozen little bosses who throw their weight about but who have no real authority are not likely to be helpful, as we found out at Excelsior House when we were converted to natural gas on November 2nd. It is now mid-January, and we are not out of their clutches yet. As for a couple of dozen little bosses in the Fourth Form - well, alas for education.

### A KIND OF STAPLING

The comic papers had no staples. In consequence, the centre sheet was often lost. The Magnet, Lee, and Union Jack had staples which, with the passing of time, rusted; the paper round the staples rotted, and once again, the middle sheet was often lost. Most destructive of all were the staples in the Schoolboys' Own Library. They ended life like a cancer. Yet modern paperbacks, without staples, fall apart like a body after an explosion.

Readers of that charming old paper "The Sunday Companion" find that the periodical is no longer stapled - probably in the interests of economy.

Some of us go wild when we get a stapler in our hands. Everything has to be stapled to something else. My fingers are scarred from the wounds in my fingers caused in my efforts to remove those horrid staples. A day or two ago one gentleman sent me a 5d postage stamp stapled to a letter. I tried to detach it, and ended up with the stamp

in fragments, my fingers punctured, and the letter covered with my life blood. So I have mixed feelings about staples.

### BASED ON THE BOOK?

On TV recently they showed "Murder Most Foul," said to be the film version of Agatha Christie's pleasant novel "Mrs. McGinty's Dead." Any connection between the two must have been coincidental. What on earth is the purpose of film makers claiming to make a film from a book when, in truth, the film is quite unlike the book? Our beloved Margaret Rutherford played Miss Marple in "Murder Most Foul," but she is really nothing like the little old lady depicted by Agatha Christie. And "Mrs. McGinty's Dead" was a Poirot story, in any case.

### SOARING COSTS

With overhead costs rising daily in some sphere or other, it is not surprising that small firms are dying like flies under a lethal spray. This month, postal charges are to rocket. Letters, parcels, everything.

When dual postage charges came in, we arranged a system whereby those who wished to get their copies of this magazine a day earlier than others could do so. About 50% of our subscribers now receive their copies by first-class mail. With the increase of 1st class mail to 7d and 2nd class mail to 6d, nearly all copies will in future be sent out by 2nd class mail. The only exceptions will be the very small number who have already allowed for these gigantic increases in postal charges.

### THE UGLY SISTERS

Decimalisation and metrication are with us, whether we want them or not. The old sizes of paper which we have always known may soon be no more. It may well be that it will be necessary to change the format of both this magazine and of Collectors' Digest Annual. It seems likely that our next Annual may comprise longer and narrower sheets, and similar size changes may be necessary with the Digest. If the old sizes of paper are no longer available - or,

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alternatively, only available with a considerable amount of waste - the changes will be inevitable.

For many years we have sent this magazine out in large envelopes, which has meant that we could post the copies without folding. For several years the post office has threatened us with POP - which means Post Office Preferred. This means that only envelopes of certain limited sizes can be used, or, at least, only used at normal rates of postage. In the near future, it may be necessary for us to send out C.D. folded once, which, perhaps, may not bother readers too much. It is likely that, even now, postmen fold them to push them through letter-boxes in your homes. An additional point is that our large 10 x 7 envelopes are expensive - and getting more expensive all the time.

If these changes have to come about, we hope that you will blame the Ugly Sisters which we are compelled to adopt in this country in the name of progress - and not us.

### GET-UP-AND-GO

Recently I came on some verses which tickled me pink. They appeared in the Winter issue of the BRA Review, a quarterly magazine sent out to all members of the British Rheumatism and Arthritis Association. This association gives all sorts of wonderful help to those who suffer from rheumatic twinges - and who doesn't? And members also receive the most interesting Review every quarter. The annual subscription is only £1 (5/- for pensioners). Their address is 1 Devonshire Place, London, W1N 2BD.

Here, then, is an extract from those verses I mentioned earlier. I feel sure that the charming folk who run the B.R.A. will not mind my reprinting them for you.

How do I know that my youth is all spent?  
Well, my get-up-and-go has got up and went!  
But in spite of it all I am able to grin  
When I think of where my get-up has been.

continued overleaf ...

Old age is golden, so I've heard it said,  
But sometimes I wonder on going to bed,  
With my ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup,  
My eyes on the table until I wake up.

E'er sleep dims my eyes I say to myself,  
Is there anything else should be laid on the shelf?  
I am happy to say as I close the door,  
My friends are the same, perhaps even more.

I get up each morning and dust off my wits,  
Pick up the paper and read the 'obits';  
If my name is not there I know I'm not dead,  
So I get a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Well, we're all getting on, aren't we? And if we haven't any  
twinges yet - those twinges I spoke of above - our turn will come.

#### THE EDITOR

\*\*\*\*\*  
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# DANNY'S DIARY

## FEBRUARY 1921

Thank goodness that the cost of everything is going down all the time. The cost of living has fallen by 3/- in the pound since October 1920, just four months.

We had high hopes that England might bring back the Ashes from Australia, but no. The English cricket team over there, under J. W. H. T. Douglas, has lost every one of the Test Matches.

In the Boys' Friend this month every Rookwood story has starred Mr. Bootles. Mysterious things were happening to him, and it turned out that he has become a millionaire. His Uncle Mortimer has left Mr. Bootles all his money - but cousin Mortimer Stacey is a villain who will get rid of Mr. Bootles if he can. The stories were named "The Mystery of Mr. Bootles," "The Rookwood Millionaire," and "The End Study to the Rescue." Final story, "Tubby Wants Adopting," was a real rib-tickler. Tubby Muffin decides that he would like to be adopted by the millionaire, Mr. Bootles.

The Cedar Creek stories have been good as always. In "Frozen Out," Mr. Isaacs compelled Frank Richards to sell the newspaper which he had bought. "The Cedar Creek Ventriloquist" was Chunky Todgers trying out a new stunt. Mr. Peckover, the Head of Hillcrest, was snowballed in "False Witness," and swore that he had seen Frank Richards throw the snowball. Frank was about to get a whacking from his uncle when Dicky Bird confessed that he had thrown it. So, in the next tale, "The Coming of Mrs. Peckover," the Cedar Creek chums got their own back on Peckover when Frank disguised himself as an awful female and claimed that Mr. Peckover was her husband.

Doug bought two tip-top Sexton Blake Libraries which he later passed on to me. They were "The Secret of the Frozen North," introducing Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie, and another fine tale called "Kestrel's Conspiracy."

Two men named Field and Gray have been on trial and were sentenced to death for the murder of Irene Munro on the Crumbles near Eastbourne.

The Gem has been back in top form this month with the real

writer giving us three of the four stories. "The Cowboy of St. Jim's" and "Fun at the Crystal Palace" each starred the new Canadian boy Kit Wildrake. Then, in "Wildrake to the Rescue," the cowboy rescued M. Labarre who had been kidnapped while on his way to take up a post as temporary French master at St. Jim's.

Finally, "Cardew Makes Amends" was heralded as a very special Cardew story, but it was rather a dud. There is a new portrait gallery in the Gem, on the back page. Jack Blake started it off, and was followed by Arthur Augustus.

Chuckles, the comic paper, has given away a working model of Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, the lovely characters in the Daily Mirror.

In very bad weather, the trawler "Wishful" has been sunk and lost with every member of the crew. There are so many sea disasters at this time of year.

The Magnet is struggling on with its dreary programme of Greyfriars stories. "Scaring the School" was a tale for very, very easily-satisfied readers. The neighbourhood round Greyfriars was in terror from a monster, which turned out to have been invented by Kipps. First time I knew Kipps was an inventor. "Harry Wharton's Sacrifice" concerned a banknote belonging to Mauleverer, and pinched by Hazeldene.

Finally, two tales which really smacked bottom. (If I were a rude boy, I would suggest that the writer deserved the same treatment.) They were entitled "The Form-Master's Disgrace" and "By Wingate's Aid." Mr. Quelch's prodigal young brother turned up. He calls Mr. Quelch, Horace. A £50 note is stolen from Dr. Locke, and Mr. Quelch gets the blame. But the thief was Loder who also provided a fake photograph showing Mr. Quelch chatting with a bookie on a racecourse. So Mr. Quelch gets the boot. In the second story, Loder is exposed as the thief, and he is expelled. "As the last words of this terrible sentence burst into his brain, Gerald Loder completely broke down. He turned on his heel, and, choking with sobs, staggered blindly from the headmaster's study."

When Mr. Quelch came back, the prefects carried him shoulder high across the quad. He put in a kind word for Loder - so Loder stays on at Greyfriars. I expect he's looking out for another £50 note.

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At the pictures we have seen W. S. Hart in "The Toll Gate;" Harold Lloyd in "Neighbours;" Charlie Chaplin in "Shoulder Arms;" Mary Pickford in "Pollyanna;" Charles Ray in "The Ole Swimming Hole;" and Eric Strome in "Blind Husbands." (Eric Strome is really named Eric Von Stroheim, but German names aren't too popular over here at the moment, so the exhibitors have changed it.)

\*\*\*\*\*  
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# BLAKIANA

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

I am getting very low on material for Blakiana. Will some of you Sexton Blake fans please write something for me? Did anyone see an episode of the current Sexton Blake serial on TV? I was at home on the afternoon of January 6th and was able at last to watch an episode. I thought it was excellently presented and worthy of being shown at a peak-viewing hour instead of being relegated to the children's period. I still think Mr. Laurence Payne portrays our favourite detective very well indeed. Tinker was "hors de combat" most of the time in this episode, but I am sure Roger Foss still gives a good performance. Maybe if all of you were to write to Thames Television and ask them for a repeat at a later time in the evening, they might oblige. After all, most of the best programmes are repeats!!!

More about the Catalogues next month.

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## HUMBLE BEGGE — A VIGNETTE

by Josie Packman

The creator of the little-known Humble Begge was one of the gifted Murray family - Andrew Murray - author and creator of many other well-known characters who appeared in the Sexton Blake stories of long ago. There was the Hon. John Lawliss, later changed to Lawless and his man Sam; Trouble Nantucket the American detective; Count Bonalli, known as the Owl because he could only see in the dark; Adrian Steele, star newspaper reporter of the "Mercury," "adventurer extraordinaire"; and perhaps most famous of all Professor Kew and Count Ivor Carlac.

It is the human and humble "Humble Begge" about whom I am going to write this time. His story can only be called a "Vignette" because of the vague references to his background and early adventures abroad. All we know is that he was the owner of the Eastern Brethren's Hostel in Groeben Square, Islington, to which place any foreign sailor

could go for food and shelter.

According to my records there were only nine Union Jack stories and one Sexton Blake Library tale in which Mr. Begge appeared. Sexton Blake's first view of him was from his consulting room window, when Humble Begge brought down an antagonist by the use of his old umbrella, a very deft use, which was to happen often in future tales. This happened in the very first chapter of the story in U.J. No. 624, entitled "At 4 o'clock," dated 15th September, 1915; the chapter also contained this description: "A little narrow-shouldered individual had just come to a halt on the edge of the pavement. He was dressed in a frock-coat of the wide-skirted variety, narrow peg topped trousers baggy at the knees, black shoes with thick soles, a soft black hat, and, under one arm, an umbrella of very ancient pattern." But underneath this queer garb Sexton Blake was to discover a man of swift action. Begge's own description of himself was "a man of peace." He first made himself known to Sexton Blake after getting involved with some Japanese villains who were out for revenge on some unsuspecting person. Humble Begge's appearance and general character were so vastly different to any of Andrew Murray's other creations, yet in a vague way underneath all the oddness he resembled John Lawless in his love of "fighting for the right."

Each tale which appeared was a gem, a different style of adventure involving people of many lands. The other tales were as follows:

U. J. No. 626	dated	October	9th, 1915	The Death Sleep.
U. J. No. 629	"	October	30th, 1915	Self Accused.
U. J. No. 636	"	December	18th, 1915	The Case of the African Missionary.
U. J. No. 640	"	January	15th, 1916	A Marked Man.
U. J. No. 647	"	March	4th, 1916	The Affair of the Ulledon Plate.
U. J. No. 709	"	May	5th, 1917	The Grimsdale Abbey Affair.
U. J. No. 725	"	September	1st, 1917	When Greek meets Greek.
S.B.L. 1st Series, No. 214, February, 1922, Beyond the Law.				
This story was sub-titled "A Story of Mystery and Adventure in the				

Hills of Kentucky." Actually a tale of illicit stills at the time of the American Prohibition.

The last tale to appear was in the U.J. No. 1009, dated 10th February, 1923, entitled "The Case of the Bamboo Rods." It was one of a series of tales printed at that time supposedly in reply to many requests from readers for the return of old characters. Whether they were authentic remains a mystery which even Sexton Blake could not solve.

# # #

### CAIRO NIGHTS

by "Anon"

In a recent article in the "C.D." it was pointed out that Frank Richards, in his Egyptian Series, omitted to mention that the view the Greyfriars' Juniors enjoyed from Shepheard's Hotel balcony included Cairo's famous gay quarter. But if our Frank was remiss in this matter, then that alert and personable purveyor of pithy tales, Gwyn Evans, certainly was not.

When he wrote "The Broken Sphinx" for the U.J. in 1930, he gave a fairly comprehensive picture of the area in question, as seen through the eyes of the "Daily Radio's" ace reporter, Splash Page, in company with one of the leading characters in the story, Larry Lester.

It was Splash who first suggested a walk round the notorious quarters at the back of the Esbekia Gardens, and when Lester asked was it quite safe, Splash assured him it was, that it was the only spot of colour remaining in Cairo, and that it was best seen at night. And so —

"They hailed a passing gharri and alighted at that malodorous quarter in the rear of the beautiful Esbekia Gardens, where all the romance, vice, and stench of the Orient congregated, in a long and narrow street that is by no means straight.

Naphtha flares threw strange and fantastic shadows on the walls. In the doorways and on the balconies of the houses lolled slim Arab girls with dark khol'd eyes, painted lips, and loaded with trumpery jewellery.

Scores of little Arab cafes were open. From within came the

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click-click of backgammon boards.

From a squalid house the sound of an Arab zither, accompanied by the shrill voice of an Ouled Nail as she danced for the delectation of the assembled guests.

"Queer place," said Splash Page, as he led the way through labyrinthine alleys.

Though Lester had been in Cairo before, he had never penetrated quite as far into its underworld as this.

"That's Antichrist's house," Splash remarked casually as they passed a low, sinister-shaped building on the balconies of which half a dozen brown-skinned women decked in flamboyant jewellery, called down ribald cries in Arabic.

A furtive figure sidled up to them, a packet of cigarettes in his hand. His nostrils twitched incessantly, and he bared his yellow teeth in what was meant to be an ingratiating smile.

"Cigarettes, sir, very special cigarettes, twenty piastres only," he wheezed.

Splash's face grew grim, and he ripped out that expressive Arabic oath which embraces not only the curse, but his house, his relatives, and his children, even unto the third and fourth generation.

The whining figure vanished into the shadows, and Lester glanced curiously at Splash Page.

"Dirty little scut!" Splash explained. "He's a snow man, a peddler of cocaine. The top layer of those cigarettes are perfectly ordinary, but those underneath are fake. They are simply cigarette papers pasted around tiny phials of cocaine."

"Gosh!" said Lester in an awed voice. "You seem to know a good deal about this part of the world, Mr. Page."

Splash chuckled.

"That's my job," he remarked. "I'm a newspaper man."

THE END

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**SEE PAGE 22**

Sweet lavender and portly baronets. Join with us in this Melodrama of 60 Years Ago.

## THE ONLY WAY

Bob Cherry went up into the Remove passage to go to his study. Most of the Lower Fourth had come in to tea, and the passage was pretty well crowded. As Bob came up there were inquiries from all sides. Bob's face was white, and he walked with a curious twist, as if he had a pain somewhere - as, indeed, he had. The angry, passionate senior had gone very near to hurting him seriously.

"What's the matter, Bob?" asked Harry Wharton anxiously.

"I was caught in the prefects' room."

"Oh! Loder?"

"No; Valence. Come into my study and I'll tell you."

"Come into mine," said Wharton.

"We're just going to have tea, and we've got a good spread."

Bob Cherry came into Study No. 1, the apartment shared by Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. Bob Cherry had been a tenant of that study once, and he was always a welcome guest there. John Bull and Fisher T. Fish of the Remove were also there to tea. Bob Cherry sank into a chair, with a slight gasp.

"What did they do to you, Bob?" Frank Nugent asked. "You look as if you had been through it rather bad."

Bob grunted.

"So I have," he said. "It was that beast Valence. You see, I dodged behind Loder's desk when I heard somebody come in, and they began to talk; and I thought it out, and showed myself, so as not to listen. But I had heard something, you see, and Valence twisted me over the table and hurt my back."

Wharton's eyes gleamed with anger.

"The brute!" he exclaimed. "He might have injured you."

"He would have, I think, only Courtney stopped him. Courtney was very decent," said Bob, rubbing his aching back. "He's had a row with Valence on my account."

"I wonder he's been able to stand that chap so long," said John Bull. "It's perfectly well-known that Valence goes down to the Cross Keys with Loder and Carne and Ionides and that he goes poaching of a night. Courtney isn't that sort himself."

"There's a reason, I guess," grinned Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I know, too. Courtney is spoons on Valence's sister."

"Oh, the duffer!"

"But why should Valence be so ratty about your being there, Bob?" asked Harry Wharton.

"It was about the rotter poaching," said Bob Cherry. "He tried to make me promise not to tell what I had heard, and I wouldn't. I want one of you to rub my back with Elliman's to-night. And you're going to help me make that bouncer sit up?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wharton.

"Courtney was rowing him for selling game after poaching it. The unspeakable animal has been selling partridges belonging to old Hilton Popper," said Bob. "If that isn't burglary I don't know what is. I can understand a chap poaching for a bit of fun; but to snare game and sell it, that's stealing. Courtney told him so, and it got Valence's rag out awfully. He's going out to-night, poaching; and my idea is that we ought to be on the scene."

"And stop him!"

"Yes. I don't see why we can't be waiting for him at the end of the Sixth Form passage - say, with a pail of soot-and-water. It will be rather a surprise for him in the dark."

"He won't dare to make a row either, in case he has to explain where he was going."

"I say, you fellows ---"

The study door had opened, and a fat face, adorned by a pair of very big spectacles, was looking in. The juniors all glanced round, but there were no

welcoming smiles on their faces. Billy Bunter never was a welcome guest in any study.

Bob Cherry picked up the butter-gish.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

Bunter blinked at him warily.

"Oh really, Cherry! Don't be a beast, you know. I didn't come here for your rotten feed. I thought you'd like to know what's happening."

"What is it?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Old Popper's dogcart has just driven in," chuckled Billy Bunter; "and old Popper's in it, looking as red as a turkey-cock."

The juniors were on their feet at once, and tea was forgotten. Well they knew Sir Hilton Popper, one of the largest landowners in the district, and an enthusiastic preserver of game. They had had many little rubs with him themselves on such questions as picnicking on the upper reaches of the Sark; but of late they had not sinned in that particular way, and it was unlikely that Sir Hilton Popper had come to the school on their account.

"I guess it's for Valence," said Fisher T. Fish. "Let's go and see the guy come in. I've seen him on the warpath before, and he's comic."

And the chums of the Remove ran out of the study in haste, forgetting Billy Bunter, and forgetting the tea.

In a second more Billy Bunter was busy, and the good things the chums of the Remove had provided for their tea were disappearing at an amazing speed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The well-known grunt of Sir Hilton Popper greeted the chums of the Remove as they reached the doorway. A crowd of fellows, seniors and juniors, had already collected there. They, too, found Sir Hilton Popper comic when he was angry. Just now he appeared to be in a towering passion. His ruddy, fat face was perfectly crimson, his light blue eyes seemed to glitter and scintillate from the deep red of his countenance, and his white moustache was trembling with rage.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows took

off their caps as the baronet alighted from his dogcart. Some didn't. Some grinned.

The baronet strode up the steps.

The boys fell away on both sides to allow him room. It might have been quite dangerous to stand in the way of Sir Hilton Popper at that moment. He had a riding-crop in his hand, and he looked as if he particularly wished for an excuse to bring it down across somebody's shoulders.

Wingate was in the hall, and he met the irate baronet with a look of surprise. Sir Hilton Popper stopped, and stared at him.

"Are you the fellow?" he demanded.

Wingate stared.

"What fellow?"

"The fellow who has been poaching on my land, and stealing my partridges!" roared the baronet, turning from crimson to purple.

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Wingate. "If you have been drinking, you had better go home, sir."

Sir Hilton Popper seemed on the verge of a severe attack of apoplexy. The riding-crop trembled in his hand.

"One of you has been poaching on my estate!" he gasped out, at last. "My head keeper saw him - not his face, as he was running - but he recognised him as a Greyfriars boy by his clothes."

"Oh, one of the juniors, perhaps."

"No, sir!" roared Sir Hilton. "It was a big fellow - a fellow as tall as a man, my keeper declares - one of the head boys of the school."

"Impossible!"

"Impossible!" roared the baronet.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"There is some mistake, sir," said Wingate quietly. "I don't believe a senior of this school would play such tricks. Besides --"

"Was it you?" demanded Sir Hilton Popper, as Courtney came up to join Wingate.

Courtney gave him a stare of astonishment.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he said.

"Have you been poaching on my estate, you young villain!"

"Certainly not!"

"Have you?" roared Sir Hilton, turning to Valence, who was standing leaning against the wall, and regarding the scene with a smile.

Valence laughed.

"If I had I should hardly say so, I suppose," he replied. "I should recommend you to go and lie down, old gentleman."

And there was a laugh from the fellows near at hand.

The baronet gasped for breath.

"Where is the Head?" he shouted. "I demand to see the Head! Where is Dr. Locke?"

"I will show you to his study, sir," said Wingate.

And Sir Hilton Popper followed the captain of Greyfriars to the Head's study. The Greyfriars' captain tapped at the door, and looked in.

"Will you see Sir Hilton Popper, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Dr. Locke. "Ask him to step in."

The baronet stamped in. Wingate withdrew quietly and closed the door, leaving the enraged landowner alone with the Head of Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke rose to his feet. He had received visits from the baronet before and generally to hear some complaint. The baronet's manner was sufficient indication that it was to make another complaint that he had come, and a more serious one than usual. But the Head's manner was courteous.

"Pray be seated," he said.

"Thank you, I prefer to stand," said Sir Hilton. "I have a very serious complaint to make, Dr. Locke."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"I have complained before of juniors trespassing upon my land."

"You have," assented the Head, with irony in his voice.

"Boys," said the baronet, in a tone that clearly indicated that his opinion was that all boys were dangerous animals that ought to be kept in cages -- "boys have trespassed on my land, and picnicked there, sir - lighted fires, sir, and burned my wood."

"Dear me!"

"But that is not what I have called upon you about, sir. That is a minor matter, in comparison with what has lately happened - with the crime that has been committed now, Dr. Locke."

"Crime, sir!"

Dr. Locke was a little startled.

"Yes, sir!" exclaimed Sir Hilton Popper. "Crime, sir! I suppose you call poaching a crime, do you not, sir?"

"I should hardly call it a crime, though certainly it is very reprehensible," said the Head of Greyfriars. "But surely the police would be the proper quarter."

"I shall certainly invoke the aid of the police, Dr. Locke. But the matter concerns you very directly."

"In what way?"

"Your boys have been poaching in my preserves, sir - stealing my partridges!"

"Impossible!"

The baronet choked.

"Impossible! But it is true, sir."

"I am sure that even the most reckless juniors would never poach your birds, sir," said the Head.

"Last night, sir, my head keeper caught one of the scoundrels at work. He was a Greyfriars boy, but he was not a junior. He was a big boy - certainly one of the boys in your Fifth or Sixth Form."

"I cannot believe it!"

"For some time past," roared Sir Hilton, "my partridges have been stolen. They were taken in snares, sir, and I attributed it to the village poachers. But I know now, sir, that your boys are the delinquents. You teach them, sir, to steal the property of others."

"Sir Hilton!"

"There have been dozens and dozens of the birds taken - taken at night, sir - and by your boys."

"I cannot think so."

"My head keeper is a reliable man, sir. Parker was my servant in the Army, sir, and I know him to be trustworthy. He declares that it was a Greyfriars boy whom he saw in the wood."

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"He did not speak to the boy?"

"The boy gave him no chance, sir."

"Can he identify him?"

"He did not see his face."



"Bring me some evidence that it is the case, someone who can identify such a boy, and certainly he shall be severely punished," said the Head, frowning. "I should expel such a boy from the school instantly."

"Is not my word sufficient?" roared Sir Hilton.

"But it is not your word - it is the word of your keeper, who may be mistaken."

"Parker is a most reliable man."

"And you do not accuse any boy specifically. You do not expect me to expel the whole of the upper school on suspicion, I presume," said Dr. Locke, growing sarcastic.

The baronet gasped with wrath.

"Parade them, sir, and question them before me!" he exclaimed. "I will question them. I will bring the guilt home to the guilty party, sir."

"That is impossible. I cannot subject my boys to such an insult," said the Head tartly.

"Then - then - then" - Sir Hilton seemed to be at a loss for words - "sir, I regard you as being responsible! I regard you as instructing the boys in your charge, sir, to pick and steal. I regard you as an unworthy schoolmaster, sir."

Dr. Locke touched the bell, and Trotter entered.

"Show this gentleman out, Trotter," said the Head.

Sir Hilton Popper almost exploded.

"I will go, sir - I will go, begad!"

"This way, sir," said Trotter.

"I will appeal to the law, sir. I will have the woods watched, sir. I will have the scoundrels found and arrested."

Sir Hilton Popper stamped out after Trotter. Dr. Locke sat down, and breathed hard. Sir Hilton Popper was a very trying visitor. The most dissatisfied parent was not so trying as Sir Hilton Popper.

(More thrills and spills next month)

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### LONDON O.B.B.C. - Hamiltonian Library

Library parcels may be posted back after February 5th to Roger Jenkins at his new address - 8 Russell Road, Havant, Hants., PO9 2DG.

After decimalisation, postage on the average parcel will be 24p and registration 25p, making 49p in all. Loan charges will be 1p per Magnet or Gem and 2p per S.O.L., making 24p per parcel. The normal remittance will thus be 73p per parcel.

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## *EDITOR'S CHANGE OF ADDRESS*

# *See page 22*

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

## A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

Since Jack Grey's contribution to the St. Frank's magazine was published recently I have been inundated with requests for more extracts from this Junior magazine that was so popular in the old days. And with Nipper's permission I present a short article that was originally written by Reggie Pitt. It is entitled:-

"Fatty Little's Cold"

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"ATISHO-O-O-O!"

Fatty Little buried his nose in his handkerchief.

"Great jumping pancakes!" he gasped painfully. "This blessed cold is going to be the death of me! I've been sneezing all the afternoon, and if I don't take something for it I shall sneeze my head off!"

The fat junior was in the Remove passage, and he addressed his remarks to some Removites who stood nearby. Several of them grinned unsympathetically.

"About the only thing to cure you is to go and have a bite to eat!" said Conroy Minor. "Don't forget the old saying, Fatty - 'feed a cold and starve a fever!' Anybody can see that you don't have half enough nourishment ---"

"I believe you're right!" said Fatty, with a nod. "Talking of grub reminds me that I haven't had anything to eat for at least half an hour! Great Bloaters! There's a terrific gnawing going on inside my tummy --- and that's a sure sign that grub is required! I'll take your advice, Conroy, and recharge the interior!"

Hubbard snorted.

"You greedy glutton!" he exclaimed. "Eating's all you can think of! Why don't you go down to the chemist's and get a bottle of Leno's Lightning Lotion or Brown's Original Orangejuice? They're both terrific things for curing a cold!"

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"Rot!" cut in Skelton, with a sniff. "I know something to beat that hollow! What about Conyer's Concentrated Cinnamon, eh? Two doses of that stuff and you'll be right as rain!"

Fatty Little looked at the speakers dubiously.

"They sound all right," he admitted. "But I don't believe in cold cures much as a rule! Grub is the only thing that will cure me, at any rate! I know that for a fact ---"

"You blithering idiot!" said Handforth, coming out of his study at that moment to see what the argument was about. "As if grub is any good for a cold! A porpoise like you ought to starve yourself for about a fortnight to get rid of a cold! At the end of that time you'd be cured!"

Fatty nodded.

"Oh, rather!" he agreed. "There's no doubt of that, Handy! I should be in my grave before the first week was over! Oh, blow the rotten cold!"

He exploded again into his handkerchief, and the juniors grinned once more. Somehow, a fellow with a cold always causes amusement - but there's not much fun in it for the sufferer.

"How the thunder did you get this cold?" demanded Handforth.

"Oh, in the usual way, I suppose," said Fatty. "It came - that's all I know! But I fancy I got my feet a bit damp yesterday ---"

"Well, in that case, I know the very stuff to recommend," said Handforth, with an important air. "Take my advice, Fatty, and get a bottle of Perkin's Perfect Preparation for the Prevention of colds! It's great! I'll tell you what -- I'm going down to the village in a tick, and I'll bring it back with me!"

Fatty thanked Handforth for his generosity, and straight away went to Mrs. Hake's little tuckshop - bent on "feeding his cold" to his utmost capacity.

Some little time later McClure brought him the medicine which Handforth had purchased, and the fat junior wasted no time in imbibing it. Neither did he waste any of the "Perfected Preparation," for he drained the bottle to the last drop, apparently enjoying it thoroughly.

Handforth probably thought no more of the matter at all, but as events turned out, he happened to be crossing the Triangle a little while later, when he heard a curious groaning sound. He was accompanied by

Church and McClure, and with one accord the trio dashed towards a dark form which was sprawling on the ground.

"Great pip! It's Fatty!" gasped Handforth. "What the deuce is he doing out here in this state? Hi! Fatty, you idiot! What's up?"

A hollow groan was the only answer Handforth received for a moment, but then the porpoise of the Remove sat up.

"Great doughnuts!" he moaned, holding his stomach painfully. "What -- what did you recommend that ghastly stuff to me for, Handy? Just now I thought I was going to peg out on the spot!"

Handforth stared.

"What stuff?" he demanded.

"Why - that muck you called Perkin's Perfect Preparation!" roared Fatty. "You told me it was a good thing for a cold, didn't you?"

Handforth snorted.

"No, I didn't," he bellowed. "I told you it was terrific stuff for the prevention of colds - and so it is! Where is it?"

"Where is it, you fathead?" gasped Fatty. "I drank it, of course - all the blessed bottleful! And in about two ticks I was nearly doubled up with gripes ---"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Handforth. "You - you silly lunatic! Do you mean to say you didn't look on the label?"

Fatty shook his head.

"No jolly fear!" he said. "I took your word that the stuff was all right, and scoffed the lot!"

Handforth roared again.

"No wonder you felt a pain, you fat dummy!" he said unsympathetically. "That stuff wasn't meant to drink at all! It's a patent preparation for shoving on the soles of your boots - to keep out the wet!"

Fatty almost collapsed.

"Great cheesecakes!" he moaned. "Then I'm poisoned! I shall have to take an emetic ---"

"Bosh!" said Handforth. "The stuff isn't poison! Perhaps it will cure your cold, after all, Fatty! At any rate, it's a dead cert that it can't harm you, whatever it is! You're too thundering well lined!"

Handforth, for once, proved to be right - for Fatty Little survived the ordeal, and was soon stuffing his interior in the same manner as usual. And, strange to say, he did not mention his cold to another soul. Evidently he was not taking any more advice!

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## A PEEP INTO THE FUTURE

by R. J. Godsave

Whether E. S. Brooks was in a prophetic frame of mind when he wrote the Communist School series in 1921/22 will never be known. What is known is that many modern Universities in Great Britain are now running perilously close to the set up at St. Frank's at that period.

The students of the University of Essex have recently forced the authorities to change the Bankers of the University for purely political reasons.

To those readers of nearly 50 years ago it would have seemed to be just another of Brooks' excursions into the realms of fantasy, although he was clever enough to write a plausible and interesting series.

Timothy Tucker of the Remove, who was already well-known for his anti-establishment ideas, was a ready-made vehicle for carrying out the communising of St. Frank's by his Brotherhood of the Free organisation.

As in real life, positions of absolute power attract the wrong type of person, and we find that Simon Kenmore, a member of the all-powerful St. Frank's Tribunal, had the additional office of Chief Punishment Server, an appointment that pleased him immensely.

It was only because Dr. Stafford, on Nelson Lee's insistence, was confined to his rooms as a precaution against further attempts by Hugh Trenton, the Science Master, to administer a poison which had the effect of transforming the kindly personality of the Head to that of a vicious and savage brute. In these circumstances all communications had to be by letter which gave Reginald Pitt of the Remove the opportunity to forge a notice of agreement to the rebelling boys, recognising

their request that St. Frank's go communist in the running of the school.

Naturally, this state of affairs could not last, as indeed it was fast developing into something very much akin to terrorism. It was on the advice of Nelson Lee that Dr. Stafford allowed the forgery to stand as a means of ending the absurdity and allow the school to return to the old system.

It is obvious that with students or scholars in control, or partial control, of an educational system, it must lead to a lowering of accepted standards.

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# VERY SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

WILL OUR READERS PLEASE NOTE!

COLLECTORS' DIGEST IS LEAVING SURBITON

On and after 22nd FEBRUARY 1971 your Editor's address will be -

**EXCELSIOR HOUSE**  
**113 CROOKHAM ROAD**  
**FLEET**  
**HAMPSHIRE**

Until that date, please address to Surbiton as usual.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 155. THE CURIOUS CASE OF THIN BUNTER

At this late hour we can only speculate as to why, with Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, and Cedar Creek already on his plate, he started the new Benbow series - and doggedly stayed with it - in the Greyfriars Herald of 1919 and 1920. If he intended to concentrate on the Benbow, as he obviously did, along with Rookwood and Cedar Creek, it was clear to anyone that Greyfriars and St. Jim's had to be neglected. As sometimes happens when a family grows too large, the younger ones are pampered and the older ones are left to fend for themselves.

Did he, perhaps, hope (as he so ardently did with Carcroft after the second world war) that the Benbow would be a new and striking success, to surpass in popularity Greyfriars and St. Jim's? After all, it was a school on a ship, which was strikingly novel.

Had it, in fact, been a real school ship, after the style, say, of the Mercury, at Hamble, he might have been on to a winner, even though his fans were notoriously conservative.

Unfortunately, apart from the ship background, the Benbow was a hackneyed series. There was the stereotyped leader, Jack Drake, with his very ordinary, humble, and true blue pal, Rodney; there was the stock villain (Daubeny); there was the inevitable fat boy (Tuckey Toodles) and the Head was very much the Head of fiction, even down to the "Doctor" in his name.

I am not saying that the Benbow stories were not pleasant enough. I enjoyed them as a child, at any rate for a time. But there was nothing that could compete with Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

We have proof here that Hamilton actually fell a victim to his own creations. Greyfriars and St. Jim's carried on successfully in the Magnet and Gem, even though they were almost all written by substitute writers who churned out the utmost rubbish, while the talented writer concentrated on a little series which was dragging its heels.

For about a year the Benbow carried on as a school on a ship. Then the Benbow went to sea, and school life changed to rather indifferent adventures in the West Indies. This factor alone proved that

the Herald stories were not a hit, or such a change would never have been made. After the Benbow returned to England, the school closed down, and Drake and Rodney went to Greyfriars.

For many months, the Greyfriars stories, with the cast augmented by Drake and Rodney from the Benbow, continued in what was now named the Greyfriars Boys' Herald. By the end of 1920, the Greyfriars series had ended, and the paper became just the Boys' Herald. It carried on for a while with an odd miscellany of stories, mainly serials.

And, from that time, the Greyfriars Herald went as a supplement in the Magnet, in which format it was probably more highly appreciated.

But the Greyfriars stories, in 1920, in the Greyfriars Boys' Herald, were indeed an odd factor. My collection is not complete, but all those I have were written by Charles Hamilton himself, and it is probable that he wrote every one of the series. So we have the incredible and fantastic picture of substitute writers supplying the Magnet with stories, while Hamilton himself was writing stories, also of Greyfriars, for a paper which had never enjoyed much popularity. Even today, nobody knows much of those Greyfriars tales in the Herald - they were little pot-boilers, though much superior to the Magnet's weird lot at the time - and few were reprinted, though one or two turned up mysteriously in the closing weeks of the Popular.

To wind up the series, Drake became Ferrers Locke's assistant and Hamilton favoured the Herald with a short series of 'tec tales about the pair.

But there were several curious factors concerning the Benbow stories and the isolated Greyfriars stories which replaced them in the Herald.

In the second Holiday Annual, published in September 1920, there was a long St. Jim's story entitled "All Gussy's Fault" in which Gussy arranged for a cricket fixture between St. Jim's juniors and St. Winifred's on the Benbow. Nobody at St. Jim's knew that Drake and Rodney had reorganised St. Winifred's, which was not now the rabbit of a fixture that it had once been. It was an excellent tale, one purpose of it, obviously, being to advertise the Benbow stories in the



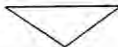
Greyfriars Herald. But Hamilton had written it early in 1920, and, by the time it appeared in print in the Annual, the Benbow had long gone the way of all flesh. It is possible that he really wrote it for the Gem. Even a year later still, in the next Holiday Annual, there was a story "The Rivals of Greyfriars" in which Drake and Rodney were new boys at Greyfriars, with their qualities unproved. This tale was two stories from the Greyfriars Herald series.

Fairly early in 1921, Charles Hamilton contributed "Thin Bunter" to the Magnet. It sparkled among the glut of pretty terrible substitute tales of the period, though it was no masterpiece. It was by three or four chapters longer than the normal Greyfriars tales in the Magnet at that time. It introduced Drake and Rodney. It was the only Magnet tale to introduce Rodney, and the only one to introduce Drake as a schoolboy. In fact, "Thin Bunter" was not written for the Magnet at all. It comprised two of the shorter tales which were originally intended to appear in the Greyfriars Boys' Herald series.

Looking back now at this very unsatisfactory period of Magnet history, it seems probable to me that other Magnet tales of the time - for instance, "Harry Wharton's Trust" and "Deaf Bunter" - were originally written to appear in the Herald series. There was, in fact, always a little bit of a mystery around "Harry Wharton's Trust" though it was unquestionably Hamiltonian. Unfortunately, I never actually verified the origin of these two with Mr. Hamilton himself.

With the Herald out of the way, Hamilton went back to his idea of mid-1919 - to concentrate again on the Gem. He was to write more and more for that grand old paper in the next year or two, and the introduction of the uninspired Wildrake was really the hazy dawn of the Gem's Indian Summer.

Mr. Hamilton wrote us, a little pettishly, in 1945, that the Greyfriars Herald need never have been started at all in 1919. Of course it needn't! But it is hard to believe that he would have written the Benbow series, with the consequent neglect of the older schools, had it not pleased him to do so.



## HAMILTON PHILOSOPHY

by M. Milston

One of the features of Charles Hamilton which is rarely discussed is his own personal philosophy of life. One can over an extensive period gradually join all the different pieces of the jigsaw until one has the complete picture. Broadly it is both humane and liberal coupled with a love of conservative virtues. One can always detect a strong vein of liberalism in Hamilton. His attitude to war is an example. His portrayal of Richard Hillary the son of a conscientious objector was of a decent young man who had both principle and pluck. He also portrayed Hillary's father with equal favour. He shows total sympathy with their outlook and blames not them for their views but society for not being civilised enough to adopt them. He only blames them for not seeing this. What of Hamilton's political outlook? Whatever Orwell says Hamilton had tremendous understanding of the effect of poverty on people. His brilliant portrayal of Joe Frayne of St. Jim's, and the way that Gussy, son of Lord Eastwood the epitome of goodness is his lifelong friend. At the same time Hamilton was wary of the left. Bunter the Bolshevick was surely a message from Hamilton to be aware of Communist propaganda.

There are two characters which I feel represent Hamilton's idea of goodness. They are, of course, Gussy and Mauly. But they are different types of goodness: Gussy was instinctively good, there was no intellectual reasoning behind his goodness. He knew Carker kidnapped Tom Merry, because Carker was cruel to animals. It was his instinctive feeling for evil that made him suspect Gilbert Carker, not intellect. Mauly, however, is the philosopher. Like all philosophers he is regarded as a silly ass. "Harry Wharton always tells the truth. If he says he didn't knock Wingate over therefore he didn't knock Wingate over." He knows people and how to reason with them. He is the true friend. How Hamilton must have laughed when the base Skinner would call Mauly a silly ass.

Hamilton always recognised that people judged one another like themselves. Smithy believed Bob Cherry would set Quelch a booby trap because he would. Skinner believed Hillary's father was a funk

because he was. Gussy could never see bad because he wasn't bad.

But Hamilton loves many of the old-fashioned virtues. Smithy's pluck, Quelch's justice, Manner's modesty - Hamilton liked a conservative sauce with his liberal meat.

Finally, Hamilton's greatest virtue was his crusade against racialism. In making Inky into such a prominent character the message was loud and clear. Treat others as you would like to be treated. That was the essence of Hamilton's philosophy.

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### ERIC LEYLAND REPLIES

I have read with some interest the article by O. W. Wadham entitled 'The Boys of Brancaster School,' appearing in the January issue of the Digest. In it he asks if Eric Leyland wrote any further school stories. I presume that the best person to answer this is - Eric Leyland!

The title he quotes, 'Abbey on the Warpath,' was in fact not the first of the series, there being one or two published earlier; furthermore, this title did not first appear in the 'Nelson Juniors Series,' whatever this might mean, at 2/6, but in their 7/6 series a year or so earlier. Mr. Wadham has evidently only seen the cheap reprint.

Eric Leyland may have 'plainly been studying the work of Charles Hamilton and E. S. Brooks,' according to your contributor, but the truth is that never in his life has he read anything by the latter author. Corker, I admit, was somewhat close to Coker, deliberately or not I can't at this stage in time remember; but not Handforth of St. Frank's please. The explanation of any similarity is probably that any competent hack - I use the last word to describe myself, with no implication of false modesty - is liable to produce standard characters.

I have indeed written many school stories, under my own name and various pseudonyms. Nelsons produced very many in the late forties and fifties; so did Ward Lock. Unfortunately, having published some 320 books in all, I can't remember all the titles, indeed only a very few. The one which gave me most fun was 'Going Concern' which I do remember, and 'Rebellion at Priors.' There were many more,

most being of the same standard, which was awful. (Looking back, I am sure it was Coker who inspired, if that is the right word, my character Corker. Clever Mr. Wadham!)

Many if not most incidents in my school stories were culled from my own experiences at public school in the twenties. There was one Abbey book, I can't remember which, but I think it was an Abbey title, in which I featured an articulated skeleton named Archie, borrowed from the lab. one summer's night. This was completely factual; I was one of those who took Archie, and gave a P.C. the shock of his life when stopping our car - or more accurately our housemaster's car - in the town about 1 a.m. and opening the passenger's door, Archie fell rattling into his arms.

I had a strange sensation as I read the article in Digest, due entirely to the use of a tense. 'Does any reader .... know if Eric Leyland wrote any further school stories,' not 'has written.' I felt as though, long dead, I had returned to read part of my biography! I am not dead, far from it, touching wood like mad. I am, in fact, the headmaster of a large independent school, where incidentally the old standards which you mention in your editorial are maintained, to the delight of the parents and also of the pupils, who thus feel secure, knowing that there are standards of behaviour to which they must conform, that if they do not they are for trouble and that civilised conduct - only civilised, not unreasonable - brings its own reward. In these days the reward is greater than it used to be. Forty years ago, if my mother visited a family containing a young man who did not come to his feet when she entered the room, she was appalled; now, if a young man does behave in this manner, the fact is remarked as wonderful! What an indictment, this switch!

I write no school stories today because there is no longer a market, for the reasons you adduce in your editorial. I unite very little fiction of any sort, indeed none in the last two years; publishing has in my humble opinion efficiently dug its own grave.

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**SEE PAGE 22**

In our Christmas Number, Eric Payne discussed his visits to the Trocadero in the mid-thirties. In view of the interest it evoked, he is starting a short series concerning some of the cinemas and theatres he went to in the decadent days of his youth.

### KENNINGTON THEATRE

Before the Trocadero became my favourite venue, I was a regular patron at the Kennington Theatre, near the famous Oval. It had been a legitimate theatre, and, like plenty of theatres which had turned to films, it was fitted with rear projection. In consequence, the pictures on the screen, though bright, always had a slightly yellowish tinge.

Seating 1500 people, it was small in comparison with the Trocadero. Its excellent stage made it ideal for cine-variety which was popular at that time. The manager then was a young man named Vernon Keith, and he was a live wire. Though there were always two feature films in the programme, it was the quite lavish and original stage shows which really attracted the crowds. Vernon Keith built up an enormous manager-patron relationship, and he always went on the stage during the live part of the show to chat with his patrons and tell them what he was planning. I became very friendly with him as time passed.

One week they had a film unit there, at every performance, taking shots of the audience in their seats and of individuals who had been persuaded to venture on to the stage. It was promised that, on the corresponding days in the following week, the film shots would be screened.

On the Saturday I took a party of my boys and girls along to Kennington. It was planned that we should make a short Greyfriars scene. At Mr. Keith's request, I took along my scholastic armour, and I imagined that I would be playing the part of Mr. Quelch. But he had other plans. He played Mr. Quelch, and was very much the star of the sequence though my youngsters enjoyed themselves. My regret at not becoming a film-star that morning was much decreased when I discovered that 'Mr. Quelch' was to be smothered with flour. My shabby old gown was not improved by its experience. Later that day, my young hopefuls went on the stage to take part in the filming with the audiences. The following week, our little film was shown every evening at the Kennington, and then I was given the film. We screened it in our school cinema. All these years later I still have the film, in a metal can, among my souvenirs.

So great was the success of Vernon Keith at the Kennington that he decided to extend his scope. He took the Mile End Empire under his wing, and now managed both theatres, playing his stage show for one week at Kennington and then going with it the following week to Mile End. It was a bad move. With his personality and his gifts diffused between two theatres, the Kennington lost a great deal - and the audiences slumped. And about that time I transferred my own allegiance.

(In passing, the Mile End Empire, though larger - it seated 2000 - had none of the warm charm of the Kennington.)

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## NEWS OF THE CLUBS

### MIDLAND

Meeting held on 15th December, 1970.

The attendance was ten, and included Gerald Price making a welcome reappearance, and St. John Howell of the B.B.C., who came

to record parts of our Christmas party.

For this meeting the anniversary number was N.L.L. (O.S.) 132, dated 15.12.1917, and the collectors' item The Housemaster's Homecoming, the latest Museum press publication. Both items aroused much interest.

Our B.B.C. visitor was then introduced and proceeded to make certain recordings for radio four. These appeared to be premeditated, and likely to give the hobby and hobbyists a comic image so that not all members were prepared to co-operate.

The party proper then followed and was an outstanding success due to the wholehearted enthusiasm and planning of the regular club members who had organised it.

The final items were a talk by Norman Gregory on Christmas numbers and annuals, and a reading by Win Brown from a Bunter hard-back - Bunter Comes For Christmas.

The next meeting will be on 23rd February, from 7 p.m. onwards.

TOM PORTER

Correspondent.



### SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

The air of festivity prevailing when members gathered at Cahill's Restaurant, Sydney, on Tuesday, 15th December, at 6.30 p.m. was enhanced by the gay table decorations which greeted them as they sat down to dinner. Two bauble-decked miniature trees held pride of place at the table ends and the centre was dominated by a lovely gold and white cherub complete with harp. With the "Spirit of Christmas" so much in evidence a good night was assured from the first moment and so it proved.

Members were sorry to learn that a sudden illness had prevented keen Hamiltonian Syd Smyth from joining the festivities, and good wishes for a swift recovery were expressed.

Letters from Josie Packman and Ron Hodgson were enjoyed by those present and our thanks to Ron for the entertaining quiz he copied

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out for our pleasure..... we won't comment on the scores, just say rather that the gesture of goodwill was appreciated. Ron has been a good friend to the club for many years and his many helpful actions were remembered once more. And the Blake enthusiasts were extremely pleased to learn of Josie Packman's very successful efforts to carry on Len's devoted work in every aspect - we send our thanks, Josie, and wish you very well indeed.

The secretary reported that she had received a visit from Melbourne enthusiast Albert Vernon, who was in Sydney recently on a business trip, and members expressed the hope that on his next visit he will be able to join them for a meeting and get to know the Sydney collectors.

Replete from an extremely satisfying dinner, the members relaxed over coffee, and the remainder of the evening passed very pleasantly reminiscing about old friends in the hobby and Christmas parties enjoyed by the club members in the past. Altogether a very satisfying conclusion to the year's activities and a good omen for 1971.

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### NORTHERN

Saturday, 9th January, 1971

This was the 250th monthly meeting of the club, but the New Year brought a smaller attendance of members than usual. Arising from last month's report, it was pointed out that St. Jim's had beaten Greyfriars in the Magnet on at least two occasions - once at senior level in the Warren series, and once at junior level in the Bob Cherry, Swot, story. Some members had copies of the new Courtfield Cracksman facsimile volume, and others waited theirs with impatience. We warmly welcomed the news about future reproductions, and wished Howard Baker every success in an obviously very ambitious venture, which we will support as much as possible. It was decided to invite Howard Baker and our worthy editor, Eric Fayne, to be our official guests of honour at the May 8th meeting, when we shall mark our 21st anniversary (which actually falls on April 10th, Easter Saturday), and any other members of the club in the vicinity of Leeds

on May 8th will also be assured of a warm welcome to our meeting. A very informal meeting ended with our tackling a quiz compiled by Gerry Allison, which ranged over a very wide field of the hobby and the famous characters of fiction. Refreshments made a welcome break before chairman Geoffrey Wilde's team - which also included Jack Allison, Geoffrey Good, Ron Hodgson and Harry Barlow - went on to score a  $37\frac{1}{2}$  - 23 points win over June Arden, Elsie Taylor, Jack Roberts and Jack Wood. Mollie Allison acted as questionmaster. We dispersed about 9.20 p.m., looking forward to another memorable year.

JACK WOOD

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### LONDON

A very pleasant and successful meeting was held at the Ruislip home of Bob and Betty Acraman. Frank Lay was present with a supply of copies of the reprint of "The Courtfield Cracksman." Good reports were given by the three librarians - Roger Jenkins, Bob Blythe, and Josie Packman.

Messrs. Doyle and Richardson reported visits to the comic paper exhibition in Pall Mall. A feature on the show is to be given on B.B.C. TV. Bob Blythe read from an old newsletter concerning the Wood Green meeting at Christmas 1953. Tom Wright entertained with a reading of a St. Sam's story "The Mysterious Marksman." Brian Doyle read an extract from "Men at Arms" under the title of "What Happened to Rockfist Rogan."

Bob Blythe conducted an elimination quiz, the winner of which was Mary Cadogan.

The A.G.M. will be held at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22, on Sunday, 21st February. If you hope to attend, please give advance notice to the hostess, Josie Packman.

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Bob and Betty Acraman for the good time which had been had by all.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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# The Postman Called

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

S. B. WHITEHEAD (Fakenham): You ask "Did we ever have Blakeys in our shoes?" Well, even in the late 30's and early 40's they were on sale in Oldham, and I can remember having the odd one in my shoes and boots to make them last. But even then they were the princely sum of 2d per card. Surprising how an odd phrase brings back old memories. I'd quite forgotten Blakeys until I read the Editorial. I greatly enjoyed the Trocadero article, and I look forward to reading more about youthful cinema visits.

E. N. LAMBERT (Surbiton): Once again the 1970 Annual has maintained its usual high standard as always. Congratulations to all who contributed to its production.

The articles and stories were first-class and catered for all sections of our hobby. Mr. Buddle's annual appearance was again very welcome and I think this episode is the best yet. Mr. Buddle's image is rapidly becoming a mixture of Mr. Quelch and Nelson Lee, and his methods of detection are quite unique. Perhaps we can also compare Meredith as a budding 'Nipper.'

J. McMAHON (Uddingston): In my short piece on the Dixon Hawke library in the Annual, I mentioned how alike were the characters 'Marko' the miracle man, and 'Waldo' the wonder man. Now, thanks to some typescripts and information from Bob Blythe, I know that 'Marko' was the creation of E. S. Brooks. Indeed he wrote quite a pile of material for the D.H.L., and one 'script that I have of a Dixon Hawke story by E.S.B. was in turn converted into an "Ironsides" story by V. Gunn. As I have a copy of the latter, you can imagine the fun that I am having comparing both stories.

J. BERRY (Hatfield): I thought I would write and thank you for all the pleasure I have got from your own articles and the readers' articles and letters.

Your own observations on the boys and youths of today compared

with our own boyhood have impressed me very much. The arrogance, bad manners, and total disregard for people and authority is sickening. Thank God, these youths are a minority group.

Yes, Skipper, I am with you all the way.

The only difference between us is that you are obviously a "Hamiltonian" whilst I am a "Leeite." Although I enjoyed the Magnet and Gem very much, my favourite was always the Nelson Lee. To me E. S. Brooks was the "greatest." His imagination was fantastic, I'll admit, but so enjoyable to read. As a writer in the C.D. wrote - "He was different," "Before his time," etc. I agree with this. Some stories are not so fantastic now after what has happened these recent years. Look at the physique of some boys and youths of today and some of Handforth's exploits were not so silly after all.

BOB BLYTHE (London): I really cannot let Bill Lofts get away with the statement he made in his letter last month. He said, if I may quote his actual words when referring to E. S. B's stories in the Schoolboys Pocket Library, "...There is no question at all that many were almost word for word in chapters of old St. Frank's stories ..."

Such a categorical statement, coming from an acknowledged expert in the field of old boys' books would be accepted as gospel by those not fully acquainted with the facts. To make assumptions sound like facts is an old trick - politicians and Trade Union leaders do it all the time! It's a form of brain-washing. If left unchallenged the Whitefield and Westchester stories will come to be accepted as straightforward reprints with only the characters names changed.

Now let me make a categorical statement, which I hope will have more acceptance as from one with an acknowledged interest in the works of E.S.B. than from Bill, who has only a superficial interest.

Therefore, allow me to say once again that the stories of these two schools as published in the S.P.L. were rewritten from old plots in the Nelson Lee Library and the Gem, and that none were reprinted "word for word."

Finally, let me challenge Bill to give us the title of one such story so that it may be checked with the original.

I realise, of course, that all this is a storm in a tea-cup, but

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so many people seem to do their darndest to find fault with E.S.B. that I simply had to challenge Bill's statement.

M. J. WINDETT (Romford): I am a comparative newcomer to the world of O.B.B. Collection, yet I seem to find as much interest in C.D. as I do in the O.B.B. themselves. So much so that I have obtained a large number of back issues. I have read letters from readers as to how they would alter C.D., but to me it seems fine as it is. Catering something for everyone. Especially I like Danny's Diary.

M. MILSTON (London): In your editorial you mentioned that Charles Hamilton always reflected discipline in his schools. I feel this is not true. He reflected a school in which like any other school had its disciplinarians and non-disciplinarians, Mr. Copper, Monsieur Charpentier, Mr. Latham, were all these characters disciples of discipline? An afternoon with Monsieur Charpentier could have been a lot less disciplined than many a lesson at Holland Park Comprehensive.

(There will always be some bad disciplinarians among teachers. But never among good teachers. Chas. Hamilton's example of a school with slack discipline was Highcliffe. — ED.)

R. GODSAVE (Leytonstone): As usual, I must congratulate you on the splendid turn-out of the Annual and Mr. Buddle. There is no doubt that Mr. Buddle has now entered the ranks of the fictional immortals.

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