

The Collector's Digest

DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL



No. 20

(Volume)
(2)

THE HISTORY OF LENO BARK & THE WYLLIE MARCH 1911

EVERY
TUESDAY

A PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL BUREAU



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Aug. 1918

Wanted - most urgently

Any Magnets between
1922 and 1928. Have
later editions for ex-
change. ~ ~ ~ ~

J. Corbett, 49 Glyn Farm
Road, Quinton, Birming-
ham, 32 ~ ~ ~ ~



(Vol.2) No.20

Price 1s.1d.

Post Free

AUGUST 1948

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

More About the Annual

Things are beginning to move nicely, and my file already has a healthy look. At the moment of writing, a week or so after the Questionnaires went out, they are coming back in goodly numbers. I can see this is going to be a really business-like feature, compact and informative. You will be able to see at a glance what the other fellows are interested in, and the numbers they specially require. This in a way will form a free advert. and we trust it will lead to a lot of collections being strengthened. At the same time we are hoping a few of you will send one along "at usual rates" as we shall require them to save us from being out of pocket.

Another prominent feature will be "The Authors' Who's Who". We shall endeavour to make this as authentic as possible,

crisp little biographies, of the men who have thrilled you way back to Victorian days, with their pen-names where they used them, and where possible specimens of their handwriting and photographs. Should there be any particular author you are interested in, send his name along and we will do our best to include, and, of course, if you can supply any information we shall be very pleased to have it.

Still another feature will be a list of the "Libraries", those published two or more at a time, like the Boys' Friend, Sexton Blake, Dick Turpin, Nugget, and so on. This will be on the lines of the Weeklies published last year.

Numerous other articles are taking shape, but of these more later. Our slogan's going to be "Better than Last Year".

And with this issue you will be getting the order form. We are hoping these will be returned as promptly as possible, for it is imperative we should know just how many copies to order. Things worked out splendidly last year, for only one copy was left over and that will probably go.

Well, more news next month.

Those Errors

At the June meeting of the London members we were gently chided about the errors which have a habit of cropping up in the C.D. Well, yes, we plead guilty; they do occur, but then, how often can you pick up a daily paper without finding some, despite the fact that they have "readers" whose full time job it is to spot them before the paper goes to bed?

Now, as you all know, producing the C.D. is by no means a full time job. Quite the contrary. It has to be prepared in odd moments as opportunity offers. Most of the errors are due, I am afraid, to my handwriting, never too clear at any time. And quite often I have to prepare copy with one hand, whilst pushing plugs into a switchboard at the rate of six a minute with the other, framing a sentence about Bunter one moment, passing "Whitehall 2323", "Belfast 38011" the next. Then, later, maybe scribbling a note on top of a bus, as

some thought occurs to me.

However, you probably have heard of the plea of the servent girl who had a baby when she shouldn't; "Please, it was only a little one." I can only make the same defence about my errors. I think there was only one though which might have got me into trouble. That was when I was made to call our youngest member a "cheeky" schoolboy, whereas I had written "cheery". However, I humbly apologised and was forgiven.

Still, despite all our difficulties, we have never failed to get the mag. out once a month, and that is something of an achievement in these days, I can assure you.

Missing Pages

We have received one or two complaints lately of papers being bought with the four centre pages missing. It is not suggested this was done intentionally, for those loose sections in papers like the Magnet had a habit of getting separated. But you know how exasperating it is when one secures some much wanted number to find it isn't complete. So please just give your copies a look-over before parting with them, and avoid disappointing someone you were probably anxious to please.

Collectors Meet

We who live in the provinces have not the opportunities of getting together like those who live in London town, yet we do manage to clasp hands occasionally. For instance, Jack Cook of Newcastle came down to Yorkshire recently and met quite a number of his fellow men. He tells you all about it in another page.

Then Bill Colcombe has spent several days with my co-editor, as no doubt the latter will be telling you also. I had the pleasure of a few words with Bill on the 'phone, and it didn't need television to realise he was enjoying himself. I knew his face was beaming even if I couldn't see it.

And talking of the 'phone, by its aid I know quite a lot of the members of the clan, even though we have never met.

Among them Len Allen, Frank Snell, Bernard Prime, Jack Corbett, Roger Jenkins, Bob Whiter, John Gocher, Colin Daines, Bill Martin, Frank Pettergell, Arthur Harris, John Robyns, Jimmy Hunter, and Dick Bawden. Anyone hearing us chatting wouldn't believe we have never seen each other, such is the friendliness the best of all hobbies inspires. Nevertheless, that we may meet in the flesh someday is the wish of

Yours sincerely,

Harold Lockley

P.S. Any more of you available by 'phone? If so, how about sending along your 'phone number?

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.

WANTED Aldine Publications, Dick Turpins, Claude Duvals, etc. E. R. Landy, 4 Nunneaton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED "Populars" 1924 and 1925 years only. Odd numbers or runs welcomed. Good condition please. L. Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED Most Urgently, any "magnets" between 1922 and 1928. Have later editions for exchange. J. Corbett, 49 Glyn Farm Road, Quinton, Birmingham, 32.

FOR SALE AND WANTED Magnets, Gems, Populars, Union-Jacks, Nelson-Lees, Sexton-Blakes, Marvels, Bullseyes, Surprises, True Blue, Nuggets, Thrillers, Plucks, Buffalo Bills, Dick Turpins, Schoolboys-Owens, Boys'-Friend, Hotspurs, Boys' Cinema, Boys' Realm, Football and Sports Library, Robin Hoods, Greyfriars-Heralds, Holiday Annuals, Monsters, etc. All enquiries: Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London N.W.10, Telephone Willesden 4474.

THE ARTHUR HARRIS COLLECTION OF COMIC PAPERS

Collecting papers seems to have run in our family, for my grandmother had a stack of Parish Magazines, I well remember. My Mother followed suit and I recall her pile of old ladies' journals with their quaint dresses of the early Victorian age very vividly. So it was a natural sequence that I should follow collecting some type of paper and so keep up the family tradition.

How this came about, and incidentally my first introduction to boys' papers, was the result of going one day for the meat, and finding among its wrappings a copy of "The Jester and Wonder". That paper henceafter became my favourite and in a few weeks' time (No.77, May 2nd, 1903) I found myself saving the copies every week.

Another favourite was "The Coloured Comic" with the well remembered Aunt Tozer as its front page character. I also took "Comic Cuts" and "Big Budget" irregularly. The latter seemed to be sold out most of the time, however, I didn't save any of these.

In 1904 "Puck" started and I kept these for quite a time, and also "Lot-o-Fun" which was started in 1906, but round 1910 I destroyed copies of both, keeping only six copies of the first numbers of the former, and No's 1 and 2 of the latter.

Still, however, I took the "Jester" and "Wonder" in right up to 1921 and kept them. Somehow I never liked destroying them, and when Joseph Parks issued his "Collectors Miscellany" round 1921 and mentioned these old time papers, I began to think of making a collection of them. My "Jesters", which, though they lack several numbers here and there, gave this a grand start, and I lamented my destroying the others. Then I enquired about "Big Budgets", but without result, but I did secure, in 1925, the first five volumes of "Comic Cuts" and "Funny Cuts". And then there was a long, long lapse into silence until 1942, when, to my great joy, Mr. Rich sold me copies of "The Jester and Wonder" of the period when I first took it in and also prior.

I shall ever be grateful to him for those copies. Happy Ike and the Bunsey Boys were great favourites of mine in those days in this paper.

Since I have been able to obtain a few volumes of the elusive "Big Budget" which I have been trying to get hold of for years. Happy Hooligan and Bloomy Gus were characters in this I revelled in. I have also gathered odd copies of most of the other comics. "Chips" with its inevitable Henry Willie and Tired Tim, "Halfpenny Comic", "Larks", "Comic Home Journal", "Fun Wonder", "Warrior's Comic" and "Butterfly" and recently copies of two hitherto "unknowns" to me were added to my collection: "Dan Leno's Comic" and "My Funnybone".

To-day my collection contains no fewer than 1,700 comic papers of the period 1890 to 1914 and the collecting of them has found me some very interesting friends in Herbert Leckenby, John Modcraft, Harry Dowler and William H. Gander to whom I owe much gratitude for their valuable help and data.

(Note: On our cover we reproduce the front page of No.1 of "Dan Leno's Comic Journal" taken from a copy of "The Big Budget". This first number appeared February 26, 1898, on pink paper, price $\frac{1}{2}$ d, later increased to a penny. Judging by the notices which appeared in the B.B. it evidently ran some good serials by Sidney Drew, Henry Farmer, Clarke Hook and others. Yet it only ran about two years. Mr. Harris possesses a copy of No.1, the only copy of the paper we know to exist. - H.L.)

Letters Like This Puts New Life Into Us

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

14th July, 1948.

Very many thanks for your letter, to which I am sorry not to have replied before this owing to considerable pressure of work in getting the two new books forward.

As requested, I have much pleasure in enclosing a number of order forms which I hope will be useful to your readers.

I have seen several copies of the COLLECTORS' DIGEST, which

is an admirable magazine, and I have intended long before this to subscribe to it. Would you please let me know how many back numbers are available so that I can send you a remittance for them and a forward subscription. I have been interested to note the remarkable news service concerning all developments in respect to Frank Richards' efforts.

I do not know if you have heard, however, that R.J. Macdonald was seriously ill following an accident in his garden in the Spring and this has meant that publication of BILLY BUNTER'S BANKNOTE and BILLY BUNTER'S BARRING-OUT has been delayed to some extent. However, all the illustrations have now been completed and the work is going forward well so that the books should be published in September with any luck.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES SKILTON LTD.

Charles Skilton.

Frank Richards Recalls the Old Days

July 15th, 1948.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for your letter with the C.D. There is an article in it by R.A.H. Goodyear which woke up a lot of old memories. Apparently we were reading the same old papers at the same old time! It is quite true, as he remarks, that the young reader could learn a lot of history from the old historical stories. Some of these were very well written, too. No doubt some of it was a little fantastic, as he says: but even so good an author as Scott is hardly to be trusted in historical details: one had to separate the wheat from the chaff. I used to like writing historical stories in my young days. Some of these were published in the 'nineties: though goodness knows what has become of them since. I think I told you about one, which was published by Stevens, in the Strand, I believe about 1897: a story of France in the sixteenth century.

I am just now concentrating my powerful intellect on the cross-word puzzle, which seems to me very ingenious.

Ronald Hunter's letter is very interesting. Lucky man to be rolling down to Rio!

I enclose the copy of "Billy Bunter's Birthday Present" in Braille. It looks a puzzle, doesn't it?

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards.

There's a Living Nelson Lee!

62, Queen's Gardens,
Bayswater, W.2.

17/7/48.

The Editor,

Sir,

Ten years ago, when I was about to become a father, I hit upon an idea for immortalising Nelson Lee.

At that time the N.L.L. had ceased publication, although the adventures of the St. Franks juniors continued to run in the "Schoolboys' Own Library". But for me the Nelson Lee was "alive" as ever and in conjunction with my wife we decided to call our first - Nelson Lee.

I sent Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks a photo when he was a few months old and was thanked and congratulated.

Now Nelson Lee Cook is 10 years of age, and while he cannot read any further activities of his name sake, he finds solace in the two monthly Sexton Blakes. Whether he will rise to such heights Lee attained in the literature realms, I cannot foresee, but he shows great promise as a leader.

Yours etc.

James W. Cook.

WANTED: Odd Adventure Books, Boys' Friend 3d. and 4d. Henderson's Aldines, etc. Exchanges.

Advertise in the Annual, 2d. word
Name and Address Free.

Have You Returned the Questionnaire Yet?

Once again TOM ARMITAGE contributes a short but extremely fascinating article. This time he tells us about his

PURPLE PERIODS

I always maintain that 1920 was my particular favourite year in boys' fiction. Most collectors have their own "Golden Age" and "Purple Periods" ranging from the old timers who swear by "Big Budget" "Boys Herald" and the Aldines, to the fairly newcomers who like the later type such as "Detective Weekly", "Rever", "Wizard" etc. and the very great number in between who find their greatest interest in "The Magnet", "The Gem", "The Boy's Friend" and "Sexton Blake Library" etc. So of course, each has his own special liking and probably his favourite year. And so, as mine is 1920 perhaps I might be raising some points of interest by stating some of my reasons for that year and also to recall what was then to be had by youthful readers of Schoolboy and other fiction. Well, we were only two years after the first World War but what a difference to now. Even the Sun shone brightly, or so I thought. The shops were pretty full of a great number of items and as for reading, well one couldn't go wrong. Besides the old die-hards such as "The Boys Friend" there were countless other books. "Picture Show", "Cinema Chat", "Picturegoer", "Buffalo Bill", Dick Turpin", Robin Hood", "Nick Carter", "Dixon Hawke", "Dixon Brett", "Tubby Haig", "Peter Flint" and Pirate stories. Also there were the ever increasing number of magazines. Red, Yellow, Blue, Violet, Green, Royal, Novel, Grand, New, Corner, etc. etc. Then the range of 2/- novels, Tarzan etc. and the Zane Greys and E.M. Bower westerns, not forgetting the wide range of Comics, colours and otherwise. In our particular field there were the "Boys Friend", "Magnet", "Gem", "Popular", "Union Jack", "Marvel", "Boys Realm", "Boys Cinema", "Boys Herald", "Nelson Lee", "Young Britain", "Boys Weekly" and many others. Also the "Boy's Friend Library", "Sexton Blake Library", "Boys Own", "Nuggets", "Prairie", "Robin Hood", "Detective", "Lloyds Adventure", School and Detective. Also "Treasure Trove" and "Buffalo Bill" novels. One could buy several each day and each different. Yes, I think 1920 was a truly "Golden Year", especially the summer turn-out of all the various publications. Just as a sample, let us see what certain famous Boys' weeklies put out during the period -

June 7th to August 28th, 1920. Starting off with the "Magnet", here are the stories. "Billy Bunter's Speculation" - "Bunter the Farmer" - "The Greyfriars Minstrels" - "Fun in the Fifth" - "The Remove's Recruit" - "Her Brother's Honour" - "Chumming with Loder" - "A Third Form Mystery" - "Bunter's Bluff" - "Bunter's Baby" - "The Schoolboy Artist" and "A Bid for the Captaincy". Now the "Gem" - same period:- "At Figgins Expense" - "Talbot's Find" - "The Tuck Dopers" - "Australia to the Rescue" - "Dick Brook's Trial" - "Troubled Waters" - "The Final Reckoning" - "Grundy's Great Raid" - "The St. Jim's Overall Club" - "The Tyrant Tamers" - "Beaten Hollow", and "All Through Baggy".

The "Nelson Lee Library" (same period again):-

"The Split in Study D" - "The Spy of St. Franks" - "The Claws of the Count" - "Lord Dorrimore's Quest" - "Bound for Brazil" - "The River of Wonders" - "The Dream City" - "The White Giants" - "The Modern El Dorado" - "Abandoned Amongst the Anzacs" - "The Traitor King" - "The Battle of the Giants" - "The Lake of Gold".

The "Magnet" and "Gem" were still in their white and blue jackets and the "Nelson Lee" in its usual Red, White and Blue. All were then only 1½d. each. Other items I recall are "The Nugget 3d Library" film story "Square Deal Sanderson" and the "Boys Friend Library", "The Circus King", also the Sexton Blake Library "The Case of the Cinema Star". The "Union Jack" was at this time still in its pink covers and carrying good detective yarns such as "Dirk Dolland's Dilemma" - "The Shadow" and "The Island of Death", whilst in other papers were stories of Frank Richards' Schoolboys. Very readable yarns of the school in the backwoods Cedar Creek. In these stories Charles Hamilton wrote under his Martin Clifford pseudonym, an imaginative and popular series of his other self Frank Richards. There have been many reprints of these stories and possibly feeling a bit self-conscious Mr. Hamilton rather prudently kept "Frank" from becoming too prominent and not at all like his most famous creation Harry Wharton. Bob Lawless did most of the reckless stunts and Verne Beauclerc the heroic ones, which was, I thought, just as it should be.

As for the rest, well, the summer numbers of the Comics Ice Cream, Cricket, "Teddy Tail" in the "Daily Mail" and delight saving time. Yes, a pretty good year. What do the other fellows say? Which was THEIR golden year?

THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

by Robert Whiter

The Latest get-together of the London Old Boys' Book Club was held at "Cherry Place", 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, N.22, on Sunday July 4th at 4 o'clock p.m., and was a great success. Mine hosts were Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Whiter, whilst Mr. Benjamin Whiter, brother of the aforesaid did sterling work as assistant host. In spite of inclement weather, the meeting showed a very good attendance and included:- Mr. John Robyns of Brighton, Mr. and Mrs. Len Packman accompanied by their young daughter Eleanor, already a staunch champion of the Magnet, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Keeling, Mr. Bob Blythe, Mr. Geal, Mr. Mavyn Haswell, Mr. John Herman, Mr. Maurice Hall, Mr. Holgate and Mr. Brooks, the latter a newcomer to the club.

Mr. Robert Whiter acted as chairman and read out letters from members unable to come, to open the meeting.

Points then discussed were:-

Mr. Bob Blythe's advert. in the Exchange & Mart to inform non-members about the club and its activities. This was received with much approval by all present.

Price Control: All agreed that the table of prices should be more widely advertised and that no member should pay the fantastic prices asked for by some of the collectors and dealers. It was further agreed, however, that as long as the price asked for was around the price in the table, such as a matter of coppers in difference, this was to be accepted. It was the three shilling or four shilling per copy gentleman that the club were out to kill.

The next meeting was then discussed, and August being a Bank holiday month it was agreed by all to cancel same and accept Mr. John Robyn's kind invitation to hold the next meeting at his house in Brighton on Sunday September 5th, Mr. Len Packman agreeing to find out details of the train service so that all members could meet at Victoria and make the journey together.

A written quiz was then conducted consisting of a set of nine questions on the Magnet, nine on the Gem, nine on the

Nelson Lee Library and nine miscellaneous. This gave all collectors an equal chance. When the results were announced, Mr. Maurice Hall came first with 47 points, Mr. Packman second with 42 points, and Mr. John Herman third with 38 points. Our two camera friends then got busy and prepared the room for an indoor photo, Mr. Hall having brought two flood lamps with him besides his camera. A nice group was arranged with the ladies sitting in front and the gentlemen standing behind, Mr. Hall and Mr. Robyns both taking several shots. It is hoped that good results will accrue therefrom.

Next on the bill came the laughter session, each member took a folded paper from a hat and retired into the next room where he was given any instructions needed, also any articles to help. He then re-entered the room with all members present, who had to guess what character he was depicting! It was a great success!

To wind up, Ben and Bob Whiter gave a performance of Bunter and Johnny Bull with his concertina - Bunter burning the instrument on the fire (see the story "When B. Bunter forgot").

Members brought their own rations and together with cups of tea provided, a good time was had by all. The meeting gradually broke up, Robby and Mr. Geal being the first to leave, owing to the former's long journey back to Brighton!

Thus ended a very enjoyable meeting.

—oOo—

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE AMALGAMATED PRESS

June, famous for its roses and sunny weather, has another claim to fame amongst the collectors of old boys' story papers. June 1888 saw a new weekly topical paper first published and the name was "Answers" and the firm who published same was the "Amalgamated Press". A new venture and a successful one, as the A.P. has now reached its 60th milestone. Before the paper shortage it published considerably more than the present "family" of 16 weekly papers, 12 fortnightlies, 14 monthlies, 10 fashion and knitting periodicals and 14 annuals. Alas, among the latter

are not numbered several papers us boys and old boys enjoyed, only a few of the more modern ones survived. Gone are the Magnet and Gem, Boys' Friend and Nelson Lee Library victims of the paper shortage. However, from that June day 1888, when "Answers" first saw the light of day, the A.P. has given boys of all ages some very happy and carefree reading matter. When one thinks of the long list of boys' periodicals, amongst which are the "Magnet", "Gem", "Boys' Friend", "Boys' Realm" "Marvel", "Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake libraries and the numerous girls' papers which were turned out for so many years by the firm at Fleetway House in the city of London, one cannot help but think of the quotation used in the "Children's Newspaper", viz. "Above the waters of the ancient river Fleet, the cradle of the journalism of the world", and sincerely hope that the A.P. will continue to flourish. So I know that all old story paper collectors will join in with me in tendering our hearty congratulations to the A.P. on the occasion of their Diamond Jubilee.

Benjamin G. Whiter.

NORTHERN TOUR

By Jack Cook.

I've just spent an exciting twelve days' touring Yorkshire - first, our good friend and fellow collector, Mr. Clive Simpson of Knaresboro, was kind enough to have me for a week. From viewing Clive's really fine collection I travelled to York and met our worthy Ed. We saw York, talked shop, made a few swops, and had a darn good time.

From York I sped coastward to Flamboro and almost lost an old $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Magnet on the bus! Later in the week I went to Leeds and contacted fellow collectors Reg Hudson and Tom Sinclair. More swops took place, great enthusiasm shown by both collectors, also their young sons!

Late Sat. night found me speeding towards Goole with no fewer than 27 Gems (some of the old $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 1d. Nos.), four Magnets, three lees, one Det. Weekly, one Sparshott, and one very old 1d. Pluck. My tour was a grand success - now you Northern blokes, how about forming a Northern Branch?

If we met once or twice a year, say in either Leeds or York, it would help us to keep together, to swop, to talk about the Hobby.

Enthusiasm is the keynote to success in any Hobby - I saw proofs of this year's coming Annual, enough to make any enthusiast count the days till Christmas.

Cheerio blokes,

JACK COOK.

REVIEW OF THE "MODERN BOY"

Much has been said of the "Magnet", "Gem" and "Sexton BlakeLib.", but so far, nothing of a book that is not so remote from the above as some would think.

The Modern Boy had stories to suit all tastes, mostly written by some of the foremost writers, including

He wrote during its reign of ten years, mainly about "Ken King Of The Islands", who appeared for a brief moment, in the south sea island series that ran in Magnets Nos. 1589-1598.

Also to appear in the M.B. were three series featuring Len Lex, the Schoolboy Detective, which were reissued in S.O.L's Nos. 353 and 371.

Another of Chas. Hamilton's characters, to grace the pages of the M.B., was the Rio Kid, written under the pen-name of Ralph Redway. It is interesting to note that the Rio Kid popped up in the Wild West Yarns, (Magnets 1573-1582) and played a fairly large part in the last three or four numbers.

So much for the Hamilton Section, but before closing it, I would like to say that a series of "Told In The Tuckshop" tales, that began in the M.B., were reissued in the S.O.L. A number of these stories, not all, were reissued in S.O.L. 398.

Other writers of note were W. E. Johns, writer of the famous "Biggles" yarns, Alfred Edgar, able to write any kind

of yarn, from Science Fiction to Motor Car Racing.

We turn now to Murray Roberts, who was responsible for that dashing adventurer Captain Justice, who made his bow, to a crowd of eager boys, in a serial called "Captain Justice - Modern Pirate" which appeared in M.B. 146. He quickly gained fame, and a few weeks later, a new serial started entitled "The Return of Captain Justice".

It was not, however, until Professor Flaznagel joined the little band of adventurers, and added his scientific marvels to the many fights between Justice, and inventions held by evil genius, such as a serial in Modern Boys 491 "The Lost of London", to 508 "Post of Sinister Secrets", that Murray Roberts had to write a yarn nearly every week.

Captain Justice was one more character, that disappeared when the war brought the multi-story paper to a sad end.

—oOo—

FOR SALE:

Magnets 1925-1939. Send wants.

W. Colcombe,
256, South Avenue,
Southend.

Happy the Editor the Subs shower on

Never put off till to-morrow, the Sub you can
send to-day.

STREETS OF MEMORIES

By Herbert Leckenby

In a letter to me recently, Mr. Goodyear, that good friend of our hobby circle, said to me:

"It just occurs to me that an article on the York shops which sold the mags. you loved would have a quaint interest, many perhaps being in Stonegate, near by Bootham Bar, and similar historic quarters. I guess you knew them all."

So far as his last sentence is concerned, how right was he. I did know them all and to tell the truth I oft-times wander about the ancient streets close by the stately Minster in the evening's dusk. I pause by certain shops and picture them as they used to be. In imagination I put back above the windows the names that were once there, and fancy I can hear the jingle of the hansoms and the clippety-clop of the horses' hooves as they pass along cobbled streets.

There was, for instance, the shop of Peter Lawson, in narrow Petergate. Peter was a gaunt, black-bearded man, tall and shabby in appearance. He lived alone behind his shop, one with two large windows. If you had chanced to pass that way some fifty years ago you would almost certainly have seen a line of boys - and adults - with their noses pressed to the window, gazing awestruck at the pink pages of the "Police Budget" and the "Police News" strung right across one of the windows, front pages, back pages, centre pages portraying the latest murders and other crimes of violence. If they happened to be murders with a "sex interest" depicting some buxom damsel sprawled on her back, bespattered with her life's blood, and with a frilly petticoat displayed coyly about her boot-tops, then the spectators were before the window the live-long day. Yes, Peter was a good window dresser.

I looked at the "Police Budget", of course, for I was just an average boy, but I can honestly say I was more interested in the papers more suitable to my age, and these were displayed in profusion on the sloping boards in the bottom of the window - Bretts "Jack Harkaway's Schooldays",

"Rubert Dreadnought", "Ned Nimble among the Indians", the "½d. Pluck", "Marvel"; the gaily covered "Aldines", the "Boys' Friend" and the rest of the papers which gladdened the hearts of boys when the century was very young.

Black Peter got to know me well, for many's the penny I've passed over his counter. The inside of the shop was dark, dirty and untidy, usually lit by one single gas jet. I well remember, once, how he brought out for me from somewhere about a dozen ½d. "Boys' Friends", numbers then quite a few years old and some I had never seen before. I thought them quite a find even then. Now, forty years on, a complete run of that once popular ½d. series has been offered in the pages of the "C.D."!

One morning the shop remained closed; and when later the door was broken open, Black Peter was found hanging from a beam, or was it with his throat cut? Anyway, he was unquestionably dead.

And the "Police Budget" and the "Police News" fluttered on in the window until they became back numbers, and the murders shown thereon forgotten. I am not sure whether the death scene in Peter's shop was ever considered worthy of a place in one of the later pages!

The shop is still a bookseller's and stationer's, but of a more dignified type. They would disdain to show in their windows the "Police Budget", "Aldine Dick Turpins", and "Jack Harkaway's Schooldays", even if they could; but I often see them there in fancy as I pass that way.

Not far away is the tiny street quaintly named Whip-me-Whop-ma Gate, a name almost as long as the street itself. Just at the corner there was once the little shop kept by an ancient dame named Miss Lambert. Oft-times she could be seen trotting along the streets nearby in old-fashioned garb, a pathetically small supply of the morning papers under her arm. Could she return to-day dressed as she was, maybe in view of the "New Look" she would be considered quite a lady of fashion! Miss Lambert added to her meagre income by means of the "Aldines" not second-hand copies, but the new ones as they came out. In the narrow window there was always a display of glossy "Dick Turpins", "Robin Hoods", and Claude Duvals, lending a splash

of colour to the drab little street. Oh, the "Aldine" covers, how attractive they were to the devotee of the "penny bloods"!

Now Miss Lambert had a sister who was blind and she, poor soul, sometimes had to look after the shop whilst the other was on her rounds, and thereby hangs a tale, one of which I am not exactly proud. However, one day, I entered the shop, a penny in my moist palm. The blind sister, dressed in rusty black, emerged from the living quarters and in response to my request for a "Dick Turpin" turned to a shelf behind the counter, passed her hands along the little piles, and in some uncanny fashion found the right ones. I picked out the four new numbers, examined each one critically, and could not decide which of two to take. Meanwhile the old lady stood patiently waiting, her sightless eyes staring over my head. Temptation came to me, I thought "She can't see, - she wouldn't know." I dropped the penny into her hand saying, "I - I'll take this one". Then a voice inside me seemed to say, "Rob a blind woman - Shame on you". I hurriedly put down one of the copies, and made for the door with scarlet cheeks.

It is a radio shop now. I fancy I can hear the voice of little Miss Lambert saying from the shadows: "Radio - what's that?" Dear old lady, I have often been glad I didn't rob you that day. May your soul be resting in peace.

A few yards away in Colliergate there stood the shop I knew best of all. I pushed open the little door and heard the tinkle of the bell every week for more than thirty years. I witnessed the owner, Mrs. Walker, advance from a stout, pleasant looking person in her thirties, to one with bent shoulders and hair of snowy white, and when first I became a customer she would eye me disapprovingly through the window as I pulled up outside with the pram containing the youngest member of the family. In after years she saw me draw up with another pram - with my own offspring inside. By that time, however, we had become good friends, and she would sometimes say, with a smile, "You've been coming here a good many years, now, haven't you?", and I would reply, "I have an' all".

Oh, what a grand shop it was, a mecca, a magnet, to the "blood hunter". Always there were piles in the window a foot high, the many Aldines", Henderson's "Wild West", and "Budget"

Story Books; ½d. "Union Jacks", "Plucks" and "Marvels" and later the ld. ones; red-covered "Magnets" and blue-tinted "Gems" and the rest of the complete story papers. In the days when I was a printer's apprentice I passed the shop many times a day, often when I shouldn't. One day I spotted a pile of "True Blues". Inside I went and found that they were almost all numbers I hadn't seen before. I bought a dozen. When I got into the street again I saw my boss in the distance. I hurriedly rammed the papers under my waistcoat. My employer stopped to speak to his not very industrious apprentice. I stood, my arms across my chest, fearfully expecting every moment the "True Blues" would slide down from their place of concealment to the pavement at my feet. However, they remained hidden, but only until he, with a kindly nod, had passed on and turned a corner.

On another occasion Mrs. Walker had purchased a huge quantity of ld. "Plucks" and its companion numbers, going back several years. I reduced her stock somewhat. One "U.J.", showing an exciting scene on the gas-bag of a balloon, particularly took my fancy. Among some copies of the same papers I bought only a few weeks ago I found the very same story. I haven't seen it in all the forty years between!

Not long ago one of my collector friends paid me a visit. We talked "shop" all the afternoon, then went off in search of a meal. The cafes were busy, but at last we found one, an unpretentious sort of a place, but where, at least, we were able to satisfy the inner man. Whilst we were waiting for the meal to be served, I stopped talking, - for the first time and, no doubt, my friend wondered why. Well, the reason was my thought were far away in the past. Just by where we were sitting I fancied I saw a counter laden with "penny dreadfuls" on the window to my left instead of eatables I saw more piles of "bloods" of yester-year. I turned my head, almost expecting to see Mrs. Walker come along from the back in response to the tinkle of the shop bell. For we were seated in the place I had entered hundreds of times in the years that were gone, in quest of another kind of meal!

I pause before a bookseller's in one of the main streets. It's a different kind of bookshop; never in its long history

have "bloods" appeared in the windows or on the counters inside, unless you include "Chums" Annual and the B.O.P. among "bloods". Nevertheless, that shop has memories for me, and my thought travel back through the years. I had just left school and was looking round for a job. One evening I saw in the local evening paper two advertisements for errand boys, one by a confectioner, the other by a bookseller. Not being very ambitious, I made up my mind to apply without saying anything to my people. Thought I to myself, "Buns or Books?" Which shall be first? Books won! I got the job and was told to start on the morrow. I have often wondered what my future life would have been if the other shop had got my services instead.

A few months as the most humble member of the staff; then I took a most important step. I became a printer's apprentice to the same master and set off each day to the little old-world office in the street nearby. Each Christmas season, however, I had a temporary change. I was "promoted" to shop assistant, and took my place behind the counter in the shop to help cope with the Christmas rush. One 23rd December I well remember; my master and I were holding the fort together during the quiet of the lunch hour. A lone customer came in, a boy wearing the cap of one of our oldest schools, St. Peter's of York, the school of Yardley, captain of England. The boy came up shyly to the counter and asked my employer, "Have you a book by S. Walkey, please?" My master knew not Walkey, and answered with a shake of his head, "Walker? - No, I am afraid not, my boy!" But I knew better, I cut in, "Oh, yes, sir, we have one, came in this morning." (Tactful, the last sentence.) I darted to the back of the shop - I had a fellow feeling for that boy - and snatched up a book from the bottom of a pile, leaving the others all in a heap, hurried back and placed before him - "Kidnapped by Pirates". Even now, years on, I can see that boy's eyes as they lit up and hear him say, "Oh, just what I wanted". He placed down his 3/6d. and went out with beaming face. His hair will now be tinted with grey; I wonder if he still remembers that little incident as does the boy behind the counter that far off day.

Next day was Christmas Eve and as I was going to lunch

the boss said to me, "I'll give you your Christmas Box now, my boy". I paused in anticipation. Now, though just and kindly, that first employer of mine was not usually a very generous one. My wage at the time was 4/- a week, and the previous year my Christmas Box had amounted to just one fourth of that sum. However, on this occasion he wrote on the till roll, withdrew a coin, and placed it in my hand without letting me see what it was. Then he proceeded to tell me how pleased he was with the way I had worked during the year. I had made good progress, he assured me; and then went on to make special reference to the incident of the day before, it had impressed him very much, and so on. All the time he was talking I was fingering the coin in my palm - for I couldn't very well look at it - and thinking, "Pooh, a measly "tanner" - worse than last year. Might show a bit more appreciation if I have been as good as that." Then, with a little salute, he said "Now off you go to dinner; get back as soon as you can, and a Happy Christmas." "Same to you, sir," I muttered and darted off. The moment I was off the doorstep I opened my hand. Then my eyes popped out of my head, my heart gave a great jump, for I had not been fingering a measly "tanner" but a glorious, gleaming, golden half-sovereign. Oh joy, I nearly did a hornpipe on the pavement and then made a bee-line for - yes, I daresay you have guessed it, my favourite shop just around two corners. I bought a goodly pile, and Mrs. Walker looked at me suspiciously as I handed her the precious coin. "It's all right," I grinned, "It's mine, it's my Christmas Box."

Oh, good old Walkey! Kind old boss! Happy Christmas, Mrs. Walker! Did I have a Merry Christmas? I'll say I did! Buried in bloods!

Boys of to-day with their generous pocket money may not fully appreciate my excitement in the long ago. No, perhaps not, but with all their weekly wealth, they've never had the thrill of handling a gleaming, golden half-sovereign.

The other evening I had an urge to visit the suburb in which I had spent my schooldays. I hadn't been that way for years. I paused before a newsagent's that once had been "Fatty" Glover's, the shop at which, each week, I had bought my "Boys' Friend". I recalled the Saturday when, a child of

six or seven, I had sat on the pavement all the afternoon awaiting the coming of the new "Books for the Bairns", and how Mrs. Glover, at long last, came out and tapped me on the head with it. Why does one remember tiny incidents like that throughout the years, when more important events are forgotten?

I passed the house where "Dicky" Clarke, with whom I used to swap, once lived. Poor "Dicky", he never knew the "Champion" and the "Rocket", for he was killed in the Kaiser war.

I came to the shop once kept by a grumpy sort of man called Millard, who were a trimmed pointed beard like Captain Kettle. The same name was above the shop, but it belonged to a different generation. There were "Hotspurs" and "Wizards" in the window, but I knew it best when Aldine "Tip-Tops" and "Comic Home Journals" were displayed there.

I reached my old school - Park Grove. The scholars had all gone, and the shadows were stealing across the playground. I looked through the railings at the shelter in which I had sat and read many a yarn. My gaze travelled to the first floor, and I counted the windows. Yes, that would be the room in which one afternoon "Sammy" Mills, the burly teacher, had confiscated my "Jack, Sam and Pete". I recalled, with a smile, how I had returned to the room after prayers in search of it, and how I found "Sammy", who never attended prayers, sitting with his feet on the desk reading it, and how he waved me away with an impatient gesture and told me to ask for it in the morning. Often after that he would say to me with a grin "How's Jack, Sam and Peter getting on?"

Poor Sammy, he weighed about sixteen stones then, but years later I read in an evening paper how he had been found dead in a ditch and a verdict had been returned, "Died of Starvation".

I wended my way home that evening of my visit to the suburbs wondering what on earth I should think about if I weren't a nostalgian.

Yes, indeed, Mr. Goodyear, the ancient streets of York hold many golden memories for me, of the days when a humble penny bought happiness and contentment.

Postscript: Lest it be thought that I spent all my boyhood days immersed in "bloods", let me hasten to say it was not quite as bad as that. I played quite a lot of cricket in the manner that boys do and I could in its proper place write quite a lot about Grace and "Ranji"; Jessop and Fry; Hirst and Haigh and other giants in the golden age of the summer game with the lovely name.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by: Robert Blythe,
81, Alsen Road, Holloway, London, No. 7.

Last month Mr. Keeling of Stanmore asked for a list of the Studies and their occupants. I am only able to give those of the Remove and Fourth, because, as I have mentioned elsewhere, the Third, Fifth and Sixth studies are neither numbered nor lettered. However, in a future article I will give a list of those who are study mates in those forms.

This month I'll deal with the Ancient and West House Remove and next I'll take the Modern and East House Fourth.

It must be understood that period is at the end of the 2nd New Series.

Ancient House

Studies A: Bernard Forrest, Albert Gulliver, George Bell;
B: Claude Gore-Pearce, Arthur Hubbard, Edward Long;
C: Nipper (Richard Hamilton), Sir Montie Tregellis-West,
Thomas Watson; D: Edward Oswald Handforth, Arnold McClure,
Walter Church; E: Archibald Winston, Derek Glenthorne,
Alfred Brent; F: Gerald Dodd, Hubert Jarrow, Charles
(Boomerang) Bangs; G: Cecil de Valerie, Duke of Somerton
(Hubert Arthur Aleric Cavendish); H: Sir James Potts, Bart,
Vivian Travers, Viscount (Skeets) Bellton; I: Ralph Leslie
Fullwood, Stanley Waldo, Clive Russell; J: Alec Duncan,
Harry Gresham, Ulyses Spencer Adams.

West House

Studies K: Reginald Pitt, Jack Grey; L: Nicodemus
Trotwood, Cornelius Trotwood, James Little; M: Guy Pepys,
John Onions, Albert Onions; N: Hon. Douglas Singleton,
Hussig Ranjit Kahn; O: Solomon Levi, Richard Goodwin,
Morgen Evans; P: Augustus Hart, Justin B. Fernan, James Owen,
Maj.; Q: Clarence Fellowes, Timothy Tucker, Robert Canham;
R: Harold Doyle, Larry Scott, Yung Ching; S: Alan Castleton,
Thomas Burton, Lord Pippinton (Clarence Augustus Jerome Marchant).

I have been asked if any of the boys' pets have ever received mention in the stories. The answer to that is - several times. Quite a few of the juniors own pets, but I think that the palm goes to Willy Hadforth's collection. It's quite a menagerie. He owns Marmaduke a Monkey, Priscilla a Parrot, Lightning a Greyhound, Rupert a Rat, and Fernidad a Ferret. Both Marmaduke and Priscilla appeared frequently. Apart from Willy Handforth, Nipper has a spaniel called "Boz", Nelson Lee has an Alsatian called Wolf, and Jerry Dodd owns a pony. Other pets appeared so infrequently as not to be worth mentioning.

L.P. of London would like to know the numbers of the N.L. containing stories of Jim the Penman, Eileen Dare, Mr. Mortimer Crane (the man with the four identities). The Green Triangle and the Circle of Terror (both with Prof. Cyrus Zingrave).

I'm afraid L.P. that there isn't room for all of them this month, but I'll take Eileen Dare and Mortimer Crane now and deal with the others next month. No's of the stories dealing with Eileen Dare: O.S. 57, 60, 63, 65, 68, 70, 75, 77, 78, 82, 87, 91, 95, 101, 106, 115. All these stories are versus "The Combine". No. 130 O.S. is a story complete in itself. There is also a story introducing Miss Dare in No. 187, 1st New Series.

Stories introducing Mr. Mortimer Crane are O.S. 55, 58, 61, 71.

To finish off, here are a few more titles:

- No.21. The Terror of Troon Towers,
- 22. Edges of Steel,
- 23. The League of the Green Triangle (the first of the Triangle yarns),
- 24. The Case of the Tube of Radium,
- 25. The Specialist's Last Case,
- 26. The Crystal Uren,
- 27. The Golden Cavern,
- 28. The Forged Finger-prints,
- 29. The Three Millionaires.
- 30. A mystery of Venice.



All Correspondence to
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THE ROUND TABLE

As in the dear old "Union Jack" the "Round Table" feature presents the opportunity for the Editor to discuss topical aspects in the Sexton Blake saga, and, as was always apparent in the original feature in the "U.J. it is hoped that all Blake lovers "gather around" each month and digest all that is contained therein. I am sure that they do, and I have often wished that I could suddenly "pop in" on some of you S.B. enthusiasts and discuss the hobby we all love. I don't suppose that I shall ever personally contact the majority of my readers, much as I should enjoy doing so, and it was therefore an occasion to be noted and underlined in red when, during the first week in June, I had the extreme pleasure of welcoming our mutual collector friend Mr. Bill Colcombe to the "den" in which these notes are usually compiled. Last year I had the pleasure of meeting my co-editor, Herbert Leckenby, and we had some most enjoyable chats, this year it was Bill Colcombe, with whom I had more chinwags. Believe me, it was a real thrill when I stood by the bookstall on Cardiff station and saw Bill's train draw in to the platform.

I puffed at my pipe in pleasurable anticipation as I watched the many and various passengers alight from that London train and disappear into the subway and when the moment came for Bill and I to shake hands, I felt that our hobby was indeed something which stood for an ideal. The ideal of a mutual and enjoyable sharing of a hobby which made friendship something real and solid. Had I met Sexton Blake in real life, I could not have felt more of a thrill than when I shook the hand of someone who appreciated our favourite character as much as I did myself. For the next few days Bill and I travelled around Cardiff together, and as we did so we chatted about various aspects of Blakiana and enjoyed ourselves greatly. Bill looked through my collection and remarked upon this story and that story in a way which amazed me. Here, I thought, is someone who really has Sexton Blake in his soul, someone who really knows what he is talking about. If I mentioned such and such a story, Bill would look up and say, "Oh yes, that is S.B.L. second series No. so and so." I really do believe he could tell us the title of any story in the second series without looking up his records. I must confess that even though I am as keen as one could be, I could not do that - and furthermore the way in which Bill discussed the work of various authors showed that he had studied them deeply and I think he could pick out the work of most of them amongst the writings of a thousand authors. Well, our few days together soon came to an end, unfortunately, and we parted in practically the same spot as that on which we had met. Bill hoped that we should meet again ere long and I most certainly echo his sentiments. He is now looking forward to meeting other members of the circle - and so am I.

As you all know, work is now commencing on "C.D. Annual" No. 2 scheduled for publication in December. It is hoped once again to include a long and interesting "Blakiana" section therein and I am hoping that fellow Blake lovers will rally round and make suggestions. I should be very grateful for any ideas for the "Annual" section and would most certainly welcome all articles, features, etc. etc. Please do not pass this plea by. Put on those thinking caps and get those pens in hand and let me have the result.

THE CREATOR OF GEORGE MARSDEN PLUMMER

Some notes on the work of Mark Osborne
by William Colcombe.

Editor's Note: Regular readers of "Blakiana" will recall Mr. Colcombe's brilliant article on the "Master of Mystery" Donald Stuart in No. 10 of the C.D. In this new article he again captures our attention when he tells us of some of the activities of a Blake author who was the favourite of many for over 20 years.

Mark Osborne, the creator of George Marsden Plummer, was one of the earliest Blake writers to make a name for himself. His real name was John Bobin, and when he wrote his first story he used that name, in fact, there were several stories under it before he adopted the pseudonym which became so well known in later years. Most of his Blake stories for the "Union Jack", for which paper he started writing before the 1914-1918 war, were under the name of Mark Osborne, but, at a later date he also used the nom-de-plume of "John Ascott" and "Victor Nelson". Under these latter names a large number of stories appeared in "The Boy's Friend Library" from his pen. He also wrote a lot for the various A.P. girls' papers using the names of Adelle Ascott and Gertrude Nelson. It was under the former name that he created the characters of Valerie Drew, the Girl Detective, and her dog "Flash".

In the creation of George Marsden Plummer, Osborne introduced to Blake readers a crook who was to win more favouritism than perhaps any other in the Blake saga. Plummer first saw the light of day (if such could be said about any fictional character) in a story called "The Man From Scotland Yard". In this yarn Sexton Blake exposes Detective Sergeant Plummer as a crook. Yes, Plummer started his career in the Force, but soon decided that running with hares was far more profitable than running with hounds.

In those early days Plummer usually worked alone, but occasionally he was teamed with Aubrey Dexter, and together these

two formed an exceedingly tough nut for Blake to crack. Plummer was later taken out of Mark Osborne's hands and handed over to George Hamilton Teed.

The other crook mentioned above, Aubrey Dexter, was another of Osborne's creations. While not such a colourful character as Plummer, Dexter was nevertheless a redoubtable opponent to Blake, and they figured in many an exciting battle over a period of many years, finally appearing in the S.B.L. (2nd Series) No. 358 "Dead Man's Bay". Dexter was not such a ruthless type as the arch criminal Plummer. He preferred cunning to killing and often used a clever disguise to help him to pull off a coup or make a getaway.

Osborne was also responsible for the stories featuring "The Council Of Nine". Plummer was one of the members of this Council incidentally. He also had his own pet Scotland Yard man, Detective Inspector Martin, the prototype of Coutts and Harker. Martin was not such a likeable personality as either of these, however. He was aggressive, short-tempered, often pig-headed, and sometimes very rude. He was often at loggerheads with Blake over a case. He had supreme confidence in his own theories, but, as many other Yard men had, he learned by experience that the man from Baker Street was more often right and he had a very high regard for Blake's ability as a detective. Despite the vast difference of temperament the two were loyal friends, though.

Osborne was very interested in horse-racing and a number of his stories have a racing background and are amongst his best in my opinion. He was the first Sexton Blake author to feature the detective in a story dealing with Greyhound racing; this was S.B.L. (2nd series) No. 337 "The Kennels Crime". He frequently used financial swindles as a theme and seemed to specialise in yarns of this type of crime. He rarely took his characters abroad, preferring to set his stories in Britain; a few had my home town, Southend-on-Sea, as a background, where he lived for a number of years and eventually died.

Mark Osborne was one of the best prose writers in the Blake series and, except for a habit of dragging in an unnecessary romantic theme, was among the top rankers in this field.

THE STORY OF DOCTOR SATIRA, Part VI.

by H. Maurice Bood.

When Sexton Blake had examined the two bodies found in the village surgery in Hampshire, he had noted the name "Claban Cragg" on the underclothes of one of them. This name meant nothing to him until, after rushing to the Hotel Cosmos and examining the body of this latest victim of murder in cold blood, he had the idea of looking through the Hotel reservation lists and seeing it in print for the second time in a very short period. He knew at that moment that Satira was the man responsible for this fresh outrage, for it was obvious that if Cragg had reserved a room at the Cosmos before Satira had murdered him, the master criminal had taken his place and used the reserved suite for his own purposes. As a matter of fact, the latest victim of Satira's cold-bloodedness was a chance acquaintance of Cragg's while he was on his way from South America. They had met on board and became friendly, and when he arrived in London the first thing this acquaintance did was to call at the Hotel to see if his newly found friend was there as he had hoped to be if his plans had gone as arranged. As you will imagine, Satira did not pass off as Cragg to HIM but it was rather different with the pair of lawyers who had the job of informing Claban Cragg of his inheritance. Not having seen Cragg before, they naturally were fooled by Satira, and seeing that he had all his victim's documents this would appear to have been very easy, as indeed it was. Satira was delighted to learn that included in his inheritance was an island off the coast of Cornwall called "Cragg Island", a sort of family retreat where he imagined he would be pretty safe from the arm of the law for a while, providing his arch enemy Blake had not found out who Cragg really was, or indeed that he was Cragg at all. He hoped, in short, that it would be impossible for Sexton Blake to follow him further, and so he made his plans to retreat to Cragg Island. But as has been told, Blake DID find out about Cragg, and consequently got in touch with the lawyers, who were horrified to know that they had been fooled by Satira. From there on it was obvious to a man of Blake's intelligence that the Cragg Island part of the legacy was just the thing for the devilish Doctor, and it was not long before he was on the mount again.

