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Edges Again!

The Collectors Digest

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1/6 Post Free

MAY 1951



Robert Whitman

THE RIO
KID

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May 1951

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR:

That Search for a Name: When I had read Mr. Wheeler Dryden's article published last month, I was torn between admiration for his obvious sincerity and an uneasy feeling that his views would not be acceptable to the majority of collectors. This was confirmed when opinions came in following publication of the Merch number. Anyway, despite pressure on space, Mr. Dryden is entitled to a courteous reply and I make no apology if I summarise opinion on this side at some length, and also publish just one or two of the many letters in the correspondence column.

Well, quickly came the criticism that "Collecting Juvenile Literature" was not a name but a statement, or phrase, explaining our motive, just as "Collecting Cigarette Cards" is understood to explain the purpose of a Certophilist.

One can also get a topical illustration from our recent census. It is suggested that the tradesman at the corner shop, filling in his form the other Sunday evening, would not describe himself as "Selling Grocery Goods" but just - "Grocer"!

In the same way it is that apt - illusive - one word name we are after - and puzzling our brains over.

Then, that part of our activities - "The Old Boy's Book Club". Mr. Dryden suggests that it is wrongly named because we have boys in their teens and ladies as members. Well, it is true we have, but I would point out that all schools worthy of the name have "Old Boys' Associations", and to them teen-age boys as well as their grandfathers are eligible as members. But where we are concerned it is the books that are old, not necessarily the members. To be strictly correct the name should be "Boys' Old Books Club". I cannot see our members saying that, however. The double plural would be a stumbling block to say the least, and to be honest very few people speak B.B.C. English. Most are guilty of contradictions, twisting of phrases and local dialect. One speaks of something being "frightfully good" or someone being "awfully nice". A sub-editor tells you in a headline "Girl Found Dead in a Ditch" and reveals in the text that the victim was 39. We say "An M.P." when according to the rules of grammar we should not, and so on. To give a further example, printers call the metal-topped table on which the pages are made up, the "stone". It used to be made of stone, but probably not in the memory of any present member of the craft. Labels have a habit of sticking, however, (as "penny dreadful" and "bloods" in our little world), no matter how inapplicable.

All this to suggest that no matter how we tried to change it, we should find slipping from our tongues "The Old Boys' Book Club", and I do not really think our lady members will mind being associated with it in these days when members of their sex take an active part in football affairs. Mr. Dryden suggests another anomaly because youthful members collect present-day weeklies. Honestly, I do not think this is so: they are worthy sons of their fathers and prefer the literature of the years that are gone.

Mr. Dryden makes some interesting suggestions regarding naming local clubs. Frankly, he rather flatters us; he visualises our movement being bigger than it really is. We are aiming for a day when we shall have a Yorkshire branch and a Lancashire one, in fact, scores of branches not only here but overseas. But the time is not yet. For the present, South Coast enthusiasts are happy to travel to London for a meeting and the Lancashire lads, Cheshire hums, Durham devotees and others in the north come cheerily to Leeds.

Then, Mr. Dryden puts the poser - "What is a book?" Well, that is rather a tough one, but I should say at a venture "Anything with a cover". A Penguin, for instance. Thus, in our line of country we could designate a Magnet a book, but not the old "Boys' Friend". But here again, we are apt to take the line of least resistance and place them all in the same category, periodicals, magazines, journals, weeklies, juvenile literature - books. Nevertheless, even if we do not agree with Mr. Dryden, we feel highly honoured that he should from afar take so much interest in our activities and go to so much trouble in an endeavour to help.

Now a word or two about the competition generally. To be candid, so far as entries were concerned it was a complete flop, for the total could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The efforts were creditable, but did not quite "get there". Maybe we were expecting too much, and that it is almost impossible to coin a word which would show clearly to the uninitiated what we stand for.

Anyway, after careful consideration, we thought the best thing to do was to have another competition on different lines with free entry for those who had made an attempt in this ill-fated one. Reg. Hudson, whilst keeping the £1 in his pocket for the time being, has got an excellent idea; one that I think will appeal to the great majority.

This new competition will be announced as soon as the "heats" in the "Magnet Series" competitions have been completed.

Meanwhile we remain unchristened!

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That Eighteenpennorth: Well, it's on the cover this month - $\frac{1}{6}$. During the past four years there had been times when it seemed it had to be, but we managed to avoid it.

However, that sensational increase in cost of paper now makes it inevitable, and no sooner had we got that settled than came another blow, the announcement of a 50 per cent increase in printed paper postal rate. Well, we shall have to stand that. Readers can help if they pay their subs promptly. The great majority do, but there are a few who do give me a little heartache, maybe through a little forgetfulness than anything else.

Anyway, I should like to say how encouraging it has been to read the dozens of letters saying in effect, "Don't worry about the increase. I'm not. The C.D.'s worth every penny of it."

Bravo! Birmingham! Since our last issue things have been happening in Birmingham and no mistake. On April 5th there appeared in the "Birmingham Mail" an account of an interview with Jack Corbett, staunch Hamiltonian of many years standing, together with a photograph of himself and son Ian. The article, after giving an account of his collection and views, said Jack was anxious to start a Club and asked anyone interested to write him at 49 Glyn Farm Road, Quinton. The response was prompt and most gratifying, for he received within a day or two about thirty letters. A room was engaged and a meeting was held on Monday, April 16th, with twenty-four enthusiasts present. A report appeared in the "Mail" the following evening, and a picture. It was stated that the official title would be The Old Boys' Book Club, Midland Section. A secretary was appointed - Mr. P. Mellor, 19 Collingwood Drive, Great Barr, Birmingham. So much was the meeting enjoyed that another one is to be held before the end of the month. What is more, a dinner will be held shortly. That's all quick work, if you like.

Jack Corbett wishes to emphasise that collectors of any kind of boys' books are welcome, and gives a cordial invitation to anyone in the district interested to get in touch with him or Mr. Mellor.

(Just after I had written this I received a report from Mr. Mellor. It appears on another page.)

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Another Name Wanted: Apropos our search for a name, I see the Ticket and Fare Collection Society (collectors of passenger tickets) with 70 members, is looking for a name. The members are considering "peridromophilists". Phew!

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A word of Reproof: I am getting some complaints that some members of the circle ignore letters requesting a reply on some point even when a s.a.e. is enclosed, and occasionally the even more serious complaint that someone has failed to fulfil their part in an exchange transaction. If anyone feels a little guilty, well, just grab hold of pen and paper, won't you?

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The Exhibition on Tour in the North: As a result of the success of the exhibition of old boys' books at Newcastle, Gateshead has expressed a desire to follow suit, and Scarborough has already booked a fortnight in October.

Can you interest your local Librarian and bring more honour to our hobby?

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It Happened in 1951! Brian Honeysett advertised recently in Exchange & Mart. In response he got an offer of 280 Magnets in mint condition, at FOURPENCE each. Moreover, when sending them from London, the owner said he hoped Brian would not think he was overcharging! Brian's opinion was more than a Gromyko "No".

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Well, I think enough has been said for this month by
Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LÜCKENBY.

P.S. Paper shortage? Heart-breaking increase in cost of same! And here's my desk piled with copy clamouring to get into this issue. Oh, hang it there's nothing else for it. 32 pages again, and I'll face the reckoning when it comes.

THE ANNUAL

Present State of the Poll

- 1. The Popular Popular 203
- 2. An Amazing Pair 199
- 3. The Bounder of Greyfriars 175
- 4. Rise and Fall of the Boys' Friend.. 163
- 5. Monograph on the Criminals'
Confederation... 146
- 6. What Might Have Been 143
- 7. Rookwood Review 139
- 8. Serials from Victorian Papers 107

Voting papers are coming in more slowly now, but it will be seen that the "Monograph" has moved up a step, whilst "The Popular Popular" has slightly increased its lead.

FOR SALE. "Magnets" Nos. 1170, 1171, 1174, 1175, 1176, 1178, 1179, 1182, 1183, 1184, 1185, 1186, 1189, 1191, 1192, 1193, 1194, 1195, 35/6d. the lot plus postage. Also: "S.B.O'S" (Greyfriars) Nos. 307, 310, 316, 367, 370, 407, 410, 1/6 each
E. W. Cox, 29 Crisbrooke Drive, Bitterne, Southampton.
WANTED: C. D. Annuals 1937, 1948, 1949, 1950. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

(Note.- This very interesting - and provocative - opinion of J. N. Pentelow as a writer of St. Jim's and Greyfriars stories comes from a new contributor to our pages, S.F. Jones, The High School, Penrith, New South Wales. Admirers of Pentelow may not agree with him, but it will be generally admitted that he knows his subject and that he gives some valuable hints on how to tell a Pentelow story. And we have another one on hand from Mr. Jones concerning Clive R. Fenn in the same role. It will appear next month. - H.L.)

Pentelow as an Imitator of Charles Hamilton

J. N. Pentelow was admirable as a biographer of St. Jim's and Greyfriars. To a really penetrating analysis of character he added valuable notices of the earlier stories of the master and wrote with an enthusiasm and skill that proclaimed the lover.

As an imitator of Hamilton, however, he was a failure. He lacked Hamilton's matchless sense of style, his effortless smoothness and his power to suggest character rather than to dwell upon it with minute detail. In addition he committed other serious blunders which betrayed him immediately as the poor substitute.

First his characterization. This interests him above all else. He loves to tell you everything he knows or imagines he knows. He is aware, for instance, that Blake is the best wrestler in the Fourth, that Mellish is greedy with food, that Fatty Wynn has blue eyes, that "Cutts and his friends will take up a fag sooner than they will a chap in the Shell and Fourth" and so on.

Pentelow loves sentiment, much of it the rather weak kind seen in "The Hill". In 1921 Cardew enthusiasts were treated to a special number featuring that volatile youth in a story that enabled Pentelow to indulge his love of his to the utmost. Roche makes a wager with Cardew that Cardew's deliberate silence will cause a rift in No. 9, a most un-Hamiltonian idea, I think, and suitable only for a girl's paper. Incidentally, it may be noted that the story was by an imitator of Clifford, the back page portrait by an imitator of R. J. Macdonald or Reynolds and the articles on Cardew probably both by the writer of the story! You would think that the special occasion would have called forth something genuine!

This sentiment finds its natural outcome in such stories as "A Very Gallant Gentleman" and the "Willesly" series of the Magnet. In both these death itself takes a hand. Such a

tragedy does not matter so much, of course, in the latter story, since only Pentelow's creations are concerned. In "A Very Gallant Gentleman", however, he ruthlessly passes sentence of death on one of Hamilton's own creations, Arthur Courtney! This is sentiment with a vengeance!

Besides sentiment, too serious an occupation with character can sometimes produce caricature or at least over-emphasis. Pentelow's Lowther, for instance, can talk like this: "Your courage expended, but no sooner was the pressure stopped and the contraction thereby removed, than there was a distinct contraction of your courage." The same kind of talk is sometimes put into the mouth of Cardew to show Cardew's flippancy! You see the result of this exaggeration - it turns the humorist and mocker into the merely boring pedant and is really a misrepresentation. As an example of this misrepresentation it may be recalled that the Wingate of "Cropped for Greyfriars" actually drops his g's!

With all his knowledge Pentelow appears to disregard Hamilton's use of names. Thus we are amazed to hear the Toff sometimes called "Reggie Talbot", Cardew addressed by his study-mates as "Relph", Loder as "Gerry" and Gilmore as "Gil". Such things spring from Pentelow's enthusiasm for all Hamilton's characters - the harshness of even the worst types he is prepared to smooth and humanize with names like these. They are on all fours with such errors as the attribution of "a nervous little giggle" to D'Arcy in "Parker the Prodigal", and ruinous to Hamilton's characters. Hamilton's practice in respect of names may be noted. In general he is less effusive. We hear of "Gussy", "Piggy", "Tommy", but never do we hear of Blake as "Jock" or Herries as "George" even from the mouths of his most intimate friends. I doubt whether Manners is addressed as "Harry" by Tom Merry, except, of course, when the results of his somewhat irritable temper call the patient Tom more closely to his side. Another imitator - not Pentelow this time - has one of the boys speaking of "The Terrible Three" - that is what the author calls them, not the characters themselves. Another objectionable thing about Pentelow's names is the use of such terms as "Gustavus" (rare in Hamilton), "Boggibus" and "Pignacious" (this last applied to a certain P. Ignatius Parker, who under Pentelow's guidance entered and left St. Jim's in that year so rich in imitations - 1917).

A very curious thing is Pentelow's elevation of less gifted characters like Grundy. Grundy shines through everywhere, though even Pentelow can't make him excel. Temple too

in that absurd story "Camped for Greyfriars" is actually considered by Wingate as a candidate for First Eleven Honours, and Bolsover is told gently (this in 1924!) that if he is not careful he will be soon getting the reputation of a bully! Truly, this is to know more than Hamilton!

It is Pentelow's style, above all, that betrays him. Laboured, sometimes pedantic, sometimes obscure, it never reaches the lightness, grace and sophistication of the master. Note first his chapter beginnings. A rather long speech frequently sets the ball rolling, something like this:-

"There's Wingate! I say, Wharton, really, you know, you ought to let me take my turn next. I'm sure it's to see my form he's come!"

Observe Hamilton:-

"Smithy, old chap!"

"Ask next door!" suggested the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy —"

There is a curious weakness of expression, strangely unlike the masculine work of Hamilton - things like this:-

"Be more gracious, Mellish, if you know how,"
end this:-

"Smithy might throw aside a disappointing bat, but William George Bunter would not be too proud to accept it." (note subjunctives.)

The same weakness is seen in chapter endings. I give two examples:- "Bolsover had no such licence and was something of a bully"; "He might not be able to help regretting that the chance had not come his way, but he had made up his mind not to be grudging." Hamilton's chapters end as a rule with an effective brevity and point a good climax like the following:-

"Oh my hat!"

"Bronx!"

"It was the Chicago gangster!"

I don't call the last one of Hamilton's best examples, but it does show his skill in rounding off his ends.

Pentelow shows a tendency to write pieces of conversation in which the speaker's names are not given. Here is an instance. The speakers are Bunter and Wingate Minor:-

"You mean that?"

"Of course I mean it! Did you ever hear me say something that I do not mean?"

"I've heard you tell a lot of whoopers, Bunter. So has everybody. But I reckon it's all right if you're willing I

should go to Smithy. So here's the cash and I'll take the bet." This device is used rarely by Hamilton. And in him it never has the harshness it has in Pentelow.

To vary and lighten a style somewhat laboured, this imitator indulges in humour - the heavy, elephantine type as seen in his Lowther and Cardew's speech. Here is some fun supplied by his Bunter:- "The trouble resolved itself into a disaster. For as Bunter's bags tightened - one does not expect tightening of bags in a tumble backwards, but the fact that Bunter's anatomy was unique must be considered - they gave way." You will note that the clumsiness of expression is quite suited to the heaviness of the humour.

As a further variation this imitator tries a classical reference or two. One story contains a quotation from Juvenal, the 'Cacoethes sennende', another a jest on Caesar's well-worn saying: "veni, vidi, vici". The latter opens with a request by Digby for a Greek translation of the words "strong pallisades". We feel that P. was not up to quoting his Vergil, as Hamilton does so frequently.

Pentelow then was no successful imitator. With one hand he conferred great benefits, with the other he wrought great destruction. Lovers of Hamilton's stories will always be grateful to him for his really fine work on the Galleries, but will find an endless source of irritation in his belief that he too could rival the style of the greatest of all school story writers.

S. F. Jones,
High School, Penrith, N.S.W.
Australia.

BILL MARTIN REGRETS: Much though I would like to grant interviews to my hundreds of clients I have to regretfully decline owing to the claims of my main business. By post, however, your requirements shall always have my prompt and courteous attention. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Boys' Friend Libraries and Champion 4d. Libraries. Also Sexton Blake Libraries. First Series 13, 23; Second Series 405, 407, 513, H.C.N. Price, 22 Northdown Road, Margate, Kent.

FOR SALE: Three Vols. B.O.P. 1905, 1908, 1912, or will exchange for similar papers. W. Jamison, Lisnacree, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

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Hamiltonia

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Were you aware that way back in 1909 when Frenk Richards was busy each week turning out stories of St.Jim's and Greyfriars, he was also writing about a third school? The school was Cliveden and the stories appeared at frequent intervals in the "Boys' Herald". They were shorter than those in the Gem and Magnet, of course, but they were in the true tradition and appeared under the author's real name.

Leading lights were Lincoln G. Poindexter (from the land of Uncle Sam, of course), Micky Flynn and Dick Neville, known as the Cliveden Combine and resident in Study 4. Their rivals were Pankhurst and Price, the Old Firm. Other members of the Fourth were Fish, the fat boy, and nothing like Fisher T., Gatty and Greene. The captain of the school was Trevelyan. One of the masters was named Lenyen, and the village nearby was Clivedale.

The stories were illustrated by that grand old-timer Arthur Clerke.

SECOND THOUGHTS ON ROOKWOOD

By Roger M. Jenkins

Rookwood has few supporters these days, and this is hardly surprising since the last original story (except for a handful written for Holiday Annuals, and a few post-war ones) appeared in the Boys' Friend in 1926, the end of a continuous run which had begun eleven years earlier. A series of reprints in the Popular and the Schoolboys' Own Library helped to introduce the school to a new generation of readers, but the casual critic might well be tempted to declare that this artificial extension of its existence was no true test of its popularity, since the Amalgamated Press never paid its authors anything in respect of reprinted work. In any case, Rookwood never had a paper to itself; it was always one of the many serials in the Boys' Friend. Moreover, compared to Greyfriars and St.Jims it was a nonentity - it had no memorable characters like Billy Bunter or Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. All these criticisms contain a germ of truth, but they are also all very misleading. Let us examine them carefully.

To begin with, it may be confidently asserted that Rookwood was not quite the Cinderella sister of the three schools it seemed to be. Unlike Greyfriars and St.Jims, each of which had been founded in a separate paper, Rookwood was implanted into the veteran Boys' Friend in the middle of its long career. The reason for this, it may be categorically stated, was that the Boys' Friend was in need of a stimulant, and Mr. Hinton, the editor, quite correctly prescribed the remedy - a series of stories by Charles Hamilton about a new school.

Rookwood was thus born of necessity, and had to face the severe competition of the two other stories which had been founded by the same author several years earlier. The fact that it overcame this obstacle triumphantly is quite remarkable, if not unique. But the comparatively late appearance of Rookwood gave it an advantage - the author had had several invaluable years experience, and was now well versed in the art of writing school stories; the period of trial and error was over. Thus it is that the characters at Rookwood, though not outstanding, are in many ways more mature than their equivalents at Greyfriars and St.Jims. Dr. Holmes and Dr. Locke, for instance, were beings out of this world - remote and dignified. Dr.Chisholm, on the other hand, was by no means the perfect headmaster. His hasty methods and rather autocratic temperament made him real and understandable. Again, whereas Mr. Retchiff with his snobbery and bad temper seemed too bad to be true, Mr.Manders with his fussy manners and interfering disposition was a perfect example of the busybody we must all have known at some time. But it was of course Mr. Bootles who was the most human and likeable of all the masters at the three schools. It was a pity he left Rookwood.

As with the masters, so it was with the boys. There were few extremes of characterisation at Rookwood. Clarence Cuffy (unlike Skimpole who was conceived as a satire on the early Socialist) was really amusing; Tubby Muffin had practically none of Trimble's unpleasantness and was far more credible a character than Bunter; and Gunner rang the bell in a way that Crundy somehow never did.

But it was the Fistical Four who were really outstanding, although most people seem to take them for granted. Jimmy Silver was the epitome of philosophical cheerfulness - poles apart from Harry Wharton, yes and Tom Merry as well. As for Lovell, well he was unique in the Hamilton schools - obstinate, blustering, perhaps a little slow in perception, yet withal a good sportsman and a loyal member of the end study. He made a

splendid foil for Newcome's gentle sarcasm. Raby, the fourth member of the Co. was the quietest, but possessed of a certain dogged pride that more than once upset the apple cart. There is no doubt that the characters of the Fistical Four were more finely drawn than those of the Terrible Three or the Famous Five. Indeed, the subtlety of the delineation often causes it to be overlooked.

The most pleasing aspect of the Rookwood stories was undoubtedly the atmosphere of cheerfulness that the stories convey. The existence of two houses readily opened the door for a certain amount of liveliness, but the House rags were only incidental to the story, and seldom formed the principal theme as they did at St.Jims.

Possibly the greatest asset of Rookwood was that Charles Hamilton wrote practically every story about Jimmy Silver & Co. Apart from a handful of imitations in the new series of the Penny Populer, it is difficult to find any that were not by his hand. The only disadvantage was that the stories were on the short side, and consequently any long series comparable to those running for a term or more in the later Magnets was out of the question. This had its compensations however, for it enabled the stories to be reprinted without editorial pruning; one copy of the Schoolboys' Own Library, for instance, could easily comprise seven Rookwood stories from the Boys' Friend.

After Hinton's time, Maurice Down edited the Boys' Friend, but during the middle twenties changes were made at Fleetway House, and when Down ceased to edit the Boys' Friend, Charles Hamilton decided that he must in loyalty to his chief cease writing for that paper. The original Rookwood stories thus came to an abrupt end as a result of this decision and the Boys' Friend itself closed down two years later. There can be little doubt of the close connexion between the two events.

Taken as a whole, the Rookwood stories easily outclassed the Greyfriars and St.Jims ones. This may seem a strange assertion from someone who has read most of his Rookwood stories from reprints, but, it is submitted, as a general impression it is nevertheless true. The Greyfriars juniors at times seemed a little too sophisticated; and some of the St.Jims heroes were a little too high-minded: but the Fistical Four struck a pleasant note of easy cheerfulness that endears every reader to Rookwood at once. "Keep Smiling" was the motto that Jimmy Silver always avowedly acted upon, and it was a maxim that

invariably had its effect upon the reader. It is gratifying to note that Mandevilles this summer are to give us all another opportunity to "Follow Uncle James".

THE PICK OF THE SERIES. No. 6.

THE STACEY SERIES. (12 stories. Magnet No. 1422-1433. Published Summer 1935).

This series showed Frank Richards at his very best, which is saying something. The theme of the doubles, Wharton and Stacey, was most skilfully and convincingly handled, for the cousins could only be mistaken one for the other when they were apart. The cricket atmosphere was delightful throughout.

A minor weakness was perhaps the fact that an experienced man like Mr. Quelch should have turned against Wharton under such circumstances, but the manner in which the master of the Remove gradually sized up Stacey was a beautiful piece of masterful writing.

A slightly tame ending, maybe, in that fine Magnet which carried Chepman's grand cover study of the Captain of the Remove. But it was a more true-to-life finish than a thrilling rescue, or something similar, could have been. Certainly the Stacey Series must go down to posterity as one of the Magnet's finest.

THE BERTIE VERNON SERIES. (11 stories. Magnet Nos. 1631-1642. Summer, 1939).

This series also worked the Doubles theme, in a cricket setting, but, though it was fairly satisfying, it was far inferior to the Stacey Series. This may have been due to the fact that Smithy and Vernon were neither very attractive characters in this series, but it is my personal opinion that, though the plot was good, the tales were not so well-written as the earlier series.

The Magnet at this period was carrying very long Greyfriars tales, and the extra length necessitated a good deal of padding. This series was consequently burdened with an excess of dialogue and some rather tedious and irrelevant situations.

TOM MERRY'S DOUBLE.

A very similar plot to the last mentioned series was used about 1914 in the Gem, in four stories which told of Tom Merry's Double, Reggie Clevering. Though very far-fetched, these tales were tense and full of interest, and the final story "Brought to Book" was a real Gem. The series was re-printed in the Gem about 1934, but unskilful abridging ruined them on this occasion.

THE TODDS.

In the early Magnets, the two Todds were supposed to be Doubles, and much humour was occasioned when Peter was mistaken for Alonzo. The double plan was not used in later years, however.

BUNTLER.

In conclusion, while on the subject of doubles, one must not forget the series in which Billy and his cousin, Wally, were doubles and changed schools, - Billy gracing the Gem, and Wally pretending to be Billy at Greyfriars. This series appeared in 1918. Far beyond the bounds of credence, this twin-series was no masterpiece, but it made amusing reading, and there is no doubt that it occupies a warm corner in the hearts of many readers.

A. J. Southway (South Africa) asks the following questions on GREYFRIARS LORE

(Note. the numbers in brackets indicate the numbers of the MAGNET in which the characters referred to appeared)

1. What are the christian names of the following Greyfriars scholars? Bencroft (6th), Sykes (6th) and Conrad (2nd).
2. What was the real name of "Flip" of the Second Form (1247-1254)?
3. Who was Dr. Marvell?
4. Who was the cousin of Jim Warren (1440-1451) who came to Greyfriars in his stead, and what study did he occupy?
5. What are the christian names of the following scholars at Highcliffe? Drury, Bedsby, Monson, Vevesour (Fourth Form) and Benson.
6. What studies did the following scholars occupy during their brief stay at Greyfriars? (a) Algernon De Vere (749-752); (b) Jim Lee (781-784); (c) Mick Angel (819-823); (d) Richard Compton (906-909); (e) Richard Drury (985-990); (f) Arthur De Costa (1059-1067); (g) Julian Dolverny (1126-1128); (h) Edger Ceffyn (1404-1412); (i) Ralph Stacey (1422-1433); (j) Gilbert Tracey (1599-1608); (k) Bertie Vernon (1631-1642); (l) Otto van Tromp (1169-1174); (m) Eric Wilmot (1458-1460); (n) Putman van Duck (1471-1478); (o) Christopher Clarence Carboy (1078-1082).
7. What are the christian names of the following, and also what studies did they occupy whilst at Greyfriars? (a) Bullivant (1547-1554); (b) The Willesby Twins (803-805); (c) Crum (1050-1052); (d) Hawkins (Fifth Form); (e) Wilkinson (Upper Fourth).

8. What particulars can you give of any new boys or masters (Temporary) who made appearance in the MAGNET prior to No.500?

Magnet Titles (Contd.)

No.651, Bunter's Bluff; 652 (S) Bunter's Baby; 653 (S) The Schoolboy Artist; 654 (S) A Bid for the Captaincy; 655 (S) Archie Howell's Return; 656 (S) In Borrowed Plumes; 657 (S) A False Hero; 658 (S) Loder's Luck; 659 (S) The Council of Action; 660, The Schoolboy Cinema Stars; 661, Wingate's Sacrifice; 662, Her Schoolboy Chum; 663, The Shadow of Shame; 664, His Last Card; 665 (S) Coker's Craze; 666,(S) The Men from America; 667 (S) The Caterpillar's Rest Cure; 668 (S) Smithy's Defiance; 669 (S) Duping the Duffer; 670 (S) Up Against it; 671 (S) A son's Dilemma; 672 (S) Harry Wherton's Trust.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB (London Branch)

Greenwich Meeting Sunday April 15th

The advent of summer-time happily coincided with a very good gathering on the meridian of Greenwich with the popular Wrights as hosts.

The proceedings were opened as customary by chairman Len and what proved to be a very fine and interesting meeting followed. The usual formalities were soon disposed of and then followed a discussion on the arrangements for the combined meeting next month of the Northern and London clubs at Hume House.

The next item on the agenda was the long article of Mr. Wheeler Dryden's and after a lengthy discussion it was agreed to keep the name of the London club as it is now.

Once more the club was treated to a very good article by Patrick Mulhall, "The Rival Rangers of Fleet Street" and read by the doyen of the club, Arthur Lawson; this was greatly enjoyed judging by the applause at the end of the reading. Chairman Len suitably thanked Mr.Lawson for his very good effort.

The result of the postal provincial members' quiz was then announced. Overseas winner was Bill Gender with Jim Southway a close second. Home winner was Ted Cox, a very meritorious effort this, with Jack Wood second, Bob Blythe third and Ron Nichols fourth. The two winners will receive a copy of "Frank Richards' Autobiography" as soon as it is published.

The very fine monthly quiz was won by Len Packman, no keeping him down, second Bob Whiter, third Len Whitmore and

myself. The thanks of all competitors was afforded to Charlie for his very fine effort in devising the quiz.

The question of having handicaps in the monthly quiz' was deferred until the June meeting.

The sale and exchange was very brisk and the spread that followed was greatly enjoyed and appreciated.

Next meeting at Hume House, 136 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E.22 on Whit-Sunday, May 13th, 3.30 p.m. All members and collectors are heartily welcomed to this great occasion when the Northern club are coming to town to join in with us to make a memorable Festival of Britain double number meeting.

Attendance: Len, Josie and Eleanor Packman, Charlie and Olive Wright, Arthur Lawson, Ian Whitmore, Tony Bluden, A.Young, Jim Parratt, Reuben Godsave, Cliff Wallis, Frank and Win Keeling, Hylton Flatman, Ron and Marea Deacon, E.Reynolds, Harry Homer, Bob and Ben Whiter.

Hylton Flatman appears in the school classic film "Tom Brown's Schooldays."

BENJAMIN G WHITER.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB (Northern Section)

First Annual General Meeting

The meeting April 14th, at 239 Hyde Park Road, was a particularly interesting occasion, for it marked the first birthday of the Club. The chairman's remarks therefore were mainly a review of the events of the year, and a very pleasant and encouraging review it was. He recalled that suspicious opening event, the Insugural Dinner with 13 members and friends and Leonard Packman as guest. The membership now stood at 60! Came memories of the Leeds Exhibition which had caused a lot of interest, and had brought us quite a number of members; and that great occasion, the Christmas Party, an event which must certainly be an annual one.

Our chairman went on to pay a warm tribute to the hard work of secretary Norman Smith and treasurer-librarian Gerald Allison, and in that thoughtful way of his reminded the meeting of the valued help of our first lady member, Vera Costes, especially where the refreshments were concerned.

Secretary and treasurer followed with their reports. Members had copies of the Balance Sheet which showed a cash in hand £2.1.8½d. As the books in the library were estimated to be worth about £20, and there were no outstanding liabilities,

it was agreed the position was a very gratifying one.

The date of the next meeting was then discussed. It was decided that it should be held on the second Saturday as usual. May 12 (Whit Saturday). Immediately following, those travelling from Leeds would prepare for the eagerly looked forward to journey to the meeting of our London friends.

Followed the election of two auditors. Charles Topham and Albert Thomas were proposed, seconded and unanimously elected.

Then came the election of chairman, secretary, treasurer and librarian. Feeling sure of the wishes of the meeting I proposed they be re-elected en bloc. I said the chairman had presided with tact and judgment (especially at one critical period), the books were in apple-pie order, the treasurer could account for all the cash, and the library was flourishing. The three were able to get in touch with each other easily, an important point, as had been proved more than once during the year.

Clifford Beardsell seconded and the proposal was carried with acclamation.

I read a letter I had received from Jack Corbett, of Birmingham, in which he said he was holding a meeting there with the object of forming a branch on Monday, the 16th. Our secretary then read a letter he proposed sending Mr. Corbett with our cordial wishes for a successful meeting.

Attendance: Reg. Hudson, Norman Smith, Gerald Allison, Mr. Honeysett, sen. and Brian Honeysett (St. Annes); Clifford Beardsell (Stockport), Vera Costes, J. Breeze Bentley, W. Harrison, W. H. Williamson, Horace Twinham, Cyril Benks, Charles Topham and friend, Albert Thomas, S. F. Armitage, Stanley Knight, David Killingbeck, David Pullan and Herbert Leckenby (Northern Section Correspondent).

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB (Midland Section)

Secretary: Peter Mellor,

19 Collingwood Drive, Great Barr,
Nr. Birmingham.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I know you are aware of the formation of our section of the "CLUB", and our Chairman, Mr. Corbett, has informed me of your kind and great interest in our effort and also of your interest in such grand literature as i.e. that was once regularly published by that fine author, Charles Hamilton. In this knowledge I feel that one of my first pleasures as Secretary should

be to communicate with you and give you some idea of how we are progressing.

I was one of many who heard of Mr. Corbett and his idea of a Club as a result of the very fine write-up given to same by the Birmingham Mail. When my friend and I arrived at the meeting we were pleasantly surprised to see twenty-two others in the room. For a first-ever gathering of this sort in this area a response of this magnitude is most encouraging. On the Chairman's table there was the cheery display of GEMS, MAGNETS and SCHOOLBOYS' OWN'S. These famous favourites lying there for all to look at added just that little bit of something needed to complete an atmosphere of joyful expectancy. The air was electric - charged with the obvious eagerness of all present (young and old) - to do something; anything; that would bring to the fore the fine spirit of life which was so ever present in the pages of those grand old papers we miss so much.

At this first meeting we elected our Chairman, Mr. Corbett, Treasurer Rev. A. Pound (Vicar); The Secretary Mr. P. Mellor. We had considerable discussion, many suggestions and some refreshments brought by an outside caterer's concern. We have since made arrangements to meet after April at the International Institute, Birmingham, where we can get on the spot refreshments. It is anticipated that our first meeting here will be a Club Dinner to give us a good start on our activities. We are, however, having a further meeting in Queen's College Chambers, Paradise Street, on April 30th. The date of our Club Dinner is fixed for May 12th, and as letters from people are still piling in we are confident of a good crowd. Also there are twelve people who had written Mr. Corbett, but did not get to our first meeting, which was a pity because the Birmingham Mail photographed us and we hit the front page of the early editions. Yes, sir, this Club is off to a fine start. A hat passed round at our meeting came back with £4.19.0d. for our expenses.

We are going to be the leading Club in the country soon. So pull your socks up, you other clubs.

WANTED: Girls' magazines, School Friend, Schoolgirls' Own (weekly and monthly), Schoolgirl, Schooldays. Also Schoolgirls' Own Annuals and Cliff House Annuals. Also Holiday Annuals for 1920, 1921, 1925, 1927, and 1928. Arthur J. Southway P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN
Conducted by Robert Blythe

(All communications from now on should be addressed direct to Robert Blythe, 46 Carleton Road, Holloway, N.6. L.G.P.)

Yes, here is the news for which we have all been waiting. Bob is now home and will be back on the "Column" as from next month. I saw him last week and am pleased to say that he is making a fine progress and looks more like his old self. Needless to say a fine welcome awaits him when he turns up at the next O.B.B.C. meeting. Well, I have done my best to keep the Nelson Lee flag flying, but I must admit it will be nice to be able to open the "C.D." without knowing the contents of the "Column" beforehand.

I have been asked what I consider to be the finest series of Nelson Lee stories, and as it is of topical interest to this section of the "C.D." here is the answer. I have no hesitation in saying that to my mind the first "Barring-out" series (known as the "Hunter the Hun" series) to be unsurpassed in the St. Frank's life of the Nelson Lee Library from late 1917 onward. I well remember, as a boy of twelve, how eagerly I awaited each Wednesday to read the latest developments in this grand little series which originally covered O.S. Nos. 148 to 157 inc., and which was subsequently reprinted in the 3rd New Series, Nos. 9 to 18 inc. Those of you who haven't read the series will be well advised to do so. They are quite easy to obtain in the reprint form and they are not expensive. Should, however, my choice also cover the "straight detective" period, I am just as decided on the "Eileen Dare versus The Combine" series. A fine set of stories these, wherein, one by one, those who were responsible for the death of Eileen's father were brought to justice. They were, of course, written by E. S. Brooks, and Eileen Dare was undoubtedly one of his finest characters.

Perhaps Bob will permit me to wind up with a suggestion. How about more articles and/or information concerning the "straight detective" life of the old paper? Can we not hear more about such as G.H. Teed's Black Wolf and Dr. Mortimer Crane, and E.S. Brooks' Jim the Penman, Prof. Zingreve (Green Triangle and Circle of Terror) and Eileen Dare, to name but a few.

BOYS M.G. ZINLS WANTED: Number 332 onwards.
 W. Werwen, 76 Western Road, Rotherham.

LETTER BOX

What's In A Name ?

(1)

Dear Editor,

As Mr. Dryden's article in the April "C.D." concerns the Old Boys' Book Club, perhaps you will be good enough to publish this reply. In the first place we fail to see how the title "Old Boys' Book Club" is inappropriate or illogical, for, whilst it is true that there were and are a few publications primarily for the ladies e.g. "School Friend", "Schoolgirls' Own", "Schoolgirl" and "The Girls' Friend", they hardly warrant a change of our title. Many boys and present male collectors enjoyed these papers almost as much as their own boys' papers. Contrariwise, lady collectors prefer the boys' papers and like the title as it is. The adjective "old" is intended to cover both papers and collectors, for, seeing that the greater proportion of the latter are ADULTS seeking OLD papers, they must, logically, as adults be old Boys. With regard to modern papers and younger collectors, it is the combined opinion of the Club, that with the possible exception of one publication, and that one is not very modern in-so-far as its length of existence, there is no modern paper worth collecting, and such young folk who do indulge in the hobby want old papers.

In one particular, we are in agreement with Mr. Dryden, and that is the rather ambiguous word Book. We do feel that as these periodicals were, in the main, between paper covers, the title is somewhat misleading, and as suggested by Mr. Dryden the matter was fully discussed at the London meeting on Sunday April 15th. The Northern Branch has, of course, been consulted on the matter and we are informed by the secretary that their views are the same as ours. In conclusion, may we say that whilst appreciating Mr. Dryden's suggestions, any further correspondence, so far as it concerns the Old Boys' Book Club, will be regarded purely as of interest.

LEN PACKMAN.

(2)

Dear Editor,

I have read with interest Wheeler Dryden's article on the subject of a name for our hobby, but am not impressed by his suggestion or the reasons he advances. Of course we are collectors of a class of juvenile literature but need we suffer this unimaginative label merely for the edification of the uninformed and the unintelligent? What we require is a comprehensive and flexible name that will raise the prestige of old boys' book collecting as Philately and Cartophily have done in their

respective spheres. In my article in the February C.D. I adopted a variant of a term used by the intelligentsia of the Book Trade to cover the subject end, although not ideal, I consider "Juvenilia" a logical and satisfactory answer to our query.

Cordially yours,

J. MEDCRAFT.

(3)

4, Lulworth Road, Mottingham S.E.9.

Dear Mr. Editor,

14th April, 1951.

Wheeler Dryden takes eight laboured pages completely to miss the point, which is, surely, to find a word or phrase which will convey to the general public the precise type of material we collect, as distinct from the material collected by all other book-collectors. The word or phrase would therefore require to be exclusive to our particular hobby.

Mr. Dryden's "Collectors of Juvenile Literature" is about as exclusive as the central marquee at a county flower show. It is a darn big marquee, at that, since it houses, with equal rights, the "Alice in Wonderland" first-editioners; the horn-book addicts; the fairy-tale collectors; the smassers of the Hervey Darton output; the Arthur Rackham and Kate Greenaway fans; and members of the thousand-and-one branches of what the booksellers' catalogues refer to as "Juvenile". As a descriptive phrase for our hobby it is useless.

Instead of defining "Juvenile Literature", it seems to me more relevant to find a descriptive phrase which will include all the varying types of material that we collect. I suggest the following, divided for convenience into three sections:

1. It is fiction, repeat fiction, written for juveniles (or, in some cases, adults of juvenile reading tastes),
2. It is, or was, published periodically. (i.e. weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.)
3. It is the type of juvenile reading matter which (justly or unjustly) has, throughout the years, been frowned upon by parents, schoolteachers, and such persons in authority over the young.

If it be agreed that the foregoing covers, accurately and adequately, all our collecting activities, and that it does not cover the activities of any other collecting group, then there is no need to search very far for a phrase. Already there exists one that fits it like a glove, and has the merit of being readily understood by the non-collecting public. It is current usage today, and has been current usage ever since its coinage a hundred years ago. It is the phrase "PENNY DREDFUL".

Let me anticipate the anguished protests of the Hamiltonians that such a derogatory phrase must never be applied to the GEM and MAGNET, every word of which is Literature, pure and undefiled. I owe too many happy boyhood hours to Charles Hamilton to want to quarrel with that assertion; I simply say that it is being applied by the general non-collecting public to whom a GEM or a MAGNET is as much a "Penny Dreadful" as the goriest DICK TURPIN. The general public is a stubborn animal, and I doubt that any amount of protest will alter its attitude. It might be as well, then, to take a realistic view, accept the fact, and consider what can be done about it. There is a distinguished precedent we could follow. The Kaiser talked of our "contemptible little army", but his talk did not make it contemptible. All that happened was that our soldiers appropriated the derogatory term as a badge of honour, and bore it proudly to Victory, and after. The "Old Contemptibles" had, of course, a sense of humour. Some day, perhaps, the adherents of our unpretentious little hobby will become as realistically-minded as our American friends who collect "Dime Novels", which is another term of derogation. They are proud enough to call themselves, quite simply, Dime Novel Collectors.

As a lone harbinger of that happy day, may I subscribe myself, with humble obeisances to those of my fellow-subscribers to C.D. who are "Collectors of Juvenile Literature", as:-

J.V.B. STEWART HUNTER
(Penny Dreadful Collector)

(4)

47, Cromwell Road, Cambridge,

Dear Mr. Leckonby,

9th April 1951.

I have just received the "Digest" and read Mr. Dryden's long and interesting letter proposing a name for our hobby. I am afraid his suggestion does not appeal to me. "Collector of Juvenile Literature" has about it an air of Victorian Pretentiousness that suggests the Nineteenth Century rather than the Twentieth. Also I think it is a misnomer. Many of the weeklies and monthlies we collect had an appeal to people who were certainly beyond the "juvenile" stage. "The Scout" for example covers an age range up to at least 18; the old "Captain" was the public school magazine and covered a somewhat similar range. To be comprehensive the title should surely read "Collector of Juvenile and Adolescent Literature" at least - and could anything be more of a mouthful. But I think there is also a strong psychological objection to the word "juvenile" - it seems to carry a flavour of childishness about

it. "Cartophilist", "Philatelist" are certainly "adult" words. They are also single words which have a recognised meaning. I think we should search for a single word to describe our hobby.

Yours sincerely,

W. T. THURBER

Frank Richards Finds Much to Please Him

March 24th, 1951.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I was very pleased to see the "Manchester Guardian" article reprinted in the C.D. It really is a very good article, written by a man with a real sense of humour. An item I should have been glad to see was a report of Mr. Bentley's address: but that, I suppose, was barred by considerations of space.

I liked very much the "Pick of the Series" No.4. Our critical friend does not pull his punches, but I like him all the better for that. The duplicating of the title mentioned was not the work of the author, but of some bright sub-editor who had no doubt that he knew better. My titles were often scrapped, and sometimes I never knew what a story would be called till I saw it in print. It couldn't be helped, for as Schiller told us long ago, mit der Dummheit kämpfen die Götter selbst vergebens! Of the two series referred to, I liked the second best, and never knew till now that the closing story was an anti-climax. But you never can tell! However, it is an excellent article, and I enjoyed reading it, and hope to see some more as good.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

Ronald Hunter Was Listening!

Rio de Janeiro,
Brazil,

12th March, 1951.

Dear Editor,

I duly listened in to Frank Richards' Radio Play in Portuguese which came through here on the B.B.C. Overseas Service on 6th March. It was repeated on the 8th. The reception was perfect and every word came through as clear as a bell. My own Portuguese, though far from perfect, was good enough to enable me to follow the theme, and if not enough my wife heard it with me. She being Brazilian understood every word, and when the play was over filled in "my gaps" in English. We were both very amused with the final scene, or epilogue, which

depicts the man of the house leaving for the office in the morning and demanding of his wife "Onde estor meu guarda chuve?" (Where is my umbrella?) The soothing manner in which the patient housewife ministered to the peevish demands of her lord and master is quite reminiscent of bygone scenes at the Bunter household, to wit, words of consolation from Mrs. Bunter to Bunter senior on the subject of the latest increase in income tax. Many thanks for advising me of the broadcast.

Sincerely yours,

RONALD H. HUNTER.

FOR SALE: 8 Bound vols. Reynolds' "Mysteries of the Court of London" in splendid condition £2. 1d. Vanguard, and 1d. and 1d. for sale. What offers for these rare items? Have also 124 reprint 2d. Gems, 1221-1344 in mint condition. Original numbers were 3 to 107. What offers in exchange?

Wanted: St. Jim "Pluck" 10/6 each offered. Also wanted 1d. Pluck school tales 1906-7-8; Jack Shepherd, Dick Turpins, Claude Duvals, Boys' Friend 3d Lib., Gem, Magnet, Union Jack, etc. Richard Whorwell, 29 Aspinden Road, London, S.E.16.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE for S.O.L. (not St. Frank's). 40 Union Jacks (between 995-1075; 90 Gems (804-1539; 15 Modern Boys (2-161); 24 Boys' Cinemas (146-843); 29 Boys' Magazines (31-60); 20 Triumphs (172-578); 12 S.O.L. Offers, T. Hopperton, Courtlands, Fulford Road. Scarborough.

FOR SALE: Holiday Annuals, 1932, mint condition, 9/6; 1925 good 8/6. Honeysett, 65 Orchard Road, St. Annes, Lancs.

WANTED: Magnets (600-900); Gems (pre-1000); Populers, Holiday Annuals, Pre-war Triumphs, Hotspurs, Wizards, Skippers, Adventures, Rovers, Boys' Friends, Pilots, Boys' Magazines, and Modern Boys. Also Hotspur, Wizard and other Annuals. All with school stories. Good prices paid. P. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middlesex.

RALLY ROUND! RALLY ROUND! Wanted, any Union Jacks for the year 1922. Your price paid. Any help greatly appreciated. Leonard and Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

FOR SALE: Three Vols. B.O.P. 1905, 1908, 1912, or will exchange for similar papers. W. Jamison, Lisnacree, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

Blakiana

MAY.

1951.

Editor:- H.M. Bond - 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, Wales.

THE ROUND TABLE.

I am very sorry to say that the Blake Voting contest which ran over two months was very poorly supported. In spite of there being a considerable number of Blakians in our circle I only received EIGHT entries, six in the first month and two in the second, and this after a special appeal. The amazing thing about it is that I have received a large number of letters from various Blake fans. Many, if not all, of them could have submitted an entry. I hope they will respond to the 2nd contest which will appear next month. Anyway I would like to thank all eight readers who DID send in an entry and despite my original intention to call the whole thing off unless 12 entries minimum were received I have decided to award the ONE POUND to the nearest to the general vote. This was submitted by Wilfred Darwin of 76, Western Road, East Dene, Rotherham, Yorkshire. His entry which read 1. Rymor, 2. Zenith, 3. Waldo, 4. Kestrel, 5. Dolland, and 6. Purvale differed from the general vote very narrowly. Actually Zenith was first and Rymor second, all the others were as stated in his entry. You will be receiving your prize in a few days Wilfred. Congratulations.

I thought you might be interested in a letter I have just had from my co-editor Herbert. He says: Dear Maurice, You will remember that some months ago Jimmy Stewart Hunter sent us some amusing stories about Gwyn Evans taken from a recently published book "Let's Walk Down Fleet Street" by C.W. Shepherd. Well, I have just got hold of the book. In addition to what we published it gives a very interesting description of Gwyn which I feel sure you would like to use. Here it is:- "Gwyn Evans was well known in Fleet Street where he was a law unto 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, but he turned out them with incredible facility, not only with inspiration but with his abnormal speed on the typewriter".

Continued:-

Poor Gwyn. Why did he die so young? How we could have done with him now. Just fancy if only the London members could have had him at one of their meetings. Yours, Herbert.

Yes, it would have been splendid if only Gwyn could have lived to a ripe old age. But we have to be thankful that we can still read of "Splash" Page. Personally I am rather inclined to think that a lot of the make up of "Splash" was that of Gwyn.

Before signing off this month I would like to express my great disappointment that the new Sexton Blake author Hilary King should have started his career by introducing Tinker as "Mr. Tod Carter". It is a pity for Mr. King apparently has the right idea as regards portraying the Baker Street pair.

Cheerio for now.

H.H. BOND.

A "DOUBLE SEARCH" FOR SEXTON BLAKE by Derek Ford.

The other week end, nearing the end of S.B.L.237 "On the 11.40 Down". I chanced to glance down the list of back numbers and noticed I hadn't had 235 and 236 from my newsagent. These two having been issued sometime in March I knew there would not be much chance of obtaining them from that source so I wrote to the A.P. for them. A few days later came the reply that they were "out of print". At the week end I resolved to ransack the newsagents of Macclesfield for them, chance what may. At the third shop I managed to collect No. 236 as I thought, and I asked them to try and get 235 for me. On a market bookstall I visited later I could have had 3 more copies of 236. Home again I glanced inside to find that 236 contained the number I had been hunting all the afternoon, 235 "Retired from the Yard". A dash back into town to the market stall to find all 3 copies sold, so to the shop where here I was more lucky. Now I have 235 and 236 both with the same cover but different yarns, so, if any reader has the opposite of this perhaps we could make an exchange of covers and put the matter right. To date, though I have read both stories, I have yet to see the cover of 235.

S.O.S.

Once again we have to ask readers to submit articles and features for Blakiana. Send your contributions to the address stated overleaf.

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND -----

Tom Hopperton.

The one eyed man is king. Mr. Bond's disquiet about the Tinker/Carter mystery has roused not a single comment, thus confirming my fixed opinion that the greatest example of Mass-Unobservation in England is to be found in the Blake fans. How sardonically that master detective would have smiled if he could have witnessed how his devoted followers had learned so little of his methods as to be gulled by a most imprudent imposture.

Thirty years ago the police had to regulate the traffic in Baker Street. The queue at the door was composed of Prime Minister, home grown and foreign, all imploring Blake's aid. The crowd lurking on the other side comprised every master crook in the world, each waiting his turn to match wits with a most redoubtable opponent. Scotland Yard was helpless without him; the House of Commons went on record once a quarter with fulsome thanks for his having saved Britain from catastrophe once again. If anyone impersonated Blake then, it was Leon Kestrel, the Master Hummer, and even he couldn't get away with it for more than one week.

And now? The name plate on the door is the same but for years the man doing business inside has been some petty private eye who probably spends most of his time digging up the sordid details of divorce evidence. Add the magic of the old name is so powerful that he is blindly accepted for what he professes to be, even to the point of having his paltry exploits reviewed in the C.D.

There is no mystery about who planned this daring coup. It is freely whispered in the Underworld that it is the same gang who demolished the hallowed walls of Greyfriars to sell the stones for kids' picture blocks. They aren't, of course, expose themselves too fully, but, emboldened by continued success, they do flaunt in your faces that this Carter fellow has supplanted Tinker. Mr. Bond stirs uneasily, but where are the elementary powers of observation of the other fans?

Blake is dead! Nothing else would have kept down that indomitable spirit. I care nothing about the real identity of the poor fish who masquerades in his place, but, with this initial stimulus, the Blakians might be able to enlighten we less knowledgeable chaps on the real mystery. And that is, when was Blake murdered and this bare-faces imposture begun?

REVIEWS.Gerald Allison."Retired From the Yard" by Anthony Parsons.S.B.L. No. 235 (Amalgamated Press - 7d).

Anthony Parsons usually has a good plot, and this tale is no exception. When Chief Inspector Elms retired from Scotland Yard he took up a hobby. He determined to find the true solution to one of his old cases. And sure enough he found it had been murder, and not accident. Well, of course, the murderer had to polish him off too. So far, so good. But when Sexton Blake came on the scene why had the murderer to give him all the very information for discovering which Elms had been killed? Later on, when arrested, neither of the villains' uttered one solitary word! But it was too late then. All the words on pages 35, 36 and 37 had given the show away. I guess Stewart MacPherson's phrase often occurred to them: 'Why couldn't I keep my big mouth shut?'

"The Case of the Two Crooked Baronets" by Walter Tyrer.S.B.L. No. 236 (Amalgamated Press - 7d).

Four stars for Walter Tyrer. He has excelled himself. I could use all my superlatives on this novel. Sexton Blake was never better portrayed. His deductions on page 43 out-Sherlock Holmes himself, whilst his tactful handling of Inspector Bruton of the Yard was a masterpiece of applied psychology. The plot is a gem of construction, perfectly worked out, with every piece interlocking. The villain a blend of Machiavelli and Pocksniff, and absolutely convincing. But it is in the minor roles that Tyrer really shows his brilliance. Take that snapshot of the secretary O'Sullivan on pages 35/36, a character who appears only once. How vivid he is, and how Blake puts him in his place. And what about Tinker? Well, he really is Tinker, and not that slick impostor Mr. Edward Carter. But how delightful it is to find that Tinker too is one of the Old Boys, and subject to the 'ills that the flesh is heir to', like the rest of us! For on Page 8 he says:

"I suppose that means watching his country place, and a lot of scrambling through bushes, and lying around in wet grass. Well, it can't be helped, although it always starts my rheumatics. Yes, Tinker isn't the lad he was in 1917.

Of the known Blake writers of the Victorian era, mention must have been made of Harry Blyth (Hal Meredith), Viscount Mount Morris (Patrick Morris) and Ernest Treeton (W. Shaw Rae). To these three can be added the name of Percival Cooke. He it was who created, as secretary and pupil of the great detective, the character of Wallace Lorrimore. An authority on stamp collecting, Cooke was, in reality, Percy C. Bishop, one of the first editors of "Pluck". Much older than most of the other contributors to the Harmsworth papers, who were then in their "twenties", Bishop was a rather ordinary looking man. Add, too, to the names of Blake's Victorian chroniclers that of Christopher Stevens. As far as is known this was the authors real name, and what became of him after about the year 1902 nobody knows; he simply dropped out. Stevens best known Blake story was "Griff, the Man Tracker" which started in serial form in the "Union Jack" early in the year 1901. Another of Blake's temporary assistants was introduced in this adventure - a waif known only as Griff. A third assistant was a diminutive Chinese boy named Wo-woo. Whether any objection were raised at the name, or whether it was on the grounds of the character's unpopularity, is a question the answer to which can only be guessed at; but Wo-woo's appearances, like those of Lorrimore's and Griff's, were of brief duration. Of the few stories in which Wo-woo appeared I have a record of only one. This was entitled "The Truman Mystery" (Issue No. 204) published at the beginning of the year 1898. Later on, in the same year, W. Shaw Rae came along with another good Blake effort, published under the title of "The Third Man" (Issue No. 228). Blake's adventures were recorded at disjointed intervals between stories by such authors as have already been mentioned here, in addition to which were to be found names like Walter Darrell, George Gerrish, Walter Everard and Wallace Morrell. These were all pen names adopted by Henry J. Gerrish. The name of Captain Coleman Groom appeared once at least. I believe, by judging by the size of writing, he could have been none other than Alec G. Pearson. It is perhaps needless to/

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mention that the typewriter was not in use in those days, and the authors had to write their stories carefully with a pen, which makes all the more surprising the claim made by champion word-spinner, S. Clarke Hook that he could turn out 70,000 words a week regularly, and often more ---almost the length of an ordinary library novel! Clarke Hook had such a terrific output that I do not dispute his claim, though how he managed it beats my comprehension!

Amongst the early editors of "Pluck" - he may have been the first - was William H. Maas, who was succeeded after only a short time by J. H. Pym. A most likeable man was Pym, genial and full of jocularly and good looking, but soon after the transfer of the firm to Tudor Street was made he died and Percy Bishop took over. Subsequently he was displaced by William Back. Boyish, good looking, slim and fairly tall, William Back was later to introduce to the Blake stories the lady writer who may have been the one to have written for the Harmsworth papers as Max Hamilton. Another who would very likely have been seen round the imaginary Round Table was editor, Hugh Tuite. Tall and aristocratic looking with thick moustache, Tuite although affable, was of a rather reserved disposition and edited "Forgot-me-Not" which, although a ladies paper, numbered amongst its contributors some of the early Blake writers. As Hugh Tuite wrote as well as edited he may have been responsible for some of the early Blake stories. Cecil Hayter, although a member of the Harmsworth staff at that time was concentrating mainly on the adult papers like Answers, the bulk of his boys stories, and his Blake yarns were to come later. Stanhope Sprigg was another Blake writer of those early days who wrote mainly for adult papers & like Hayter contributed serials for Answers. He became Editor on one of the adult papers and controlled a literary agency in the vicinity of Henrietta St. Tallish & of slim build Sprigg died 15th May 1932 at the age of 65.

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To be continued.

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NOTE: Walter Webb will conclude his review of the Victorian Era in the next issue. In July we shall present the first instalment of Part 2 of BLACK THROUGH THE YEARS which will deal with the Edwardian Era.