

The Collectors Digest.

SPECIAL OFFERING NUMBER OF 32-6 PAGES



No. 1-Vol. 1 SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1900.

Our Champion of the Week.



"Walt Christ, Bristol!"

EMERSON'S CHAMPION
TEAM-BASE.
By Ernest S. Brown
The first of the series of articles on the life and work of Emerson, the great American philosopher, writer, and naturalist, is published in this issue. The author, Ernest S. Brown, is a well-known writer and lecturer on Emerson's life and work. The article is a comprehensive study of Emerson's life and work, and is a valuable contribution to the knowledge of this great American figure. The article is written in a clear and concise style, and is accessible to a wide range of readers. It is a must-read for anyone interested in Emerson's life and work.

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OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBNorthern Section

A meeting was held on January 27th at 239 Hyde Park Road. Despite the 'flu epidemic there was a gratifying attendance.

Reg. Hudson was in the chair. He might not have been, for a few days earlier he had had an accident which might have had serious consequences. However, fortunately he was able to preside with his usual tact.

Norman Smith, now able to be present throughout the meetings, read the report of that Christmas Party of pleasant memory.

Gerald Allison, treasurer and librarian, gave his report, and showed the library to be in a flourishing condition. It is especially appreciated by distant members. Gerald also read several interesting letters he had received from Jim Hepburn, Stanley Ward, Cyril Banks, Geo. Ramsbottom, and Eric Humphreys. The latter told something which greatly amused the meeting. He is a member of a dance band and he said that at a recent fancy dress do, he got a real surprise when a couple came on to the floor got up as Billy and Bessie Sunter. They were the famous pair down to Billy's check trousers. They got the first prize, too!

Harry Berlow sent an apology. It was the first meeting he had missed.

Horace Twinham then gave his long awaited talk on the Gem. He had evidently spent quite a lot of time in preparing it, and he got a well deserved round of applause at the finish.

Refreshments followed and then the usual discussion.

Attendance: Reg. Hudson, Norman Smith, Gerald Allison, Ernest and Mrs. Hubbard (Sheffield), Stanley, Mrs. and Keith Knight, Miss Knight, Horace Twinham, Vere Coates, W.H. Williamson, W. Harrison, C. Topham, David Pullan, David Millingbeck, and correspondent Herbert Leckenby.

In the hope that this issue will be out in time a reminder. Next meeting, February 10th. A talk by J. Breeze Bentley on Charles Hamilton.

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FEBRUARY 1951

Editor: Miscellaneous Section:
Herbert Leckenby

Telephone Exchange, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

The Best Annual Yet. That's the almost unanimous verdict of all those who have expressed their opinion. Well, that's nice to know, a real stimulant in the midst of a 'flu wave.

All the articles have their supporters, but there's one I must specially refer to, and that's Harry Homer's masterpiece - "Monograph on the Criminals' Confederation". Out of the hundreds of articles we've published since the start of the C.D. few have so many bouquets. And the striking part of it is many of them have come from those who are not normally particularly interested in Sexton Blake. There's Harry Dowler, for instance. This is what he says:

"Harry Homer's article is undoubtedly the best article ever written about the old boys' papers. It is simply masterly. Just think! I am not greatly interested in the Confedera-

tion but his contribution is so gripping, scholarly, and evidently the product of much deep research that one is compelled to read it over and over again."

Well, that's a tribute if you like. Unfortunately, Herry Homer is at present in hospital, but as you will see by a letter from him, he is eager to get going on an article for the next Annual. Nothing like starting in good time. If any of you can help him with the papers he requires, you will, needless to say, be doing it in a good cause.

The ballot papers are coming in well, and I may be able to give the state of the poll before we go to press. One gratifying feature is that many are giving reasons for their preference. These are very helpful.

Despite much midnight oil spent over the "Collectors' Who's Who", some well known names were overlooked. These include Ernest Hubbard, Granville Weine, Richard Whorwell Bill Colcombe, and E. C. Mason. It was, however, a terrific job compiling it. We'll see if any more are notified, then publish details in the March number.

As I write, reports are beginning to come in from overseas. Iceland, South Africa, Canada, U S.A. They are all so gratifying, making me look forward to those from Australia New Zealand, and Brazil.

o-o-o-o

Error: It wasn't until the last number had been mailed that I noticed, to my dismay, that it had been dated February on the cover. I tried to comfort myself by thinking, "Oh well, perhaps it won't be noticed down there at the bottom of the page." I ought to have known better. Little escapes the eagle eyes of C.D. readers. Still, that implies a compliment, so I don't mind.

It was a little unfortunate, however, for as the January number through unavoidable causes, that enemy 'flu the main one, was much later than usual, some might have got the impression that we were going to miss a month. But as you will now know, that isn't so.

And once again the delay brought a stack of anxious enquiries. Some of you later apologised for worrying me; it wasn't necessary, for after all it's nice to be missed.

Some period subscribers, too, had an uneasy feeling that maybe the non-appearance was because their subs had run out. Even if they had they would still have got their copies.

I don't get concerned until it appears evident something has gone wrong.

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"Headache" As a follow-up to the last paragraph, however we have been given the tip that the price of paper is going up steeply, especially that for the covers. Moreover, it's going to be scarce. In view of what happened over the lateness of the January number, it gives me shivers to think what would happen if the C.D. was held up altogether; but I don't think it will. At present, at any rate, it may mean that we shall have to resist the temptation to run beyond 28 pages. After all, when the price was fixed at the beginning it was with a 20 pager in mind. That was soon forgotten about.

As for the shortage, well, we are already taking steps to get paper into stock for the next Annual!

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No.50. Half a century of C.D.'s. I don't suppose I ever dared to think of such a thing that Sunday afternoon in November 1946 when I looked for the first time on No.1.

Well, I've added over four years to my age, yet I feel several years younger. And certainly richer because of hundreds unknown then but now jolly good friends to

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LÖCKENBY.

P.S. I left this until the last moment for I was hoping it wouldn't be necessary to write it at all. I regret to say, however, that there are still a number of subs. for the Annual to come. I am a little disappointed, as it is now long past closing date. I can only think it is due to forgetfulness, and I feel sure those to whom it applies will set my mind at rest as quickly as possible.

HIGH PRICES PAID for 1914-1918 "Rainbow". Also "Magnets", "S.O.L.'s". Brian Honeysett, 65 Orchard Road, St. James, Lancashire.

WANTED: Magnets (600-900), Gems (pre-1000), Populars, Holiday Annuals. Pre-war Triumphs, Hotspurs, Wizerds, Skippers, Adventures, Rovers, Boys' Friends, Pilots, Boys' Magazines, Modern Boys,, Hotspur, Wizerd or other Annuals, All with School Stories. Good prices paid. P. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middx.

Pioneers of Juvenalia

By John Medcraft

Old Boys' Book collecting is no new cult originating in the demise of the "Magnet" and other worth while boys' papers in 1940, or inspired by E. S. Turner's "Boys will be Boys" and sponsored by the Old Boys' Book Clubs, but is now nearing its century as a hobby.

It all started when Edward Lloyd became ashamed of the penny bloods upon which his considerable fortune was founded and tried to kick them out of existence. It is on record that, around 1860, he commissioned Edward Viles to buy up and destroy as many copies of "Verney the Vampyre" and the 250 or more Lloyds bloods that had been published since 1836. In execution of this difficult task Viles used a cab to tour the most prolific sources of supply, the 2d circulating libraries, buying up and removing their stocks whenever possible. Having to the best of his ability conscientiously performed the first part of the commission Viles neglected the latter end, although most of the Lloyds bloods were destroyed, he retained many of the best which he is believed to have sold years later at a considerable profit. Incidentally, the possession of "Gentleman Jack; or, Life on the Road" inspired Viles to write the well known "Black Bess; or, the Knight of the Road". Since that time the Victorian penny dreadfuls and bloods have been desultorily collected and as a result many were preserved from the wholesale destruction which the sanctimonious Victorians meted out to pernicious literature, as they sweepingly termed it. A proportion certainly did merit this fate, but not the majority. As is usual when any collectable item is no longer currently obtainable, the interest in penny dreadfuls increased considerably in the early years of the present century when Brett and the other old publishers closed down, and this started a boom in collecting the Victorian boys' papers. Up to 1930 this phase of the hobby rode on the crest of a wave but inexorable time took its toll and by 1940 the ranks of the old Victorian collectors were woefully depleted, and a younger and more virile school of collecting was gaining strength. The modern boys' papers, launched by Alfred Harmsworth in 1894, were coming into their own and the almost complete suspension in 1940 provided the stimulus which was to bear fruit after the war in the hobby as we know it today.

But let us look back 30 years when a few pioneers commenced to collect the modern boys' papers in the face of an amused contemptuousness on the part of our relatives and friends who waxed hilarious at the very thought of collecting kids' books, as they termed them. By collecting may I first make it clear that I refer to the questing for further copies and not merely the accumulation of ones own current boyhood purchases. I think I was one of the first to venture along this dimly lighted byway when in 1918 I resolved to replace the books of my boyhood, treasured for years only to be wantonly squandered in an excess of mistaken zeal three years previously. One of my very first contacts was Fred Harrison (Berry Ono) commencing a friendship that was to last until his death in 1941. Berry was exclusively a collector of the old school and his scorn for the modern papers and the "Gem and Magnet maggots" who collected them was deep and vitriolic. But he was not above selling them and helped me considerably in those early days plus instilling in me a real and lasting love for his beloved Victorian journals and dreads. I fancy he hoped to wean me from allegiance to the "Boys Friend", "Nuggets", "Marvel", "Gem" and other boyhood favourites, but never succeeded. George Gilbertson and Frank Wearing also aided me in those early days and the former encouraged me to wider Henderson interests while Wearing, although primarily a Victorian collector, did not disdain the early Harmsworths, and we had many tastes in common. In Tom Stenning I met a collector after my own heart with identical interests, and for several years we ran a mutual aid society in the old papers, buying and swapping without thought of gain. It was a sad day for me when, tired of waiting for the promised land fit for heroes, he emigrated to Australia taking the cream of his books with him. James Whittle, another of my early hobby friends, specialised in the "Boys' Friend", "Boys' Herald" and the "Boys' Friend 3d Library" and together we built up very respectable runs. He gave up collecting on his marriage a few years later and passed on his books to me. F. W. Lawrence also specialised in the good old Green 'un and to a lesser degree in the "Boys' Herald" and "Boys' Realm". It is sad to reflect that failing eyesight ended his devotion to the hobby, although I believe he still retains certain cherished items.

Apart from second-hand booksellers and junk stores, the only man I knew who dealt in back numbers of boys' papers in

the old days was Arthur Budge of Almondbury, Huddersfield, and one could usually rely upon him for supplies of our favourite papers. He was a queer fish in many ways and usually wrote on small scraps of paper with a profusion of marginal additions and afterthoughts, but although an indifferent correspondent, he delivered the goods. If only Arthur could but know the prices now being paid to money conscious dealers for books he used to sell at less than published price, verily I believe he would erupt in his grave. James Sullivan, another of my early contacts, was primarily a Henderson collector and his spotless runs of "Nuggets", "Wild West", and "Nugget Library" excited my envy and admiration. He kept them all in a large tin trunk with an overflow into several boxes, and disdained binding, preferring to retain the original published condition. Eventually he also emigrated and gladdened my heart by turning over his entire collection, tin trunk and all.

George C. Foster had one of the finest collections of all time with sets of the "Gem" and "Magnet" complete to the time of his secession from the hobby which his many other interests unfortunately rendered necessary. We had many collecting experiences in common over a period of ten years including a brush with the enterprising Leslie Pearson long before that plausible individual exercised his peculiar talents on a larger scale in 1947. George's greatest mistake was to remove the Gem and Magnet covers before binding. What became of them I can only guess. May he be forgiven.

Too few collectors of modern boys' papers cast their nets wider and a really representative collection is a rarity. One such belongs to George P. Grainger whose interests cover a wide field from the grand old Victorian journals to to the "Boys' Friend" and "Union Jack", while his Aldine and Henderson items make an imposing array.

Another collector active more than 20 years ago was S. L. Fulker whose interests were primarily Aldine with a preference for "Dick Turpin", "Spring Heeled Jack", "Jack Sheppard" and "Claude Duval". Although no longer active in the field he retains his sets of these full blooded libraries.

W. Baskett was not actually a collector, but he probably inspired many others to that end. Possessing nearly complete sets of the Gem and Magnet up to No.800 he ran a juvenile circulating library for several years, and after tiring of it he sold the undamaged balance of his stock, over 1100 copies,

to me for 10/- carriage paid. Some members of our circle possessing copies of the Gem and Magnet with his name on the cover may find food for reflection in the knowledge that these books were once repurchased at 10 for a penny. More years than I care to remember have passed since I first corresponded with our worthy editor and official scribe, Herbert Leckenby, and even in those early days I recall that his interest in the personalities of the old papers - the authors who wrote and the artists who drew for them - predominated over mere acquisition. Little did either of us dream that over 20 years would elapse before we met and then the hobby would be on an established and dignified footing. Joe Parks, active in the hobby from the earliest period, has done much to develop and add to its interest for collectors. In 1919 he launched "Vanity Fair", now better known as the "Collector's Miscellany" and for 20 years it held the fort as the official organ of Old Boys Book collecting. Of the hobby writers of pre-war days only Herry Steele, Joe and myself are actively pursuing the same course today. Percy Smith is another whose enthusiasm has grown greater with the passing years and, though his interests have widened considerably, he is unswerving in his allegiance to Buffal Bill. Percy's collection of literature devoted to his hero is an imposing one and probably the finest in Britain.

Len Packman too, now bearing with becoming dignity the office of chairman of the London Section, probably remembers one Autumn evening in the misty past when he called on me and later departed happily, staggering under a load of early 1/2d and 1d Gems plus a few Magnets including the original grease-stained copy of No.1 which I purchased when a boy. Happy days. Dick Thorwell, the indefatigable, had the toughest collecting luck of all, but he is as keen now as ever he was in the early days between the wars. It was several years later in the uneasy years before 1939 that I first contacted Eric Fayne and launched him along the hobby road with a beautiful bound run of the "Gem" up to No.312, since when he has garnered a wonderful collection of Hamiltonians. C. A. Ransom, one of the last collectors of the older school, passed on in June 1939, and the modern section of his extensive collection was suctioned two days before the outbreak of war, a most unpropitious time for a sale, and finely bound volumes of "Boys' Friend", "Boys' Realm", "Big Budget",

and "Jester" realised less than one shilling per volume.

Collecting stagnated during the first half of the war but, providing a form of escapism from the strain of war, it picked up remarkably later, and within a year after the cessation of hostilities an ever growing number of new enthusiasts of all ages were attracted to the hobby. Interest rocketed when the news of Charles Hamilton's activities became widely known, and press publicity did the rest. Once the cult of a comparatively few individualists who ploughed their lonely furrows in uncharted but fertile territory, Old Boys' Book collecting now emerged from obscurity and lined up a trifle self-consciously at first perhaps, with Philately and the other established hobbies. Today the embryo collector has no longer to fend for himself but is guided along the path by the sure light of many informative articles and portentous character studies and in various other ways instructed in the whys and wherefores of the cult. The collector of today has gained in stature and enjoys many advantages that we of the pioneer days never knew, but gone is the adventure of the past and the frequent thrill of an attractive find at bargain price. Alas, the world has been too fiercely combed in recent years for much to escape and the small second-hand bookseller, once the most prolific source of supply, no longer fills the penny box with old boys' books, but reports at maximum prices. Furthermore, there were no parasitic dealers in the old days, for we were all collectors buying, selling and exchanging in mutual accord and with no thought of monetary gain, any profit made was infinitesimal and soon evened up.

Verily, these were the days.

S.O.S. Will any collector assist Mrs. Packmen and myself to complete our joint collection of Union Jacks? Your price gladly paid for any of the following: 1316, 1314, 1313, 1292, 1272, 1042, 1040, 1039, 1038, 1016, 999, 998, 997, 996, 991, 989, 988, 987, 975, 984, 983, 982, 978, 977, 976, 975, 974, 972, 971, 970, 969, 967, 966, 962, 960, 957, 953, 919, 917, 911, 907, 903, 902, 898, 896, 890, 887, 886. Leonard Packmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED:- Volume 14 Bow Bells, 10/- offered. A. W. Lawson, 13 Charles Square, Hoxton, London, N.1.

Popular Papers of the Past

No.13 - "Boys Of The (Our) Empire" (Melrose)

Oct. 27, 1900 - Oct. 10, 1903 - 155 numbers

There was an interesting story of rivalry behind the coming of Melrose's "Boys Of The Empire" for, some years earlier, there had been another paper bearing the same name. It had been one of Edwin J. Brett's many enterprises and after a run of a little over five years had died in May 1893. When this prominent publisher of Victorian boys' journals got wind of Melrose's intention he pricked up his ears - and promptly got busy; so much so that a week before the Melrose paper reached the bookstalls, another one appeared thereon - a re-issue of Brett's old paper - price one halfpenny. Slick work, but not so difficult, as it simply contained old stories and pictures, too. So, during the week of October 10th, 1903, the boys of the day had the choice of two papers bearing the same name, one at a penny, and one at half that sum.

I well remember the coming of that No.1 of the Melrose "Boys Of The Empire", for my father gave me a surprise by placing a copy in my hands. As I have related more than once, my father disapproved generally of the boys' weeklies, but as the new paper had evidently been modelled on the "Boys' Own Paper" (a paper which not even the sternest Victorian parent could object to) I suppose he had a hope that it would eventually wean me away from the "Boys' Friend", and other so-called "bloods" of the day.

Well, what did I find when I turned the pages of the new paper that day over 50 years ago.

It consisted of 24 pages (reduced to 20 the following week) enclosed in a cover of an attractive green. I am unable to comment on the cover in detail, as the volumes I have have been bound without them. The page size was the same as the B.O.P. There were two serials. "Contraband of War", a tale of the Boer War then in progress, written by B. Aitken; and "The Lone Star Rush" by Edmund Mitchell.

It is interesting to note that "Contraband of War" was illustrated by an artist associated with the Brett papers, one whose work was as familiar to the readers of the "Halfpenny Surprise" as C. H. Chapman to those of the "Magnet". I don't

think he ever signed his drawings in the Brett papers, but according to a picture in the Melrose "Boys Of The Empire" he was E. T. Pope, or Pope.

The first page was occupied by "Our Champion of the Week" with an illustration and a column biography. In that No.1 the champion was Ernest Needham, famous half-back of Sheffield United. The drawing was by none other than Hutton Mitchell, the artist who nearly eight years later was the first to draw Billy Bunter. This "Champion of the Week" feature I believe continued throughout the run of the paper. A page announced the "Boys' Empire League" with an imposing list of patrons, including Lord Charles Beresford and the Duke of Marlborough. Linked with this was a competition with £100 in prizes, spent on hampers to be awarded to the schools obtaining the most members for the League in proportion to the number of scholars. I won't mention the contents of these hampers; it wouldn't be fair to our younger members.

The rest of the papers was made up with short stories and articles, and the editor was Howard Spicer, in appearance not unlike that more famous boys's editor, Hamilton Edwards.

I don't quite remember what my reactions were at the time; probably I was not greatly impressed. Certainly the "Boys' Friend" did not lose a reader. I liked four serials in my papers; including a school one. I believe my comment was that it seemed to be for the "swotter", the "good boy of the family", and that wasn't me. However, it's only fair to say that the paper improved as time went on, at least in my opinion. And, it would appear, others were thinking as I was, for in No.20 it was announced so many readers had indicated their wish for a school story that it had been decided to publish one. It started in the next number: "Chisholm's Chums", written by K.M. and R. Eady. It was not at all a bad story.

A little earlier another new serial had started written by an author well known to some of the older members of our circle: Robert Leighton. Its title was "Cap'n Nat's Treasure", a tale of old Liverpool. The artist was again Hutton Mitchell, and his work here was brilliant, far superior to his contributions to the "Magnet" and "Gem" years later.

Robert Leighton, of course, wrote quite a lot of serials with his wife, Marie Connor Leighton, as partner, or perhaps it would be more correct to put that in reverse, for their daughter, in a biography of her mother, implied her father was

a meek little man very much under the dominance of his wife. Meek little man or not, he could certainly write a racy, full of thrills story for boys.

In No.34 started another serial, "The Secret of the Wonderland" by an author who later was to become well known, Ridgewell Cullum. With this story, however, he had a partner - Charles Wingrove.

It would appear that about this time "Boys of the Empire" was doing quite nicely. The editorial columns took up quite a lot of space answering readers' questions. There was a good "Mart and Exchange" and the Boys' Empire League seemed to be in a healthy state. Then E. J. Brett made another move - he increased the price of his paper to a penny. Thus, in No.37 of the other "Boys of the Empire" it was announced:

"Owing to another periodical bearing the same name as our Magazine having intimated that its price will be raised from a halfpenny to one penny weekly, a great deal of confusion is likely to be caused to the Newsagents, Wholesalers and Retailers alike. It would be quite impossible to know which paper was meant when an order was sent for "Boys of the Empire". Under these circumstances we have resolved to make a slight alteration in our title ---- it will keep us from sustaining the damage and annoyance which the publishers of the other paper evidently intend us to suffer.

On and after this date our Magazine will be entitled "Boys of Our Empire".

Evidently there was no love lost between Messrs. Melrose, and, where boys' journals were concerned, the more experienced Mr. E. J. Brett.

No further reference appears to have been made to this little war, and if one had not seen that notice one would probably have been quite unaware of this change, for the word "Our" was only in very small lettering on the masthead.

Vol.2 started off with a new school serial by Robert Leighton, "Hounded Out" or "The Boys of Waveney College", and before the finish he had also contributed "In the Land of Ju-Je" and "The Haunted Ship". Another serial in this volume was "The Yellow Satchell" by Fred Whishaw, illustrated by Hutton Mitchell.

There comes a real whiff of nostalgia when one looks at some of the Champions of the Week described in these old

volumes, especially to lovers of King Cricket, for there are told the feats of Grace, Gilbert Jessop, Sidney Barnes, Reginald Duff, Warwick Armstrong and other giants of the golden age.

In No.80 there commenced a school story, "A Rank Outsider" by Kent Carr. This was a splendid story of life at a great public school. I remember reading it at the time with real interest, and thinking that "Boys of Our Empire" was not such a bad sort of paper after all. Kent Carr later had another one, "Caught Out".

Harking back a little one finds in No.61 the first of a two-part article "Why Can't We Fly". In it the writer says, "The problem of flight has thus been only very partially solved by "man-ridden" machines. No such machine has as yet been able to regulate its flight in any chosen direction, or to fly at all under anything but the most favourable conditions; and it seems the navigation of the air, if it ever takes place, is more likely to be accomplished by means of air-conveyances something like the airships which will be the subject of our next paper."

Well, airships are obsolete, and two years after that article had been written the Wright Brothers lifted a heavier than air machine from the ground at Kitty Hawk and flew! Would the world have been today a happier and more peaceful place if it had never happened? Well, look at London, and think how we shudder at the mention of "atom bomb".

No.55 contained a supplement running to four pages telling of a meeting of the Boys' Empire League at Holborn Town Hall on October 23rd, 1901. 500 boys were present and Archdeacon Sinclair president of the League, was in the chair, and the meeting opened with the singing of "The Dear Home Land". Stirring speeches were made devoted to "the glorious history of the great, far-flung British Empire". A good time seems to have been had by all on that evening night on 50 years ago. Cynics may have scoffed and said there was another motive behind it - circulation for the "Boys of Our Empire". Maybe, but that kind of thing did link proprietors and readers, the boys of the day were able to see the editor as a real live personality. He could be friend and adviser. Would there were more of the same spirit today.

With No.86 came another change; the green cover was dropped, and four extra pages of story matter given - 20 in all.

As Brett's "Boys of the Empire" had no cover this would no doubt add to the worries of the newsgent. Then with No.109 the heading was printed in two colours instead of one, and continued so until the end - No.155, Oct. 10, 1903. As, unfortunately, I have no copies of Volume 3, I am unable to say under what circumstances it came to die. It seems to have put up a brave fight seeming to try and find a place a little to the left of the B.O.P., somewhat to the right of "Chums", but found there wasn't room.

The "Boys of The Empire" went on until September 15th, 1906, No.311. E. J. Brett had the last laugh.

NOTE. For much of my information I am indebted to Henry Stables, of Bradford.

WANTED almost any Henderson publications, especially Young Folks Tales (1906-14). Could if preferred offer various pre-1914 items (non-Henderson) in exchange. E. Mason, 20 Warriston Gardens, Edinburgh 4.

SALE, EXCHANGE: 60 Victorians, 1d and 2d each; 27 Thrillers, 3d each; E. V. Hughes, "Caswell", 25, Hillsboro Road, Bognor Regis.

WANTED: Best prices offered all types of old Boys' Books, For Sale, "Magnets", "Populars", "Boys Friend Green Weeklies", "Boys' Realm", "Union Jacks", etc. From 12/- per dozen, S.A.E. For list please. G. R. Adsley, 17 Abergerw Road, Brynmenyn, Nr. Bridgend. Glam.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: 84 1d Mervels ranging from No.40 (29/10/04) to No.877. All in good condition. A few others coverless or damaged also available.

Wanted. 1d Mervels: 1d Mervels Nos. 3, 7, 9, 23, 24, 134-6, 141, 215-240, 275-290, 375-400. Populars (first series) 2, 3, 12, 31, 32, 33, 36. Union Jacks containing Lobengu stories. Thurbon, 47 Cromwell Road, Cambridge.

FOR SALE: Collectively or separately, 80 B.O.P's; 330 Champions. Also 6 Champion Annuals. Offers. Details. B. R. Edgeley, 9 Southway, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey.

WANTED: Modern Boys 1931-32-33. Write C. Wallis, 64 Oakland Park Road, Southgate, London, N.14.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by Robert Blythe

(All communications temporarily to Leonard Parkman,
27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.)

By a strange coincidence I have had two requests for the same information, both coming by the same post, although some hundreds of miles separates my enquirers.

These chums of mine are comparatively newcomers to the circle, and as their enquiry may also be of interest to others, I am putting the question and part of the answer in this "Column".

The question is, "Which issues of the Nelson Lee were reprinted in the "Monster" library, and were all the stories in this paper reprints?"

The second part of the question is Yes, they were all reprints, each "Monster" containing what was originally a series of anything from 7 to 11 consecutive issues of the Nelson Lee first (Old) Series.

Here are the first ten "Monsters" and the serial numbers of the original N.Lees contained therein. I will finish the series (a further nine "Monsters") next month.

No.1 "Monster"	=	Nelson Lee (O.S.)	158 to 165 inc.
" 2	"	" " "	170 to 177 "
" 3	"	" " "	187 to 194 "
" 4	"	" " "	178 to 186 "
" 5	"	" " "	195 to 204 "
" 6	"	" " "	205 to 212 "
" 7	"	" " "	213 to 220 "
" 8	"	" " "	221 to 228 "
" 9	"	" " "	312 to 319 "
"10	"	" " "	240 to 249 "

And now to "press on" with the Nelson Lee titles, 1st New Series. 61, St. Frank's in the Congo; 62, The Congo Quest; 63, In the Cannibals' Grip; 64, The Slaver of Kelala; 67, The Schoolboy Exiles; 68, The Feud of the Fourth; 69, The Foes of St. Frank's; 70, The Secret Societies of St. Frank's; 71, Drummed Out of St. Frank's; 72, The Rascal of the Remove; 73, The Spoofers of St. Frank's; 74, A Rank Outsider; 75, Staggering the School; 76, The Stricken Schoolboy; 77, The Doomed Schoolboy; 78, The Miracle of Study D; 79, Handforth's Triumph; 80, Armistice Day at St. Frank's.

Hamiltonia

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

The news of the probability of the publishing of "Frank Richards' Autobiography" seems to have set you all agog. As most of you know, the master wrote it quite a long time ago, and that it has been held up for various reasons, paper shortage and so on. I had the privilege of seeing some of the chapters in manuscript once. They concerned the births of the Gem and Magnet, and what followed. I can assure you they made absorbing reading.

One often sees biographies and autobiographies concerning some nonentity and wonders why the dickens they were written and who reads them. I've noticed some in a Public Library which hardly ever leave the shelves. I'd like to bet that won't be the case with Frank Richards'.

I understand that unless something unforeseen occurs it should be ready in the autumn.

Thanks to that good pal, Jim Shepherd, I am able to browse over a number of early Magnets and Gems, and apart from the stories, I find much to interest and amuse me, in those which contain "Replies in Brief" in the days when H. A. Hinton was editor.

For instance, in Gem No. 369, he says in reply to Maurice Wood (Croydon).

"The Gem has been in circulation since the beginning of 1908."

March 1907, surely?

Then in the same number I was very very much interested to note this:

"A Little Reader" (Brighton). Both St. Jims and Greyfriars are the invention of Mr. Richards."

Oh, what a slip! I never knew that ever appeared, and H. A. Hinton was the fellow who years later told, oh so vividly, and with such wealth of detail how he met for the first time the three, Martin Clifford, Frank Richards and Owen Conquest.

Again, some number, in reply to H. Booth (Freshfield):

"There are thirty-three boys in the Greyfriars first Form. First Form? It never existed, surely?"

Then in Magnet 377, in answer to a Northampton reader, he explains:

"Stockbraking is a risky game, and while some men are lucky at it, there are many failures. Business people were, of course, only comparatively poor. I hope this explanation will satisfy you."

I wonder if it did. But why the past tense? Reads as if Billy was an orphan.

In the same number E.W. (Bristol) gets this answer: "Many thanks for pointing out error. The author of the story referred to was stranded in Switzerland when the war broke out, and I was consequently compelled to publish two stories out of their order."

But was it Switzerland? I don't think so.

Finally he here again mentions the First Form, saying it had no captain!

All this goes to give the impression I think that H. A. Hinton was not very well acquainted with the stories he edited, or was inclined to be careless, or maybe he thought that any old answer would do for youthful readers, never dreaming that years ahead the stories would have become historic.

Here's a Laugh. Opening his mail one morning recently, jovial Bill Martin came across this gem. He does not say what he told the writer to do with his magnets.

"Dear Sir,

As I was looking through my weekly 'Exchange & Mart' I saw the advert of wanted magnets, any period. Top price paid.

So I enclose three dynamo magnets of which I hope will be some use to you.

Waiting your return,

A. E. B."

I'll keep secret the name of the man who apparently has never heard of Billy Bunter.

In contrast to the foregoing here's a letter from a well-known member of the circle, which raises a very interesting point. It's something which has often struck me. "Tom Merry" would never have fitted the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, who at times could be very moody, for instance, and Bob Cherry and Frenk Nugent in reverse would have seemed all wrong.

Again, Herry Manners was just right for the quiet member of the Terrible Three.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Running through some recent C.D.s I've been struck - not for the first time - with Charles Hamilton's remarkable facility in coining names for his characters which fit them perfectly. There is nothing artificial in them, yet I believe that given a list of names someone who had never seen a GEM or MAGNET (if such an individual exists!) could unerringly separate the 'blacks' from the 'whites' - and have a high percentage of successes in the 'greys'.

I know from experience that the naming of characters is not easy - a women editor, making my Derek into Donald, informed me indulgently that Derek was never the hero; he was the weak-willed brother for whom the heroine was willing to marry the rich, old suitor! - so I'm intrigued to know how the Master did it. Did he, like Dickens, scribble name after name until he got one exactly right, or were they all flashes of inspiration? Perhaps he will tell us.

And, as a secondary thought, what does the brotherhood ~~think~~ think the most successful coinage - leaving out the national and regional ones. My vote goes to the triple gem of Skinner, Snoop, and Stott with Bolsover and Bob Cherry fighting for a place.

Sincerely,
JVESH."

THE PICK OF THE SERIES. No. 3.

By Eric Fayne

The SMEDLEY series. (Opening story in Magnet No.1360, published March 10th,1934. 13 stories).

The plot of this interesting series, which had Vernon-Smith for its central character, covered a good deal of ground. Opening in the Spring Term, it swept, in the Easter holidays, to France and then to Wharton Lodge, before the final scene was played out at Greyfriars to the accompanying sounds of cricket bat and ball. Mr. Vernon-Smith threatened to disown his son in favour of a cousin, one Luckius Teggars. The latter came to Greyfriars under the elies of a form-master, Mr.Smedley and worked hard in his endeavours to get Smithy disgraced.

It was altogether a very satisfying series, and, apart from many of the stock situations, it contained several very original twists. The two stories staged at Wharton Lodge were exceptionally cleverly written, and a fine cricket yarn in the series was a superb piece of work.

Over five years later the plot was used again, - lock, stock, and barrel, - in the very last series which the Gem ever published. The SILVERSON series in the Gem started in No.1647 and ran until the closing of the paper with No.1663, - 17 stories in all. In spite of the similarity, it was inferior to the Smedley series. For one thing it was too long; for another, the plot repeated itself time and time again; thirdly, the motive of the villain of the piece was nothing like so strong as in the case of Smedley who was after the Vernon-Smith millions.

The Silverson series was, however, outstanding in having Tom Merry as the central character. Tom was much neglected in much of the history of St.Jim's. It was remarkable, too, in showing another side of Tom Merry's character, and in showing a marked development in the character of Manners. Had the Gem continued, I feel sure that Manners would have become one of the most interesting personalities. The Smedley series also brings to mind the DA COSTA series in the Magnet. In this case, a lad came to Greyfriars to disgrace Harry Wharton. In both the Smedley series and the De Coste series, we read of the device of placing the stolen money in a letter from a relative making it appear like a gift from the said relative. A well-worn stock situation, but always an interesting one. The De Coste series will come under review again when we turn the spotlight on some of the very fine cricket stories which appeared in the Magnet.

Magnet Titles (Contd.)

- No.501, Judge Jeffries; 502, Getting out of hand; 503, The Great Inquisition; 504, The Barring-Out at Greyfriars;
- 505, Victory; 506 (S) Rivals of the Chase; 507, Ponsobny's Pal;
- 508, Coker the Rebel; 509 (S) A Gentleman Ranker;
- 510, An Old Boy at Greyfriars; 511, The Saving of the Bounder;
- 512 (S) The Missing Skipper; 513 (S) The Greyfriars Xmas Party;
- 514 (S) Far from the Lest; 515, Flap's Brother; 516, Looking after Inky;
- 517, In Another's Place; 518, Clevering of the Remove; 519, The Whip Hand; 520 (S- A Very Gallant Gentleman.

Annual General Meeting of the London section of the
Old Boys' Book Club. Wood Green. January 21st, 1951.

The third Annual General Meeting of the club was a very happy and convivial affair. Chairman Len opened the proceedings in his usual good style and the minutes of the last A.G.M. were read and commented on. The treasurer's report and statement of accounts for the year 1950 were read and accepted. These show an income from subscriptions and bank interest of £42-11-0½. The total expenditure for the year was £28-8-4, thus giving an excess of income over expenditure of £14-3-8½. Audited and found correct by the Hon. Auditor C. Wright, to whom the thanks of the club are extended. The chairman then gave his address and then followed the election of officers. On a motion proposed by R. Jenkins and seconded by J. Geal the retiring officers were re-elected en bloc and after suitable thanks had been given the secretary read a very lengthy correspondence. The last letter was one to Bob Whiter from Frank Richards and the latest photograph of our worthy president playing chess with his cat was shown round and orders taken for copies.

It was agreed that Bill Gander be elected a vice-president of the club in view of his good work on behalf of the hobby. The chairman is awaiting a reply from Edwy Searles Brooks as to whether he is willing to become a vice-president.

The next Bunter book is supposed to be published in April, so the enjoyable task of drawing for postal members' names to receive a copy of this book resulted in Peter Cushing, H. Spencer, J. Boland, and S. Godfrey being successful. These will receive their copies as soon as the book is published and the members who have won copies of the Mandeville books are asked for their kind indulgence as they are behind schedule.

A reading by Bob Whiter of the Frank Richard story "Bunter Breaks Through" in "The Comet" 128 (New Series) was greatly appreciated and enjoyed.

Twenty Questions with Ben Whiter as question master and Len Packman, Ian Whitmore, Tony Blunden and J. Hurrell as the team was also greatly enjoyed. The team guessed all the nine questions, a very creditable effort.

The first championship quiz of the year was won by Len,

last year's champion, with the runner up finishing second. Len amassed 31 points, Bob Whiter 27 points, Ron Crollie 20 points, and Roger Jenkins 16 points. A certoon quiz, drawn by Bob Whiter and consisting of five cards was solved by almost all who attempted it.

Attendance. Len & Josie Packman, T.Blunden, Ian Whitmore, R.Godsave, R.Crollie, W.Hurrell, A.Lewson, C.Wallis, A.Stewart, R.Jenkins, J.Geel, R.Knight, F. & W.Keeling, W.R. & B.Whiter.

List of subscribing members: A.Blunden, E.Blight (P), R.Brown, L.Brenton (P), M.Bond (P), J.Boland (P), R.Bennett (P), R & L.Blythe, T.Concannon (P), E.Cox (P), R.Crollie, W.Colcombe (P), R & M.Deacon, J.Dow jun. (P), E.B.Flinders (P), G.Fuller (P), Eric Fayne (P), W.H.Fenn (P), H.Flatman, J.Geel, S.Godfrey (P), W.Godhead (P), R.Godsave, F.Green (P), H.Homer, E.Hubberd (P), J.Hurrell, R.Hooton (P), R.Herlock (P), R.Jenkins, R.Jones (P), M.Jacobs (P), F & W.Keeling, R.Knight (P), E.Lendy (P), H.Leckenby (P), W.Lewson, T.Large (P), R.Long (P), R.Mortimer (P), R.Mathews (P), R.Nicholls (P), W.Orr (P), S.Orme (P), L & J.Packman, V.Page (P), B.Prime, H.Price (P), P.P.dro, A.Prior, G.Protheroe (P), D.Reader (P), J.Robyns (P), Frank Richards, A.Richardson (P), A.J.Southway (P), T.Strype (P), P.Sutherland (P), H.Spencer (P), J.Smith (P), R.Southwood, A.Stewart, C.Vennimore (P), C. & O.Wright, E.Willett (P), I.Whitmore, W.B. & R.Whiter, J.Wood (P), E.Windover (P), W.Well (P), C.Wallis, J.Walsh (P), A.Young, E.Reynolds. J.Parrett.

(P) signifies postal member.

BENJAMIN G. WHITER.

THE SUNDERLAND EXHIBITION

Interest in the old papers, up in the cold north, certainly has not waned, judging by the steady stream of people passing along the glass cases containing sixty of the old favourites. We, (Mr. Storey of Jesmond, Mr. J. Smith of Benwell, and yours truly, Jack Cook) have just arrived in Sunderland.

The day is Saturday; gloomy and damp, though we three enthusiasts are happy enough in the pursuit of our Hobby, and as we pass up the stone steps leading to the Upper Gallery which houses the collection of old boys' books, the property of our good friend, Mr. H.Leckenby, we wonder what old favourites will greet us.

Ah! Here we are - and here before our eyes are the books and papers of yester-year - "The Bullseye" in its familiar blue jacket, "The Surprise", "Jack Harkaway", "Dick Turpin", and what is this large, white paper - why, yes - "Boys' Best Story Paper" for 1911 price 1d. A school story too.

We move on, enthralled. A small white paper takes our eyes - it is No.1 of the "Greyfriars Herald" dated Nov.20th, 1915. A "Magnet", a "Gem" and a lone "Nelson Lee" are displayed, but somehow they seem lost among the swarm of other old favourites.

An early "Union Jack" grips us. Details of Blake and an early exploit are before us. Old comics too are there - "Comic Cuts", "Chips" - just as they used to be in their large, coloured covers.

A "Boys" Friend" Bumper No. confronts us and we sigh. Mr.Storey smiles - he can afford to with eight volumes of the old paper in his growing collection - yes, No.1 too!

"Boys of England" and some of the very early bloods float before us. Before our time, though not without interest. "Young Britain" comes along, and more recent papers - "Scoops", that science fiction mag with a picture of a gigantic space ship plunging to earth, obviously from Venus - we gasp a little as we remember recent films, Rocket Ship XM, and Destination Moon.

The old familiar colours, the pinks, the yellows, the blues, the faded greys, they are all there, and the whole blends into one satisfying tapestry, as if the Almighty Author had planned this dim day long ago. A day of memories, tinged perhaps with a little regret - perhaps we envisage the perfect exhibition of the future; an exhibition comprising hundreds of the old papers. Perhaps there could be a kind of Super Convention of Story Paper Collectors (Well chaps, there's the nucleus of the BIG IDEA).

Can we (by we, I mean all of us). Can we talk this over? Obstacles to be met - and overcome. Think it over, and send your view to our worthy Ed.

JACK COOK.

WANTED: Collectors' Digest Annuals, 1947, 48, 49, and monthly numbers 1 - 48. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W. 10.

WANTED URGENTLY: Gems No's 819 and 946. Josephine Peckman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

Don't forget your Voting Forms for Competition and Annual!

SCHOOLBOYS' OWNS FOR SALE: Greyfriars No.15; St. Jims Nos.180, 186, 200, 208, 224, 240, 350, 359, 401. Condition - fair to good. Price 17s.6d the lot. Roger Jenkins, "Strathmore", Town Hall Road, Havant, Hants.

Letter Box

More Kudos for Our Hobby!

City and County of Newcastle-upon Tyne
Public Libraries

24th January, 1951.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

We are interested in your collection of boys' magazines now on exhibition in the Sunderland Art Gallery, and would be pleased to show such an exhibition in the Central Library, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for two weeks.

Would it be possible to have the collection transferred direct from Sunderland to this Library after January 27th, the closing date of the Sunderland exhibition? If such an arrangement could be made, I can assure you that every care would be taken of the exhibits.

Your co-operation would be very much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

E. Austin Hinton,
City Librarian.

Is from: Yulden Farm,
Heathfield,
Sussex.
12/1/51.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Dear Mr. Editor,

Two weeks on my back in hospital following an operation for hernia doubtless caused by the Spurs Arsenal result in December. have granted me the leisure to read and enjoy the

best "Annual" yet. Congratulations!

Now of course my mind looks ahead to the next one.

You will remember our last meeting at Hove when I told you I had in mind a monograph on Roxane Herfield. I can see your very direct look as you replied, "Why not Yvonne Cartier?"

Well, Herbert, I cannot write of that which I have not read, so I have been trying every avenue known to me for the acquisition of the old Yvonne stories, but with very little success.

Titles and numbers have I found, but of copies very few. My earliest is 540 but before that I have traced 529, 509, 498, 492, 488 and 485 which I have some reason to believe is the Number One. In all the S.B.L's of all series I can only trace First Series 385 as featuring the incomparable Yvonne, but I may be well wide of the mark in this case.

Now to the point of my letter.

If any fellow collectors have copies of any of the very early Yvonne stories and would lend them to me for a month or so to read and help me in the work, I would very much like to attempt this monograph as a feature for the next Annual - always provided of course that you still want me to do it. I will gladly defray the cost of registered postage both ways and although I may keep the books for from one to three months, they will be handled with the greatest of loving care.

I am, Mr. Editor,

Very sincerely Yours,
HARRY HOMER.

(Of course we want it, Harry!)

For the Attention of Blake Fans

Dear Editor,

For the benefit of those who are seeking accurate data perhaps the enclosed additional information, and two amendments concerning 1923 "U. Jack" titles, to be found in January 1951, may be published.

LEONARD PACKMAN.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1004. The Palace of Mystery (Three Musketeers) | G. H. Teed |
| 1005. The Case of the Stolen Locomotives. | H. G. Hill |
| 1007. The Temple of the Blind. (The Owl) | for Symonds
read A. Murray |
| 1009. The Case of the Bamboo Rods (Humble Bogge) | A. Murray |

1010. The Secret of the Mine. (The Owl)	for Symonds read A. Murray
1012. The Case of the Petrol Turbine	G. Chester
1013. On Secret Service (Zenith)	A. Skene
1017. The Case of the Indian Fakir (Rymer)	G. H. Teed
1019. The Valley of Flies (Adrian Steele)	A. Murray
1020. The Mystery of the Moving Mountain (Plummer and Rymer)	G. H. Teed
1022. The Case of the Crimson Curtain (Kestrel and Zenith)	A. Skene
1030. The Case of the Professional Tennis Player (Hon. J. Lewless)	A. Murray
1039. The Gargoyle's Secret (The Owl and Kerr)	A. Murray
1042. The Case of the Crippled Monk (Three Musketeers)	G. H. Teed
1043. The Case of the Golden Pebble	G. H. Teed
1049. The Straits of Mystery (Plummer)	G. H. Teed
1055. The Scareb of Ament-Aba. (Ribart)	L. Jackson.

(As Blakians had been prepared it was thought best to insert here rather than hold over until next month.- H.L.)

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Ronald Hunter Will Be Listening

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea,
Broadstairs, Kent.

January 12th, 1951.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Another Address wanted! Perhaps you may remember my radio play, "Plus ça Change", which was on the air in October 1945. This is now being translated into Portuguese for transmission on the Latin-American Service to Brazil, dates March 6/7 and 8/9. It occurred to me that our friend at Rio might like to listen in, if we let him know: and if he did, I should certainly like to hear from him how the play came through. But all I remember of his address is that it is in the Avenida Rio Branco, Rio de Janeiro. Can you help?

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

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Billy Bunter 1899 -- ?

January 19th, 1951.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D. -- ever welcome and ever attractive. Lately I have been looking over some of the old numbers, and I must say that the C.D., like wine, improves with age. Many thanks for sending me the Rio address. If our friend Hunter does listen in, it will be very interesting to hear from him how my play comes through in Portuguese. I shall try to get it myself: but there are a lot of snags in the short wave.

I am very interested in Mr. Walker's article on our fat old friend the Owl. I see that he has noted that W.G.B. was kept a good deal in the background in the early days. I have referred to this in one chapter in my Autobiography. It was due to the ineradicable diffidence which is characteristic of the author, -- the reason being that when Bunter was first evolved, as long ago as 1899, he was turned down by the publisher to whom he was then offered, which discouraged Frank Richards, and caused him to relegate the Owl to cold storage for years, and to give him only a modest part when he did come to life, at last, in the Magnet. It is quite curious that best-sellers generally are turned down by publishers at first: a circumstance that ought to be very encouraging to young writers. I remember when I was a boy a novel called "Mr. Barnes of New York", which was turned down everywhere: I have even heard that at last the author was driven to publishing it at his own expense. And immediately it appeared, it became a best-seller, and sold by unnumbered thousands all over the world. Nevertheless, when a publisher looks solemn and shakes his head, it does have a discouraging effect, though it ought not to have: hence poor old Bunter's long eclipse and modest beginnings.

A very good number, my dear boy: and it has given me a very pleasant hour accompanied by an armchair and a pipe.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

February

B L A K I A N A .

1951.

 Address all communications to H.H. Bond, 10, Lrw Wen, Rhinbina
 Cardiff. Contributions to the section type written if
 possible. We regret that owing to the paper situation we
 have had to cut down the number of pages allotted and have
 therefore had to temporarily do away with usual heading.

GERRY ALLISON has once again sent along reviews of the
 latest (at time of printing) issues of the S.D.L. and here
 are his opinions of the two volumes.

No. 230 "A Case for H.I.5" by Warwick Jardine. There is
 plenty of action here, but much of it resembled a crowd of
 people in disguise running at top speed around Hampton Court
 maze. However, we finally discover which is Sexton Blake
 and who Major Hugh Dirling of the 'Secret' (joke) Service
 really is. To help the pursuers the villain keeps writing
 clues on scraps of paper and leaving them about. E.g.
 'Kymarch', page 44, 'Grazoby 330', page 33. A very sporting
 gesture, I thought. Blake has rarely been so inept, but my
 pet aversion was Sergeant Pinn. When he said "Cor stone
 the crows", for the 50th time I shrieked aloud.

No. 229 "The Mystery Of The Rio Star" by Walter Tyrer.
 At last! A grand tale which has everything. Good char-
 acterization, wit and humour, entirely convincing locale,
 and a perfectly credible plot. Sexton Blake is superb.
 Competent, and masterly in action. Yes, this author is the
 man for my money. I still remember with pleasure his
 earlier fine football/mystery yarn ONE OF ELEVEN (No. 202).
 What I like especially about Tyrer's work is his little bits
 of quiet humour, such as this: 'She closed the door on
 those mysterious callers and left them standing outside, so
 that they might not be tempted to steal the barometer from
 the wall, or the flower painted section of drainpipe which
 served as an umbrella stand. However, to lessen any
offence she closed the door very quietly.'
 That final sentence to me is delicious. Do read this tale.
 You will enjoy it.

GERALD ALLISON.

Pierre Quiroule was evidently an admirer of France. He chose a French non-de-plume; many of his adventures take place partly against a Paris background, and his heroine Nada oiselle Julio, probably the most engaging woman in all Flake lore, is a Parisienne. It is not surprising, then, that he has also given us one of his most true to life subsidiary characters, a typical Frenchman. I mean, of course, Bertrand Charon. Now Charon, Commissaire de Police of the Paris Surete, could have been built up into a major character. As such, he could have become a bit of a bore, with his Gallic temperament and his habit of deflecting the main plot from its course. Wisely then, I think, he was kept in the background, and his occasional, always surprising entry gives a touch of sauce to the story's meat and serves also as comic relief. There is much of Charon that is reminiscent of Hercule Poirot. This is not to suggest that Pierre Quiroule in any way copies the eminent Belgian. No, Charon is a more natural character than Poirot. "A rotund little man—very suave, very discreet, very globular, and with a head as bald as a billiard ball. In fact one might have pressed down his bald head, double up his sturdy legs, folded his robust arms—and then have played ping-pong with him. One might have done—provided Bertrand Charon had no say in the matter..... And the one who attempted such an imprudence would certainly have required more courage than discretion. For Bertrand Charon was one of the most skillful agents of the Paris police and a detective of international repute. But whatever else he might have resembled he certainly did not look in the least like the detective of fiction". No, you would have taken him for a little grocer. But his tapered, artistic hands distinguished him on closer scrutiny, as did other things. There was a keenness about the eyes in the almost childish innocent face—that mask over the operations of a swift brain. There was the tenacity with which he seized upon an aspect of a case and worried it to a conclusion. But Charon, astute as he was, had often to give best to Sexton Blake, whom he regarded sometimes as a friend but mostly as a professional enemy. I would say that Charon hadn't the

true temperament to be a real friend, in the manner of say, Inspector Courtts or Splash Page. He was too secretive, inscrutable, aloof. His professional jealousy was so acute that, when working on the same case as Blake, he would accept no help or even the slightest clue from the Baker Street map. "No, no! I cannot avail myself of the loan of your brains, my good friend. All my professional pride rebels against such a proposal. I prefer to tackle this thing my own way, and you should tackle it in yours" (see "The Black Limousine" S.B.L. 2nd series No. 40 reprinted in the same series in No. 540). As Blake went on to quote clues, Charon put his fingers in his ears and fled from the room! But Charon's idea of independence is to follow Blake around secretly and spy on his work. He is always moving like a ghost behind the story and popping up in the most unexpected places (he once masqueraded as a corpse!) to try and discover Blake's line of enquiry. When all the time Blake would have told him freely! It's a trait that not unnaturally annoys Blake. And when Blake succeeds, Charon explodes: "Parblou! Then you have beaten me! So I am no longer required. I will retire, resign from my profession and go and plant potatoes!" In that characteristic remark, the lion from the Sureto just about sums himself up. (You can meet Bertrand Charon to his best advantage in "The Black Limousine"; "The Ethiopian's Secret, S.B.L. 2nd series No. 45; and the "Mystery Of No. 13 Cavendish Square", S.B.L. 2nd series No. 569).

THE END.

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THE ROUND TABLE.

H.M. BOND.

I thought I might be able to get a few words in after Rex Dolphins brilliant little portrait of Charon. It might not be so easy to do so in future though, for the very very unfortunate situation which has arisen in the paper trade is going to make it very difficult for us. Friend Herbert has asked me to cut down to 5 pages and I have to try and make use of every available inch from now on, and after all it is most important to get articles in first. However, we shall be able to have a chat together occasionally, and in any case there is always the post to make use of. I only hope that Blake will survive the coming onslaught!

H.M.B.

Royal's next attempt was made when Frank and Charlie went on a fishing expedition. He attaches himself to the brothers and the party set off in a small boat. The Indian then deliberately caused a leakage in the bottom of the vessel which sank, and it was only through the timely intervention of Blake again that Frank's life was saved. Of Charlie there was no sign, and it was presumed that he had been drowned. When the searchers returned to the house, Royal was already there, and greeted them with a story of having become knocked unconscious in the water and having awakened to find himself washed ashore. Blake did not reveal the fact that following immediately upon his rescue of Frank, he fished little Charlie out of the water, his plan being to lead Royal to suppose that his plot had succeeded. He took the youngster to the cottage of a fisherman and his wife to be cared for. A little later, when Frank voiced his intention of going to look for his lost brother, Royal offered to accompany him. But it was Royal only who returned to the house, and he told a catastrophic tale of having seen Frank fall over the edge of a cliff into the sea below. A frantic search was made, but when the tide turned sufficiently to leave the shingle bare, no sign of the body was to be seen, and it was supposed that it had become washed out to sea. Fortunately as it for Frank that Sexton Blake had followed and had seen Royal deliberately push his cousin over the precipice. Landing not on the shingle but in a clump of furze-bushes lower down the cliff face, Frank's fall was arrested. Blake rescued him and then took him to the fisherman's cottage to join little Charlie. Apparently one life only then stood before Royal and the Everton estates. Next, Harry was struck by a mysterious illness, and, despite all medical skill and devoted nursing, got gradually weaker and weaker until at length came the news that he had died in his sleep. But, thanks again to Blake, a life was saved, for when Harry fell ill, the detective suspected that he had been poisoned and administered a draught that sent his old school chum into a cataleptic stupor, a trance so death-like that the doctor in attendance on Harry was deceived and pronounced life extinct.

One night, under the cloak of darkness, Harry was lifted out of his coffin and a powerful antidote administered to him, which put him well on the road to recovery. In accordance with Blake's instructions, wax effigies of Harry's head and shoulders and hands had already been made. These were put into the coffin, and a little later, from a place of concealment close by, Harry then had the unique experience of witnessing his own funeral, as the coffin was placed in the Everton vault. Seemingly the last of the direct line in the Everton succession had now been swept away, and Royal, son of Gerald Everton, was master of the Everton estates. It was then the latter decided to take possession that he received the shock of his criminal life, for Sexton Blake in the manner of a conjurer producing rabbits from a hat, brought before him, in rapid succession, the three brothers, all unharmed and in the best of health. To an audience struck dumb with mingled amazement and relief, Blake denounced the murderer as an impostor, whose real name was Shib Del Hmaid, the offspring of an outcast Hindu woman, and one-time servant of the late Gerald Everton. The real Royal lost his life when on a shooting expedition, and it was Shib Del Hmaid who killed him. Then Gerald Everton died of a wasting sickness, similar to that suffered by Harry, which was administered by the servant, who then took on Royal's identity after having robbed his dead master and benefactor of all his papers and effects. A four-fold murderer by intention the rascally Indian was an actual assassin in at least one instance. Turning upon Shib Del Hmaid Blake denounced him as the murderer of Squire Everton, and produced the photograph he took of the dead man's eyes as proof of his accusation. Seeing that the game was up, the Indian confessed his guilt, pressed a spring on a large silver ring he wore and thrust his tongue-tip into the small cavity disclosed. It contained a deadly poison, and almost immediately the assassin fell prone to the ground. A few minutes later he was dead and the Everton family had been avenged. With the closing of this case, one of the few really outstanding adventures of Blake in the Victorian era, I must get the spotlight on the move again, and come back once more to the authors and editors who helped make him the famous figure in fiction he had become. TO BE CONTINUED.