

STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Nº301 Vol. 26

JANUARY 1972

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FOR THE BEST MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE STORIES



12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> p

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## COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 26

No. 301

JANUARY 1972

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and Greatest 'Footer'  
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Week's :: :: :: ::*

**"BOYS'  
REALM."**

## A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

THIS IRRITATING AGE

Life has always been made up of irritations. How many times a year do most of us say "These little things are sent to try us?" My readers are accustomed to my fumings over the abandonment in this country of British traditions, and their replacement with something of

doubtful improvement from overseas. I will refrain from dwelling on our decimal currency from Egypt and our coinage from Holland and our two-tier postal system from the States. Australia and the States have a reasonable system of postal-coding by numbers. We have taken this, made it utterly complicated with a conglomeration of figures and numbers which some people's writing often makes indecipherable, and called it our system of postal codes. The result must be of little use to the postal-sorters, but succeeds in being a chronic nuisance to nearly everybody else. It is beyond my understanding that a place like Cheadle needs SK8 4RN after the name before our post-office can find it. Perhaps it makes no difference if the writer makes it look like ZY84RM. In fact, obviously it doesn't.

But life always had its irritations. I remember fuming when the Gem became a pocket-sized booklet in a mustard-coloured shroud, when the old papers abandoned their chapter numbering, and when, instead of Tom Merry's Weekly of affectionate memory they presented the St. Jim's News as a poor imitation of the Greyfriars Herald and Billy Bunter's Weekly. And when the much-loved Union Jack became Detective Weekly. And when Tinker became Mr. Carter.

I expect we just cannot appreciate it all when the powers-that-be make all these changes for our own good.

#### AHEAD OF HIS TIME

A few months ago we quoted some passages from one of Desmond Coke's books which might apply very well indeed to modern times. Reading recently about two London schools which are to be amalgamated, much to the annoyance of the pupils of each school, I was reminded once again of Desmond Coke. The first Coke story I ever read was "The School Across the Road," a fine tale concerning the trouble that the authorities met when they tried to make two schools into one larger whole. On that occasion, the amalgamation was eventually successful. But, in a later story, "Stanton," written for adults, Coke told of a master who decided that the very large school, compared with a much smaller one, was against the best interests of the pupils of the large place.

Today schools get larger and larger and larger. I fancy that Coke would have believed that, in these circumstances, the Heads of

these schools get more and more and more remote. Personally, I believe that he would have been right.

### SILVER JUBILEE

On a Sunday in December I had the great privilege and honour of being the guest of our London Club at a luncheon, at a London hotel, to mark the Silver Jubilee of this magazine. My pride in the occasion was enormous, and it was an afternoon which I shall never forget.

The meal was a dream of delight; the menu-cards, produced and presented by John Wernham, the president of the London club, were the last word in good taste and happy nostalgia - facsimiles of more than a couple of dozen of our past covers were reproduced - and the company was everything that anyone could ask for. As it takes all sorts to make a world, so it takes all sorts to make a club - but all the very nicest people in the world seemed to be gathered together that December afternoon. In truth, a day to remember.

I was deeply impressed by the fine service at the Rembrandt Hotel. (With that name, no wonder the Mysterious X was in the programme.) The waiters went about their duties with the utmost efficiency, unostentatiously, and with every quiet courtesy. They were a credit to a first-class hotel.

My grateful thanks to the London Club for a wonderful day.

### C.D. TO COST MORE

Constant rising costs in all branches of the production and distribution of this magazine have made it unavoidable that we must increase the price of Collectors' Digest to help us to break even. Commencing with our next issue, February, the basic price of the magazine will be 15p. Inflation has been the great curse of life in the past few years, and we can only hope and pray that some day it will be checked.

Nobody regrets this unavoidable increase more than I do, and I ask my readers for their understanding at this time.

THE EDITOR

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WANTED: Nelson Lee Lib.; Union Jack; Sexton Blake Library not after 1937. Beys' Friend Lib.

H. VERNON, 5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

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# DANNY'S DIARY

JANUARY 1922

It has been an absolutely marvellous new year in our cinemas. I never remember such a run of wonderful films.

A truly lovely picture - Mum and I went to see it twice, which Dad said was ridiculous extravagance - was "Over The Hill." It lasted over two hours, but they seemed to go in a flash. Anyone who goes to see it needs to be well equipped with handkerchiefs. The old lady, played by Mary Carr, wrote to her elder son and her daughter, who lived in adjoining houses, to ask if she could go to live with them for a while. The elder son replied that the climate would be too cold for his mum. The daughter replied that the climate would be too hot for her mum. So Mum was sent over the hill to the poor house. It was the black sheep younger son - played by Johnny Walker - who eventually got out of prison and fetched his mother home again.

On each visit to see "Over the Hill" it cost Mum ninepence for herself and fivepence for me, and we had a quarter of Packer's Crispets and some Sharp's Mellow Pieces to eat during the show.

But this month we have seen other fine films, too. There was a lovely horse-racing picture - Violet Hopson in "Kissing Cup's Race;" Mary Pickford as sweet as always in "Amarilly of Clothesline Alley;" and a really mirthful film named "Squibs" which starred Betty Balfour who is every bit as good as Mary Pickford.

After a very cold New Year's Eve, we had the warmest New Year's Day recorded for 50 years. But there has been a terrible influenza outbreak in London, and they say it may be due to the unusually mild weather. Altogether there have been 13,000 deaths, and 354 died from flu in London in one week.

There is a new paper out for boys. It is named "The Champion." The first issue gave an art picture of the boxer, Georges Carpentier. This month I had a copy of the Nugget which contained a story called "Rivals of the Fifth." It was about school life and boxing, and it was by Charles Hamilton. Every month there is a story about the St. Frank's boys in Nugget. It costs 3d.

First tale in the Magnet was "The Team that Couldn't Be

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Beaten." A team of boys named the Ironsides, because their captain is named Cromwell, have gone around playing football and licking St. Jim's and Highcliff. So the Head of Greyfriars invites them to stay a week at Greyfriars - and the Remove draws with them. Rather a silly old tale.

Then came two more rather weird tales. In "The Footballers' Feud," an American educationalist writes to Dr. Locke to offer to come and take charge of Greyfriars for a while, without pay, to introduce his wonderful new system of education. Dr. Locke feels like a holiday, and agrees. But Dr. Isaac Armstrong, the new Head, is an odd character. He abolishes football, and makes the boys play marbles.

In the sequel "Wibley the Wonder," Wibley did some impersonating, and Jack Drake, the boy tec, discovered that Dr. Armstrong had injured his brain by working too hard, and had escaped from an asylum.

But the last Magnet of the month was good. In "Billy Bunter's Big Bargain," Bunter persuaded the Famous Five to attend an auction. He bid £5 for a bedstead and mattress, and it was knocked down to him. The Co. had to pay. But eventually they found 5 sovereigns hidden in the mattress. Really amusing, this one.

The Duke of York has cut the first turf at a place named Wembley - I think it is a little place north of London - where they are going to have a big British Empire Exhibition in two years' time.

The new Irish government has taken over Dublin Castle, but there have been a lot of outrages in Northern Ireland. A bomb went off in a tram in Belfast and a lot of people were hurt.

Prices are beginning to drop, and it is just as well, for there are nearly two million unemployed in the country. Coal has gone down by 3/- a ton, and there has been a sharp drop in the price of electricity.

The Mr. Manders series has continued in the Boys' Friend and it is still going on at the end of the month. "The Mysterious Mrs. Manders" and "Exit Mrs. Manders" were great fun. Putty Grace turned up as Mrs. Manders and gave Manders a hot time, but Putty himself got in a muddle before his prank ended. "Too Much Manders" found the Rookwood fellows getting thoroughly fed up with Manders in charge of them, and open rebellion flared in "The Rookwood Rebellion."

There was a train crash near Northampton. One person was

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## NELSON LEE COLUMN

### THEY PUT IT IN OUR TEA,

by R. Hibbert

#### YOU KNOW

Miss Judith Walker has shown me up for what I am. At the National Union of Students' Margate Conference on Saturday, the 20th of November, 1971, she proposed a motion to set up a School Children's Union, and happened to mention, in passing, that I was one of the "reactionary forces in society." (Observer, 21.11.1971, page 3.)

She was talking about headmasters, and I'm one.

Now, I doubt if Miss Walker will be able to bring about the time when lust, oppression, crime and headmasters are no more, but she has a case. We can be rather overbearing. I turned up late at the last meeting of our local headteachers, and believe me, when I stumbled in, mumbling my apologies, my colleagues looked a pretty awesome crowd. As the Duke of Wellington said, "I don't know what they'll do to the enemy (Miss Walker and her School Children's Union) but, by God, they frighten me."

What turns us - if Judith's right - into oppressors of the young? We start out as school children ourselves, we become mild mannered young teachers, terrified of our first classes, and only too anxious to placate the little devils, but something happens to us. Where do we go wrong?

Well, the fact of the matter is, we're nobbled.

Got at.

It was Edwy Searles Brooks who first ferreted out the reason for headmasters' autocratic behaviour as long ago as 1921. Just fifty years ago they had even unlikelier doings than usual at St. Frank's. In the winter of 1921-22 they had the first schoolboys' Union and the first recorded case of Headmaster Nobbling.

Dr. Stafford was a benign headmaster, but towards the end of 1921 (Nelson Lee Library No. 338, 'The Head's Other Self,' 26.11.1921) he began to have fits of madness; beating the boys unmercifully. In his saner moments he was bitterly sorry for what he'd done, but many of the boys rebelled.

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One lad, Timothy Tucker, formed them into a union. (Nelson Lee Library No. 341, 'The School Boys' Union,' 11.12.1921.) In an outline of policy speech he said, "Let us form a union. We shall have strength, power, force. We shall dictate our own terms. We shall appoint classroom stewards. Masters will only be permitted to teach us under the strict understanding that the control of the school remains in our hands. This scheme is all powerful. It is the greatest step towards the emancipation of the modern schoolboy which has ever been formulated."

The decent lads - loyal to Dr. Stafford in spite of himself - told Tucker he was a dangerous agitator, but the shirkers and the weaker vessels were all for Tim's union. And the more cynical cads used him for their own rotten ends.

"He's dotty, of course," said Doyle of the Remove, "but if this giddy Brotherhood pans out we're absolutely on velvet. The Head and Nelson Lee will be kicked out, and we shall be in power."

And the day came when the Head and Nelson Lee were sacked. This followed Dr. Stafford's worst fit of madness. He threw a chair at the assembled governors, knocked down and kicked the chairman and chased the others into the school grounds. He was shambling like a gorilla and uttering wild cries. It took half the boys and three gardeners to restrain him. When the excitement was at its height Nelson Lee staggered in, reeking of whisky and apparently as tight as a barrel.

As soon as the Headmaster and the Housemaster were in their right minds they were dismissed, and hooted, howled and hissed off the school premises.

But Nelson came up with an explanation.

For several weeks Dr. Stafford had been receiving doses of a powerful drug - "A fiendish brain poison which, for the time being, destroys every trace of kindly human instinct. The victim is reduced to an animal like state, with all the evil in his nature ready to find an outlet, unbridled and out of control." This drug - Zaxzol - was invented by Mr. Hugh Trenton, the new science master, and he'd been slipping it into the doctor's throat tablets.

Why?

Because Mr. Trenton and his comrades, Professor Holroyd

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Garth (well-known scientist), Dr. Roger Paxton (West End physician) and Mr. Henry Chandler (highly intellectual journalist) were 'acute revolutionaries.' "They are against every principle of society as we know it today. They are opposed to the whole system; they are in fact anarchists."

Trenton, Garth, Paxton and Chandler were arrested, charged with conspiracy and treason, and if there's any justice in England, they're still in the Tower. But it's my belief that other people have taken up where they left off, and I don't doubt that if you're in the know you can get hold of Zaxzol without a prescription. And this explains the otherwise unaccountable behaviour of headmasters.

4 YEAR OLD GIRL SENT HOME FOR WEARING HOT-PANTS  
"2.95 they cost," says elfin Emmeline Bentwistle's distraught mother.  
"My child don't wear no rubbish."

17 YEAR OLD BOY SUSPENDED UNTIL HE GETS HIS HAIR CUT  
"I can sit on it," says acne-pitted Len Smallwood. "It's been a life's work getting it this long. I can't destroy it overnight."

PARENTS BOYCOTT HEADMASTER WHO SHOWS SEX  
FILMS IN DINNER HOUR

"That's not what we give our kids 12p a day for," says Mrs. Lena Buttery.

It's not our fault!

Put the blame on Zaxzol. Somehow or other, someone or other is feeding us steady doses. Dr. Stafford got his in his cough lozenges. These days it could be in anything; school dinners, chalk dust, tea, anything.

But what can I do? Headmaster Nobblers Inc. will stop at nothing. I'll just have to sit it out and hope for the best I suppose. And if Nelson Lee doesn't come to the rescue, I wonder if my union would give me any help?



FOR THE RECORD

by R. J. Godsave

In the London Club's Newsletter for December 1971, "Pathfinder" states that there has never been any research as to where Nelson Lee had his chambers in Gray's Inn Road.

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E. E. Briscoe was responsible for a fine set of drawings relating to St. Frank's and places connected with the Nelson Lee Library which appeared in the supplement "Nipper's Magazine" when the Nelson Lee was increased to 2d in 1921.

Of these drawings was one of Nelson Lee's Rooms in Gray's Inn Road, which was reproduced on the cover of the Collectors' Digest No. 86, February 1954. Incidentally, it was recorded as appearing in O.S. 408 in the latest bibliography of the writings of Edwy Searles Brooks.

Writing from memory I believe the block of houses are known as Verulam Buildings and are occupied by professional men as offices, etc. As to the actual house I do not recall that any number was even mentioned.

Apart from the beauty of Briscoe's drawings they were invaluable in bringing St. Frank's to life.

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### THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

Wizards. Bound Volumes. 1920's and 30's. 28-30 copies per Volume. £16 each.

Big Budgets. Still some Bound left, going cheap - £6 per Volume.

True Blue. Several Bound Volumes, various prices.

Young Britain. Bound Volumes and loose copies.

Scout. 39 Bound Yearly Volumes and loose copies.

Comrades. 1894 Vol. 2, 1-52 with Summer Number, £12. Vol. 3 49 NP £10.

Greyfriars Holiday Annuals. From 1920-41. While stocks last!

Magnets & Gems. Bound Volumes and loose copies.

Boys' Friend Library. Fine assortment from the early ones. Over 600 copies. (NO Richards.)

Still some early Magnet Facsimiles left. Buy while they last! Plenty of Bunter Hardbacks.

A very large and comprehensive stock at your disposal. I pay very good prices for collections and surplus items.

ALL THE VERY BEST FOR THE NEW YEAR!

Norman Shaw

84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON, SE19 2HZ. 01-771-9857.

REVIEWTHE MYSTERIOUS "X"

Martin Clifford  
(Museum Press £1.00 incl.)

This magnificent story comes from the Golden Age of the Blue Gem, when honour was bright and Gems were one real penny each. The story originally comprised two stories "Baffled" and "Caught Red-handed." In its time it has been a much reprinted story, though, oddly enough, they never came on it for the Schoolboys' Own Library.

It is a question whether the original title of "Baffled," with its early-century flavour, might not have been more attractive than the one now used. This newest reprint is actually taken from the reprint of 1935, which doesn't matter, as, unlike so many of the reprints in the thirties, it escaped the vandalistic pruning pencil of the mutilator. The illustrator is, presumably, Macdonald, though he did not quite capture the atmosphere of the story as he did in the original. Dr. Holmes wore his gown to sit up waiting for the cracksmen, both in 1912 and in 1935. Mac did not realise that schoolmasters are not all that attached to their gowns. But perhaps the study was cold.

All this apart, it's a great tale, packed with incident, and it reads with a fluency which makes it ideal to read before the log fire at Christmas time. And if you haven't a log fire, this yarn will help you to imagine it.

Here is your chance to go back 60 years with Martin Clifford at the height of his powers, and to find out why, then, the Gem was possibly the most popular school story paper in the world. You lucky people!

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GREYFRIARS

(Howard Baker Press

HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1928

£2.75)

This is a reproduction of the last of the Annuals to be printed on the thinner paper. It is a big book though it is not quite the complete Annual - the sections which did not concern the Hamilton schools have been pruned away. The majority, who only read the Hamilton or

pseudo-Hamilton material in any case, will not bother unduly. It brings home to everybody what giant books those early Holiday Annuals really were, what a wealth of reading matter they offered, and what wonderful value for money they were at six shillings.

More regretted, probably, will be the fact that for some reason the original picture on the cover has not been retained. (It was a picture by Briscoe.)

The covers by Basil Reynolds are attractive, particularly the back cover which will please everybody. The words "Anniversary Edition" on the cover are puzzling. Which Anniversary is being commemorated is a little obscure.

The contents are excellent. The two long stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's respectively appeared only in this Holiday Annual, and may well have been written specially for the 1928 edition of the volume. A very early Rookwood story is reprinted, with the name of Mr. Bootles being unnecessarily changed to that of Mr. Dalton. The Red Magnet is represented by the re-issue of a famous tale showing how Horace Coker got his remove into the Fifth Form.

The plentiful verses are delightful, and there is a miscellany of other odds and ends to entertain the enthusiastic Hamiltonian.

Though dated 1928, the volume was, of course, published in September 1927.

This new volume is an opportunity for fond parents to buy it for their sons and daughters to show them the wonderful stuff Dad had to read when he was young. Bachelors have no excuse. They will buy it for themselves alone, quite shamelessly. And enjoy themselves immensely.

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 WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. BOYS' FRIENDS issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256 (inclusive). Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

XX  
 WANTED: Chums Annual 1934-35; Chatterbox Annuals 1914, 1918, 1920; Champion Annuals after 1926. Champion, Nelson Lee, Union Jack, Sexton Blake Lib.

H. W. VERNON, 5 GILLMAN STREET, CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA,

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Christmas is now past and the New Year is upon us, but first a few words to all the kind people who remembered me and sent such lovely Christmas greetings. Thank you all very much.

## LEON KESTREL, THE MASTER-MUMMER!

(SEE WITHIN.)



If anyone still wants a Sexton Blake Catalogue or Supplement there are still some available.

I have been very grateful for all the contributions received during the past year, but now the old cry goes up for material for the coming year. I shall need some by March (enough in hand till then) so will Blake fans please set to work and write something for me to put in Blakiana? Quite a number of our members have borrowed from the Sexton Blake section of the Library so maybe they could tell us what they think of different stories they have read or maybe the new characters they have encountered.

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Recent additions to the Library are Union Jacks of the early 1920's so if you are interested in these numbers (873 to 924) please write for them. The charges are 1p for each Union Jack or Detective Weekly and 2p for each Sexton Blake Library, plus postage each way.

There is no news at the moment of writing about the hard-cover reprint of the Criminal Confederation Series but maybe by the time you read this month's Collectors' Digest we shall have heard something.

Happy New Year to everybody.

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COMMENTS ON RALPH RASHLEIGH

from George Beal

May I refer to pages 16 and 17 of the December issue of your excellent magazine?

The list of 'Union Jack' serials has a number of titles marked N/K, presumably meaning 'not known' in the case of the author, etc.

Doubtless someone else has already informed you that 'Convict 99' was the work of Marie Connor Leighton and her husband Robert. The book was also published in hardback, but unfortunately I no longer have a copy of this, so cannot give dates, etc.

Regarding 'The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh,' however, there is quite a history. The book was originally published in 1929 by Jonathan Cape. It was unquestionably the work of a transported convict to Australia, and in fact, is an absorbing story of the life and times of such a man.

Cape's decided that there was sufficient evidence to regard the book as the genuine memoirs of the transportee, who was given on the original manuscript, dated about 1840, as 'Giacomo di Rosenberg,' an obvious alias, as indeed was the name 'Ralph Rashleigh.'

In a publisher's note to the first edition of 1929, Cape's state that they considered the 'archaic literary style' of the writer to be unacceptable to modern readers, and the whole book was therefore rewritten. It went into several editions, including the serialization in the 'Union Jack.'

Lord Birkenhead, in a preface to the book, states his opinion

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that the work was genuinely the memoirs of an Australian transported convict, and among the authenticated details was the name of the ship the Magnet, mentioned in the book, and in fact a true transport used at the time.

However, there were others who were convinced that the whole thing was a hoax, but nothing further was heard until 1951, when the researches of an Australian writer named Colin Roderick were made known.

Roderick has spent years examining the original manuscript, and was convinced it was genuine, if not a true life account of a convict in the early 19th century. The story of his detective work is a fascinating one, but too long to mention here. Suffice to say that the true author was discovered to be James Tucker, who was born in Bristol in either 1803 or 1808, and transported to New South Wales as a convict for the term of his natural life in 1827.

'Ralph Rashleigh' was entirely his work, and although hardly a true-life story, was yet hardly a work of fiction. Its basis lay somewhere in between, a kind of fictionalized biography. Tucker wrote other works, but none reached any sort of fame.

However, in 1952, Angus and Robertson published the authentic version of 'Ralph Rashleigh,' and in 1962 it went into a paperback edition with Angus and Robertson's 'Pacific Books' imprint. I believe it is still in print. The publishers, of course, are Australian, but their books are available in Britain. A. & R's address in London is 54-58 Bartholomew Close, E.C.1. They also have a bookshop at Australia House, in the Strand.

I have not been able to compare the 'Union Jack' version with either of the hardback versions. It would be interesting to know whether the genuine original was used in the 'U.J.' or whether, as is almost certain, the rewritten Jonathan Cape version was employed.

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GOOD LORD — GAS LAMPS!

by Raymond Curé

Well, here I am sitting by the fire, cosy like, reading. Reading what? you may ask. To which I reply, "Reading about

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Unemployment, Strikes, Riots and police control."

"Nothing new in that," you may say, "nothing new at all." I agree with you, of news of strikes, riots and unemployment I have had my fill. I mean not only in the printed word but on the pictures too.

The coloured picture on my paper shows that crowds of unhappy men are marching past Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, watched by the police. While inside illustrations reveal the scowling faces of angry and disappointed men, waving sticks and shouting.

It's so familiar, I feel so much at home, as it were, with the paper I am reading. It's all happening. It's happening today. But just a moment, stay with me while I re-examine these pictures. I can see a huge banner "We asked for work - you gave us Dole" and on another (because of its proximity, blocking part of my view of the Houses of Parliament) in angry red letters tells the world "WORK OR THE WORKHOUSE." I don't get it. I know Ebenezer Scrooge said sarcastically "Are there no workhouses, are there no prisons?" But in 1971 I find myself saying "We have prisons - not enough and too small, but still prisons, but where oh where will I find a workhouse?"

Another funny thing here but nearly all the men in this crowd are wearing hats. Bowler hats, trilby hats, top hats and caps. Real boys for supporting the slogan "Get a hat and get ahead." I stand ashamed, I feel naked, that so many unemployed men can wear a hat. Only last week I priced a trilby "£2.50" said the shop assistant helpfully and audibly. "Get stuffed," said I, under my breath, but out loud, "Thank you, I will call in again." The last time I bought a trilby hat it cost me 17/6d and a Blackpool gale swept it into the sea. Now you don't believe me, that a whole crowd of unemployed men are wearing hats, that not one is without. (Where did they get the money to buy them?) Not many men wear a hat today, but who said anything about today? You just assumed that, because of the strike, riot and unemployment situation. There's nothing new under the sun. It's all happened before. If my readers' interest has carried him so far he will want to see the picture, he will want to read what I have read, he will want to know how, when and where, in fact he will be a regular Sexton Blake. Talking of Sexton Blake reminds me I have kept you waiting too long. As a Sexton Blake fan you have but to borrow the Union Jack No.

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952, dated 7 January, 1922, from Josie Packman, Sexton Blake Librarian, or possibly from one of the O.B.B.C's you will find I have told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth - the title "Among the Unemployed" - author Alfred Edgar.

Well, that's what I like about Sexton Blake, he is down to earth, like Sexton Blake in Blackpool, Sexton Blake at Margate, Sexton Blake among the Unemployed. One of us so to speak, visiting the common watering places of the small fry. Can you imagine the Saint among the unemployed, or James Bond? Sexton Blake is the poor man's detective. As I have already said, the action of this story is so like today, but the illustrations remind us that it is set in the twenties. In two scenes, by the side of a factory wall, a street light is casting its yellow beams upon the crowd, it's a GAS lamp! I loved them, their warm friendly light on dark nights as a kid in Leeds. Now for the most part we are surrounded by 16 ft. concrete lamps like concrete trees in a concrete jungle.

'Bye for now.

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WANTED: Enid Blyton Sunny Stories Magazines 1937-1954. FOR SALE: Blackie's Boys Annual, circa 1924.

SCHMIEDER, 36 WARREN ROAD, ICKENHAM, UXBRIDGE, MIDDY.

XX

WANTED: Story Paper Collector 6-9, 11, 12-17, 21-26, 28, 29, 50.

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XX

SALE: 69 Magnets 1522 to 1683. Gem 1520. £14 the lot. 21 Greyfriars S.O.L. £8.40. 19 St. Frank's S.O.L. £3.80. 8 Greyfriars S.O.L., coverless £1.20. 8 St. Frank's S.O.L., coverless 80p. Postage extra.

LITVAK, 58 STANWELL ROAD, ASHFORD, MIDDY.

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XX

WANTED: Magnets, Gems, Populars and Hamiltonia S.O.L.'s.

DR. B. KELION, 69 FRIERN BARNET LANE, LONDON, N11 3LL.

XX

MAGNETS WANTED. Please send details to J. de FREITAS, 29 GILARTH STREET, HIGHETT,  
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3190.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 95 — Magnets 858-60 — The Bounder's Feud Series

In the mid nineteen-twenties the Magnet must have struck a bad patch. Anyone who has collected Magnets for very long will know that the 800's and 900's are notoriously difficult to come by. Possibly the readers were put off by the large number of substitute stories or, more likely, the Magnet was facing greater competition than it had done in its more palmy days. At all events, it is a period that tends to get neglected, rather unjustly, for there were some fine character stories at this time, and those concerning Vernon-Smith were among the finest of them all.

The Bounder's Feud series was, like many character stories, built round sport. Owing to a nocturnal excursion the previous night, Vernon-Smith was off form in a cricket match. Wharton spoke to him about it, and a quarrel ensued, whereupon he was left out of the eleven for the coming Rookwood match, Redwing taking his place and the Bounder relegated to the reserves. Having ensured that Redwing got left behind at Ashford, the Bounder went on to win the match and reap the whirlwind: Redwing moved out of Study No. 4 and the Bounder was awarded a form beating. After this, things went from bad to worse.

Of course, it is not the plot alone that makes a first-class Hamiltonian story. Hamilton retained his grasp of plot-construction to the end of his life, and if this were the sole criterion it would be impossible to draw any distinctions in his work. A polished style of writing, subtlety of characterisation, and sensitivity of approach are all hallmarks of his superior stories, and in this series they are abundant. The relationship between Vernon-Smith and Redwing is here displayed in all its varying facets, but even more interesting in its way is the portrayal of Hazeldene - weak, passionate, sullen when in the wrong, resentful if under an obligation, and eternally vacillating. The chapter in which Marjorie talks over his difficulties and gently leads him on to the conclusion she wants him to reach, at the same time letting him feel it was his decision, is a little gem in its sustained character drawing which certainly never appeared again after the Golden Age, and indeed was really an individual feature of the nineteen-twenties.

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There are other interesting touches in this series. The episode where Skinner hopes for a renewal of the old times before Redwing arrived is a reference to events of more than six years previously, which gives a pleasing atmosphere of continuity. Equally pleasing but much more fascinating is Peter Todd's legal examination of Redwing, an unco-operative witness, in an attempt to ascertain the truth about events at Ashford station.

There are thirty-four chapters in this series of three numbers, but it does not give the impression of being cramped. Every turn and twist of the plot is allowed an adequate exposition, but there is no padding. It could have fitted in nicely into one of the larger Schoolboys' Owns without any abridgement, but oddly enough the story was never reprinted. It is certainly not one of the really great Magnet series, but there are grounds for rating it as a neglected little masterpiece.

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REVIEW

BILLY BUNTER ON

Frank Richards

THE NILE

(Armada 20p)

Originally entitled "The Shadowed Schoolboy," this is the sixth story in the Magnet's Egypt series of 1932. Though, as we have mentioned before, it seems a little odd to reprint single stories from a long series in this way - and the entire series has been reissued in the past few years - it is a very pleasant format for the reader, and the story shows the famous author in good form in what was an entertaining travel series. Even though the price of Armada books has now risen to four shillings, it is excellent value for money in these hard times. The interior illustrations are by Leonard Shields.

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PRE-1932 MAGNETS URGENTLY REQUIRED. Please write stating numbers and price to:

P. J. MALLETT, 52 SUNNYMEDE DRIVE, BARKINGSIDE, ILFORD, ESSEX.

Phone Evenings 01-550 3988.

XX

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FELDMAN, 4 BALLANTRAE HOUSE, LYNDALE, LONDON, N.W.2.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

A keen C.D. reader sends us the following which contains food for thought.

THE FLOGGING

by M. Milston

On reading of the ruthless flogging of Courtney by Sir Hilton Popper I feel that there is need to comment on what the psychological repercussions are for the younger readers of Hamilton. One may say that one is being too soft, wrapping children up in cotton-wool and I would agree that children should see tragedy and that there is nothing worse than a mollycoddled child. But there is an element in the flogging ceremony which is dangerous. In portraying Greyfriars, Hamilton has produced a school which one must admire and respect. Dr. Locke is a kind but just Headmaster. Mr. Quelch is the epitome to which all teaching colleges should aim, the rules of Greyfriars are humane and the punishments are on the whole just with one exception - the flogging! I remember as a child reading about the flogging which Smithy received for being found fully dressed in the middle of the night (Billy Bunter's Banknote). As I read the chapter I simply dreaded reading the next line. I must admit that in reading of Courtney's flogging a similar experience occurred to me. What causes this? The reason must surely be that whatever crime the culprit has committed is outweighed by the flogging itself. That flogging is a crime because it is inflicting a great deal of pain on a fellow human being. I have often wanted to see Loder sacked but never flogged because if one examines the two punishments it is surely worse to cause someone considerable physical pain than to expel him. The conflict then is tremendous because the child cannot reconcile a school like Greyfriars condoning flogging nor the "kind old Head" actually carrying it out. Hacker, maybe, but certainly not the Head. It is for this reason that Hamilton must be criticised. There is no room for floggings in Utopia.

No. 166. BEND OVER, BUNTER.

I could not help feeling, when I read the foregoing article, that Mr. Milston must be very sensitive indeed. I really cannot see how

anybody who shudders at the thought of corporal punishment is able to read Hamilton at all.

True, the flogging of Courtney, as related in "The Only Way," touched on the sadistic. Sir Hilton Popper was quite clearly portrayed as a sadist. We, today, regard sadists in a rather different light from that in which they were viewed sixty years ago when the story was written. I would be very surprised, all the same, whether many children of 60 years ago read the episode with horror, and, more so, if it did any of them any harm.

There is a streak of mild sadism in most children. It is part of the peculiar state of being young. Some youngsters show it in being cruel to one another - a state of mind which does not last. Others, who would despise cruelty to man or beast, would still get a kick out of a visit to the Chamber of Horrors, or reading of medieval tortures - or going with Courtney to meet Sir Hilton Popper.

Publishers and authors both knew of it, and made capital out of it. Extremely severe punishments often featured in Hamiltonia, and editors usually made sure that they also featured in the cover illustrations to tempt those who could be tempted by that sort of thing - and most could. Courtney's flogging, oddly enough, did not figure on the cover of "The Only Way," though it was illustrated inside the paper. In fact, Arthur Clarke's cover picture was unusually inept, showing a childish Valence, in Eton suit, cowering in an armchair, while a massive adult Courtney, frock-coated, towered over him.

But ropes-endings usually found their way on to covers to tickle the palates of wee-sadists, which most boys are. Normal youngsters grow out of it, and it is harmless enough.

Any Hamilton connoisseur knows many examples which seem mildly sadistic in the author's writings down the years. Harry Wharton, (in "The Stolen Schoolboys"), and the Rio Kid, (in the series in which the Kid was shanghaied), each had a taste of the rope's end, and the incident featured in cover pictures. But Eric, in Dean Farrar's famous book, went through the same ordeal, described in passages of writing equally as sensational as those of Hamilton. Farrar, in his story, piled harrowing incident upon harrowing incident, and, so far as I am aware, nobody complained. Here and there, in Hamiltonia, very

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ferocious canings took place, and even Mr. Quelch administered one to Wharton in the Rebel series.

Hand-caning, which took place frequently in real life, always struck me as a dangerous and barbarous punishment. But, after the nineteen-twenties, hand-canings disappeared in the new Hamilton stories, and punishment was applied in the place which nature provided for the purpose.

There was, however, one very nasty, sadistic episode in Hamiltonia. In the blue Gem, Monteith was in the habit of going for a sprint, after dusk, clad only in running shorts. Levison stretched a rope between two trees in order to trip the runner, and left a heap of broken glass to cushion his fall. Monteith, obligingly, fell into the glass. The astonishing thing about this gruesome item is that it was really quite unnecessary. The plot would not have been impaired in the slightest had Levison provided a mess of soft but unpleasant garbage for Monteith to fall in.

The story was not reprinted in later years, and no doubt its omission was due to this nasty little sequence. Otherwise, it was a first-class story.

Any reader of public school stories expects to meet up with corporal punishment. There has been plenty since "Tom Brown's Schooldays." I am not referring to the recent B.B.C. presentation under that name. The B.B.C., which usually does period pieces so well, produced a script glorifying the evil Flashman - so symptomatic of the day - which was a travesty of Hughes' book.

It is, of course, fashionable to shudder at corporal punishment these days. It is fashionable to belittle the victim, and to spread sympathy like syrup over the thug and the brute. Strangely enough, while the public attitude to the lawbreaker and the murderer becomes gentler and softer, the criminals become more violent, the rioters become more deadly, and what today passes for entertainment is often only suitable for the warped. Sometimes I wonder whether gentleness does not beget violence.

As a schoolmaster, I have never believed in corporal punishment or found it necessary. A schoolmaster should get respect for his personality, not for his cane. Nevertheless, the Head of a boarding

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school is in loco parentis to those in his charge. If he is a sound man, the decision should be left to him. And I am well aware that there are types in our day schools these days such as I never had to cope with myself. I very, very much doubt whether the abolition of corporal punishment in schools by direction of parliament is a wise move.

In conclusion, I am firmly of opinion that there is nothing, anywhere, in the works of Charles Hamilton which could be in the slightest degree harmful to even the most sensitive of children.

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EXHIBITION AT BATH

Readers within travelling distance of Bath should drop in at Bath Reference Library (18 Queen Square) where an exhibition of comic papers and other periodicals is being held daily (except Mondays) until January 15th. The exhibition is based on the collections of C.D. reader, Mr. Jack Parkhouse, and the development of the British comic, over the past 100 years, is clearly shown. It is all well worth a visit, and should make a pleasant day out for the family early in the New Year. Admission is Free.

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HAVE FOLLOWING TO

SELL/EXCHANGE

Wizard (1932/34, 1940/45), Rover (1934/39, 1940/45), Wizard, Hotspur, Rover, Champion (1946-1955), Sports Budget, Modern Boy, Modern Wonder, Wild West, Chums, Topical Times (1930's); Young Ladies' Journal (1860's), Nelson Lees, Schoolgirls Own Annuals, Buffalo Bill (1920's), Young England, The Scout (1900's), Hundreds More.

*ED. JONES*

43 DUNDONALD ROAD

COLWYN BAY, DENBS.

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JEMIMA. A postscript

by W. O. G. Lofts

I sent Mary Cadogan's article (in the 1971 C.D. Annual) to Mr. L. E. Ransome, whom I have known for many years. He replied as follows:

"I thought Mrs. Mary Cadogan's monograph on Jemima Carstairs most interesting. As she took so much trouble over it, I have racked my brains going back nearly fifty years to bridge the gap. Horace Phillips, writing under the pen-name of 'Marjorie Stanton,' was the creator of Morcove, but sometimes when he was ill, or needed a holiday, the editor R. T. Eves asked me to fill in the gap. Although I had handled the normal Morcove characters quite often before, I decided to introduce a character of my own as several stories had to be written, and it was customary to make a series, or in effect a serial, of the particular situation caused by a 'sensational' new character. I use this qualification because the character must cause some change in the usual Morcove set-up, and must therefore be a personality. The first such character I introduced in 1921: Theresa Tempest, a girl with a wilful independence, and wild temper. She arrived like a jelly-bomb.

"As a rule, a writer prefers his own characters, and I was prepared for the fact that, when the series finished, H.P. would be reluctant to use her. In the event he did not want to keep her, as a regular character, and as he was unsympathetic she would have faded into the background. The editor, however, liked her, and in his view influenced by readers' letters who found her popular, the solution was to send her over to Cliff House. At that time I was writing all the stories.

"Here is roughly the genesis of Jemima:-

1. At the time there was an actress named Heather Thatcher who wore a monocle, and was very well advertised as doing so in the press.
  2. Gussy of St. Jim's was always a conspicuous character, easily identified in illustrations by his monocle.
  3. There was in the twenties, a convention in the theatre and in stories generally, especially in spy stories, that the silly ass was proved in the end to be the clever, shrewd spy or detective.
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4. In the year of publication 1925, the short skirt made its debut, accompanied by the shingle hair-do, the boyish flat figure, etc. The skirt was knee length, as befitted the boyish girl. She differed from the pre-war (1914) masculine woman, who was Amazonian tweedy, cigar-smoking, smart, gay and dashing. A follow on from the bright young things - Liz Pelly and all that.

5. Possibly also from Charles Hamilton's The Caterpillar at Highcliffe, and also Cardew of St. Jim's and we have some possible ingredients not consciously compounded. In fact, I was not aware of the above at the time; they have been recalled by the stirring of memory. Every character created by any writer is compounded in some manner, but most writers, I think, would rather not become conscious of the fact. The conjuring trick that is evidence of creative writing ability, is making the character seem to live, and behave in a predictable way in a given situation.

"It is really startling to realise that a girl of nine years of age who called or wrote to the School Friend Office in 1919 is now over retirement age! and that I wrote a Gem story when only a schoolboy that was published by John Nix Pentelow. A Last-wicket stand!"

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FOR SALE: C. D. Annuals 1949 to 1964; 1968; 1969; 1970 (approx. 19). Collectors' Digest (about 160 copies). Full years 1950 to 1958; 1960, 1969; 1970; other odd copies. 6 different issues of Tom Merry's Own. Billy Bunter's Own 1953, 1954. 11 Goldhawk St. Jim's. 7 Tom Merry hardbacks; 16 Bunter hardbacks; Jack of all Trades; Boys Will Be Boys; Autobiography of F. Richards (all as new). Greyfriars Annuals 1925 (good); 1932, 1937, 1938 (all fair); 1939 (good). Young England Vol. 48 (1927) Good. Magnets 1937 (30); 1938 (38); 1939 (16); 1940 (27); duplicates here; total 111. Misc. Magnets (white covers) 1936 (7); 1935 (1); 1929 (1); 1927 (5); 1922 (2); 1920 (1); 1919 (3); 1918 (4); 1916 (1); 1915 (1, with dirty red cover); 1914 (2, one without cover, one with red cover, fair); 1909 (1, with no cover). Total 34. Gems 1917 (1); 1931 (10); 1932 (1); 1935 (5); 1936 (3); 1937 (3). Total 23. All above readable and fair order, not mint. Preferred offers for the lot. Might consider split sales. S.a.e., please.

S. IMPSON, 19 JERNINGHAM RD., NEW COSTESSEY, NORWICH.

In this series, Eric Fayne looks at some of the cinemas and theatres he knew a long while ago.

### THE CANTERBURY MUSIC HALL

This famous theatre stood in the Westminster Bridge Road, close by Waterloo Station. In the time when I knew it well, it was under the Gaumont banner, but it had clearly been, in its day, a great Victorian Music Hall, and it was rather nice that the old name was retained. One sees little of such pleasant sentimental touches these days.

In my time, cine-variety was always the attraction - a couple of big feature films plus several variety acts on the large and well-appointed stage. The vestibule was the longest of any theatre I knew anywhere - quite a long walk. Actually, the Canterbury had its entrance on the Westminster Bridge Road, but the theatre itself stood well back beyond the railway lines. The long vestibule was elaborately decorated with tinsel and gold and giant photographs of the film-stars of the day, and, walking along it, one passed under the network of railway lines which ran from Waterloo Station.

Walking along this vestibule or foyer one was always conscious of a faint but definite smell which came from a soap works somewhere in the vicinity. Whether the smell still persisted in the auditorium I cannot remember. Perhaps, by the time one reached the auditorium, one was used to it. It was a large house, seating nearly two thousand people, and, in some ways, it was rather a barn of a place. Nevertheless, it was always warm and bright and cosy, and the shows were first-class. It had an atmosphere all its own, apart from the proximity of the soap-works. With its main seating on the ground floor, and its circles not coming very far forward, I always found it just a little reminiscent of the Brighton Hippodrome.

The Canterbury was always filled to capacity whenever I visited it, a testimony to the quality of the entertainment provided.

On the opposite side of the road from the Canterbury, under the bridges and a few hundred yards towards Westminster, stood Gatti's. I am not sure that its full title may not have been Gatti's Music Hall, but it was always a cinema when I knew that part of London. I do not recall ever going in, but I stood and contemplated the programmes offered on many occasions. I fancy it was an Upstairs Cinema, and it was certainly a very cheap house. Something in the class, I fancy, of the Seright at Hackney.

I often wondered where the people came from to pack the large Canterbury, for it never seemed to be a residential district. Probably the trams brought them along from the Elephant & Castle area.

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### COMING SOON

THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR BORING MACHINES

(Special article by J. E. M.)

# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## NORTHERN SECTION

It seemed only a very short time since we last celebrated Christmas, but Saturday the 11th December found 24 members and friends sitting down to yet another party. What a party, even Bunter would have been satisfied, and indeed was.

After the banquet, we were divided into two teams, one being Greyfriars, the other St. Jim's, but unlike Hamiltonia, the Owl (Jack Allison) exhausted his energy in the dual roll of M.C. and games participant. First, a puzzle game where everyone tried to decide which occupation was represented by a picture on a card. Next, a Cross-Country run - not in running gear, but by dice over a paper course between the two schools. Plenty of hazards here, enough to exhaust us, and cause a break for Magnet reading with a difference. The story narrated by Mr. Quelch was interspersed with schoolboy chatter each part having been previously allotted and made more alive by a lifelike Hurree Singh (Harry Barlow).

Following supper, our final game of Criss Cross Quiz enabled scores to be aggregated, and winners decided. Overall, St. Jim's proved the successful, but all received prizes donated by Myra Allison from Gerry's collection.

The party broke up at 9.30.

K.B.

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## MIDLAND

Meeting held on 30th November, 1971.

Eleven members attended, including our President, Jack Corbett and his wife, who were most warmly welcomed by us all.

Correspondence included the regular letter from our stalwart "country" member, Stan Knight, who never fails to accompany his apologies for absence with a bright and cheerful letter of good wishes and personal news from Cheltenham.

Tom Porter presented the Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item, the former being Nelson Lee Library (Old Series) No. 182, "The Ancient House Burglary" (one of the Boy from Bermondsey Series), dated 30 November, 1918, and thus 53 years old to the day. The latter item by coincidence was also dated 30 November (but this time 1922) and was B.F.L. (First Series) No. 642, "The Boys of the Bombay Castle" by Duncan Storm.

The Library received a gift of three 1938 "Gems" from our President, amid great applause, and Jack Corbett then became the first candidate in our popular "One Minute Talk" challenge game. His subject was the O.B.B.C. Bill Morgan followed with "Lord Mauleverer;" George Chatham contributed a goodly minute on "The River Sark," following Gerald Price on "Friardale."

After a break for refreshment - or should one say an opportunity for refreshment and splinter group discussions? - this pleasant evening was rounded off by a taped recording by Gerald Price reading splendidly from two well-chosen chapters in Magnet No. 1661, followed by the raffle (prizes going to Bill Evans, Gerald Price and the undersigned).

Our Grand Christmas Study Feed follows on 14th December, and the first meeting of the New Year at the Birmingham Theatre Centre, 7.30 p.m. onwards, on Tuesday, 25th January, 1972.

Happy New Year, Everybody!

IAN BENNETT

Vice-Chairman.

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LONDON

Sunday, 5th December.

The Silver Jubilee of Collectors' Digest was celebrated at the Rembrandt Hotel, London, when thirty-three O.B.B.C.-ites sat down to a grand steak, kidney and mushroom pie luncheon. Guests of honour were Eric Fayne and Madam. Supporting the president of the club, John Wernham were Brian Doyle, chairman, Don Webster, vice-chairman, and Roger Jenkins.

After the Loyal toast, the chairman made the welcoming speech

and suitably thanked the president for supplying the magnificent menu cards, depicting 27 cover illustrations of past issues of "Collectors' Digest." Don Webster proposed the toast of C.D. stating how fortunate we were to have had the C.D. all these years, 300 issues not out. In reply, Eric Fayne recalled with gratitude C.D.'s first editor, Herbert Leckenby, and said it did not seem possible that it was 12 years since he, Eric, took over. Roger Jenkins toasted the Old Boys' Book Club, and paid tribute to the regular arrival each month for 25 years of C.D. The 23 years of the London Club's existence regularly reported each month.

The chairman then called on W. O. G. Lofts to speak on behalf of all readers and contributors to the C.D. The president added his congratulations to the long and lively life of the C.D. His opus for 1971, an appropriate choice, is a "Gem" story, "The Mysterious X." Later tea in the lounge, informal chats, and menu cards being autographed, to finish an unique occasion.

A week after the Rembrandt Luncheon Party members met at Friardale, Ruislip, for the Christmas Meeting. Hosts, the five Acramans, put on a superb happy occasion. Rum punch was available as soon as one arrived, hot mince tarts with the study feed, two candle-light readings by Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe, Polpelly and Handforth Towers chapters, a very fine competition by Don Webster (won by young Adam Bradford), one of Uncle Ben's special quizzes, a fine recording by Brian Doyle about Angela Brazil, the reading of the Newsletter that gave an account of the Christmas meeting at Wood Green in 1953. All these went to make up a very enjoyable time. As hitherto stated, a fine feed had been provided and with the distribution of copies of "The Mysterious X" a convivial atmosphere prevailed. Green and Yellow Chartreuse were available to those who like to participate in this liqueur. All too soon it was time for callover. The first meeting for 1972 is at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. Host Josie Packman. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

## *The Postman Called* (Interesting items from the Editor's letter-bag)

S. GORDON SWAN (Australia): I wish to thank you and the contributors to the Collectors' Digest for maintaining interest in the old papers which flourished in the days of our youth — days which, alas, seem so far away now. Present-day youth has nothing of the kind to fill its leisure hours so it does not miss them, but to me the old periodicals are irreplaceable. I often turn to them for relief from the literary garbage which passes for much of the reading to-day, and if that is "wallowing in nostalgia," as someone once stated, then I have no apologies to offer.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): On this happy occasion of your Silver Jubilee may I offer a special thanks to the reader who first introduced me to your fine magazine - Miss E. Magoveny from Ireland. A copy came from out of the blue whilst advertising nationally for boys' papers some years ago. It was just the stimulus I needed, and I haven't missed a copy since. A long-standing reader and hobbyist, Miss Magoveny prefers the Magnets of the twenties to the later ones, and hopes to see some of these reprinted.

Another pleasure it quickly brought me was the reunion with a hobby friend whom I hadn't heard from since before the war - Richard Whorwell. As close neighbours we first met over an exchange of Magnets, and, despite the passing years, he hadn't forgotten selling me the precious No. 1 for 2/-, a copy once belonging to John Medcraft. A life-long Hamiltonian, Mr. Whorwell has been in touch with most hobbyists over the years, and once met Herbert Leckenby. A photo he cherishes is one of himself and Len Packman taken in his Bermondsey garden in the thirties. Both are holding  $\frac{1}{2}$ d Gems.

JACK COOK (Newcastle-on-Tyne): Roger Jenkins mentions the first meeting of the novocastrian Club in Leeds. I began the novocastrian Club - in Newcastle-upon-Tyne! We failed because of lack of members. According to Brand, the Historian, a novocastrian is a Northumbrian.

S. A. HAILSTONE (London): How nice it is to see a cover bearing the words "Special Christmas Double Number." How my mind flies back to

those happy days of publishing when this was a regular occurrence! Can one ever really describe those feelings one experienced as some of those wonderful "double numbers" were purchased and devoured? My feelings are "Out of this world."

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### Cecil Bullivant Looks Back

The following are extracts from a letter, sent to C.D. reader Charles Day of Keighley, by Cecil Bullivant who also wrote as Maurice Everard and Robert W. Dixon.

"I had personal contact with A. S. Hardy all through the eleven years that I edited boys' papers for the Amalgamated Press. I never knew him to write under any name but his own. It is unlikely that, under various pseudonyms, he would have written the huge mass of trash that was published under the editorship of Percy Griffith who ran both the Magnet and the Gem - trash which I believe led eventually to the death of that particular brand of boys' papers.

"Hardy wrote a great deal for me whilst I was editor of the Boys' Herald, a lot for Willie Back who edited the Boys' Friend, a good many football serials for the Boys' Realm, and a good many Sexton Blake yarns.

"No man, however prolific, could ever have turned out the enormous wordage attributed to Frank Richards and the half-dozen other names he wrote under. It would have been a physical impossibility.

"Hardy was a slow but careful writer and everything he wrote was of a high moral tone, vastly different from the Billy Bunter type whose only claim to fame was excessive bad manners, general unkindness, sheer buffoonery, and execrable bad manners. Certainly neither Gilbert Floyd of the Boys' Realm nor William Back would have accepted stuff like this.

"A. S. Hardy was a charming man, very gentle, and greatly respected by everyone who met him in Carmelite House: quite alien in his make-up to the Billy Bunter trend."

(Editorial Comment: Mr. Bullivant is 88 years old and almost blind. His comments above seem to be an attack on the Hamilton papers, but as Mr. Bullivant left the Amalgamated Press in 1911, when Hamilton was enjoying what was an early success, it seems doubtful whether Mr. Bullivant really knows much about it all. Up till that time, the Realm and the Herald and the Friend were under Hamilton Edwards. Charles Hamilton certainly wrote for Hamilton Edwards, the famous "King Cricket" serial appearing in the Boys' Realm. Most of us would doubt whether Hardy as a writer could be comparable with Charles Hamilton. There could be no doubt that, but for the movement which Hamilton inspired, such men as A. S. Hardy would be completely forgotten today.)