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(Vol. 5) No. 29 - May 1949 - Price 1s. 6d.

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"The
Collectors'
Digest"



(Vol.3) No.29

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MAY 1949

Next Issue June

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR:

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH: Said Bob Blythe, speaking of exhibitions at the March Meeting of the O.B.P.Club. "What York can do, London can do also." And, in almost less time than it takes to tell, as Maxwell Scott would have said, another Exhibition was in being, and a whiff of nostalgia could be discerned in the Public Library at Islington Town Hall. Once more a great success for the hobby, for arranged for a month, it was at the request of the Librarian extended for a further two weeks.

Further, it received quite a lengthy notice in the London Evening News (as would be seen from our April number), and a nice paragraph in the Daily Her-

ald, 7th April, in which live-wire Bob had a sentence all to himself. Nice work, London!

And now will say, "What York and London can do, Leeds and Liverpool, Newcastle and Nottingham, Birmingham and Bristol, and all other places large and small possessing Public Libraries can do also." What about it, chums?

But the Islington Exhibition is not the only event of the month. Far from it, for the very same issue of the Daily Herald carried an account of another display of old boys books - one under the auspices of the National Book League, Albemarle St., Piccadilly. Once again the Magnet and Gem were well to the fore. Two reports concerning the papers connected with our hobby in one issue of a National Newspaper is something unique.

On the morning of the day these appeared, three of my operator colleagues rang me up to ask me if I had seen the reports. They used to chaff me because of my interest in the "bloods", as they called them. One of them now said "I'll hand it to you. This idea of your's seems to be spreading", and the others said something to the same effect. Mino was the last laugh! And, I don't think it would be difficult to guess what the great majority of you were doing on the evening of April 12th, between 9-30 and 10-30 - listening in, and it wouldn't be to the Light Programme, I'll be bound. Fancy an hour of it - of a truth the subject of our hobby is making progress. You got a thrill when you heard the Maestro's voice, didn't you. And I'll bet you all noticed that slip the commentator made just previously when he said Frank Richards was the author of the St. Jims, St. Franks and Rookwood stories. Well, there won't be space to go into the broadcast in detail here, but I shall be pleased to have your views upon it if you haven't already done so when these lines appear.

**

GOOD SAMARITANS: In our last issue Len Allen,

writing about his six favourite stories happened to remark that he had been trying to get hold of "In Trackless Space" for years, without success. He tells me that no sooner had the C.D. appeared than he was presented with a couple of copies by Percy Smith, of Mumby, and Henry Bartlett.

I had a similiar experience when I begged the loan of the Wycliffe and Haygarth stories, for a day or two later Miss Flinders sent along every copy she possessed. A great gang, ours!

THE DOCTOR'S TONIC: I receive some very interesting letters these days, letters which are a joy to read. Here are some paragraphs from a recent one. The writer, Dr. Robert Wilson, of Glasgow.

"I have a very busy medical practice in an industrial area of Glasgow. For almost twenty years my precious (and precious few) hours of relaxation were spent in the company of Harry Wharton, Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver, and very pleasant and congenial companions I found them. In 1940 when they disappeared, the gap so left was not immediately apparent as my additional war-time duties had reduced my hours of leisure to nil. The war over, however, I found that the gap became an aching void, and feeling sure that there must be numbers of Magnets, Gems, etc. available, I tried all the dealers in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland without much success. My only piece of luck was when I picked up 5 Holiday Annuals in excellent condition for 2s.6d a copy - surely a bargain?"

My Doctor correspondenc goes on to say: "I came across a copy of E.S. Turner's "Boys will be Boys" and saw therein a reference to the collectors' Magazine, and, as a result, am now I hope, a member of the clan." I have assured the doctor that he certainly is.

I am sure, too, that all will agree that what he tells us is still another striking illustration of the fact that the Magnet and its companions were, and are, far more than just twopenny weeklies.

I might also say that through joining the Clan, Dr. Wilson is now in possession of sufficient Magnets to enable him to forget Mr. Bevan for many a day, for in a later letter he says "I can hardly believe my eyes yet when I look at them and visualise the feast of first-class reading which lies in front of me."

Yes. I really enjoy reading my morning mail.

FOR LONDONERS' NOTEBOOKS:

Frank Pettingell has a fine part in "Daphne Laurcola" now running at Wyndham's Theatre and he has received some fine notices. It looks like settling down to a long run, so there's a chance of an enjoyable evening for those in London Town.

SOUTH AFRICAN ENTHUSIAST:

We have recently had the pleasure of welcoming to our circle Arthur J. Southway, now residing in South Africa. He is a real enthusiast if ever there was one, and we quote from one of his letters in the correspondence columns. With regard to his suggestion that we have separate sections for say, St. Jims News, Greyfriars Herald, and Rookwood Review, it has occurred to me that we might combine the three and run a column under the heading "Hamiltonia" on the lines of Bob Blythe's admirable "Nelson Lee Column". Any volunteers for the job? And would one of our artists like to do a heading showing D'Arcy, Bunter and Jimmy Silver?

I might also mention that Mr. Southway is delighted and extremely grateful for the help already given him in compiling records by many members of the clan. He declares a "Grand lot of fellows read the C.D.". A remark which is again heartily supported by

Yours sincerely,

Herbert Leckenby.

LEAVES FROM THE DIARIES OF MAXWELL SCOTTContinuity by John P. WoodIII

The year is 1894, and in his diary Maxwell Scott writes .. "I then began to write a series of short stories with a doctor for the central character, but whilst I was engaged on this series I received a letter (it was in March, I think) which was destined to prove the turning point of my career as a writer of stories."

"The well-known firm of Harmsworth, the proprietors of "Answers" and a dozen other periodicals, had just begun to publish a halfpenny boys' paper, under the title of "The Halfpenny Marvel". It consisted of sixteen pages, with four or five illustrations, in a coloured illustrated cover; and was .. let me be perfectly frank .. an out-and-out 'penny dreadful' in everything but price. It met with a phenomenal success, and was speedily followed by two others, also published by Harmsworth, precisely similar in character, and respectively entitled 'The Union Jack' and 'Pluck'."

"The editor of 'The Marvel' was a man named Summers. One of the other Harmsworth editors was a journalist named Stanhope Sprigg who had been assistant editor of the Sheffield Weekly Independent at the time my two serials were published (1892). Summers was in need of new writers, not only for the 'Marvel' but for the two new papers he was about to bring out. He consulted his fellow-editor; Sprigg gave him my name and address and hence the letter to which I have alluded."

"Briefly stated, the gist of the letter was an enquiry as to whether I would write him some sensational boys' stories, 22000 words in length. He sent me half-a-dozen copies of 'The Marvel' to show me the style of story he wanted, and stated that he would be prepared to pay me from £7 to £9 for each story, -

according to merit." £7 for 22,000 words! - less than 7s.0d per thousand. By 1902 Scott never got less than £1.1.0 per thousand, and had received as much as 27s.6d per thousand.

"This letter was the subject of long and earnest consideration on the part of my wife and myself. Summers said he would be prepared to take a story a month from me .. which meant, on the lowest scale of payment, an addition of £34 a year to my income. At the same time, I did not mean to become a writer of 'penny dreadfuls'. I had high ambitions in those days. I wanted to become a second Thackray, a masculine George Eliot, an English Sir Walter Scott! But I also wanted money, and I wanted it badly. The medical practice, I was convinced, was never going to be worth more than £200 or £250 a year at the outside. And how was I going to educate my son on £250 a year?"

"The temptation proved too much for me, I yielded. I buried my high ambitions, and although I made one or two feeble efforts to exhume them afterwards, they have practically remained buried ever since. I wrote to Summers and accepted his offer. I became a writer of "sensational boys' stories", and with few exceptions I have written nothing else since."

"The story I wrote for Summers was entitled 'The Phantom Dwarf'. He was delighted with it. He wrote to tell me so, and he wrote again later to say he had been reading my story again in proof and he liked it so much he had decided to use it for an early number of his new paper the 'Union Jack'. He also told me he was about to bring out a third paper 'Pluck', and he would willingly take one story a fortnight from me, if I could supply them. On 18th May, 'The Phantom Dwarf' appeared, and Summers sent me a cheque for £8.8.0."

"All my stories up to the appearance of 'The Phantom Dwarf' had been written under the pseudonym of Stair Cortley. When I decided to write sensational boys' stories, however, I dropped this non-de-

plume and adopted that of Maxwell Scott. With the exception of the series of short stories presently referred to, all the stories I have even written since have been signed Maxwell Scott."

"After posting the manuscript of 'The Phantom Dwarf' to Summers, I immediately started another story for him, entitled 'The Sister of Death'. This was published in 'The Union Jack' on 13th July, and brought me £9. 'The Avenger's Quest' appeared in the same paper on 24th August, and added eight guineas to my income. On 19th September in 'The Marvel' appeared 'A Dead Man's Secret', a detective story in which I first introduced the character Nelson Lee, who has earned me many hundreds of pounds since. For this story I also received eight guineas; the length of the stories having by this time been reduced to 18,000 words."

"On 31st October, also in the 'Marvel' appeared another Nelson Lee story, 'Nelson Lee, Detective'. For which again the editor gave me eight guineas. Then I dropped detective stories for a while and wrote 'The Mountain Stronghold', which was published in 'The Marvel' on 12th December, and also brought me eight guineas. Finally I wrote four short Nelson Lee stories which were published in the Christmas Number of the 'Union Jack', and for which I received £10."

"1895 .. At the end of January I began a story entitled 'The Jewel Thief', which was published in 'The Marvel' on 3rd April, and for which I received £8.8.0. I followed this with another detective story entitled 'A False Scent' which was published in 'Pluck' on 3rd May, and for which I received £8. Then for two months from April to June I did no writing at all."

"On the 1st of June I received a note from R.L. Harmsworth stating that my character Nelson Lee had proved to be very popular with boys and asking me to write a serial story for 'The Comic Home Journal' -

(another of the Harmsworth boys' papers) founded on the adventures of this popular character. I naturally complied with this request, and from that time to the middle of November the greater part of my writing was devoted to this serial. My title was 'The Mystery of the Malton Moors', but the editor altered it to 'The Further Adventures of Nelson Lee, Detective'. The first instalment appeared on 16th August, and the last on 10th January, 1896. I did not know at that time on what scale serial stories were paid for, and I was too timorous to enquire. I received a cheque every week, which varied from £2.12.0 to as low as 10s.0d. Altogether I received £36.13. 9 for the whole story; and as it was 66,391 words in length, I was paid, roughly speaking, at the rate of 10s.6d a thousand words."

"Although this serial monopolised most of my time from June to November, I yet found time to write a story of 20,000 words for the editor of 'Pluck'. I entitled it 'The Black Ruby', but the name of Nelson Lee was evidently too big a draw to be omitted, and when published the story on 10th, the editor entitled it 'Nelson Lee, Detective'."

"To this same editor, whose name was Maas, by the way, I suggested an idea for his Christmas Number. I suggested that he should ask two other authors, who were writing detective stories, to write a story apiece dealing with their own particular characters. I said I would write a Nelson Lee story, and also the necessary introduction and padding to weld the three stories together .. and he could publish them as 'Christmas Clues; or How Three Famous Detectives Spent Christmas Day'."

"He eagerly jumped at my suggestion. He sent me the two stories, I wrote a third. ('The Dynamite Cartridge') I edited the other two, wrote an introduction, and practically relieved him of all work in connection with his Christmas Number. And for all this he rewarded me with the munificent sum of £3.10.0."

Next Month - Kenyon Ford is born. A quarrel with Harmsworth over the copyright of Nelson Lee, etc. etc.

Old Boys Book Club

Report on the Meeting held on Sunday, 3rd April, at 706, Lordship Lane, London, N.22.

The Meeting was opened by the Chairman and an unanimous agreement declared the minutes of the previous meeting read and these were duly signed.

A sound financial position was then declared by the Treasurer.

The Chairman then welcomed Leslie Brunton from Hull and a new London Member, Peter Cushing. He also read a letter from Arthur J. Southway of Cape Province, South Africa, who has become a postal member and had forwarded a year's subscription. The latter is a very enthusiastic collector and should be a very welcome addition to the circle. Other letters were read from visitors to the Club's Exhibition at the Islington Public Library, asking for particulars of the Club's activities. These have been supplied and it is to be hoped that many recruits to the Club will result from these inquiries.

The aforementioned Exhibition was then discussed and a motion proposed by Charlie Wright and seconded by Mrs. Len Packman, a hearty vote of thanks was afforded to Robert Blythe for his very fine work in making the Exhibition such a great success. The report in the London Evening News was debated and the Club were pleased to welcome the attendance of Leslie Ayre, the writer of the article. The latter collected quite a good deal of data and facts for a future article and Mr. Packman stated that he hoped to organise a similar Exhibition at the Camberwell Library later on.

John Geal then shewed samples of the Club Note-paper and orders were replaced for individual requirements. It is hoped to supply postal members with a quantity of this paper complete with their addresses thereon.

On the occasion of the marriage of Robert Blythe and Miss Laura Butcher, it was resolved to present them with a suitable gift and this was left in Frank Keeling's capable hands.

The third "Picture Query" was then held and although rather more difficult than its two predecessors was won by our worthy Chairman, Len Packman, with Bob Whiter second, Charlie Wright third, and John Geal a good fourth.

"Gem Jettings" by Len Packman, and "Rookwood" ones by Ian Whitmore were handed in and suitably thanked for.

Bill Martin having very kindly sent along a parcel of books on approval enabled a Sale to take place. This gentleman is to be thanked also for loaning several good specimens to the Exhibition.

Charlie Wright is to be congratulated on the securing of a complete set of the Halfpenny "Greyfriars Herald" and also for his article on the hobby in his works staff magazine.

The next Meeting will be held under the Chairman's auspices at Hume House, 136, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. Attendance: Mr. & Mrs. Len and Eleanor Packman, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Keeling, Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Wright, Peter Cushing, John Geal, Ian Whitmore, Leslie Branton, Leslie Ayre, Robert and Benjamin Whiter.

Mrs. Olive Wright was the winner of a fine basket of fruit in a popular competition.

Benjamin G. Whiter.

STOP PRESS:

Leonard Shields, famous Magnet Artist, is dead.
See June C.D.

The Nelson Lee Column

All queries and suggestions to Robert Blythe,
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, No.7.

As some of you may know, I was married recently. This being so, it will explain, I hope, why my answers to those of you who have written, are so belated. Not that they are so numerous that I cannot cope with them, but household duties of various kinds are taking up my time. You see, I am becoming domesticated already!

However, this does bring me to a subject that I have discussed with our editor. Considering that this space is given over entirely to Nelson Lee Collectors, and is being written solely to help those of you who are interested in what we can call the 'Statistics' of the old Paper, I receive very few letters of enquiry or suggestion (about one a month on the average). After all, its rather difficult trying to make up one's mind what to write about if no one gives any indication of what they want to read. For example, at the end of the column, for months past, I have given a list of titles, (at Lon Packman's suggestion), and a Start/Stop list of the series, to help you when buying the books, on my own initiative. In view of the dearth of comments on these two items alone, I am wondering if they fulfil a need or whether I am wasting so much space? So how about it, you Nelson Lee enthusiasts? How about letting me have those interesting facts that you have discovered, those possible lines of research we haven't thought about? Remember that if it appears in this column everyone will be able to read and comment upon it. Thus we shall enlarge our knowledge of the best of the boys' papers to the interest of all.

Having got that off my chest, I'll take a chance and conclude as usual, first with the Series, and secondly with the Titles.

SERIES:

258-365 Intro. and Kidnapping of Yung Ching; 366-374 Adventures in the South Seas; 375-380 The Discovery of New Anglia; 381-397 Complete Stories (No. 386 Intro. Willy Handforth); 398-407 Barring-out against Mrs. Trumble and her lady Teachers; 408-414 Intro. Alf Brent as Alf Huggins; 415-422 The Remove on a Caravan Holiday; 423-428 The Remove in America; 429-432 The Remove as Slaves on Dorriemore Island; 433-441 Intro. Buster Boots and the Moor View Girls.

TITLES:

No. 151 The Barring-out of St. Franks; 152 The Rebel Remove; 153 Sticking to their Guns; 154 A Scrap of Paper; 155 Turning the Tables; 156 At the End of his Tether; 157 The Fall of the Tyrant; 158 Captain Burton's Quest; 159 The Schoolboy Stowaways; 160 S.O.S. or Tricked by Wireless; 161 The Island of Fire; 162 The Valley of the Unknown; 163 Marooned; 164 The Fight for Mastery; 165 A Bid for Gold; 166 By General Request; 167 The Moor House Mystery; 168 The Cottage on the Moor; 169 Handforth - Detective; 170 The Coming of the Serpent (Intro. Reggie Pitt).

FLASH: Did you know that according to the Broadcast of "Boys will be Boys", the St. Franks stories were written by Frank Richards? !! No comment. I'm speechless!

S.O.S: Robert Blythe had three of his Nelson Lee Libraries stolen from the Islington Exhibition, thus ruining his complete set if not replaced. The numbers are 139, 140, 141 old series. Can anyone help?

WANTED: Magnets 880-887 inclusive, and most 650-880 Gems, pre-1064; 2d Populars; S.O.L's; Nelson Lees April-June 1933; Triumphs, Boys Friends, and old school stories. F. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middlesex.



Warmth from South Africa:

P.O.Box 3,
Beaconsfield,
Cape Province.

March 22.1949.

Dear Editor.

Very many thanks for the back numbers of the C.D. safely to hand. I am also delighted to hear from Peter Walker of Bristol, that he has sent me the 1st Annual. I am sure this will be most useful to me in compiling my records.

Now I see from one of the back numbers that the Members of the Old Boys Book Club volunteered to pay 1s.6d for their copies to help the C.D. pay its way. I certainly agree that it is well worth it, therefore I am forwarding my Sub. for one year at this rate.

Without doubt it is a Magazine of great value and of absorbing interest, not only to collectors of old boys' books, but anyone interested in recalling those happy hours of their youth. I think that the Nelson Lee Column is the most interesting and helpful section (perhaps because it is of particular interest to me) and would like to see similar columns devoted to Greyfriars (not the Magnet only), St.Jims, and that poor old Cinderella - Rookwood. I realise that all four appearing each month would rather crowd out the interests of other collectors, and to obviate this I would suggest that two schools appear alternatively, with the other two. Maybe the trouble will be to find someone with sufficient knowledge of the magazines to do this, but I feel sure

there are those who would be able to deal with most queries and to give inside information.

Yours sincerely,
Arthur J. Southway.

NOTE: Our "Now chum" made several other interesting suggestions, and to these we have replied direct, and his comments here are referred to in my chat. Regarding his generous gesture, I might say that the circulation is steadily increasing so we are hopeful we shall soon balance the budget. Whether or no it is such a happy job running a magazine like the C.D. we have made so many golden friends that my co-editor and I are not unduly worried if just now and again we have to dip into our pocket money. H.L.

Skip Ruggles! Frank Richards New Character!

13th April, 1949.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I wrote to you rather in haste the other day enclosing the letter for R.H. Hunter. However, here is a word on the subject mentioned therein. Frank Richards, who as you know is a glutton for work - to call it work! - has added a new school to the long list of scholastic institutions founded by him, and 'Felgate School' now has a local habitation and a name! Four short stories of Felgate will appear in a sports book which will be published this autumn by World Film Publications, in the Gays Inn Road, of whom no doubt you may have heard. The title of the book is not yet decided, so I cannot pass that on. I rather like my new character "Skip Ruggles", but whether anything further will come of him is so far on the knees of the gods.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
Frank Richards.

From a Famous Writer to Len Allen:

March 28th, 1949.

2, East 86 Street,
New York, U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Allen,

Thank you so much for sending me the "Collector's Digest". I shall treasure it not only for the article about me but for the rest of its contents. Awfully interesting.

How long ago those Captain days seem. It really was a good magazine, but the catch, I suppose, was always the advertisements. Boys have so little money to spend on anything, and the circulation of what they call over here a 'juvenile slick' is so limited.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

P. G. Wodehouse.

For Your Library List:

43, Mayfield Road,
Sanderstead, Surrey.

Dear Editor,

I thought it might be of interest to mention a new book dealing with the Edwardian Period, which has an interesting chapter on Old Boys' Books. Disappointment might be felt by Hamiltonians that no mention is made of Magnet or Gem, but others of the period are mentioned, including the old Halfpenny Marvel. Other Chapters in the Book, although not dealing with the old papers are extremely interesting, especially to any Edwardian Old-Timers.

The Book is a non-fiction one entitled "101 Jubilee Road", the author being Frederick Willis, and published by Phoenix House, and should now be obtainable at most of the Public Libraries.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard Prime.

Here's Your Chance:

1st April, 1949.

William Campion,
Publishers,
26 Manchester Square,
London, W.1.

Dear Sir,

It had occurred to us that many of your readers may be authors as well in their own rights in the type of literature in which you deal in your paper.

We are on the lookout for promising young authors who specialise in the writing of stories for boys and girls - stories of school life, speedway racing stories, adventure serials, articles on how to make models, etc. In fact, everything that goes into the making of a popular boys' or girls' magazine or annual.

I should also like to hear from readers who are able to illustrate in line and colour or are able to supply comic strips.

Our rates of payment are £1 per 1,000 words and £1.1.0 for each drawing accepted.

Would you also enter us on the subscription list for the Collectors' Digest, which is the best publication of its kind.

If we like any particular serial, it is possible that we would bring it out in weekly or fortnightly parts on the lines of Schoolboys' Own Library and Sexton Blake.

Yours faithfully,
T. Tambimuttu,
for William Campion.

This should interest quite a number of our readers. H.L.

FOR SALE: 130 Magnets, 130 Lees, Few Populars. Stamp for list. D.McGreevy, 17 Edward Street, Lurgan, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland.



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

THE ROUND TABLE

Last month I announced that an article entitled "Sexton Blake and the First World War" would appear in this issue, but regret to say that it is impossible to include it as I had hoped. It will, however, appear in the June Issue and its companion article in the July Issue.

I have had several letters thanking me for including lists of titles in the S.B.L. Third Series. It appears that quite a number of readers who are interested in collecting the Libraries have little knowledge of the three series and I would like to tell them that any information they require as to authors, titles, numbers, etc. etc. will readily be given on request, that is, of course, if the information required is on record. Immediately upon the conclusion of the series of titles of the third series I am commencing UNION JACK titles from No.1000 to No.1531, so, in due course readers will be able to turn up any story they wish by turning the pages of the C.D. At the same time a new series of titles of the S.B.L. 1st Series which commenced in 1915, will commence.

I must say a few words upon the broadcast version

of "Boys will be Boys". Those interested in non-Blake publications will find that my co-editor has given his opinion of the broadcast in the general section, but seeing that this is Blakiana I must deal with our sleuth in Blakiana. Well, frankly, I was disappointed at the meagre Blake ration in the feature. After all Sexton Blake was the most written of character in fiction, and still is for that matter. To include one or two scraps in a programme lasting for an hour seemed to me rather inadequate, and then the fellow they chose to play Blake was most unsuited to then part. I think the detective should have displayed more gentlemanly behaviour, whereas the radio actor seemed to think that he was playing the part of a bumptious ass. And why include the love scene between Blake and Roxane. I was gratified to note that a Teed story had been chosen for the excerpt, but the author was not given any credit whatsoever, and in any case his original girl character Yvonne would have been the obvious choice rather than Roxane, who was merely a new version of the old. The other romantic affair referred to was exceedingly flimsy. Not one Blake reader in a million, even had he read the whole series of stories from 1893 onwards would have recalled one small incident like this. And what about the absence of Tinker, Pedro and Mrs. Bardell. Surely the Baker Street Trio and their Housekeeper should have been mentioned. Probably the N.L.L. fans are happy about the treatment given to Nelson Lee. He was treated better than Blake, anyhow.

Cheerio for now,
H. M. BOND.

SEXTON BLAKE'S GOLDEN AGE

A new article by Rex Dolphin

Part III

Coutts Brisbane, creator of Dr. Ferraro, I have already eulogised in a previous article. He again,

was a mainstay throughout the age.

In a class by himself is Pierre Quiroule, another who for all round excellence of style, plot, character and background, often seems to me the best of all Blake authors. How difficult it is to pick the of this superb team! Pierre Quiroule, of course, means Granite Grant and Madamcisselle Julie, for nearly all his stories were built round these two master spies. Here was plot and intrigue, and the glamour of far-off lands. His masterpiece was probably "The Riders of the Sands" (S.B.L. 1st Series No.258).

In the realm of real crime and detective stories we had a first class section in Anthony Skene, Gwyn Evans, Gilbert Chester, Edwy Searles Brooks, Mark Osborne, Allan Blair, R.L.Hadfield, C.Malcolm Hincks, and Donald Stuart. Skene was noted for the bizarre Zenith, who was in the limelight throughout the decade and was a U.J. mainstay. He also wrote several non-Zenith stories, his own "zenith" being reached in that brilliant story "The Broken Melody" (U.J. No.1321). I claim he also wrote as Victor Fremlin that other masterpiece "The Adventure of the White Salute". (U.J. No.1348). Skene's literary style, ironic and gripping, delights me.

Edwy Searles Brooks, like Skene, featured mainly one character, the almost impossible Rupert Waldo. He was intensely readable, but somehow undistinguished. Chester wrote singles mainly, but sometimes his rather flat characters the Hales appeared. Noted for his jerky style and jigsaw plots, some of his stories are near-masterpieces. A typical example of his best work is "Buried Deep" (U.J.No.1381). Many of his stories contained a really good "terror" atmosphere.

Mark Osborne, creator of George Marsden Plummer, wrote many stories in the earlier Blake days. He later handed over Plummer to Teed, who seemed to make more of him. Osborne's stories are very good in a quiet, unspectacular way. A typical example of "Cracking Walls". (U.J. No.1342).

Allan Blair was another prolific writer - with some good ideas but a style which I find unreadable. (Scope for an argument here I should imagine! Ed.).

Gwyn Evans merits a place to himself for his brilliant ideas and gallery of colourful characters. "Splash" Page the reporter was the finest of these, but high on the list are Mrs. Bardell (almost Evan's own!), Ruff Hanson, King Karl, the Robin Hood League, the Shadow Club, Julius Jones. With minor characters he was not so happy, being content to use stereotyped caricatures such as Timothy Tubb, the rubicund jovial publican. Evans' literary style, too, was full of cliches, but he could convey atmosphere, and his basic ideas were born of genius. His best stories perhaps, were singles: "The Man on the Stairs" (U.J.No.1301), "Suspended From Duty" (U.J. No.1519), and "Death in the Jungle" (S.B.L. 2nd Ser. No.390).

To be Continued

The following item which is an extract from the Book "Let's Walk down Fleet Street" by G.W. Shepherd, will be interesting to those who loved the work of the late Gwyn Evans and is especially interesting this month seeing that Rex Dolphin deals with this writer in his latest instalment of "Sexton Blakes. Golden Age".

AN AUTHOR WHO WAS A REAL "CHARACTER"

Gwyn Evans was well-known in Fleet Street, where he was a law to himself. Tall and dreamy, wispy, ethereal, Gwyn died quite young, leaving a world in which he always seemed something of a stranger. It was odd that such a gentle, poetical man should have been an author of the "Sexton Blake" thrillers, beloved by readers from schooldays to senility, but he turned them out with incredible facility, not only with inspiration, but with his abnormal speed on the typewriter.

Kindly as he was, he could at times write with

acid instead of ink. He was an ardent Rationalist; he believed in nothing that was not proved, and his tilts at organised religion were often confounding. (Here, I omit a passage re G.E. & Dean Inge).

Gwyn, unworldly as he was, could always deal with any of the financial emergencies with which Fleet St. often confronts those who work in it. Thus he told me of how he once found himself "a little near the knuckle" on a Thursday. He was doing "Sexton Blake" at the time and was due to deliver a story which he had not even begun; and the money was essential to his immediate programme.

He rose early on the Friday morning, and wrote the first and last chapters of the story; then taking the middle part of an old typescript, he made sandwich which had all the appearance of a fully completed story. This he took to his editor, who, he knew, had a way of glancing at the beginning and end of a story and leaving further reading until later. The editor glanced at it and gave Gwyn the expected hit wherewith to collect his money from the cashier.

By Monday morning, Gwyn had completed the middle part. Bursting into his editor's room, he exclaimed: "I'm awfully sorry, but I got my copy mixed up on Friday, and must have given you some old stuff. Here is what I meant to bring." ... All was well.

(There follows another long story of how G.E. again broke, sat on the steps of the Albert Memorial juggling a hard-boiled egg from hand to hand. He explained to an enquiring constable he belonged to the Society for the Veneration of Ancient Monuments and did this at different monuments every year. He then went away and phoned a newspaper telling them of the occurrence, saying he was too busy to write it himself, but suggesting they send a staff man. They did. Of course G.E. had gone, but staff man got story from the enquiring constable and it was published. Next day G.E. collected his three guineas for tipping the newspaper off.)

NEXT MONTH:

"Sexton Blake and the First World War" by H.M. Bond.

"Sexton Blake's Golden Age", Part IV. by Rex Dolphin.

"Packing a Rod", by Robert Whiter; "S.B.L. Titles for 1943", and, of course, "The Round Table".

COMING:

"Sexton Blake and the Second World War" by H.M. Bond.

"Blake - His Earlier Days and Chronicles", by Walter Jebb.

"The House in Baker Street", by H.M. Bond.

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY - 1944Third Series, 63 - 86

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|------|---------------------------------------------------|----|------------------|----|
| 63. | The Man from the Far East.. | .. | John Hunter. | .. |
| 64. | The Riddle of the Kidnapped
Prisoner. | .. | Gilbert Chester. | .. |
| 65.* | The Case of the Biscay Pirate.. | .. | Lewis Jackson | .. |
| 66. | Previously Reported Missing -
Now ? | .. | Gilbert Chester. | .. |
| 67. | The Mystery of the Cairo Express | .. | Anthony Parsons. | .. |
| 68. | The Riddle of the Italian Pris-
oner. | .. | John Hunter. | .. |
| 69. | The Riddle of the Ruins .. | .. | Lewis Jackson | .. |
| 70. | The Mystery of the Demobilised
Soldier.. . . . | .. | Gilbert Chester. | .. |
| 71. | The Essex Road Crime .. | .. | John Drummond | .. |
| 72. | The Case of the Renegade Naval
Officer.. . . . | .. | Anthony Parsons. | .. |
| 73. | Barred from the West End .. | .. | John Hunter. | .. |
| 74. | The Man who wouldn't Quit.. | .. | Gilbert Chester. | .. |
| 75. | The Manor House Menace. . . | .. | John Drummond | .. |
| 76. | The Case of the Indian Million-
aire. | .. | Anthony Parsons. | .. |
| 77. | The Case of the 5 Fugitives .. | .. | Lewis Jackson | .. |

78. The Man they couldn't Buy Gilbert Chester.
 79. The Mystery of the Bombed Monastery Anthony Parsons.
 80. The Tragic Case of the Station-master's Legacy John Drummond ..
 81. The Case of the Conscript Miner. Walter Tyrer ..
 82. The Riddle of the Leather Bottle John Drummond ..
 83. The Mystery of the Indian Relic. Anthony Parsons.
 84. The Strange Case of the Footmans Crimo. Gilbert Chester.
 85. The Case of Sgt. Bill Morden .. Richard Standish
 86. The Painted Dagger.. .. John Drummond ..
- * Featuring Leon Kestrel "the Master Mummer".

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

James W. Cook, late of 62, Queen's Gardens, Bayswater, W.2., has moved to No.4, Swanston Path, Oxney Estate, Carpenders Park, Near Watford, Herts.

LATE NEWS FLASH:

Mr.E.S.Brooks attended the Old Boys Book Club meeting, on Sunday, 1st May. Report in June issue.

NEWS ITEM:

Following the success of the Islington Old Boys Books Exhibition, Len Packman has been discussing the possibilities of a similiar one with the Librarian of the Camberwell Public Libraries. All the Libraries there, however, suffered badly during the raids, and are in course of repair. The Librarian is all in favour and he promises at the earliest possible moment to recommend his Committee to sanction such an Exhibition.

WANTED: Any Gem Christmas Double Numbers - Reasonable prices paid. R.A.Hudson, 5 Throstle Row, Middleton, Leeds, 10.

PLEASE REPORT any Fantasy Books, Ferrers Lord, Captain Justice, etc. Exchange; Sell. Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED: Magnets, 1925-1929; Penny Populars; Greyfriars Heralds. C. Hanson, 30 St. Margaret's Road, Wanstead Park, London, E.12.

If you have a Collection of Old Boys' Books for sale, or part collection, consult Wm. Martin, 93, Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10. You can count on a square deal.

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

WANTED: Aldine Publications, Turpins, Duvals, Robin Hoods, etc. E.R. Landy, 4, Nuneaton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED URGENTLY: Gems Nos. 356, 358, 359 and 375. Top prices paid. Leonard Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.W.22.

AN IN-EXPENSIVE HOBBY: Collect specimen numbers of Victorian boys' papers. I can supply Boys of England, Boys Standard, Boys Comic Journal, Boys of Empire, Young Englishman, Boys World, Black Bess, Black Highwayman, Sweeney Todd, Blueskin, Tyburn Dick, Ching-Ching, Harloway, and hundreds more. 6s.6d per dozen. Medcraft, 64, Woodlands Road, Ilford.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: (Exchange preferred).

Magnets - 1350, 1353, 1392, 1419, 1459, 1487, 1489, 1495, 1531, 1532, 1547, 1550, 1603, 1654, 1655, 1657, 1678. Gems 1228, 1242, 1243, 1244, 1247, 1430, 1433, 1438, 1439, 1495, 1504, 1506. S.O.L. 250, 252, 287, 305, 327, 372, 374, 377, 380, 386, 395, 406. Robert Pick, 3 Stonegate Grove, Leeds, 7. Also Holiday Annuals, 1933, 1938.

A FOURTEEN (22 TOGETHER)

It is hoped to arrange a Dinner, either at Leeds or York, probably in July or August. In order to get the suggestion moving, would anyone interested - North, South, East or West, please get in touch, as soon as possible, with Tom Sinclair, 3, Branston Terrace, Leeds, 10. It would help in fixing a date, probably a Saturday, if dates which would be inconvenient owing to prior engagements be stated.

NEW COLLECTOR compiling detailed catalogue of stories from papers which published stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Bookwood, and St. Frank's urgently requires assistance in regard to the Popular, Nugget Weekly, Nugget Library, Greyfriars Herald, Dreamought, Boys Realm, Triumph, Kempin, Boys Friend (weekly), Chuckle, and others. Can YOU help? Please write air-letter (5d) for particulars required. Postage refunded. Correspondence welcomed. All letters answered. A. J. Southway, P. O. Box 3, Beaconfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

FROM VILKOK *Journal*
H.B.C. Drama no. 2000
and the man who wrote the
products they are in the
H.B.C. school is to adapt for
some special stories of the
"Crown" "Mystery" and "World
and you" magazine. These
may not be quite so familiar
with the persons characters
introduced with these titles.
But they are a middle-aged man
who has become head of fifty
thousand of B.A. and all over
you a dull fellow.

Tom Kerwin is thinking of
translating the idea into tele-
vision, and it will be interesting
to note whether the stories
which we thought "spinning" in
our day will be regarded as
"rubbish" by the schoolboys of
today.

The Bloods
A. J. Southway, Central
Library, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Above from the "Daily
Newspaper" of 6th April,
week-ending 15 Apr. 1949.

