

The

Collectors' Digest

Number 17  
(Volume 2)

May 4 1957

Reproductions of the cover pictures of the first two Sexton Blake stories, in *Marvels*, Nos. 6 and 7, 20th & 27th December, 1893...

No. 6.

**MISSING MILLIONAIRE**

The Story of a Daring Detective.



"And still they struggled, though they were descending to their doom."

No. 7.

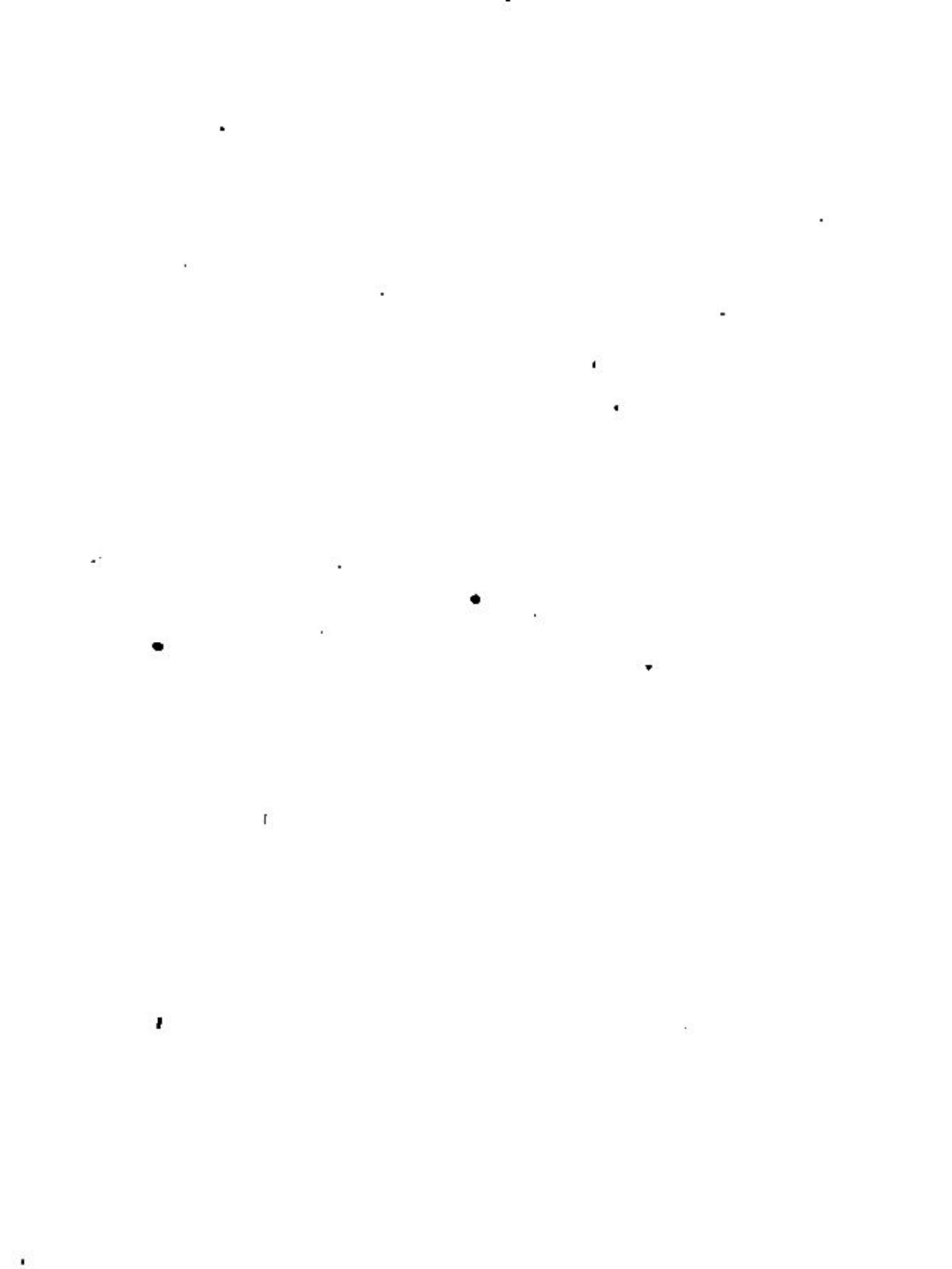
**A CHRISTMAS CRIME**

Or the Mystery of the "Black Grange"



"Sexton Blake and Jonas Fink fought desperately, each struggling to become the sole occupant of the car, which every moment threatened to overturn and cast them into space."

ONLY  
**1d**  
**2**  
EACH.





(Vol.2) No.17.

Price 1s 0d

Post Free

MAY 1948

Next Issue June

Editor, Miscellaneous Section  
Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,  
G/o. Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR:

In this issue we reproduce the opening chapters of the very first Sexton Blake story. My colleague will have something to say about it, here I shall just like to say the page photographed splendidly, and I am hoping it will come off the duplicator as clearly. If it does, it opens up all sorts of possibilities. For instance, how about a complete reproduction of the first "Magnet". How does that strike you? Anyway, more later.

Along with that  $\frac{1}{2}$  Marvel No.6, I had the fortune to receive quite a goodly number of copies of that paper and its companion, Pluck, and the Union Jack. As I had been searching for them for a generation their green, yellow and violet covers were

good to look upon, especially as they were as immaculate as the day they came off the press - some of their pages even un-cut, and almost the first thing that caught my eye was a note by the editor in one of them - said he "The first numbers are already out of print. Take care of your copies, they will be worth a lot of money some day." How right was he! For in view of present controversies I had to grin over that, and I couldn't help wondering where the copies had rested for over 50 years, for its a long time. They were carefully bound in no particular order, probably by an amateur, yet as I say, some of the pages were un-cut. There might be an interesting story behind them.

Most of our readers, I believe, will have received the latest issue of the S.P.C, that fine little production any printer would be proud of. And one is pleased to see gradually getting back to the size we knew of yore. Congratulations Bill, and I guess that Greyfriars Gallery is going to keep you busy for some time.

And that's all for now, for I've got to grapple with the old problem. how to get a quart - or shall I say a gallon - into a pint pot.

Last Minute Flash: Mr. Eric Payne has generously offered £1 as a prize in another little competition. Details in June issue. Of a truth the C.D. has some good friends.

Yours sincerely,

An interesting article, "I Visit Frank Richards" by Mr. T. Johnson, will appear in the June issue.

SELLING OUT - OFF TO AUSTRALIA: S.O.L's; Magnets; Gems; Populars; Boys Friend Monthlies; Lees; etc. State wants and price offered. J. Baguley, Pensilva, Cornwall.

THE CAPTAIN

by

L.M. AllenContd:

Many other famous artistes graced its pages, such as H.M. Bateman, Tom Browne, Chris. Heaps, Heath Robinson, Stanley L. Wood (the original illustrator of Captain Kettle) and those peerless depicitors of the schoolboy, Tom Peddie, H.M. Brock, and Thos. Henry.

A galaxy of talent was presented on the writing side and readily to mind come P.G. Wodehouse, who contributed six instalment school serials, Gunby Hadath, Richard Bird, Hylton Cleaver Warren Bell Alfred Judd, Harold Avery, etc. Adventure serials were catered for by John Buchan, Bourne Cooke, Herbert Strang, and many others.

Another feature of the paper was the space allotted to hobbies and, in turn, Cycling, O.T.C., Photography, Radio, Stamps, took pride of place

Apparently the original intention of the publisher was to build circulation from Public Schools and for the first ten years space was given to the Public School Sports events; in fact, the day following the publication of the first number the University Boat Race was held and the opportunity was taken to advertise the magazine by means of a launch parading the course suitably labelled. During and after the 1914/18 war, however, this feature was gradually diluted probably due to the changing public spirit and the growth of the various school magazines.

The End

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Notes on the second Meeting held at 706, Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London, N.22, on Sunday, 4th April, 1948, at 6-0 p.m.

The second meeting got away to a fine start after fifteen collectors had gathered together at the above

address. The muster included Messrs. R. Blythe, F. Keeling, J. Parrott, J. Herman, M. Haswell, E. Fryne, H. Skinner, R. H. Hunter, A. W. Dawson, A. Holgate, C. Wright, B. G. Whiter, L. Packman and Mr. & Mrs. R. H. Whiter.

As some of the members had not been present at the first meeting, a brief resume was read out by Mr. R. Blythe, to bring all collectors up to date on the topics. Then followed a discussion on advertising. It was suggested that all adverts for insertion in C. D. should not bear "Your prices paid"; as this would tend to make the price of the books keep rising, as collectors would try and outbid each other to get hold of certain numbers.

A member remarked that through the dealers extensive advertising many books otherwise unknown had been brought to light. He advanced a suggestion for the Club to pool resources and to also advertise extensively, then for members to draw out of the hat for the books this obtained; after much discussion the idea was dropped as not being practical.

All members were now present and Mrs. Whiter taking advantage of this fact read out letters received from friends unable to attend. These included Messrs. A. Horsey, J. Medcroft, R. Cox, T. Satchell, G. C. Foster, J. Shaw, F. Pettingell and C. W. Daniel. Our worthy Editor, Mr. Herbert Leckonby had his letter of good wishes read out in which he mentioned that he would be with the circle in spirit. Then followed a friendly debate "Greyfriars versus St. Franks", Mr. R. Whiter lead the attack against St. Franks, the latter being supported by Mr. Blythe, who was assisted by Mr. Packman. After much friendly arguing, Mr. Eric Fryne gave a speech supporting Mr. R. Whiter's first statement. The debate ended with honours even.

The Robert Blythe announced that the exchange session would now start. This movement proved quite a success to all present and many exchanges, etc.

were made. Whilst all this was in progress, Mrs. R. Whiter arrived with teas and light refreshments which to use a Magnet term, were both grateful and comforting. The time was getting on and as several of our friends had distances to travel, the meeting broke up. It was agreed by all members to have been a great success. Mr. Eric Payne kindly offered to hold the next meeting at his establishment at Surbiton - vote was taken and his kind offer accepted. (Next Meeting 2nd May).

\* \* \*

#### Editor's Comment:

Well, the second meeting with fifteen present, seems to have been quite an interesting occasion. Herewith my friendly comments. I feel sure the decision that the idea of collective advertising was not a practical one, was the only possible decision, for many reasons. It would be too much of a gamble and the results would probably have been found extremely disappointing. Better leave that kind of thing to those who know which papers to choose for advertising. As for the debate, and the exchange of papers, that part of the meeting seems to have been enjoyed by all, in themselves alone, something to make the gatherings well worth while.

Now to the controversial subjects - prices and dealers. Well your editor wears a worried look. I have in my file a pile of interesting articles, some of which have been there a long time so much so that the writers of them must be beginning to think they are never going to see the light. In addition, the subjects just mentioned have brought me a record mail, so as I think the views of others will prove of more interest than mine, I am allowing a good deal of space for them in the Correspondence Columns and say little more myself. I should just like to express a hope that everyone will take all that has been said in good part, and remember that even doctors disagree.

Postscript:

When I suggested in the April issue that the dealers were useful because they brought new blood into circulation, I had not then seen the adverts which appeared therein, but I think the adverts amply proved my contention, and within a week of their appearance I received numerous letters from grateful collectors who were quick to take advantage of the opportunities offered.

WANTED: Certain Old Series Nelson Lees and Modern Boys. For Exchange, Magnets, Gems, and New and Old Series Nelson Lees E. McPherson, 80 Benedict St., Glastonbury, Somerset.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: Magnets, Triumphs, Modern Boys, Chums, Nelson Lee's, S.O.L's. Special offer of Nelson Lee's. all large size 8/6 and 7/6 per doz. Chums 4/6 per doz. A few Holiday Annuals for Sale. Boys Own Papers. 6/3 per doz. All Books Post Free. H. A. Smith, 13 New Road. Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

ODD BOOKS - SALE OR EXCHANGE: Lists exchanged, complete stories, Boys Friend Libraries, etc. Henry J. H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED: Early issues of Gem, Magnet, Pluck, Dreadnought. A few Magnets and Gems for disposal and red covered Magnets for exchange only. Eric Fayne, 23 Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

MAGNETS WANTED: Urgently - between 1922 and 1930. Good prices paid. Have Magnets 1936 to 1940 for exchange. I. Corbett, 49, Glyn Farm Road, Quinton, Birmingham.

WANTED URGENTLY: Nelson Lees, 1st Series (1917) 124, 125, 126, 128; Gems, 1111, 1115. Also Wanted, Gems 1101 to 1110, 1248 to 1260. L. Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London. S.E.22.

Advertise in the Collectors' Digest





BUNTER BOOK No. 4 ON THE WAY

21st April, 1948.

Dear Herbert Leckonby,

In reply to your query, the new books have been a little delayed by the illness of the artist, but I am told that the delay will be brief, and that No.2 will be out in the early summer, followed by No.3 after a very brief interval. And at this moment, I am engaged upon No.4, which will be called "Billy Bunter in Brazil" - Bunter as usual, butting into the title, though he won't be allowed to steal the show. With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards.

P.S:

"Billy Bunter's Birthday Present" in Braille, will be out in May.

\* \* \*

THEY MET AFTER MANY YEARS

22nd April, 1948.

Dear Editor,

By now you will have heard of the successful meeting here last Sunday. Of the fifteen present one proved to be Charlie Wright. He reminded me that he last saw me at the Hugh Middleton School, Clerkenwell, 31 years ago. We recalled how I had to put an issue of the Magnet in the waste-paper basket, but retrieved it later.

Yours sincerely,

Ben. Whiter.

L.M. Allen Looks on the Bright Side

10th April, 1948.

Dear Mr. Editor

I was very surprised to read in the April C.D. the suggested publication of a Black List. Surely this does not arise from the pages of your magazine. I have corresponded with many fellow collectors hitherto unknown to me and would like to put on record the sincere pen-friendships formed, with never once a discordant note, thanks to Messrs. R. & H. Goodyear, C. Simpson, H. A. Smith, J. Cook, L. Vosper, R. V. Bennett, J. Shepherd, H. Dowler, W. H. Gender, D. McGreevy, E. McPherson, J. Herman, R. J. Wareing, yourself and several others.

I have also always been highly satisfied with my dealings with Messrs. W. Martin and Herbert Smith. They must have the hobby interest at heart for no one can visualise a rich reward in the buying and selling of O.B.B's, and the risk of accumulating a pile of junk.

\* \* \*

Its the Inexorable Law of Supply and Demand  
that does it!

14th April, 1948.

Dear Editor,

I was interested in the report of the Meeting, and I think you've covered it all adequately. Surely they should know that these papers are like a used foreign stamp - they've no value in themselves if no one wants them, but proportionately as the number of people who want the same thing increases, so proportionately the price rises. That's simple economics. The only way to keep prices low is not to buy at high prices - but that's a counsel of perfection to any collector who badly wants an item. I must admit I've some sympathy with the dealer. He is trying to make a living, and a bookseller who has to carry a lot of slow moving stock (and some that never moves at all) must have a profit on what

he does well. I agree entirely with you that the dealer serves a useful purpose in bringing new items into the common pool; a hobby that depends on each taking in the others washing must before long come to a full stop.

J.U.B. Stewart Hunter.

\* \* \*

A Lancashire Man Compliments a Yorkshire One

15th April, 1948.

Dear Editor,

I was exceptionally impressed with the clear, dignified and masterly write-up in the current issue of the C.D. under "Editorial Comments". I agree with all you say about the "Black List" and "Price Problems", of course, is impossible to print a list of complaints. Deliberate swindling is a different matter. To give lists of prices is silly. Anyway you've said all I want to say on that. I agree, though, that only ads. dealing with books and paper should be inserted and I think you ought to charge a higher sub.

Harry Dowler.

\* \* \*

THOSE PRICES!

18th April, 1948.

Dear Editor,

I have read with interest the 'findings' of the committee on 29th February, and agree some of the prices asked for and paid are ridiculous. I suggest a league with a gentleman's agreement not to pay more or ask more than the prices suggested by that "committee", for I think they are quite fair in the cases of papers like the Magnet, Gem, Popular, Sexton Blake, Boys Friend, Marvel, Union Jack, Schoolboys Owns, and Dixon Hawkes. There should be extra for double numbers, however. There are many papers of course which are not worth more than 6d, of course, but the committee could decide.

W. Neate.

MORE COMPLICATIONS

Dear Editor,

16th April, 1948.

Many thanks for your last letter and the latest copy of the Collectors' Miscellany, which was as interesting as ever. The account of proposed fixing of prices for Magnets etc. was especially worthy of note, but I can see a lot of pitfalls in this endeavour. For instance, Magnets of the 1918-1920 period are far commoner and cheaper than those of the 1921-26 period. It is a fallacy to think that the older the book the rarer it is.

R. M. Jenkins.

\* \* \*

ANOTHER ERIC IS FORTHRIGHT

Dear Editor,

14th April, 1948.

Thanks for C.D. which I found as interesting as ever. What a crime you commit if you accept an advert for books and the advertiser slips in a few lines about stamps or a miniature farm! Dash it, you're slaving for love of a hobby and not for personal gain.

Eric R. Lundy.

\* \* \*

THE DANGER OF LIBEL

Dear Editor,

Might I say how much I agree with your remarks about the resolution passed by the collectors about the Black List, Price regulation, and so on. I think it would be most dangerous to pillory people unless they have been guilty of fraud. I know from my journalistic experience how careful one must be over what one puts into print. The anti-dealer complex is also rather unwise, I think, because dealers do rescue wanted books from oblivion and they have more time to get out and search for them.

Hugh W. Fennell.

This article in Mr. Roger Jenkins best style has been in our file for over a year. We think it about time it was put to better use. Ed.

THE SHYLOCK OF GREYFRIARS

by  
Roger M. Jenkins

Some people have queer hobbies; there are those who like to deduce the private life of Sherlock Holmes from the fragmentary evidence afforded by Dr. Watson's narratives, while there are some who find nothing more enchanting than studying the love-making of newts at the full moon. But whatever the hobby may be, it is undoubtedly a clue to the character of the person who pursues it. Such at any rate is the case with the Shylock of Greyfriars, who could find no occupation so engrossing or diverting as spending a pleasant afternoon checking his accounts.

Fisher T. Fish came to Greyfriars in "Magnet" No. 150 entitled "The Yankee Schoolboy", which appeared on the 21st December, 1910, a time in which Anglo-American concord was, to say the least, conspicuous by its absence. It was in the same year that American sentiment was swayed by the famous declaration of a senator that it would not be long before the stars and stripes flew over all the North American continent. President Wilson's unfortunate remark five years later that America was too proud to fight was the culmination of the ill-feeling of a decade, the British view of which is acutely defined in the character of the young American schoolboy.

For Fishy had all the worst American attributes. He was mean, cowardly, boastful, untruthful, avaricious, and endowed with peculiar moral views concerning business. To someone whose eye-teeth had been c in New York it must have been provoking not to have been allowed to pursue one's natural - or unnatural - bent. But Fishy schemes never succeeded, no matter

# The Missing Millionaire.

## THE STORY OF A DARING DETECTIVE.

BY HAL MEREDETH.

### CHAPTER I.

**The Detective and His Visitor - A Strange Story of Treachery - The Missing Millionaire!**

"Mr. FRANK FILLARY wishes to see you, sir."  
"Good!" answered Mr. SUTTON BLAKE. "Let him come up, and at once."

The clerk withdrew, and his master gazed thoughtfully at the grimy window of his office in New Inn Chambers.

"No," he muttered. "my wealthy client has come at last, thanks to the influence of my friend Gervaise, of Paris. I wonder what kind of mission it is he has in hand that is to bring me in such high rewards! Gervaise says it may keep me busy for a year or two."

Sutton Blake belonged to the new order of detectives. He possessed a highly cultivated mind which helped to support his active courage. His refined, clean-shaven face readily lent itself to any disguise, and his mobile features assisted to clinch any facial illusion he desired to produce.

The door again opened, and a tall, handsome man whose cheeks were browned by travel, and whose grey eyes were large and prominent, en-

tered the room with a look of good fever. "I am determined to get to the Antipodes by hook or by crook, and try my luck at the diggings. If I come across my sister, well and good, although I do not start with any design of finding her: I have no objection in view, and one only—that was wealth!"

"I have obtained my desire," he added, with a heavy sigh, "but my heart is empty, and my life desolate!"

"Out in Australia, not a man and his wife, with whom I became so friendly that he and I became partners in a claim, at which we toiled for months without finding one grain of gold. He was some years older than myself, and he went by the name of Calder Dulek. I don't suppose it was his real title, for I knew now that there was nothing true about him."

"In those days I would have trusted him with my life. He, again, was younger than his wife, who was a tall, majestic woman, of French extraction, wonderfully accomplished, fiercely ambitious, and altogether unscrupulous."

"I always mistrusted her, and, unfortunately, I had no the art to conceal my dislike."

"Just when we were despairing of ever having a luck, and were thinking of seeking our fortune in some other part, we struck a rich vein of the precious ore, and found ourselves wealthy."

"Like many before us, this sudden success turned our heads. Nothing would do but we must hasten to Melbourne and enjoy ourselves."

"A few days after we arrived there I accidentally found the house where my sister lived. I got there just in time to bid her



stred to profane.  
The door again  
opened, and a tall,  
handsome man, whose  
cheeks were bronzed  
by travel, and whose  
grey eyes were large  
and prominent, en-  
tered.

"Mr. Blake, I be-  
lieve!" he said, as  
he paused on the  
threshold.

"Very much at  
your service," Mr.  
Frank Ellaby. Pray  
take a seat, and let  
me hear what I can  
do for you. Mr. Ger-  
vaise prepared me for  
a visit from you, but  
I am quite in the dark  
as to the nature of  
the business you desire  
me to undertake."

"It will prove more  
troublesome than dan-  
gerous," said the visi-  
tor, with a slight smile.  
"I will tell you my  
story, and then you  
will understand exactly what I want.

"My sister and myself were left orphans before we had  
finished our schooling. Some friends sent her out to  
Australia, where I believe she obtained a comfortable situa-  
tion. It is unnecessary for me to bore you with a description  
of my struggles for existence. When I was about twenty I,  
like thousands of other men, old and young, took a severe



"BILL BENDER SKIPPED A HEAVY CUT-GLASS WATER BOTTLE WHICH WAS  
YEAR AT HAND, AND RAISING IT HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD CRIED: 'MOVE A  
STEP AND I'LL BRAIN YOU.'"

we must have  
Melbourne and enjoy  
ourselves.

"A few days after  
we arrived there I acci-  
dentally found the  
house where my sister  
lived. I got there just  
in time to bid her  
good-bye for ever.  
She was dying. A  
beautiful, golden-  
haired girl of perhaps  
four years of age was  
playing in the room.

"'Frank,' gasped  
my sister, 'I swore to  
the mother of little  
Rose there, when she  
lay on her deathbed,  
that I would protect  
her child until she  
came of age. Take  
the same oath to me,  
Frank, so that I may  
die in peace.'

"There was, of  
course, no refusing  
this request at that  
awful moment, so I  
most solemnly took  
the vow she wished.

"In that cabinet, standing in the corner over there, you  
will find some papers which will explain who her parents  
were," my sister continued, speaking with great difficulty,  
for life's lamp was at its last flicker. "When you have  
perused them you will understand how precious she is, and  
how important it is that she is well guarded till she becomes  
a woman and can claim her own!"

No. 6.

The opening Chapters of the very first Sexton  
Blake story - the Story A.P. forgot. For further  
particulars see Blakiana.

ingeniously they were contrived; when in Magnet No. 290 he took over the tuckshop and doubled the prices, he was outwitted by the Remove wht set up a rival establishment in the Rag; in No.381 his Insurance Company for issuing punishment policies was compulsorily wound-up when questionable methods were employed by the Company to avoid payment to the policy-holders; and just as his effort in No. 204 to start a pawnshop had met with little success, so, in No.465, his effort to invest on the Stock Exchange money he didn't possess was foiled by his form fellows. But he met with least encouragement in his money-lending proclivities.

It is said that Orpheus with his lute drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek; but it took a signature to promise to pay ten-per-cent interest per day to draw money out of Fishy. He wasn't in business for his health he told the world indignantly, as he counted his little piles of cash, loaned his bunch of keys out at twopence an hour, and bought Nugent's "Holiday Annual" from Bunter. Fishy was spry, and for this reason Bunter was a persistent but not a favoured customer. It is not on record that he ever lent Bunter much money, but on the hilarious occasion in Magnet No.640 when Bunter went bankrupt, paying a penny in the pound, Fishy had made up a creditor's list for over twenty shillings, so presumably there must have been quite a number of times (like the one when Bunter received a cheque from his father with instructions to display it and return it immediately) which induced Fishy to expend a sprat to catch a mackerel, however faithfully he followed the precepts of his father, Hiram K.Fish.

Mr.Fish was a well-known figure on Wall Street, where, we understand, he lost considerable sums of other people's money in attempting to corner grains of various descriptions. His two most famous appearances in the Magnet were in Nos.1092 to 1107 when he took Harry Wharton & Co to Hollywood to make pictures for him on the nod, and in Nos.1434 to 1439



when he leased Portercliffe Hall to find some hidden sovereigns. This series was exceptionally amusing, Mr. Hamilton interplaying with brilliance the opposed characters of Bunter, Fish and Alonzo Todd, all of whom had different ideas on the subject of the disposal of the treasure. Needless to say, neither Hiram K. Fish nor his son Fisher Tarleton gained a red cent from their nefarious transactions. The episode was fishy in all senses of the word.

In a way, Fishy was badly treated by the Remove. He usually had everything except moral justice on his side, but naturally schoolboys could not be expected to venerate the written word with the same esteem as their elders; if they borrowed money, and found that they had signed an agreement to pay an exorbitant rate of interest, they conveniently forgot all about it. Fishy, with all his perspicacity, never bargained for the rough justice his creditors meted out to him. It was a case of cunning over-reaching itself. Nevertheless, Fishy must have felt that it was the bee's knee, not to mention the elephant's side whiskers, that people in this goldurned island just didn't understand business.

Fisher T. Fish's character seemed to deteriorate as the years went by. Many other characters underwent a gradual transformation - like Mauleverer who later became less weak-minded but more lazy, and Bunter who seemed more obtuse each year. Fishy really developed his worst miserly instincts after the first world war, when the epithet - "Shylock" on the one hand, and "Swindler" on the other were freely banded across the Atlantic at the time America demanded payment on her war-debts. But not all the Americans who came to Greyfriars were objectionable. Putnam van Duck, for instance, who appeared in Magnets Nos. 1468 and 1471 to 1478, was everything that Fishy wasn't - generous, sporting, and agreeable - even to Bunter, though he did dub him "Fat Jack of the Bonehouse". Fishy just couldn't make him out. But then Fishy was a Yankee of 1910 whilst Putnam van Duck was a typical

American of the thirties. The favourite pastime of Mr. Fish's son and heir was to peruse his accounts book and check his spondulicks. This highly engrossing activity was one which he pursued for many years, and it inevitably landed him in trouble, the greatest of which was probably the time when Mr. Prout chanced to find the ledger and had to be squirted with ink before he would relinquish it. The blame for this subsequently fell on Bunter, and the Popper's Island Rebellion which ensued in Magnets Nos. 1374 to 1382 is among the most interesting of the many revolts recounted in the pages of school fiction.

But Fishy, despite (or probably because of) his queer notions, was one of the most popular figures with readers of Greyfriars tales, like Bunter, his oddities made him more interesting. Many have asserted that after tales of Bunter, stories of Fishy's exploits were in the greatest general demand. Some people have objected to the character of Fish on the grounds that he like most Greyfriars juniors, seemed too old for his years. But it would be equally appropriate to level a counter-charge that St. Jim's juniors seemed too young for their years. Probably there is a little truth in both statements. But there is no doubt about the popularity of stories about this American junior, and I feel certain that when Mr. Hamilton's new Greyfriars stories are published, we shall hear a great deal more about the Shylock of Greyfriars.

**FOR SALE:** Complete Sets 1st & 2nd New Series Nelson Lee, 1/- copy; 3 only large Champion 3d, 1913 (Old-hams) offers invited; 12 early 3d Boys Friend Lib. 120 pages, 2/6 each. 20 early 4d Boys Friend Lib. 2/- each; 16 early 1d Union Jacks 1/6 each; 20 4d early Sexton Blakes, 1/9 each; Penny Popular 40-76, 1919, leather bound, offers invited. Magnets and Gems 1200 to finish, 9d to 1/3 according to age. About 400 Gems and Magnets 300 - 750 2/- to 2/6 each. Union Jacks coloured covers, between 985 and finish,

# The Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe

81 Aisen Road Holloway, London, N.7.

During a conversation recently with a fellow collector, the question arose as to who comprised the staff and employees of St. Franks. As I think it may be of interest to readers of this column, I am making a start this month with the Masters, followed by general information concerning the Ancient House. In succeeding issues I will deal with the other Houses. Incidentally, unless otherwise stated, the period is at the end of the 2nd N.S. Right, off we go!

Headmaster: Until 1928 Dr. Malcombe Strafford, afterwards, Nelson Lee.

Housemasters: Ancient House until 1928 Nelson Lee, afterwards, Mr. Alington Wilkes. West House, Mr. Beverley Stokes. Modern House, Mr. Arthur Stockdale. East House, Mr. Barnaby Goole.

Form Masters: 6th Form Mr. Langton; 5th Form, Mr. Pagett; Remove, Mr. Crowell; 4th Form, Mr. Pyecraft; 3rd Form, Mr. Suncliffe.

Other Masters: Science, Prof. Silvester Tucker; Maths. Mr. Robert Grayle; Chem. Mr. Simpson; French, M. Henri Jaques Leblanc; Sports, Mr. Clifford, Swimming Inst. Mr. Francis Weston; Gym. Mr. Blake. Also, Chaplain, Rev. David Smythe; Doctor. Dr. Brett.

ADVERT. (Contd): 1/- to 1/3; complete reprinted Confederation series, 14 stories bound in one volume £1. Detective Weeklies 1-130 in five half-yearly vols. 27/6 vol. 38 Odd Detective Weeklies 8d each. Film Companies Photographic stills from Sexton Blake films. Offers invited. Send your lists of nos. of papers required. W. Martin. 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10. Phone Willesden 4474.

**Ancient House:** Colours Red and Blue. Head Prefect and Capt. 6th Form, Edgar Fenton. Capt. 5th Form, William Napoleon Browne. Capt. Remove, Nipper (Richard Hamilton). Capt. 3rd Form, Willy Handforth.

**Matron:** Mrs. Poulter. **Pageboy:** Tubbs.

Around and about the Ancient House: 5th and 6th form studies are neither lettered or numbered. The Remove are lettered from A to J. The Third occupy a number of rooms, originally box rooms. All except the Third form sleep in small rooms corresponding with the studies.

**DID YOU KNOW:**

Before coming to St. Franks Handforth, Church, and McClure were at a school called Monkurst? At first they were bitter enemies owing to Handy's pugnacious nature. Later this animosity turned to friendship, which lasted ever since.

That St. Franks has a golf course of 9 holes, also 4 hard and 2 grass tennis courts?

That the swimming bath is situated on the ground floor of the School House?

That there is a private telephone exchange at St. Franks operated by two girls, Ethel Winters and Chrissie White?

That although the Triangle is so called, it is really a quadrangle? The term originated from the days before the school was rebuilt in 1926.

**WANTED URGENTLY:** Football Annuals 1919-1938. Also Books by Francis Vivian. John W. Gocher, Junr., Victoria Cottage, Constitution Hill, Sudbury, Suffolk.

**ODD BOOKS:** Salw or Exchange. Lists exchanged, complete stories. Boys Friend Library, etc. Henry H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

Advertise in the Collectors' Digest

Rebellion by Robert Blythe  
(Continued)

I think that when Mr. Brooks wrote his next barring out storys (502-512 O.S.) he must have been thinking of Dicken's "Nicholas Nickleby" for his description of Mr. Grimseby Creep's Moat Hollow School is reminiscent of Squeers and Dotheboys Hall. The plot in this case is fairly simple and centres mainly around Tommy Watson. Watson's father finds that he can no longer afford to send his son to St. Franks and as this new school is so near and the fees less, he is sent there. On arrival Watson soon finds out what sort of a place it is. The boys are treated like convicts and most of the learning is done a la Squeers, by practical application of work. Most of the pupils at this school have been completely subdued and hav'nt a modicum of spirit left. Watson tries to alter this with unhappy consequences to himself. He is assisted by Nipper who makes a mysterious appearance as the "Phantom Protector" and later leads a barring-out at Moat Hollow. All the usual skirmishes, which one associates with this type of story, takes place. Finally they are assisted by the St. Franks Remove, and Mr. Creeps is beaten. The conditions existing in the school are made public, and Mr. Creeps is arrested. By a strange coincidence(!) Mr. Watson's fortune revives and his son is once more able to return to St. Franks.

Nos. 553-580 O.S. brings us to Guy Sinclairs rule in the West House. Sinclair by reason of a hold over his Housemaster, Mr. Stokes, has succeeded in being appointed Head Prefect of the West House in place of Arthur Morrow. Even before the present episode he was regarded as a bully, now he excells himself; so well in fact, that in a very short time the West House juniors' revolt. The Head takes a dim view of this (No, he hasn't left the school this time - at least not yet!) and decides to use force; to such effect that the rebels would be defeated but for the intervention of the Ancient House, let by Nipper.

Continued



All Correspondence to  
H.M.Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

#### THE ROUND TABLE

The front cover and centre pages of this issue of the C.D. will definitely have interested the majority of Sexton Blake fans. My colleague and I both thought that our recent acquisition of "The Halfpenny Marvel" No.6 containing the very first Blake story ever published was an event of paramount importance and most certainly warranted a "splash" in the earliest number of the magazine possible. As I write I have the much cherished copy of "The Missing Millionaire" (the story in question) before me and I must say it is amazingly well preserved. And what a difference to the modern "Sexton Blake Library". When this historic yarn first appeared on the bookstalls in 1893 I don't suppose there was a living soul who realised that the character featured therein was destined to become one of the most famous of all time, in fact it is certain that not even the author realised that in Sexton Blake he was creating a detective in whom hundreds and thousands of boys not then born would be interested. But this angle of the "Man from Baker Street" has been discussed many times before so I will not dwell on it further. As will be seen from the reproduction in

the centre pages of this issue, the story was written by Hal Meredith, actually Harry Blyth. He wrote most of the early Blake stories, including the one which The Amalgamated Press for many years insisted was the "first Sexton Blake story" namely "Sexton Blake Detective" which appeared in No 2 of "The Union Jack". To the uninitiated the very title of this story would indicate that it was indeed the first, but thanks to patient research by the late Mr. Walter Dexter most of us knew of the existence of at least one story in "The Marvel" before the "Union Jack" arrived on the scene. But few of us knew that the first story had a sequel and that it appeared in the very next issue, No.7. (See reproductions on front cover of this issue). And I am told on very good authority that there was at least one other before that famous one in U.J. No.2. It seems strange to me that the A.P. should not have been aware of these early yarns of one of their best moneymakers. Should the present editor of "The Sexton Blake Library" be interested we could probably give him quite a lot of information on the subject.

You will immediately notice the very great difference between the old and the new when you read the page reproduced in the centre pages, but nevertheless I am inclined to think that this yarn would not be too much out of place were it to appear on the bookstalls to-day. The author tells us that Blake belongs to "the new order of detectives". He does, in fact he always did, for he changed with the times and like many other things which have changed to suit modern tastes and conditions it has not always proved successful. To illustrate my point I would like to mention the continual popularity of the famous Sherlock Holmes. In his case a few stories have lived through the years. No one worries about the differences in way of living when they read them. If Holmes takes a cab anywhere it is not thought of as out-of-date or old as the hills, for the average reader is more interested in the threads of the act-

ual story rather than the small incident such as I have mentioned. With Blake it has been rather different. He has had to appeal not so much to the reader of detective stories as to the ever changing moods of youth. He has been a "boys' detective" and although he always has and still does appeal to a vast number of adults it is the younger members of the reading public who have been his most ardent admirers. Most of them have cast him aside when they grew up, and probably many of them would laugh at the idea of men in their fifties trying to complete certain "runs" of "Union Jack" or cherishing very old copies of the S.B.L. Thus, when we look at the modern Sexton Blake, although we see a very different individual to that featured in "The Missing Millionaire", we realise that he still does belong to that new order - that new style of sleuth that modern youth dotes on. The same applied in 1938, in 1928, and yes, in 1918, too. Blake was always changing, yet ever the same. When bloodhounds became popular as men hunters, Blake acquired one, and it stayed with him for many years. It ought to be with him still, but the modern authors do not mention Pedro these days. Far too slow I suppose! He had an aeroplane when flying was in its infancy. He had to have one to be modern and to appeal to the modern boy of that period. His car "The Grey Panther" although always a Rolls was renewed from time to time. It had to be to suit the needs of the moment. But nevertheless Blake is still Blake and we love him. He has provided us with countless thrills in the past and I hope will give us many more in the future. His personality, his deeds, in fact his whole make-up has been something to look up to. I know that as a boy I thought that Sexton Blake was the essence of manhood and I still think of him as a fictional character with human personality. It is thrilling to be able to pick up this very first story about him and realise that it appeared over 55 years ago!

But the acquisition of "Marvel" No. 6 was not the



only 'scoop', for almost immediately after we managed to get hold of "Union Jack" No.125 (original series) containing the story "How Sexton Blake won His Spurs". This proved to be of a very interesting nature for it told of an adventure of the great detective when he was just out of his 'teens. The action takes place in the year 1878 which indicates that Blake is now about 90 years old! His first "client" was a youthful companion who needed his aid to find his fiancée who had disappeared. "Look here, Harford!" exclaimed Sexton Blake, "if you want me to help you, I will do so; but you must leave the matter entirely in my hands. For some time I have been intending to enter the detective profession. I have been studying and training for it for years, and have lately completed my arrangements. Now I am quite ready for a start. This shall be my first case. Will you entrust it to me?" Harford approved and Blake continued: "Very well, I will take it up, I shall make it a test case. I work in it as your friend, as an amateur; but on my success will depend whether I enter the ranks of professionalism. Rely upon it, I will do all I can. My whole future will depend upon the result. I shall win my spurs through this case, if ever I am to wear them." And so we now know of the very first case - I think you will all agree that such information is most interesting in the light of all that has been said of the early history of our favourite character. Is it not amazing to think of Blake solving one mystery in 1878 (for of course he DID win those spurs) and another, in fact several in this present year, 1948. Seventy years! The author of the yarn mentioned is given as W. Shaw Rae, but it is believed that it was one of the last written by the creator of Blake, Harry Blyth. I hope to tell you more about these early copies before long, in fact it is possible that we might be able to reproduce copies of them if our plans are successful and we get enough support, but more of this later.

A few weeks ago I received a copy of a modern New Zealand boys' paper known as "The New Zealand

Chums", consisting of 24 pages (inc. cover). It was dated 6th November 1947, and was priced "seven-pence fortnightly". The cover was just black and white as were all the internal illustrations and the stories inside were actionful, but I had a bit of a shock when I opened up at page 16 and espied "The Flaming Frontier" by John Brearley, a tale of intrigue and a battle of wits waged against Britain along the Indian Frontier. Nazi agents, inciting the tribes to form one great fighting confederacy, had made such headway, and the position was perilous. One man stood in the way - yes, you've guessed it SEXTON BLAKE, world famous detective, and now acting as special agent for British Intelligence. The story was told in serial form, but that is by the way, I thought you would all be interested to learn that Blake was still popular "down under" and that he was featured in a paper outside the sphere of the A.P. The author John Brearley, will probably sound familiar to you. I believe he did a lot of work for the A.P. papers before the war.

Well, I think I've just about used up all the space again this month, so I will sign off now, but before I do let me say that in No.18 I intend to let an old friend, Bill Colcombe, of Southend, tell you something about "Some Semi-Permanents of the Second Series" introducing The Hon.R.S.V.Purvale, Dearth Tallon, Ted Flanagan and other popular Blake story characters. So look out for "The Round Table" conducted by Bill Colcombe!

H. M. Bond.

In No.19 "The Story of Dr.Satira", Part 6. Coming soon - "The Creator of George Marsden Plummer" by Bill Colcombe. "I visit Baker Street again" by H.M.Bond.

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