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Vol.6. No.67.

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JULY 1952

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Another Veteran Passes. With deep regret I have to report, somewhat belatedly, the death after a long and painful illness of Henry Steele, of 204 High Street, Wealdstone, Harrow. He died as long ago as February 11th, but I only heard of it just after the June number was issued. He was probably the second oldest member of our circle, being I believe in his mid-seventies.

Many of us will have pleasant memories of those long letters of his written with such boyish enthusiasm describing in great detail the favourite papers of his youth. He was particularly interested in the journals of Charles Fox and E. J. Brett. Invariably he would break into verse, and paste alongside his writing pictures appropriate to the occasion.

Some years ago he spent several days with me in York. We had some grand talks and walks together. He particularly enjoyed a tour of places associated with Dick Turpin.

Henry Steele was a typical example of what used to be

termed "a fine old English gentleman"; kindly, thoughtful, courteous, one of the last of the Victorians. He has passed into the Unknown to join other members of our fraternity. I wonder if they ever gather together in some little Valhalla of their own.

: : : :

Lucky Girl. Edna Mervyn, shining light of the Merseyside Club, is on holiday in Canada. There is a possibility that she may be calling on that great fellow Bill Gander, who has entertained us for years with his grand little Story Paper Collector. If she does she will, I believe, have the distinction of being the only member of our fraternity, including those resident across the Atlantic, to have met Bill in person. Let's hope she will have an interesting story to tell on her return. Meanwhile, Happy Holiday, Edna.

: : : :

A Labour of Love. Readers would see a reference to a talk on St. Franks Bob Blythe gave at a London meeting with the aid of a map of the school and its environs.

This map is now in my possession, and I can assure you it's a remarkable achievement, particularly as Bob does not claim to be a draftsman. When I unrolled it I was lost in admiration at the thought of his patience and the long hours he must have spent over it. Leeites should be proud of him. We hope to reproduce it, on a much smaller scale, of course, in an early issue.

: : : :

Sackcloth and Ashes. On page 184 of last month's issue Hugh W. Fennell was made to say that Hutton McClere first drew Bunter. It should, of course, have read Hutton Mitchell. Oh yes, I deresay you guessed - my handwriting again in penning that footnote, and to think that when I was at school I used to get top marks for handwriting. Ah, me! I must be getting old. Anyway, apologies, Mr. Fennell.

: : : :

Wanderer's Return. Jack Murtagh is back home at 509 Selwood Road, Hastings, New Zealand, after a tour of the U.S.A. He would be pleased to hear again from old friends and assures them their letters will now be answered.

"Annual" Time Again. With this issue you will be receiving the Order and Who's Who forms connected with the Sixth C.D. Annual. May I appeal to you to make use of them if you require one. Last year one or two members were unfortunately overlooked through making a request for one as part of a letter. I shall have more to say about contents as time goes on. Meanwhile, if any of you would like to have a shot at an article I shall be pleased to hear from you.

Despite what I said last month quite a number of fellows have kindly offered to put their hands down to clear any loss on last year's. But I am happy to say all subs. have now been paid, so all's well, and there will be no increase in price this year.

And from now on I shall be busy o'nights. You will greatly help if you get those forms in early.

Now just a word about the ballot on last year's articles, final figures for which follow. It was a most interesting contest. J. Breeze Bentley's article led from the very beginning, (congratulations, Breeze!) but several others gave it a good run. The contributions not mentioned were by no means without their supporters, and the expressions of dislike of any one could be counted on the fingers. It was all very encouraging and gratifying to

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

THE "ANNUAL" BALLOT

Final Placings

1. The Remove Form at Greyfriars,	235
2. Harry Wharton Captain of the Remove,	219
3. Monograph of Yvonne Cartier,	188
4. That Enduring Magic,	186
5. St. Franks Success of Failure?	177
6. The Long Arm,	159
7. Every Story a Gem,	151
8. Inside Fleetway House,	124
9. Hero of the Shell,	107
10. Grandfather Liked Them Fierce,	105

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

London Section. Blake Chambers. Greenwich. June 15th.

Despite the holiday season there were 28 members at Charlie Wright's abode. The news-sheet was discussed and on all sides it was agreed that it was a very fine effort and John Geal was congratulated on the fine duplicating. Arthur Lawson, doyen of the club, gave an excellent talk on "The Red Rover of the Seas". This was greatly enjoyed and he was asked to give similar talks every month, to which he agreed. A couple of thrilling chapters from "Head Hunter's Lair" featuring Ken King of the Islands was read by Ron Deacon and this was greatly appreciated. I then gave a couple of readings from the S.P.C. and the "M." on the Thomson House papers and this was followed by a very fine discussion on the subject. Charlie had compiled a very fine quiz and Roger Jenkins was a good winner with Bob Blythe second and Len Peckmen and Ian Whitmore third. Future quiz competitions were debated and some excellent ideas were formed. Our Herbert 'phoned the meeting and all who could had a few words with him. Thus the great personal touch is kept going. The agenda was thought to be getting rather stereotyped but after a discussion a few minor amendments were made and the worthy chairman agreed to carry on the hitherto good work. Olive Wright had prepared the usual good feed and with the other ladies doing sterling work refreshment time went with a will. It was agreed to sell the residue books in the library as they become redundant and after the good sales and exchanges members dispersed until the next occasion of the meeting once again under Len's leadership at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22, July 20th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

Northern Section, Leeds. Meeting, June 14th, 1952.

Sixteen members present, including Frank Case (Liverpool) and Stanley Smith (Besingstoke) whom J. Breeze Bentley in opening the meeting expressed pleasure in seeing again.

Secretary Norman Smith said the Sunday York trip would take place very shortly, but one to the coast, either east or west, would have to be further discussed.

Gerry Allison, as usual, had something cheerful to say, including Library Receipts £2.7.8.; Books sold, £2.1.0.; Subs. £3.1.0.; Cash in hand £12.7.10.

Then came Harry Stables' postponed talk "The Sage of Deadwood Dick". Apart from Harry, I should think I was the only one present who had ever read "Deadwood Dick", yet Harry was listened to with rapt attention from beginning to end. He gave a graphic description of the once famous character who delighted the hearts of Victorian boys, and he slipped in several touches of humour. Altogether it was one of the most successful of the many talks we have had at Hyde Park Road. He received a well deserved ovation at the finish, and a tribute paid to the great amount of research he must have undertaken. More talks on these lines are desirable to lend a little variety and maybe the ever ready Gerry will come along with the inimitable Tim Pippin stories by Roland Quiz.

The same Gerry helped to bring a most enjoyable meeting to a close with a subtle quiz.

Next meeting, Saturday, July 12th.

H. LECKENBY,
Northern Section Correspondent.

Report on meeting (Merseyside Section) 1st June, 1952.

The meeting opened 7.30 p.m. at the usual rendezvous, 7 Crosby Road, South, Waterloo. Messrs. Simpson and Welsh were absent owing to holidays, otherwise there was a satisfactory attendance.

The chairman started the ball rolling with a report on hobby and section matters; he proposed also that future meetings be held on the second Sunday of the month, to which there was general agreement. On behalf of the section he wished bon voyage and a pleasant holiday to Edna Mervyn, who is off to Canada on a three months' vacation. An understudy will now have to be found for serving us with our "cups"!

The secretary then read the minutes and financial report, and this was followed by "fun and games". These took the form of a version of the old parlour game "Consequences", with some amusing - not to mention amazing! - results. The company

were then set the task of furnishing two apt lines to an uncompleted Greyfriars limerick, written by Don. The would-be Shelleys - and Allisons - went to work, and Frank Case was adjudged the winner, with Mrs. Webster a close second. Their efforts may not be without interest:

When Bunter was sent to the Head,
"Oh! it wasn't me, sir," he said.
"It was that sly beast, Skinner
Who stole Quelchy's dinner,
Must I have the flogging instead?" and

When Bunter was sent to the Head,
"Oh! it wasn't me, sir," he said.
"I just meant to borrow -
And pay back to-morrow,
Must I have a flogging instead?"

Frank now has the task of setting the competition for July. In passing, it should be pointed out that Don generally acts as the judge, which explains why his name doesn't occur in the winners' lists - it would probably do so quite a lot otherwise.

The meeting ended at 10.30 p.m. with the usual library business, which was quite brisk.

Next meeting Sunday, July 13th.

FRANK CASE.

Secretary.

Midland Branch Meeting - 26th May, 1952.

Twenty-three members were present at what was known would be the first annual business meeting; it being intended to review the past year's working, receive accounts, elect officers, etc.

Unfortunately, however, acute differences of opinion on certain questions of policy had arisen in recent months between, on the one hand, two officials, (the Secretary, Peter Mellor and the Rev. Mr. Pound, a committee member and Joint Founder), and on the other hand the remaining five officials, (the chairman, Jack Corbett, the Treasurer, Norman Gregory, and the other three committee members.

As it had become inevitable that these matters be discussed in general meeting, most of our May meeting was so occupied. Our usual happy atmosphere was sadly marred by the argument; but eventually it became clear that the feeling of the meeting was definitely against the dissenters, and eventually they announced their resignations from the Club. Mr. and Mrs. Mellor and the Rev. and Mrs. Pound left, together with another old member, Mr. F. Willison.

The resignations were received with regret, but were felt to be unavoidable. Nevertheless, it is hoped that perhaps we may see some of them again one day.

After refreshments, (which were sorely needed!) elections were made as under:-

Chairman and Treasurer re-elected unanimously; also two of the retiring Committee Members, (Miss C. Scott and Mr. Wilfred Devey).

A new Committee Member was elected, (Mr. Geo. Green), and the writer of these notes was elected Secretary.

To conclude the meeting, the Chairman gave us an account of his reception of Mr. Down last month. It was that gentleman's first visit to Birmingham, and before he left after the party, Mr. Corbett presented him with a folder containing a "Magnet" and a "Gem", in mint condition, and press cuttings relating to the visit, as a souvenir of a memorable occasion.

E. J. DAVEY.

FOR SALE: 42 "Magnets" (1390-1680) 1/- each. 6 "Union-Jacks" (1041-1327) 1/- each. 9 "Union-Jacks" (950-1523) all Xmas numbers and Xmas Week numbers, 12/6 the lot; 6 "Marvels" (617-638) 2/- each; 50 "Marvels" (consecutive, 902-951) 50/- the lot; 7 "Pluck" (233-370) 2/6 each; 3 "Boys' Friend" (green weeklies) years 1903-1906, offers wanted; 8 "Detective Weeklies" 9d. each; "Tom Merry's Own" (1950) 4/6d. Many other items, S.A.E. for list.

WANTED: "C.D." Annuals 1947 and 1948.

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POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST

No.18 - The Boys' Herald (Amalgamated Press)

Aug. 8, 1902 - May 18, 1912 - 511 numbers.

By Herbert Leckenby

In 1903, where publications for boys were concerned, the Amalgamated Press was in its heyday. It feared no rival. E. J. Brett, James Henderson and other great Victorians were passing or had gone, and the Aldine Publishing Company who had drawn countless coppers from the pockets of boys was faltering under the onslaught of Carmelite House. Enthroned in that then home of the Harmsworth papers was Hamilton Edwards, astute and most famous boys' editor of all time. He had made a huge success of the Boys' Friend and raised it to penny status in 1901. A year later he had given it a companion - the Boys' Realm, and it hit the target straight away. Then with the passing of another fourteen months came another brother - the Boys' Herald. Oh happy boys - if they could afford threepence a week - of those placid days before world wars were known. Twelve serial stories, completes, articles, and three "editors' chats". However, here it is the "Boys' Herald" I propose to speak about, so here's to it.

It was almost identical with its two companions, except that it was printed on white paper. Its title was in plain bold type with a border, and carried below it the slogan "A Healthy Paper for Menly Boys."

No.1 contained three serials, "The Seventh House of St.Besils" by Henry St.John; Sidney Drew's "Wings of Gold" described as "The Story of the Most Terrible and Amazing Journey Ever Made by Men"; and "Trapper Dan". This story was written by George Manville Fenn, a popular writer for boys whose stories for boys in book form were considered suitable for Sunday School prizes. No doubt this was a gesture by shrewd Hamilton Edwards in the direction of the Edwardian parent who was a little particular as to what his son should read. However, when "Trapper Dan" finished

Menville Fenn was seen no more in the pages of the "Boys' Herald" except for a fugitive appearance some years later, whereas Henry St. John and Sidney Drew were regulars.

In addition to the serials, there were long and short complete stories, the first article of a series entitled "The Battle of Life" concerning the lives of famous men, shorter articles, and "Your Editor's Advice", adorned, of course, with a picture of the handsome features of Hamilton Edwards.

I well remember that having coaxed an extra penny from my mother I exclaimed "Jolly good" as I perused the contents of that No. 1 that Thursday morning way back in August of 1905.

But there was more to come, for with No. 2 a fourth serial was added and it was by another favourite author, Maxwell Scott. It was called "Nelson Lee's Pupil" and seeing that the famous detective of Greys Inn Road was one of my special heroes I knew that for some weeks to come at least, I should have to get the purchasing price by hook or by crook.

"Nelson Lee's Pupil" proved to be an epoch-making story, for the pupil was an urchin, one Nipper, who proved to be the heir to vast estate, and who was destined to be the hero of a host of boys then unborn.

Yes, indeed the "Boys' Herald" got off to a fine start, and for a few years it appeared to be as sturdy as its elder brothers, though probably its circulation was never as great.

When "The Seventh House of St. Basils" finished a sequel, "The New Master" took its place, and the school story to follow that was "The Boys of Winbury College", written anonymously. Another outstanding serial in Vol. 1 (52 numbers) was "Rajah Dick" by David Goodwin, a yarn so exciting as to get boys on to the newsagent's door-step very early on Thursday mornings.

There were also two double numbers with their gorgeous coloured covers during that first year. Oh what a feast of reading for twopence. There were many double numbers later, but minus the covers, which was a pity.

The "Boys' Herald" was never better than in its second year. That volume two contained the whole, or part, of no less than eighteen serials, the majority of them really first-class. They included "Afloat with Nelson" by

Henry St. John (he was at his best in this type of yarn); "On Turpin's Highway" and its sequel "The Black Mask" by David Goodwin; and "The Longbows of England"; one of Morton Pike's best. There was also "Football Foes" by A. S. Hardy. I believe this was his first serial concerning the winter game and it was a good start.

Notable was "Nipper's Schooldays" which found that pupil of Nelson Lee's at St. Ninien's, where he had many adventures some thirteen years before he went to St. Frank's for another long spell.

Not so good, in my opinion anyway, was "The Fensgate Schoolboys" by E. Hercourt Burrege, a reprint from one of the Victorian penny dreadfuls Hamilton Edwards professed to despise.

In the following three years numerous very satisfying serials appeared, the majority of them by Hamilton Edwards' "resident" authors, - Henry St. John, Maxwell Scott, David Goodwin, Allen Blair and Sidney Drew. Mention should be made of the trio by Cecil Hayter, Sexton Blake at School", "Sexton Blake in the Sixth", and Sexton Blake at Oxford. These were good as stories go, but slackaday, how Hayter did play ducks and drakes with Blake history. Sherlock Holmes' rival of Baker Street had been nigh unto death and put many a criminal behind bars in the nineteenth century, yet here he was a youngster at school in the twentieth. Moreover, in the third story he made the acquaintance of Tinker, despite the fact that another author had brought that about three or four years earlier. What's still more, Hayter made Tinker only a few years Blake's junior. Ah well, those responsible couldn't foresee that nigh fifty years later there would be fellows trying to make Blake as much a reality as Sherlock Holmes.

By the end of the fifth year or so there began to be suspicions, not very pronounced at first maybe, that the younger of the trio was not as healthy after all, as its companion papers. The old reliable authors were not appearing as frequently, and those taking their places were not so adept at that trick of making the reader wait in a state of suspense for the next instalment. A good deal of space was devoted to hobbies and an exchange and mart was

was started. A regular advertiser here was that "character" well remembered by many present day veterans, Arthur Budge, of Almondbury, Huddersfield. Came a time when his adverts were no more, the reason as Arthur told me himself years later that Hamilton Edwards looked upon him as a dealer. Dealer or not, he was a godsend to many a collector for many a year. Would that poor Arthur was with us to-day - with his bargains at the old prices. The little post office at Almondbury would be kept busy I warrant. But alas, the quaint good-natured fellow has been in his grave ten years or more.

Harking back to the stories, I must not forget to mention the complete stories of Cliveden School by Charles Hamilton. They had not a very long run, but the master touch was there.

An ominous sign, or so I always consider it, was the coming of reprints. Among them were at least two serials which had appeared in the 3d. Boys' Friend, "Val, the Boy Acrobat" by Claude Heathcote, and "The Boys of St. Basils" by Henry St. John. When they first appeared they were fine yarns, but somehow in their new settings they had lost their charm.

In its last year or two the Herald was a mere shadow of its former self. Still, it lived for just a few weeks short of a decade, and that was well above the average for a boys' weekly. When we said goodbye to the familiar large white pages we were told that the Herald was to be reborn in a grand up-to-date paper called "Cheer Boys Cheer". I wonder who thought of that one. It was of Magnet size with a brown cover but it lasted about as many fortnights as the more famous one did years. Maybe the boys were bashful about asking for "Cheer Boys Cheer", but its fate was little better when its name was changed to "Boys' Journal".

These letters, too, never appealed to me, but in my few leisure moments c'nights I turn for a restful hour or two to "Redcastle at St. Simeons"; "Rajah Dick"; "Facing the Footlights" and other grand "Boys' Herald" yarns which fascinated me in my youth of long ago.

HAMILTONIA

Conducted by Herbert Lockenby

You will remember that last month Frank Richards revealed that one of his pen-names of long ago was Robert Stanley, and that under it he wrote a serial called "The Heart of Africa" for Trepps Holmes & Co. Well, shortly after I got his letter I had a stroke of luck. I was looking for some paper or other one evening when quite unexpectedly I came across two papers which contained instalments of this very serial. Len Peckman, or anyone else who knows the chaotic state my collection is in will know what a miracle that was. I forget now if I actually found the paper I was really after, for these instalments of "The Heart of Africa" interested me more.

The papers concerned were "The Best Budget" and "Larks", "The Best Budget" only ran for twelve weeks and when it finished "Larks" took its place and "The Heart of Africa" was continued in it. This No.1 of "Larks" is dated June 7, 1902. I thought it a good idea to reproduce the picture heading on our cover this month, as an interesting addition to Hamilton lore. I hope it has come out sufficiently well to enable you to see that the story was "By the New and Powerful Author, Robert Stanley". Fifty years ago! Well, the author is no longer new, but he's still powerful.

The hero of the story was Russell Keene, "a mysterious Englishman, with face of iron and heart of steel". And it is interesting to note that his two friends were named Sidney Talbot and Thorne Darrel. There was a lady in it, too, Claire de Poncere Countess of Ligny.

Judging by these two instalments the future Frank Richards knew how to write a thrilling story years before the "Magnet" was born.

Despite 36 pages last month I did not say a word, as I fully intended to do, about the illuminated address the London O.B.B.C. recently presented to Frank Richards on behalf of the members of all the clubs. However, better late than never.

The address was the work of Robert Mortimer, a member of London O.B.B.C., and all who have seen it pay tribute to a job splendidly done. The voluntary work some fellows will do for this hobby of ours is really amazing.

The wording was as follows:-

"A Loyal Tribute to Charles Hamilton from all Members of the Old Boys Book Club.

For over forty years Mr. Hamilton under various pseudonyms has been giving unbounded pleasure to countless thousands of boys and girls of all ages with his wonderful tales of school life. As Owen Conquest he has written stories about Rookwood that will always be affectionately remembered; the tales of St. Jim's by Martin Clifford are evergreen; but above all, the Greyfriars stories by Frank Richards have secured for their author a unique place in the realms of literature.

Without a doubt no other writer of his kind has been so gifted, so prolific, and so versatile.

Aut Optimum Aut Nihil.

Surrounding the text were no less than 32 sketches of leading characters from the three schools.

Ben Whiter made a special journey to Margate with the address and there handed it over to Norton Price who later presented it to Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Hamilton expressed his sincere thanks and was evidently much moved by this gesture from a section of his admirers.

-o-o-o-

A lump came to my throat when I read this in a letter from Jack Hughes, of Chelmer, Brisbane, Australia.

"In the course of my ministerial duties I have begun to work in a new area and I discovered a young man dying of cancer who in conversation happened to say he would love to read about Billy Bunter again, a character he had known years before. You can imagine how pleased I was that I had the means of satisfying his request."

There's something really remarkable about that when you

think it over, for in the whole of Australia there would not be many who could have granted this dying youth's wish. It's nice to think it was one of our fraternity who did.

-o-o-o-o-o-

Over to South Africa. In its issue of May 2nd "The Outspan" page size larger than "Picture Post" took for its "Book Choice of the Week" "The Autobiography of Frank Richards". The review filled a page and carried a banner heading, "A Boys' Writer Spills the Beans".

Magnet Titles (Contd.)

"S" denotes Substitute.

(Note - By an unfortunate oversight Magnet titles 871-915 were omitted last month and 916-949 published instead. Here, then, are the missing ones. Thanks to the many readers who drew attention to the error. We will continue from 950 next month. - H.L.)

871, (S) Sir Hilton's Nephew. 872, (S) The Mystery Wreck. 873. Both Bunters. 874, Giving Bunter Beans. 875, The Vanished Ventriloquist. 876, The Bunking of Bunter. 877, Billy Bunter's Campaign. 878 (S) The Schoolboy Financier. 879, Trouble in the Co. 880, Harry Wharton's Christmas. 881, Friend or Foe. 882, The Downward Path. 883, The Rebel of the Remove. 884, Slacker and Captain. 885, Harry Wharton's Downfall. 886, Down and Out. 887, The Worst Boy at Greyfriars. 888, Harry Wharton's Last Chance. 889(S) To Shield His Father. 890 (S) The Barring of Bolsover. 891 (S) The Great Postal-Order Mystery. 892 (S) Bunter the Prophet. 893, Coker's Crosswords. 894 (S) The Mystery of Mossoc. 895 (S) Aunt Judy Comes to Stay. 896, Poor Old Bunter. 897, Bunter the Cavalier. 898 (S) The Schoolboy Sculptor. 899, Playing the Goat. 900, Buck up Bunter. 901, (S) Pep for the 'Friars. 902 (S) The Feud with Cliff House. 903 (S) Sports Week at Greyfriars. 904 (S) The Rival Tuckshops. 905 (S) Alonzo the Slogger. 906, Ragged Dick. 907, Ragged Dick at Greyfriars. 908, Ragged Dick's Resolve. 909, A Boy's Crossroads. 910, Billy Bunter's Brainwave. 911, Bunter of Bunter Court. 912, Billy Bunter's Master Stroke. 913, The Mystery of Bunter Court. 914, The Bunter Court Eleven. 915, The Prisoners of Bunter Court.

THE ELIXIR OF YOUTH

By Donald Webster (Liverpool)

"Remembrance wakes with all her busy train....."

This excerpt from Oliver Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" has come to my mind several times during the past six months, and all because of a man named Richards. (You're wrong - his christian name was Raymond, not Frank.)

One day last year I had occasion to visit Birmingham, and having some time on my hands strolled into a bookshop to seek a suitable book for my son's tenth birthday. "Bless my soul, (vide Mr. Quelch) do my eyes deceive me, for surely that big book is entitled "Tom Merry's Own," was my inward comment as I perceived a copy of his famous Annual. I stared fascinated and memories of my youth and the good old "Gem" came back to me. Of course I purchased The Annual and wondered if it was possible to find the answer to so many queries which had baffled me. Was it possible that my favourite author was writing about St. Jims and Greyfriars again? I must confess that I read most of the book on my homeward journey in the train, but one paragraph in the Editor's Chat caused me thought. It read ... "For the SECOND time I have had the pleasure of editing ... etc. Great Scott! I had missed last year's copy in the shops. This must be remedied at once, for was not my son a chip off the old old block and had read and re-read the 1920 and 1921 Holiday Annuals which I had saved all these years. A letter to the publishers followed with a request for the Annual I had missed, and back came a prompt reply stating Mr. Raymond Richards was no longer with them and that my letter (which contained several reminiscences) had been forwarded to Frank Richards himself. They also sent me a list of the Bunter Books etc. which had been published and gave me the address of "our Herbert" at York.

I was now in seventh heaven for I should be able to renew my acquaintance with the Companion Papers again. However, more joy was to follow, for one Friday morning, April 13th (don't ever tell me either are unlucky again) came a letter from "The Head" himself enclosing an autographed book for my son and a real chatty letter to me.

The lad's face was sufficient gratitude and words could not describe my feelings. I had always wanted to visit or correspond with the men who had brought me so many happy hours as a young man and I felt at long last I had done so. We have exchanged several letters since.

I think it was Byron who wrote "Ah! happy years! Once more who would not be a boy." Well, I've felt a boy ever since, and I fortunately possess an "understanding" wife. (I think she was a reader of "The Schoolgirl's Own" and "Girl's Friend" in bygone days.)

Suffice to say that I became a member of The Northern Section of the Old Boys' Book Club who received me - a perfect stranger - like any other "Old Boy." Even more amazing is the fact that they lent and trusted me with their books. I have since attended their meetings and visited an Exhibition of Old Boys' Books at a Public Library.

In addition, I have visited several of my London colleagues and been made welcome at their homes, proving that "Old Hamiltonians" etc. have turned out to be what the author tried to achieve - jolly decent men. What a moulder of character Frank Richards must have been. One wonders what effect he would have had on the present "younger generation" had he still been writing weekly stories. To quote an example: I like to watch my son's contracted brows when he is reading some modern weekly and compare it with the chuckles he emits when he is reading one of the old Companion Papers. Like all lads of his age he reaches the stage of "What shall I do now?" but a copy of The Magnet or Gem thrust into his hands keeps him quiet for hours and out of mischief. What higher tribute can the author have than that.

I would here utter a word of warning to parents who intend initiating their offspring into the cult. Do not regards your swotting days as over or the following dialogue might ensue:-

Son: (looking up from "The Magnet" he is reading) It says here that "Quelchy was in a bad temper and lines fell as thick as the leaves in Vallambrosa." What does that mean and where is Vellembrose?

Father: Er..Er.. Oh, look it up in your encyclopaedia.

All of which proves that as we grow older we really see the

depth of those famous quotations used by Frank Richards, and as so many other people have eulogised his references to the classics I need not add to their number in this article.

It always seemed strange to me that Martin Clifford and Frank Richards knew so much about each other's characters. A telephone call to the late Mr. H. A. Hinton of The Amalgamated Press failed to elucidate the mystery, so, like many thousands I was eventually enlightened by the article which appeared in "Picture Post".

I always remember as a boy how disillusioned I was to discover that St. Jims and Greyfriars never really existed. I was most adamant they did until my father proved otherwise. But - whisper this - perhaps they really do under different names - only the author can answer that. We do know, however, that Gussy, Billy Bunter, Quelch, Smithy and Frank Nugent were taken from real life. Yes, I've certainly been "educated" these last six months or so.

What a travesty that Billy Bunter should have been featured in the "Knock-out" Comic (with Jones Minor of all people.) Thank goodness The Master has picked up his pen (or should it be typewriter) where he left off. I am proud that three generations of my family have derived happiness from these books, and who knows, a fourth generation may follow suit. In conclusion, I must disagree with the song-writer who wrote... "Gone are the days of our youth, too soon." What rot! Mine are only just beginning.

Note:- I have had to try Don Webster's patience quite a bit, for I've had this breezy article in my file quite a while. So if it isn't quite up to date, blame me. - H.L.)

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

By Bernard Prime

If I were to ask a gathering of Hamiltonians who in their opinion was the most lovable character at St. Jim's I have no hesitation in saying that quite a large number of those present would promptly answer with a note of affection in their voices that Gussy was the most lovable, and they

might truthfully add the most laughable also. I should cordially agree with them. There are many cases in the realms of fiction where the most lovable people are also the funniest, though there are of course exceptions to this rule. In the pages of Dickens we find aristocrats such as Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Frederic Verisopht who were neither lovable nor laughable, but thorough bounders, but in Arthur Augustus we have an aristocrat of the very finest type and tradition. Let us examine him as closely as we can and see why this is so. In the first place he was no snob, be it stated. Snobbery in the writer's opinion is of various kinds, but Arthur Augustus could never be called a snob of any kind. He has a few faults which make their appearance at times, but as a general rule the emphasis is all on the other side. He is the sort of fellow who suddenly hits upon an economic truth, when the reader, knowing his aristocratic, leisurely, and cultural background, would not expect him to do so.

Some of us may remember that when Harry Hammond, a member of the working-class, whose people had grown rich through business ability and the selling of popular hats, came to St. Jim's, Gussy made friendly approaches to him not because of Hammond's money but because he was having a rough time of it at the school. His gentle and kindly nature was always coming to the fore over matters like these. I have already hinted that he occasionally hit upon an economic truth. It was true in the case of Hammond, for instance. When that youth was being chipped and derided on account of his frightful accent and working-class associations, Gussy very sensibly makes the profound remark, "that if it were not for the workahs cheps like us could not exist." It was indeed true. The humour of the situation lies in the fact that it was Gussy who saw the truth while the fellows around him apparently could not see. They were indeed too blinded with snobbery to be able to do so. He would have been the first to object to a man like Sir Hilton Popper - closely related to him by class and upbringing - to hedging off a piece of land that should have been used for the public good. Incidentally I might remark here that in view of what usually happens when a place is "thrown open" to the

public in the shape of stray tins, paper, and banana-skins, I have some sneaking sympathy for Sir Hilton's point of view!

D'Arcy, Conway, and Lord Eastwood had nothing in common with many of the French aristocrats of the Eighteenth Century, many of whom were rogues and tyrants who certainly deserved to fall. The historical lingering on of boys like Arthur Augustus did no harm to a changing social order. True he was rather an anachronism - one feels too that the Welfare State would have made short work of him because he was not a member of the working class. They would have crunched his topper and monocle underfoot, and the Labour Exchange would have directed him to a factory in order to increase Productivity and to aim at targets, but they would have failed to crush his soul or his dignity. They were inborn and permanent.

The top-hat has come to mean these days a mere symbol of wealth, greed and success, but it took on a very different character as it sat straight on the noble head of Arthur Augustus. It was in fact a kind of outward sign of an invisible grace; so also was the monocle, for to be sure it appeared to be a natural part of his eye and seemed to grow there.

It should never be forgotten that this laughable, lovable, and aristocratic personage was considerably more than a mere buffoon, fop, and mirth-provoker. True he was something of all these things, but he was infinitely more. He had a serious nature and was anxious to do that which was right and fit.

Aristocrats have often been represented in fiction as being very bad, such as Sir John Chester, or incredibly dull as was Sir Leicester Dedlock. Later on came the "blood" and the Burlington Bertie type of person who were not necessarily aristocrats at all, but who retained the "cane" and the monocle and were imitated more or less correctly by the early Edwardian Music Hall comedians. By 1914 the "Nut" had appeared. All these individuals were "dressy". They had a certain sartorial splendour and dazzle, but they one and all lacked the dignity of Arthur Augustus.

Nothing is more amusing than some of the passages in the "Gem" between Jack Blake and Gussy. Blake's "cheek" always makes Gussy rise, and in my view these things are the

real, genuine, sound stuff of the dear old "Gem" in its heyday. D'Arcy was no feeble, empty-headed or ephemeral character invested with "glamour" and put there to attract snobbishly-inclined readers. He knew how to use his fists to good purpose, and these were often used to protect the weak against the strong. He avoided dullness on one side and wickedness on the other.

In our time we have seen the fall of kings, and corrupt, mighty and immoral empires crumble into dust almost overnight. We have, in fact, seen innumerable changes both good and bad, but if there is one thing that could never change it is the noble and generous heart of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. That was founded upon the rock.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

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All communications to Robert Blythe,
46 Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

Once again I am in the happy position of being able to sit back whilst others take the stage.

Some years ago we did a spot of research to find out how many copies of No.1 were in existence. We found that there were no more than 8 (at that time) so it's highly improbable that more than a few of you have even seen a copy. As for the story itself - it's covered with impenetrable mist, until now when Jack Cook of Newcastle blows a few of the cobwebs away. I've got my metaphors a bit mixed, but what's it matter, so long as you're 'appy?

THE MYSTERY OF LIMEHOUSE REACH

Being a short synopsis of No.1 Nelson Lee Library.

By Jack Cook

Smuggling on a huge scale has been going on along the river and the police suspect a local H.Q. Under the flooring of a well known seamen's public house there is a secret way into the vaults. This is used by Brassard, the leader of the smuggling gang.

Nelson Lee, disguised as a seaman tries to find information by visiting the pub and listening to the various conversations going on around him. A member of the gang

suspects him and tests him with sea songs. A glass of beer which has been poisoned is handed to him and only the timely interruption by another member being chased by the police saves him. The gang escape and Lee notices the cellar retreat. He obstructs the police so as to gain favour with the gang. The police chase Lee and Nipper into the river and are caught. Lee arranges that Nipper escapes during the Court proceedings - at a given signal from him. Unfortunately Lee is detained by a too zealous officer, but Nipper, with the aid of the gang escapes and is taken down into the secret H.Q. in the vaults.

A fight ensues between Brassard and a queer old character, Blind Dick. Nipper sticks up for the blind man and Brassard is suspicious of him. Brassard imprisons Nipper in a cellar near the water edge. Lee cruising down the river spots Nipper at the grating. He charges the place and with police aid Nipper is rescued.

Brassard is then unmasked and is revealed as the murderer of a fellow policeman. He pays for his crime and the smuggling comes to an end - thanks to Nelson Lee and Nipper.

In spite of the considerable controversy which recently rages over the inoffensive head of E.S.B., very few of you have taken the step of putting your thoughts on paper. Probably you thought, as I did at one point, that there was no need, as his detractors didn't really know what they were talking about anyway, not having read sufficient of his stories to form a fair judgment. Nevertheless, a few comments from the large body of Lee-ites would have been warmly welcomed. It is more than pleasing therefore to be able to give you this summing up by Jim Hurrell of Romford.

IN DEFENCE OF ^{THE} BROOKS

By Jas. W. Hurrell

It seems to be that about 80% of "Old Boys'" Book lovers have AN IDOL, an IDOL that is far above any other. That idol is the great Chas. Hamilton. He is, of course, an idol of mine, but his undoubted genius does not blind my eyes from the fact that some other authors may also have "something". It strikes me, from what I have read in the

C.D. and other journals, and from discussions at Old Boys Meetings, that there is a great and absurd prejudice against other authors, especially in the realm of school stories.

Take the latest article, in the C.D., by S.F. Jones. In dealing with stories written by E.S.B. in the Magnet and Gem, he writes, as I see it, very disparagingly of his (Brooks') efforts. He blames E.S.B. for bringing in what he calls "N.L. or Brooksian", characteristics, such as "dotty", "biffed", "my son", "my sons", and the Handforthian "my lad". Well, why not! Mr. Brooks had stepped into the breach to write up these stories, but do you hear any faint word of thanks to Brooks! Not on your life. Only criticisms.

Note that this staunch Hamiltonian says of Brooks that his plots are "generally feeble, boring and unconvincing". No word here, of course, that some C.H. stories were ditto. He goes on to say that "Brooks writing Hamilton is like a small boy wearing his father's clothes. This would apply in reverse, if Hamilton wrote Brooks, of course, but nobody would dare think of that.

S.F. Jones does give some (grudging, it seems to me) praise to E.S.B. for his work in the "N.L." and mentions the "brilliant" Ezra Quirke series. Well, that is something handed down to us N.L. fans from the lofty Hamiltonian perch and I suppose we must be thankful for small mercies—

As a lover of both E.S.B. and C.H. may I ask a little more indulgence and fairness in debates etc. on the merits or demerits of the two writers, a little less dogmatism, if you will, from Hamilton fans.

My own opinion is that BOTH writers in their own spheres were great, that they both enthralled us as boys, and that in an insane world we can still read and re-read again the exploits of the boys of Greyfriars, St. Jims, Rookwood and St. FRANKS.

URGENTLY WANTED: Magnets, 1142, 1145, 1149, 1153, 1154, 1161-64, 1175, 1184, 1197, 1198, 1201, 1202, 1212, 1221, 1223, 1225 and some earlier numbers.

Roger Jenkins, "Strathmore, Town Hall Road, Havant, Hants.

L E T T E R B O X

Half Rations

18th June, 1952.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Your readers might be interested to learn that during the summer months, it has been necessary for us to curtail our TOM MERRY series from two a month down to one a month. It was a step which we were most reluctant to take, but was occasioned by the seasonal drop in sales. Provided that the demand is there in the Autumn, we shall be happy to revert back to two issues per month.

Yours faithfully,
for HAMILTON & CO (STAFFORD) LTD.
H. ASSAEL,
Director.

Justice for a Veteran

3 Montgomery Drive,
Sheffield 7.
June 1st, 1952.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Referring to paragraph four of the article "That Enduring Magic" published in the C.D. Annual for 1951, may I point out that although Gunby Hadath may have been congratulated as recently as 1945 for his originality in introducing a secondary school boy into a public school, his original serial story on this theme appeared in "The Captain" for 1912. The title "Conquering Claybury", later published in book form as "Schoolboy Grit".

Yours truly,

LEONARD M. ALLEN.

(Note: Gunby Hadath, author of many fine school yarns, is now over eighty and, unfortunately, in a very feeble state of health. - H.L.)

SALE: Nelson Lees, Union Jacks, S.O. Libraries.

WANTED: Lees (old series), Chums, comics.

L. M. Allen, 3 Montgomery Drive, Sheffield 7.

Request for a new "Magnet"

The Modern School,
Surbiton.

11th June 1952.

Dear Mr. Editor,

It is interesting to note Mr. Down's opinion that the Magnet will never re-appear, - and that Billy Bunter will never come back. But surely Bunter has come back. At any rate, Bentall's of Kingston seem to be doing a roaring trade with yellow-jacketed books which feature a character of this name, whom they describe as the world's greatest schoolboy character.

Mr. Down's view with regard to the "Magnet" may, unfortunately, prove to be right. There is, I believe, an unwritten law in the publishing trade, that a paper which fails to appear without previous notice of its suspension, shall never appear again. But the circumstances under which the "Magnet" passed away were a little unusual, and I cannot help thinking that, were it not for the paper difficulty, the Amalgamated Press might be tempted to cash in on the Bunter demand, and try their luck.

The advertisements argument is not, I think any real reason for not publishing a boys' paper, though it probably carries weight during a paper shortage.

I cannot believe that the day of the school story is past, as Mr. Downs suggests. These things go in cycles, and it seems to me that the early years of this century saw a surfeit of story papers of the extravagant adventure type. Even the Gem published adventure stories for a very short time, in its early days.

Boys today are mentally lazy. In school they like television, radio, handwork, and P.T., rather than real lessons. It's the spirit of the age. They would rather look lazily over a periodical telling a story in pictures than read a book. But I fancy they would like to get hold of a good periodical of the Magnet type if they could. At any rate, we stock the Tom Merry books in our school tuck-shop, and we have sold hundreds since they first appeared, - and at 1/6 a time. Let the Amalgamated Press experiment with the Magnet for a month or two when the paper shortage is less acute. I doubt if they would regret it. Yours faithfully, ERIC FAYNE.



(THE ROUND TABLE)

10, Erw Wen.
Rhiwbina.
Cardiff.

Very many thanks to all those who have written to me during the past month. Your letters have been most interesting and certainly encouraging. Although we may differ as regards our opinions of various authors & artists in the Blake field, we all seem to think the same about the main character and almost without a single exception we agree that the Blake of the present is but a shadow of the Blake of the past. Nevertheless, now and then we catch a glimpse of the Blake of old in the modern stories and when we do it makes all the difference to our enjoyment of the story concerned and also in our view of the present day S.B.L. But it is the policy of the 'Round Table' to let readers have their own say-so and accordingly I will quote from recent letters.

Firstly another welcome letter from Vera Coates. She remarks that she could not find a voting slip re the return of the S.B.L. reviews, in the last number. No, I am sorry about that Vera, there was an unfortunate slip up on my part and perhaps it was just as well, for I intended to include a voting form which could have been cut from that issue and afterwards Herbert informed me that not many readers would like to do this. You will

see what I have done about this on another page. I might add here that there is no need for those who have already given their views on the question of S.B.L. reviews to repeat them in the manner I suggest. Up to now I think the majority vote FOR them, but more of this later. Enough to say that Miss Coates is on the side of those who think they should return to our pages. I am delighted to know that she managed to get a set of the 'Mr. List' series mainly due to the insertion of her last letter in these pages. I hope more of this sort of thing will happen in the future. Vera goes on to say: 'I don't know if I am the only one, but I have enjoyed the two current S.B.Ls "The Man from Space" and "The House on the River" very much indeed, they seemed more interesting and the latter seemed more like the story Gwyn Evans would have written. Reading it reminded me of him continually, and strange to relate I have borrowed some early C.Ds and came across the article "John Drummond" by John Cocher Jnr published in 1947 which contained the words --- He had, from the start, a distinctive style which often reminds me of the late lamented Gwyn Evans --- that is strange to me, but I feel there must be some resemblance as I had no idea any one else thought about it also. Every success to the Round Table'. Thank you very much Vera, we hope to hear from you again soon.

Next a letter from our old friend Wilfred Darwin, enclosing another article (very welcome Wilf) entitled 'The Last Days of the Union Jack'. Although this little article is on the same lines as some we have printed very recently it has a different touch about it and I am sure all readers will find it interesting when it appears in the near future. Wilf says he has recently come across a paper backed novel entitled 'Five in Fear' by the late G. H. Toed. It is obviously a reprint of some sort and he wishes to know if anyone can tell him anything about it and whether it has any connections with Blake. As far as I am concerned it rather strikes a chord, but search as I may amongst my collection I cannot discover anything, yet it rather seems to me that it is a reprint of a past Blake story. Can anyone else help here. If Wilf could

give us a little more detail of the novel it might be of help. The first paragraph would give a clue perhaps! Wilf goes on: 'I was reading a **back** of crime stories a short time ago, edited by Dorothy L. Sayers. In the introduction she had quite a few interesting comments to make about Sexton Blake and the Blake authors. She thinks the stories are very well written with good plots. I'm not so sure that she knows Blake as well as she makes out though, for she drops a brick by calling Pedro a bulldog'.

I'll say Miss. Sayers dropped a brick. Of course the words might have been written without reference to the stories of the past, and it appears to me that she must be referring to the older ^{type} type of Blake story rather than the current series.

A most interesting letter from a newcomer, Neil J. Gourlay of Whitley Bay. I must thank you sincerely for your interest Mr. Gourlay, or should I say 'Neil'. I think your letter deserves printing in full so here goes:

'My interest in the old Boys papers of the past, of my youth in the later 'thirties, was revived by the new Tom Merry books. A copy of the C.D. came into my hands and made me decide to join the O.B.B.C. However, on reading your S.B. section I found my latent fascination for the famous detective was aroused, in addition to the work of Charles Hamilton. I have always regretted that the only present day S.B. adventures are those in the S.B. L. Since the war I have tried odd issues of this but the character seemed but a ghost of his old self. It has been said of Blake's famous contemporary that although Holmes survived the terrible duel with Dr. Moriarity he was never quite the same man afterwards. In the same manner it can be said that although Blake lived on in name through the second World War, he died in spirit in 1939. What is wrong with the present stories? They are so ordinary, humdrum. They are written in an uninspiring style, about ordinary people. Whatever else might have been said of the old stories at least the characters could never be called ordinary. How thin seem the present day plots. No Plummer, Rymor, Yvonne, Zenith, Waldo, or any of the other intriguing foemen against whom Blake could pit his

vits. Moreover the criminals are so potty. What is a more murderer or swindler compared with Dr. Satira who could hold all England to ransom! How weak seems a mere murder for revenge compared to a dreaded Chinese Tong who are prepared to carve up half the population of London with their knives! No, Blake is not the same man in 1952 as he was in 1932. I fancy the cause of the decline is the attempt to subdue the so called sensationalism of the old days and to convert Blake into a criminal investigator of the Hercule Poirot or Ellery Queen type. It will not succeed! As Mr. E. S. Turner pointed out in his book "Boys Will Be Boys", Sexton Blake is not a master of deduction like Holmes. What we want from Blake is action and crime of the grand scale. A Blake plot needs a touch of the bizarre, like the late G. H. Tood or Gwyn Evans could supply. Our favourite detective has more in common with the late 18th century Gothic stories of Maria Edgeworth and Horace Walpole, than with a modern Crime Club novel. Compare the titled as a modern Blake S.B.L. novel with some of the old titles. A story called "Secret of the Caretaker" or "Murder of an A.R.P. Warden" does not catch my imagination like the title you quoted in your article "The Blake Abbot of Chong Tu". I have not read the story, but just reading the title makes me tingle with an anticipation which the title of a modern 1952 story could never arouse. Unhappily I have a feeling that the old days are gone forever, and I have a suspicion that if a story with a title as above were submitted to the current editor it would be turned down as "too sensational". Our only hope of reading such yarns appears to be through back numbers of the days when Blake really meant something more than a cartoon strip in "Knockout" to the youth. I have written quite a lot but I hope you are interested in hearing from yet another person who recalls the old days of Blake. Thank you again for Blakiana. I have to someday get a copy of "The Black Abbot" and try to recapture something of the old thrill of reading an S.B. story.'

What a tonic that letter from Neil is. May he write in often and to great length. I am writing you in the

near future and will give you fuller details of the famous Black Abbot story.

Sorry I still cannot give readers any news of the last meeting of the Sexton Blake Circle. Evidently the founder members have either emigrated or shut up shop for the summer season!

Cheerio for now.

H. MAURICE BOND.

S.B.L. REVIEWS. Will all readers let me know if they want these to return. Send a postcard to the Round Table address. Mark it YES or NO and add the words S.B.L. Reviews. And don't forget YOUR name and address. H.M.B.

TALKING OF BLAKE by Graham Davies. Discovery of the S.B.L.

I must make it clear at the outset that I can lay no claim to be included amongst those Blake enthusiasts who are also Blake erudites. My knowledge of the Man from Baker Street does not extend farther back than 1929, & I am well aware that I arrived on the Blakeian scene long after some of the greatest battles had been fought and won, and after some of the famous, and infamous, characters had departed. Indeed, it was not until quite recent years that I learned the full facts about the monstrous and infernal Criminals Confederation, against whose sinister leaders Blake had been engaged in deadly and relentless war as far back, I believe, as 1912. Nor again was I able to discover, until recently, the facts of that unusual and rather unprecedented period of Blake's career when he was thrown by Fate into conflict with the unforgettable Yvonne Cartier, whose true feelings towards Blake (and Blake's towards her) were ultimately and eternally revealed by G. H. Ford in No. 1 of the S.B.L. Library. I am merely a Blake lover; a lover of a character in English fiction who, although primarily created for boys, through some magic of his personality, and indeed of the personalities of his inseparable associates, Tinko, Inspector Courtts, Mrs. Wardell and the rest, has won and kept my affection even though the boy has long since been left behind, leaving a rather soured and sooty adult in his place. My discovery of the S.B.L. and the U.J. at the age of 11 in 1929, affected me

in the same way as the discovery of America must have affected Columbus in 1492. (Or was it Vespucci? I can never remember who got there first.) What was this S.B.L? How long had it been 'on the go'? And, who were all these authors and how many of them were there? Overnight, I became not merely a Blake enthusiast, but a Toed-Skene-Evans Murray-Chester enthusiast, and last but no means least, an Eric R. Parker enthusiast too. For, in retrospect, I think that it was not only Blake's personality & character that were so likeable, but, at the same time, that Toed, Murray, Evans & their colleagues must too have been some of the best fellow one could ever have met; after all, it takes a good fellow to write about a good fellow. And I am not forgetting, of course, that Blake is still the good fellow now that he was in those days. Whilst, last, but not least, there was the sure hand of Eric Parker to create before my eyes the exact & perfect picture of the Baker St. criminologist, just as I had conceived of him in my mind. I believe it is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of Parker's distinct & individual artistry as a contributing factor to the fame & popularity which Blake enjoyed from about 1929 onwards. Not that he did not enjoy such fame for many years previously. But Arthur Jones and the rest were not ideal Blake artists, whilst Parker is the only Blake artist; and who, incidentally, can draw those charming heroines of Blakian adventure more attractively than he?

To be concluded.

In the forthcoming AUGUST number of the C. D. we hope to include the following:

1. Talking Of Blake (conclusion) by Graham Davies.
2. Blake in the Edwardian Era. Chapter Twelve.
3. The Last Days of the U.J. by Wilfred Darwin.
4. The Round Table. (with some new revelations!)

Apologies are offered to Graham Davies for not being able to feature all his interesting article in one number and to Walter Webb for not being able to include his memoirs of Blake in the Edwardian Era at all. I trust they will understand that we have to strictly limit number of pages.