

# THE COLLECTORS DIGEST

An Amateur Magazine devoted entirely  
to story paper collecting hobby

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## EDITORS:

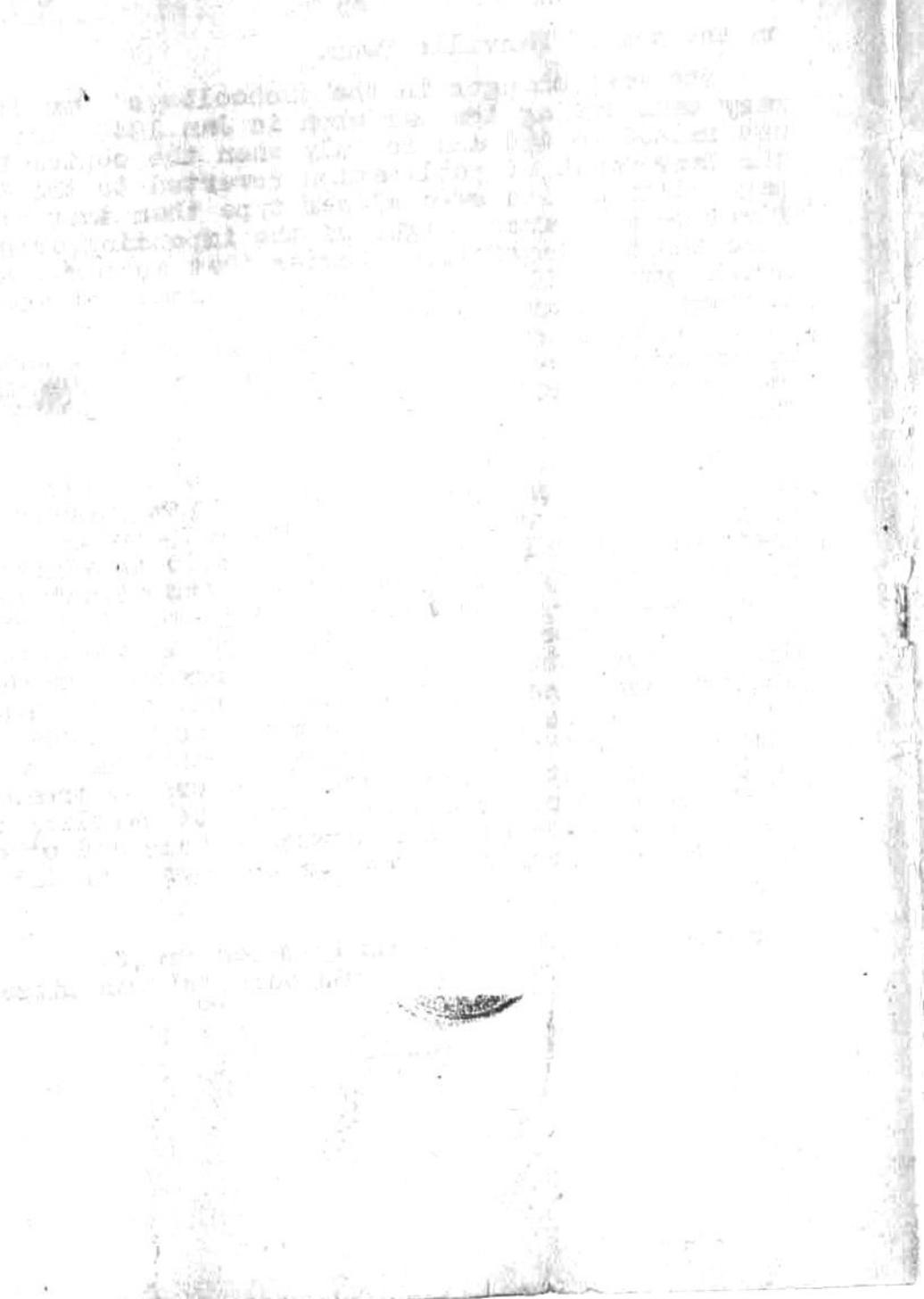
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NOVEMBER 1946



I N T R O D U C I N G

## The Collectors Digest

Dear Fellow Collector,

Probably you have been aware of the illness of our good friend, William H. Gander, and the suspension of the "Story Paper Collector" as a consequence. Happily, as these lines are being written, he is much better and it is possible that, ere long, we may see once again that popular little magazine devoted to the hobby of story paper collecting. When it does come, however, it will, he advises us, be of necessity, in reduced form. That is the reason for "The Collectors' Digest". It occurred to us that, in view of the growing number of collectors (or at least the number getting together) there was a good case for another paper, partly to make good the loss in size of the S.P.C. In saying this we are not forgetting the other excellent magazine - "The Collectors' Miscellany", published with the same commendable object. Certain it is, the material to be drawn upon is sufficient to keep several such papers going, if only it can be made use of. Anyhow, here is No.1. In passing we may say it has the cordial support of our good friend across the sea. How good a friend we realised when the question of putting the C.D. out in printed form was considered. We learned quickly how much the collectors owe to him, for a production equal in artistic merit to the S.P.C. would have cost £10 for the first 100 copies. That, of course, was a sheer impossibility, hence the C.D. as you now see it. We feel confident that, taking everything into consideration, you will agree that a good job has been made of it.

Now as far as this particular issue is concerned payment is optional. A few enthusiasts are prepared to cover any loss. If it meets with your approval, and you are prepared to give it your support the cost of future issues will be 1s.0d per copy (see

subscription rates below) and you can, of course, pay for this one if you wish. For the present we have no definite schedule for publishing, issue appearing as soon as we can possibly get them completed. As time passes they should appear more frequently and possibly at a reduced rate. It all depends on YOU!

Our intention is to publish articles on the hobby appealing to collectors of all periods, and all tastes. If you are of what might be termed the "Hamilton group" there will be something for you; if one of the large number of Sexton Blake devotees, there will be ample fare; if a staunch collector of the "Nelson Lee Library", we shall try to please you; or if you are one of the veterans, interested in the grand old papers of long ago, you will not be neglected.

We want to make it a real live, intimate paper the "collectors own paper". If you want to know the number in which a certain story appeared in "The Boy's Friend Library", and if you are curious about a certain "Magnet" story, the name of which you have forgotten, if you want to know when some favourite paper started its career, ask us and we'll try and give you the answer.

If you are keen to get hold of particular numbers of a paper to help your collection ask us, we may know someone who is willing to part with them. In short, in every way possible, we are at your service, to help in the grand old hobby of story paper collecting.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.  
H. MAURICE BOND.

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Advertisement Rates:

Small advertisements, 1d per word (name and address will be inserted free of charge).

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Contributions intended for publication are, if possible, to be typewritten on quarto sheets (as this paper).

WILLIAM H. GANDER - A TRIBUTE: by Herbert Leckenby

If this had been the "Story Paper Collector" this would not have appeared, for Bill Gander is not in the habit of talking about himself; but as he is not editing this paper it goes in, for I think a word or two about the man who, for so long, produced that magnificent little magazine, is long overdue.

I have never seen Bill, I only know him through his cheery letters and the S.P.C. Oft times I have tried to picture him out there, four thousand or more miles away. It so happens that in the long ago I learned something of the printer's craft, and each time I have examined a new issue of that pride of his I have marvelled as to how, with his limited plant, he could turn out such a high class specimen of the art of printing.

I have pictured him then, settling down after one's days work was done in the corner of his store which housed his cases of type, his little side lever, hand-power machine, his mallet and his plane, his "chase", and all the other equipment necessary for turning out a printing job. In my minds eye I could see him pick up his composing stick, scrutinize the copy, then, letter by letter, word by word, line by line, set up the story concerning Greyfriars, Sexton Blake, or Billy Bunter, ever and anon knitting his brows and saying things below his breath concerning the scribe, maybe that fellow Leckenby whose handwriting was often not all it might have been.

Then Bill would have to prepare it for press. The average printer would run it off eight, or maybe the whole sixteen pages at a time, by motive power. Not so Bill on his Lilliputian machine. One page at a time for him, and the power that of his own right

arm. Before he started on a run he would read over the page carefully, in search of any possible error that may have crept in. How carefully he did that can be realised if you run through that Volume 1. All the typographical errors you can find therein I guarantee you can count on the fingers of one hand.

And having run off the whole sixteen pages, 3,000 or so printings, there would be the folding, the wiring, the addressing, the slipping into envelopes, the stamping thereof, and one or two other little things I have not mentioned.

Bill once told me that in the setting of a certain page he ran short of certain letters, therefore having to do the page at two printings. That would need very careful feeding so that the join up would not be noticable. I examined that page, and I defy anyone without a Sexton Blake magnifying glass to say which was the last line of the first printing and the first of the second. I raised my hat at the skill of the man who had done that, all for love of a hobby.

Showing a copy of the S.P.O. to a printer friend one day he said "nice work, first class type, artistic make-up. A lot of matter in it, it would take a week to set by hand".

Well, Bill "set it by hand", in his spare time. Think of that! You acclaimers of the S.P.O. who grew impatient if it was a little late in its arrival sometimes.

Owing to illness Bill has had to lay his "stick" down; we sincerely hope only for a time, and with restoration to health we are given the pleasant opportunity of seeing the neat white envelopes again. We shall welcome them as one does sunshine after storm. In any event we shall never cease to be grateful to him for the happy bond we have derived from browsing over the S.P.O.

And, having written this, I find I have not said half of what I wanted to say about the man who worked o' nights, not for financial gain, but through love of a hobby and for the benefit of his fellow men.

REPRINTED PIECES:

by R.M.Jenkins

(A review of the Schoolboys' Own Library)

The Secretary of the British Museum looked enquiringly at the youth before him and remarked - "Exactly which books do you desire to see?" The answer "The Magnet and the Schoolboys' Own Library", probably surprised Sir John; he put his finger tips together and stared out of the window in a reminiscent manner, no doubt recalling the time before the appointment to his present exalted post when he too followed the adventures of Billy Bunter and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. At any rate, my request was granted, Sir John declaring that the British Museum was the only place in the world where these particular books were available in their entirety. He was still musing when I left him, although for all I know he may only have been considering the objections to importing a sphinx or two. But I like to think I had reminded him of far-off days.

Within the hallowed portals of the Museum Library I learnt that the Schoolboys' Own Library commenced on 3rd April, 1925 (two months before the Boys' Friend and Sexton Blake monthly libraries began a new series). Two issues of 64 pages were published at 4d each on the first Friday of each month, although they were always dated the last day of the month. All the stories were reprinted from various publications of the Amalgamated Press - mainly the "Magnet", "Gem", "Boys' Friend" and "Nelson Lee". A curious fact is that the reprints were done in no particular chronological order; very often glaring anachronisms became apparent - as for instance in Nos. 50 and 55 of the S.O.L. The latter number entitled "A Rank Outsider" was reprinted from "Gems" Nos. 129 and 130, and deals with Lumley-Lumley's arrival at St. Jims. But No. 50, "Tom Merry's Enemy", the earlier number, was reprinted from "Gems" 159 and 160, and related to events on the Outsider's return to the school after his illness! When these stories were reprinted in the "Gem" in 1934 a stricter check was kept on their sequence.\*

\* It is amusing to note that Skimpole was referred to as the "St. Jims' Social" in "Gem" 159, and S.O.L. 50, but in "Gem" 130 when the story appeared

This was not the only instance of juniors' coming to schools long after they had already been established there. In the S.O.L. many stories of famous characters' arrivals were published without any seeming regard for chronology. Instances of this are:- No.47 "The Greyfriars Hustler" (Fisher T. Fish); No.56 "The Terror of the Third" (Hardforth Minor); No.118 "Jimmy Joins Up" (Jimmy Silver); No.220 "Son of a Cracksman" (Kit Errol). In each of these cases there had been previous stories in the library featuring these juniors.

In March 1928 the date on the books was changed to the actual day of publication, and in the following month that day was put back from the first Friday to the first Thursday in each month - a procedure which remained unaltered. By this time it had become the accepted custom that one copy a month would be a Greyfriars story - (this had been observed every month except March 1926 and July 1927). In all, 184 Greyfriars stories appeared in the S.O.L. and after 1930 these were reprinted from the Magnet in a recognisable order, the only noticeable switchback being Nos. 301 and 304 of the 1925 Bunter Court Series in Magnets 910 to 916 which must have been overlooked. All other reprints of Greyfriars stories at the time when the Schoolboys' Own Library was in the three hundreds were from Magnets of the early thirties. It may be of interest to some to know that, after Billy Bunter, the character to whom reference was most often made in the titles of the Schoolboys' Own Library was Fisher T. Fish. Among the epithets that graced the titles of his adventures were:-

No.3 "The Greyfriars Business Man"; No.47 "The Greyfriars Hustler"; No.94 "The Get-Rich-Quick Schoolboy"; No.113 "The Shylock of Greyfriars"; No.119 "The Boy from New York"; No.130 "That Gay Fish"; No.239 "The Shylock of Greyfriars".

There were many others - like the Hollywood Series - wherein he played prominent parts although his name did not appear in the titles. Bunter's actual name occurred 16 times, but there were many allusions

for the third time it was changed to the "St. Jim's Determinist" - Time Marches On !

to him, of course, apart from these.

A radical change in the make up of the S.O.L. was effected in March 1932 when each issue was - to quote an advertisement "Permanently enlarged to 96 pages" and "Printed in the latest modern type". Whether or not this latter improvement enabled the stories to be "many thousands of words longer than before" is a moot point, but the library certainly became more attractive to look at and easier to read. But this increase in size brought with it certain complications. One copy was now equal in length to three Magnets of the early thirties, but when published in the enlarged size it often became difficult to fit them in. (Of course the introductory pieces in the beginning of each Magnet were always curtailed, but naturally this was not enough.

Once again, the Bunter Court series of Magnets may be taken as an example. The first three stories went into S.O.L. No.301, while the last four were compressed into S.O.L. No.304, one of them with so much cutting as to render it almost unintelligible. Sometimes other methods were adopted. In S.O.L.No. 216 "The Wizard of St.Franks", of the original 8 stories in the "Nelson Lee" (542-549) only the last three appeared. These piecemeal reprintings were very unsatisfactory and annoying, but were rather the exception than the rule.

In October 1936 came another innovation - three copies were issued each month, the extra copy containing a story by E.S.Brooks, thus ensuring that Nelson Lee fans would be compensated for the recent cessation of St.Franks stories in the "Gem". Hitherto, only 7 St.Franks stories had appeared in the S.O.L. (Nos.4,27,54,120,212,216) but the total was brought to 52 by the monthly tales that appeared for the next 4½ years. These stories were neither original nor reprinted ones but a curious hash of both, E.S.Brooks having revised and slightly altered his earlier tales.

During the one hundred & eighty-three months in which the library appeared there were 81 tales of Tom Merry & Co. and 54 of Jimmy Silver.

(Continued on Page 23)

The Monster Library:A Short Description by  
T.Armitage

The "Monster Library", one of the A.P. ventures has not yet, I think, been mentioned in an article. This is probably because it only ran to 19 issues, and was not as handy for collecting as, say, the "Boys' Friend Library". Each volume, one per month, from November 1925 to May 1927, had measurements of about 11" x 7½". So perhaps not many will have the set or even a few. Those who have, however, have the equivalent of 167 Nelson Lee Libraries, and 29 "Schoolboys Own Libraries". The stories were reprints of former St. Franks yarns in the "Nelson Lee and for 1s.0d one had a really good amount of reading to settle down to. No doubt lack of support caused the end of the Library, but I think that if the volumes had covered the Nelson Lee stories from No.1, 1915, the "Monster" would have been more successful as having appeal to those who missed the actual "Nelson Lee" issues. As it was, however, the publishers saw fit to commence No.1 as an equivalent to No.158 to 165 of the N.L.L. This was a holiday series in the Pacific with buried treasure, cannibals and the rest. A good volume, but rather less interesting than No.13, another holiday story in Brazil. The remaining 17 were of all types, Cricket, Barrings-out, Chinese Tongs, etc. etc. All the stories were further reprinted in the "Schoolboys Own Library" from autumn 1936. "The Monster Library" volumes were rather small print, having a great deal to cover, and carried no illustrations barring the story heading. The covers were in good colour and inside usually carried a replica of the cover of the next number. The Titles of the set were as follows:-

(1) The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers, Nov.'25; (2) The Black Sheep of the Remove, Dec.'25; (3) The Tyrant of St. Franks, Jan.'26; (4) The Boy from Bermondsey, Feb.'26; (5) The Bullies of St. Franks, Mar.'26; (6) Expelled, Apr.'26; (7) Neath African Skies, May '26; (8) St. Franks in London, Jun.'26; (9) The Boy from the Bush, Jul.'26; (10) The Spendthrift of St. Franks, Aug.'26; (11) The Barrng Out at St. Franks, Sept.'26; (12) The Mystery Master, Oct.'26; (13) The

Voyage of the Wanderer, Nov. '26; (14) The Ghost of Bannington Grange, Dec. '26; (15) The Boy who Vanished, Jan. '27; (16) St. Franks on the Spree, Feb. '27; (17) Prisoners of the Mountains, Mar. '27; (18) The Remove in the Wild West, Apr. '27; (19) Rebels of the Remove, May. '27.

No doubt many would be glad to collect the "Monster Library" owing to its association with the popular "Nelson Lee". I haven't heard of anyone doing so, however, and now it is rather late to start, as not many copies are likely to be existence. The 19 issues mentioned above would, I am sure, look very well if handsomely bound, with six or so to a volume, and would be rather a good acquisition to a collector's bookshelf.

\*There are quite a number of collectors and would-be collectors of the "Monster Library", Tom, and we are sure your list will be of interest. EDITOR

#### THE LETTER BOX

All communications to be addressed to H. Leckenby, Telephone Exchange, C/o Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to hear that you propose starting a new mag. devoted to Story Paper Collecting. I feel sure there's room for one more, and I wish it every success. But let me make a plea. Don't have too much in about those over-rated papers the "Gem" and the "Magnet". I could never understand why there was so much fuss about them. Think of the padding in them, with lines merely consisting of "Ha, ha, ha's", "Bump", "Ger-off" and the like. As for plots, why, the same old ideas were served up about every three months. And surely there was far too much of that egregious ass Bunter. He was hardly a fit specimen to be a leading character.

You can use this in your first number if you like, but please don't publish my name. I know I shall tread on some corns and I'm all for a quiet life!  
"Pat".

My word! You've started something now "Pat"! Thanks a lot. We don't blame you for using a non-deplume, you've a right to your opinion, but we're afraid the verdict's against you. The old "Gem" and "Magnet" ran for over 30 years you know; and three decades can't very well be wrong. There were certainly a few exclamation marks on the stories, but there was also good solid story as well. It's true there was also repetition, but not just after three months. As for giving the papers a show, well, if we find that 20% of our readers are "Gem" or "Magnetities" it would only be fair if they got a fifth of the space. Anyhow, we'll hand you over to the "Magnet" group.

THE EDITOR

Tit-Bits from Letters:

"Why should that washout, John Hunter, be allowed to disgrace the name of Sexton Blake?"

"Disgusted"

THE THREE MUSTETEERS of BOYS PAPERS by "The Veteran"

In the history of boys journals there are not many instances of three papers running in close companionship for any length of time. One good example which did last for several years was that of "The Boys Friend", "The Boys Realm", and "The Boys Herald". They were allied until the youngest fell by the way. But the three which actually put up a record in this respect were "The Marvel", "The Union Jack", and "Pluck". From November 1894, when "Pluck" joined the other two, to the day when it became a casualty of the First Great War, over twenty years later, they were indeed good companions - the three musketeers. Especially was this so in their humble half-penny days when just as the poor are out to help the poor, each was ever at hand to help the other along. Pick up a copy of "Pluck" in 1899 and you soon could glean what the U.J. and the "Marvel" had to offer that week. The appetite was whetted for the stories usually had real full-blooded titles.

This is how they started: "The Half-penny Marvel", March 15th, 1893, "The Union Jack", April 27th, 1894, and "Pluck", November 24th, 1894. They contin-

ued so until October 17th, 1903, when the "Union Jack" joined the ranks of the penny papers. The "Marvel" followed suit on January 30th, 1904, and "Pluck" assumed the same dignity on November 5th, 1904. As I have said, the youngest, and probably always the most delicate of the three, died during the Kaiser war; the exact date was March 18th, 1916, the "Marvel" continued on until April 22nd, 1922, whilst the grand old "U.J." waved triumphantly until January 29th, 1933, putting up a record by length of run for all boys papers. Thus we have them running in harness from November 24th, 1894, to March 18th, 1916, over 21 years, a really impressive record.

For the purpose of this survey however, I propose to deal only with their half-penny days, the days when I myself had to think in terms of half-pennies. I have a neat little pile before me now, in any odd order, the green of the "Marvels", the mauve of the "Union Jacks", intermingled with the yellow of the "Plucks". Some, especially the very early ones, are almost as immaculate as the day they came from the press, making me wonder where they have been all these 50 years. Often, when one of these papers of long ago, came into my possession I wish it could tell the story of its wanderings.

Now when young Alfred Harmsworth launched "The Marvel" he declared he did so with a motive, to kill the 'penny dreadful', and for years the paper bore the slogan, "started to suppress bad books for boys". Alas! disheartening is the lot of the reformer. Throughout its career as a half-penny paper, stern fathers and teachers scowled upon it, and along with "Deadwood Dick" the poor little "Marvel" became synonymous with "blood and thunder". However, it was certainly a success, so I don't suppose the future Lord Northcliffe worried very much.

Some of the titles had certainly a torrid touch about them. No.1 for instance, was "Dead Man's Land", written by dear old S. Clarke Hook, and No.4 "The Black Pirate" by Harry Blyth. A special note must be made of No.6, for it was an epoch making story. Its title was "The Missing Millionaire" and it was a yarn of Sexton Blake. Make a note of the date, December

20th, 1893, 53 years ago! - and we're reading about him still! That date is important for it has often been stated that fiction's greatest detective first made his bow in No.2 of "The Union Jack", but that number did not appear until May 4th 1894, so obviously "The Marvel" and NOT the "Union Jack" had the honour of introducing him to the world. Moreover, two other stories about him followed in quick succession, No.7 "A Christmas Crime" and No.9 "A Golden Ghost". Nos.6 and 7 gave Hal Meredith as the author, No.9 gave Herry Blyth. There is no doubt, however, that Blyth wrote all three, Meredith being merely a pen name of his. It is a curious fact that the Amalgamated Press seemed to have forgotten the existence of these three stories, strange indeed, in view of their importance to the legion of admirers of Sexton Blake.

No.1 of the "Union Jack" was "The Silver Arrow" by Paul Herring, and No.2, the story just referred to; simply entitled "Sexton Blake, Detective". No.4 is also worth noting for it saw the advent of Nelson Lee, who was destined to be for years, Sexton Blake's greatest rival. The story bore the sinister title "The Phantom Dwarf" and the author was, of course, Maxwell Scott. Nelson Lee also appeared in No.35, in a series of short stories.

"Pluck", in the beginning, was slightly different to the other two for it was styled "Stories of Pluck" and it specialised in the heroic deeds of soldiers, sailors, firemen, policemen, and the like. Any airman there were in those days usually travelled by balloon, of course, though weird airships appeared occasionally. "Pluck's" cover was also printed in red ink, but this, together with "Stories of" was dropped during the second year. Another minor difference was that it was made up in three columns to a page, whereas its companions had two. This lasted throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> run.

The earliest "Pluck" I can trace was No.29, a story entitled "Not Guilty". No.31 was "Shield and Assegai" by Herbert Maxwell.

All three papers almost from the beginning ran a serial story, early ones in each being "By Nelsons

side" by S. Clarke Hook ("Marvel"); "Peter Slim, the young Ventriloquist" by Captain Spencer ("Union Jack"); and "Strong Arm's Secret" also by S. Clarke Hook, ("Pluck").

When the "Marvel" was nearing it's third birthday, and the "Union Jack" had just passed it's second, someone on the staff had a brainwave; or perhaps it was Alfred Harmsworth showing us he was sincere when he said he was out to kill the penny dreadful. Anyway, we find, appearing on the flimsy covers of these ha'penny papers, the names of the great masters, Sir Walter Scott, Captain Marryat, Harrison Ainsworth, Charles Dickens, and compressed into thirteen pages or so were such immortal works as "Ivanhoe", "Peter Simple", "Rookwood", "Oliver Twist" and several more. Some poor fellow would get a few headaches cutting down those stories to the allotted number of words. Alas! again, the boys of the period apparently did not appreciate this attempt to bring the classics within their reach, for soon we find the old favourites, S. Clarke Hook, Malton Whyte, John G. Rowe, Henry St. John, etc. had once again the field to themselves. It seems, by the way, that "Pluck" was out in the cold when the noble experiment was being tried.

When you come to think it over though, where is the dividing line between a "blood" and a "classic" Those stories I've just mentioned for instance. The killing of Nancy by Bill Sikes in "Oliver Twist" was pretty gruesome. "Rookwood" it was which first told of Dick Turpin's alleged ride to York, and I don't suppose there was any more blood in an Aldine "Robin Hood" than in Scott's "Ivanhoe". I suppose it's all a question of the difference between stiff and paper covers - and the price !

However, it would appear that Scott, Dickens, Marryat, etc. having departed from the pages of the ½d "U.J." and the "Marvel" the powers that be forsook their crusade and said in effect, "Very well, if the lads WILL have "bloods" let 'em have "bloods" for we find stories with these alluring titles appearing; "Marvel No.176 "Mysteries of a Madhouse", "U.J." No.196, "An Avenging Eye"; "Marvel" No.199,

"The Death Ride"; "Marvel" No.187, "The City of the Dead", and "U.J." No.141, "The Haunted Brig".

This, too, has the ring of an Aldine or Hogarth House production about it; "The Wolf King or "The Wild Man's Revenge". Weird! Startling! Awesome! by Herman Hall, engaged regardless of expense as he has achieved enormous success in a high-class monthly magazine! That was "Marvel" No.175.

The Christmas numbers were really special events when the reader had somehow to find an extra half-penny. He would manage it by hook or by crook, for where's the boy who could resist seasonable ghostly fare like this? "Pluck" No.370 (1901) "The Masked Phantom" and "Misers Gold"; "Pluck" No.471 (1902) "The Ghost Detective" and "The Spectre's Reward", "U.J." No.344 (1900) "The Ghost of Smugglers Rock" (Sexton Blake) and "I Will Avenge Him". "U.J." No.292 (1899) "The Phantom Cruiser" and "The Plague of Death". Yes, those WERE the days.

(Continued)

### DEAD MEN'S SHOES:

In the "Boys Friend Library" 1st series, there appeared the following stories by Cecil Hayter. (they had previously been published serially in "The Boys Herald"). No.102 "Sexton Blake at School", No.105, "Sexton Blake in the Sixth". No.107 "Sexton Blake at Oxford". Many years' later they re-appeared in the second series, No.'s 388, 392, and 396. The author was given as John Andrews.

Still earlier (about 1907) in the 1st series appeared "The Missing Heir" (No.17) and "The Great Unknown" (No.24) - old Boys Friend serials by Maxwell Scott. Over 30 years later in 1938 they were re-published in the 2nd series, Nos.644 and 662. The author again was John Andrews.

In the very early days of "The Sexton Blake Library" 1st series - 1915 and 1916, Andrew Murray wrote several stories concerning those master criminals, Count Carlo and Professor Kew. After many years (1939) the stories made their appearance again

with the names of the villians slightly changed - the author once again - John Andrews.

Yet again, No.716, "The Boys Friend Library" 1st series, May 1924, was "Smith of Rockandshire" by Richard Randolph alias J.N.Pentelow. In June 1937, it appeared in the "Football and Sports Library" No. 518, disguised as "Wizard at the Wicket" and with the names of the characters changed. The author was given as, no, not John Andrews, but John Drake.

In each instance, when the stories re-appeared, the authors who really created them, Cecil Hayter, Maxwell Scott, Andrew Murray and Richard Randolph, had been dead for years. Did the Johns feel ghostly fingers guiding their hands as they wrote their stories ?

### B L A K I E N A

A section of the "Collector's Digest" devoted to the Man from Baker Street, Sexton Blake. All communications relating to Blake matters, including letters from members of the S.B. Correspondence Club, to be addressed to H.M.Bond, 172, Caerphilly Road, Birchgrove, Cardiff, South Wales.

Sexton Blake, Detective.

At Home every Friday in  
"THE UNION JACK" - 1d

The other day, while glancing at some of the old Blake stories in my collection I chanced to see the above, printed as an advertisement at the end of a Blake story in "The Boys Friend Library". I could not help feeling that this little reminder that Sexton Blake used to be "at home" to all his friends every week would be very welcome to-day. Although we know that it is very unlikely that the dear old "U.J." will ever return we are all hoping that the amalgamated Press will realise once again what a fine character they have in that fictional detective

from Baker Street. I have never tried to disguise my feelings towards some of the present Blake stories, although I realise that their appeal must be for the present generation. If we are to have a new Blake weekly let it be based on the traditions of the old "U.J." That imitation visitation card simply exudes that friendliness which we used to know in the old days and there is no reason why it should not again be printed, and with good effect.

This Section of "The Collector's Digest" will deal entirely with matters relating to the reading and collection of those papers dealing with Sexton Blake. Articles are welcomed from any reader and we shall be most pleased to include all those items considered worthy. But before any attempt is made at printing articles and anecdotes dealing with Blake we think it only fitting to introduce you to the Sexton Blake Correspondence Club. Many of you are already members of this Club, which was formed with the intention of bringing all those interested in Blake, together, and already it has been of great help in solving problems which have puzzled readers for years as well as enabling quite a few to enlarge their collection by purchasing from or exchanging with fellow members, copies of "The Union Jack", "Sexton Blake Library" and "Detective Weekly". But the first great task which was accomplished was the series of deputation letters to the Editor of the Library. This deputation may or may not have been a success, seeing that it more or less asked for a return of the old Blake we used to love rather than the shadow of a slauth featured to-day, but it DID at least make the Editor sit up and take notice as it were. His reply showed that he was pleased to know that such an interest was shown in Blake, and although he could not promise anything definite, he did hold out some hope that we might see a new Blake Weekly in due course. In October of this year we had the first sign of a return to the old timers when a story by Rex Hardinge appeared in the Library, and we hope that ere long, maybe before this appears in print, more of the old authors may return, presenting us with a more human Blake and Tinker, to say nothing of a re-introduction to those other two fav-

ourites Mrs. Bardell and Pedro. Anyway, it is hoped that all members of the club will support any future campaign we may undertake and also that they will take the opportunity of communicating with one another through the medium of the Club. It is now possible, in this magazine, to let you know who the actual members of the Club are at the moment and so we are starting "Blakiana" off by giving you a list of the names and addresses of all current members, active or otherwise, and we feel sure that a lively exchange of views will result, in fact probably more than views will be exchanged. So don't forget, send your Blake articles to us for inclusion and if these items are likely to cause a spate of correspondence so much the better, for in research the old adage of "too many cooks" does not apply.

H.M.B.

#### The Sexton Blake Correspondence Club:

Here we present a list of the names and addresses of current members:-

- (1) H.M. Bond, 172 Caerphilly Rd., Birchgrove, Cardiff.
- (2) H. Leckenby, Telephone Exchange, C/o. Northern Command Central Registry, York.
- (3) J.W. Gocher, Jr., "Victoria Cottage", Constitution Hill, Sudbury, Suffolk.
- (4) T. Martin, 37, Twinnell St., Easton, Bristol.
- (5) T. Armitage, 205, Batley Rd., Akverthorpe, Wakefield, Yorkshire.
- (6) J.R. Shaw, 6, Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill, London, N.10.
- (7) J.V.B. Stewart Hunter, 4, Lulworth Rd., Nottingham S.E.9.
- (8) Granville T. Waine, 3, Croft Lane, Hollins, Whitefield, Manchester.
- (9) Alfred Horsey, 60, Salcombe Rd., Walthamstow, London, E.17.
- (10) H.R. Cox, 73, Chelston Rd., Ruislip, Middlesex.
- (11) F.E. Bottomley, 48, Downhills Park Rd., Tottenham, London.
- (12) F.E. Stannard, 37, Rectory Lane, Cleinsford, Essex.
- (13) Douglas Brooks, 34, Ash Grove, Palmers Green, London, N. 13.

- (14) Olive Simpson, "Ebor Mount", York Place, Knaresborough, Yorkshire.
- (15) Wm. Colcombe, 256, South Ave., Southend-on-Sea, Essex.
- (16) Wilfred Darwin, 76, Western Rd., East Dene, Rotherham, Yorkshire.
- (17) Rex Dolphin, "The Wicket", Hyde Heath, Amersham, Bucks.
- (18) S. Maidment, Twmpath, Gobowen, Oswestry, Shropshire.
- (19) Vincent Baxendale, 19, Vincent St. Openshaw, Manchester, 11.
- (20) Derek Adley, 19, Braithwaite Gdns., Stanmore, Middlesex.
- (21) Eric Fayne, The Modern School, Grove Rd., Surbiton, Surrey.

There you are! Twenty-one enthusiasts of Sexton Blake to date. We shall print subsidiary lists from time to time. Members of the Club are asked to advise us of any change of address.

#### Forthcoming Attractions:

"I Visit Baker Street" No.1. - - H.M. Bond.

"The Traveller Detective" - "The Art of Eric R. Parker" - "Baker Street Recollections" - "Blake's Scotland Yard Friends".

If YOU have any original ideas for Blake articles, please work on them and let us have the result. The more the merrier.

#### THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY (2nd Series)

744 Stories - The Men who Wrote Them by  
Herbert Leckenby

Interest in the men who wrote the yarns of Sexton Blake seem to never grow less, if anything it increases with the passing years. There are those who believe Hamilton Teed was the greatest ever, some who are loyal to Robert Murray, others who swear by Gilbert Chester, still more who think Gwyn Evans was king. Quiroule, Skene, Brooks and Hardinge have

their supporters, whilst not a few have a kindly thought for Blair and Murray Graydon, those veterans of the little army. I am convinced, therefore, that the detailed list of how the 744 stories in the S.B.L. 2nd Series, were shared among them will be of no little interest. It has taken a great deal of compiling for, as readers know, no authors names were given until the series was well on its way. For the fact that I am able to supply all the names I am indebted in great measure to that energetic member of the younger generation, John W. Gocher. He, with sublime confidence, submitted a long list of titles to the Editor of the Library and asked for the authors names to be appended. John must have a way with him for he got them, every one of them. In helping make my list complete his help was invaluable. Nice work, John!

Well, after checking and re-checking, this is how the list worked out:-

G.H. Teed, 78; Gilbert Chester, 64; Allan Blair, 59; John C. Brandon, 56; Outts Brisbane, 47; Wm. Murray Graydon, 45; Donald Stuart, 41; Pierre Quiroule, 38; Anthony Skene, 36; Rex Handinge, 34; Gwyn Evans, 31; Warwick Jardine, 22; Walter Edwards, 19; Paul Urquhart, 18; Mark Osborne, 17; Lester Bidston, 13; Hylton Gregory, 12; Stanton Hope, 11; John Hunter, 11; Anthony Parsons, 11; E.J. Murray, 9; Edwy Searles Brooks, 7; Arthur S. Hardy, 7; Sidney Drew, 4; Lad-broke Black, 4; Maurice B. Dix, 4; Andrew Murray, 4; L.C. Douthwaite, 3; Stacey Blake, 3; John Creasey, 3; Barry Perowne, 3; George Dilnot, 3; Martin Fraser, 3; Lewis Carlton, 3; F. Addington Symonds, 2; J.N. Pentalow, 2; Hedley Scott, 2; Richard Goynes, 2; H. Gregory Hill, Barre Lindon, H. Townley, Gordon Shaw, R.F. Foster, W.J. Elliott, Michael Poole, Richard Essex, H.P. Viokery, John Ascott, Lewis Jackson, T.C. Bridges, Vernon Frost, Gerald Bowman and Clifford Gates, 1 each. Total 744, with 53 authors.

Comments: I say 53 authors, actually the number was not quite that for it is certain that some of them wrote under more than one name. It is a fact, for instance, that E.J. Murray and Sidney Drew were one and the same. Mark Osborne was John Ascott, and there's a suspicion that Hylton Gregory was another

way of saying H.Gregory Hill. There may be other instances. Edwy Searles Brooks wrote one as Berkeley Grey, but I have included that in his seven.

An examination of the figures is really intriguing. We find, for example, that although some 50 authors contributed, eleven of them shared 529 stories. G.H.Teed, as was to be expected, came out well on top, though it has to be remembered that a number of his stories appeared twice. This applied to others also, including Pierre Quiroule and Gwyn Evans. A real surprise to me was the number written by that grand old timer Allan Blair. Until John W.Gocher came along with his "secret" list I had no idea he had been so active in the Blake field. W.Murray Graydon's record too, is impressive for the reason that No.260 was his last. This was not surprising seeing that when the second series started he had been writing stories for some 40 years. I have an idea that if a complete record of the 1st series could be compiled he would be well in the lead.

Another striking achievement is John G.Brandon's, for No.365 was his first story. To finish fourth with that late state suggests he was very busy writing about Blake in the latter period of the series.

On the other hand it is really surprising to note that Lewis Jackson wrote only one solitary story, and that under a pseudonym, Stephen Hood. Where was he all those years? More remarkable still, the name of Robert Murray, brilliant creator of the Confederation Paul Cynes, and Dr.Satria, does not appear at all. Admirers know, however, that he was often ill, and maybe the length of a Library story was too much for him.

Well, it a fine list of names of men who knew so well how to write of the Sexton Blake we loved, and the other dwellers in the famous house in Baker Street W. Sad to relate, the ranks of the little army are seriously depleted. Brilliant Teed, gay Gwyn Evans, prolific Graydon, fascinating Robert Murray, Osborne, Andrew Murray, and John G.Brandon, we know have joined the Great Majority; we fear there may be others, for their years were many when last we heard of them. Others, like Pierre Quiroule, E.S.Brooks,

and Anthony Skene, still use their pens, but not to write of Blake. It seems to those who have followed the adventures of the Man from Baker Street throughout the years, that no one has risen to take the place of those that have gone. Still, that may be just the old, old sigh that things are not so good as they used to be, to which the retort is, they never were, and I have a suspicion that so long as a Blake story is written, his band of devotees will never be able to resist the temptation to peruse it.

### Advertisements

Certain early "Magnets", "Gems", "Plucks", wanted. Especially "Gems" Nos.16, 22, 385. Would gladly buy, or exchange.

Shaw, 6, Colney Hatch Lane, London, N.10.

Wanted: Certain "Gems" between 1932 and 1937; "Magnets" before 1916, any condition so long as readable. Any reasonable price paid. "Schoolboys Own Library" for exchange for other early numbers. Shepherd, 3, Priory Place, Sheffield, 7.

Wanted: "Union Jacks", 1910 - 1914, bound or loose; highest prices paid. Also "Chums" 1919.

Maidment, Twmpath, Gobowen, Oswestry, Shropshire.

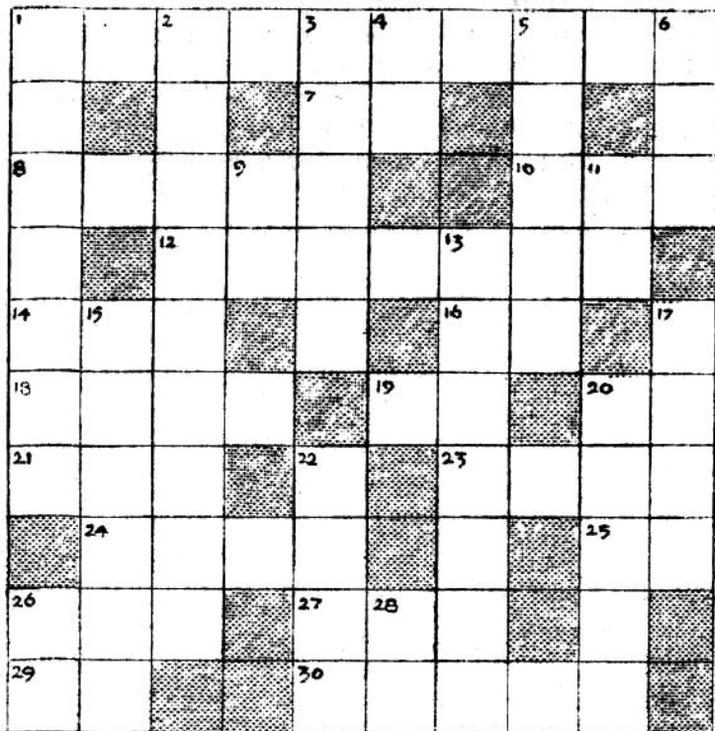
"Magnets" and "Schoolboys Own's" wanted to complete set for binding. Send serial numbers and price to: R.M.Jenkins, "Calfe", 2, Town Hall Road, Havant, Hants.

Wanted: "Nelson Lee's", "Monster" Libraries; "Union Jack's", "Sexton Blake Libraries"; "Detective Weeklies", "Thrillers", "Magnets", "Gems", "Popul-ars" and "Schoolboys Own Libraries".

C.Simpson, "Ebor Mount", York Place, Knaresborough, Yorkshire.

For Advertisement Rates see

Page 3.



SEXTON BLAKE CROSSWORD No.1  
by H.M.Bond

Across:

1. - Peel had such a horse.
7. Famous Blake artist (abbrev.)
8. Crook almost a poet.
10. Mrs. Bardell ensures Blake and Tinker does this with relish.
12. He was a steeplejack.
14. Furg was familiar with this.
16. An extra letter makes an explosive.
18. Blake has no use for this type, useful though he may be.
19. Baker - (abbrev.)
20. Blake, first and last.
21. Beginnings of Evans, Rochester and Teed.
23. Eileen reminds us of a kind of storm.

24. Ferrers name but not his title.
25. The Owl plus these make a strong man.
26. Aided a Chinese Prince.
27. The 'Grey Panther' is Blake's - car.
29. Heads of Blake and Coutts sound very ancient.
30. Why! This Blake author seems to have departed.

Down:

1. Warwick is nearly a fish.
2. His second name reminds us of a tree and an exclamation!
3. This author sounds tough.
4. It had a record run. (abbrev.)
5. Mary assisted a surgeon.
6. Blake once met a black one.
9. These help to make Blake.
11. Second and seventh of No.12 across.
13. Skene and Parsons have this in common.
15. An associate of this character sounded like some gardens.
17. He created No.26 across.
20. A poet, a doctor, and a detective.
22. Pedro is this.
26. Our hero is abbreviated.
28. The latter half of a Chinese detective, or is it his surname ?

As will be appreciated, the compiling of this puzzle has been far from easy owing to the very limited number of titles, names, etc., available. I think that all the clues refer to Blake or Blake lore directly or indirectly, and should not prove too difficult to understand.

The solution will be given in the next issue.

Continued from Page 7: Re-printed Pieces:

On a rough average, therefore, a St. Jims story appeared every other month, and a Rookwood story every third month. But often there were long gaps like the one between Nos.226 and 262, during which time no Rookwood story appeared at all, every prom-

inence being given to the saga of Dr. Sammy Sparshall of Grimslade which, when reprinted from the Ranger, occupied seven copies of the S.O.L. between August 1934 and Feb. 1936 (Nos. 232, 238, 242, 248, 252, 254, 256). No doubt Rookwood devotees were supposed to be satisfied with the few reprints in the "Gem".

Sometimes queer anomalies occurred in the S.O.L. Let us take, for example, the story of Edgar Bright, the "Toad of the Remove", who was at Greyfriars in the Autumn of 1927. This tale was twice reprinted in the Library but from different angles. As the story deals with Levison's return to Greyfriars to find an old will, S.O.L. No. 179 "The Toad of the Remove" is by "Frank Richards" and contains no scenes at St. Jims while S.O.L. No. 365 "The Boy who Came Back" is by Martin Clifford, and is almost entirely situated at the Sussex School, the action moving to Greyfriars only at the end. The very last episode in both these numbers is taken from "Magnet" No. 1034; apart from this they bear little resemblance to each other.

Very few stories by substitute writers were ever reprinted from the "Gem" and the "Magnet". The only spurious Greyfriars story was S.O.L. No. 15 "Football Heroes". St. Jims fared worse; altogether six 'duds' appeared again, two of which No. 186 "The Secret of Drere Manor" and No. 224 "Handforth at St. Jims" were palpable forgeries. The latter was written by E.S. Brooks in his own style and he seemed to make little effort to imitate Mr. Hamilton's. No. 240 "Tom Merry's enemy" was an indifferent attempt. But the other three are quite a different story. They are:-

- No. 180 "Ghums Alfoat".
- No. 274 "Camp and Caravan".
- No. 276 "Nippy from Nowhere".

These were in all probability written by Olive R. Penn, the only person who ever used Mr. Hamilton's pen-names without his disapproval. And one can appreciate the reason, for these tales seem to be written by the hand of the master himself. It is unfortunate that, if the employment of substitute writers was inevitable, the A.P. did not always call first

on the son of Manville Fenn.

The last changes in the "Schoolboys' Own Library" came during the war when in Jan. 1940, the price was raised to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d and in July when the copies for the last month of publication reverted to the 64 page edition with even closer type than that of the first seven years. Signs of the impending crisis were the two Greyfriars stories that appeared each month from April to June and the absence of advertisement of future copies in the June issues. As it was, the Egypt series had only just started their reprinting. Nevertheless, it is queer to note that the library outlived even the "Magnet" itself by a few weeks.

There is no doubt that the S.O.L. has played a useful part in making available for new readers the best of the old stories that were so popular in their day. That it had its failings it is admitted, but they were by far outweighed by its advantages. Some collectors, I am aware, disdain to allow the S.O.L. to become part of their hoard on the grounds that it lacks the atmosphere and character of the "Magnet" and "Gem". On the other hand, it is undeniably more convenient both to read and to store, and I have no hesitation in prophesying that in the dim future when most of these weekly papers we treasured have gone to dust, there will still be nestling on the bookshelves somewhere between novels and other volumes a few copies of the "Schoolboys' Own Library".

Abbreviations: "A.P." - Amalgamated Press.  
 "S.O.L." - "Schoolboys' Own Library".

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