

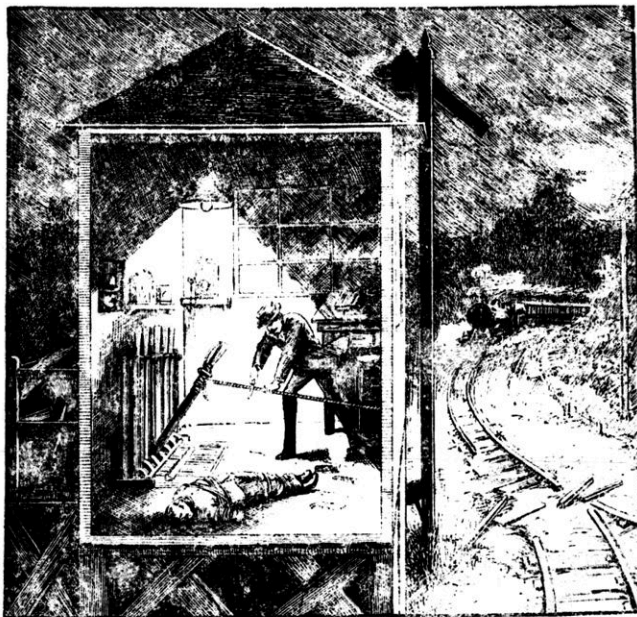
THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 10, No. 113.

MAY, 1956

PRICE 1s. 6d.

REPRODUCED FROM "FUN & FICTION"
No. 5, NOVEMBER 11th, 1911. (Story in No. 6)



This ceiling scene occurs in a thrilling detective story of Adam Ewart which will appear in this paper next week. The finely-drawn illustration reproduced above will be seen on the cover of our next number, so please ask your friends to look out for it. In the signal-box, the millionaire detective is endeavouring to cut the cable which holds back the signal lever. Will he succeed in time to save the scores of lives dependent upon his rapidity of action?

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The Collectors' Digest

Vol. 10 No. 113

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MAY, 1956

Editor, HERBERT LECKENBY,
c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
7, The Shambles, York

From the Editor's Chair

COLLECTORS CONVERSE IN CEYLON. Once again that Happy Wanderer, Alan Stewart, has met a fellow collector far away from home. Listen to this in a letter from A.C.H. de Soysa of Colombo to Ben Whiter.

"I have a piece of news which I am sure will interest you. Please pass on to Herbert Leckenby. On Sunday evening, 11th March, I got a telephone call from Alan Stewart who was passing through Colombo. He was leaving at midnight on the Monday.

As we had arranged to have an evening party at our home the next day I asked Alan to come along. He arrived sharp on time with a friend. It was thrilling to meet a fellow old boy for the first time in the flesh and we had a wonderful evening, although I would have preferred a quieter one for a long jaw with Alan. News got about at the party and, as a result, I am contacting two girls who are likely to join the O.B.B.C., having been Bunter fans for years."

Great work! Whither next, Alan?

* * * * *

EXHIBITIONS AGAIN. As will be seen from the Merseyside Club report an exhibition of old boys' books was on show at the Bootle Art Gallery for several days in April. Judging by a lengthy and excellent report in the Liverpool "Daily Post" it was a big success. The report was headed "Schoolboy Literature on Show and They Still Plump for Billy Bunter in Bootle". It went on to say:

"Are the exploits of Billy Bunter and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy too pedestrian for the youth of the modern space travel age? Officials of Bootle Art Gallery, where the experiment of an Old Boys Book Club exhibition is now being staged, are gratified to find that the answer is No.

Moreover, the schools of the borough are still on holiday so that the steady stream of young visitors who walk in of their own volition, instead of in organised school groups, is proof that Greyfriars and St. Jim's remain immortal, despite the rivalry of Davy Crockett. But it was not all Bunter & Co.; by no means. There was an impressive

display of scores of boys' weeklies of all types going back 50 years and more."

A notice was displayed by this enterprising Club of ours; "If these periodicals arouse nostalgic memories we will have achieved our object."

Nice work, Merseyside.

***** * *****

WHAT'S IN A NAME? It would appear that several loyal Leeites could not resist the temptation of an investment on a quadruped which ran in a certain event at Aintree recently. Owing to the fact that the animal ran more quickly and was not as unlucky as others in the race the speculators were more successful than Cutts, Loder & Co. usually are.

***** * *****

INDEX VOL. 2. I have been asked when I am going to publish this. Well, it's a long time since Roger Jenkins kindly compiled the details, and I had hoped to have produced it before this. To be frank, the problem is the cost and the situation is now made worse because in June we shall be faced with the increase in postage. Even so, I don't want to increase the cost of the mag. and I shall avoid it if at all possible.

The best way out, I think, is to include the index with the June issue and appeal to you to send me a few coppers in stamps to cover the cost on this particular occasion. I feel sure you will back me up.

***** * *****

THE TENTH ANNUAL. I had a letter from Geof. Hockley that breezy New Zealander the other day, in which, after saying some nice things about the Annual, went on:

"So the next Annual will be the 10th. Let's all pitch in and make it a super-duper! I'd love to have the privilege of making a modest contribution if you can find room for it. Anyway, I'm going to get busy in the fairly near future, on the assumption that you'll be able to! And I've just about decided that an article on Captain F. H. Shaw's wonderful war and adventure serials in "Chum's" might have a chance of being well received."

Well, needless to say, I have told Geof. to 'get cracking'. His Peter Flint and S. Walkey articles were winners and I am sure he can make a treble of it.

And now I hope more of you are preparing to 'pitch in' as Geof. puts it. We've reached the merry month of May, you know. And, oh by the way, it will be a merrier one for me if those seven subs. still

outstanding for the last one come in before we pass into
Glorious June.

Yours sincerely,
HERBERT LECKENBY.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN.

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

First of all I have an apology to make. Owing to misunderstanding my informant on the telephone, I inadvertantly stated that the editor of the S. B. Lib. died last year. What should have been said was that he retired last year. Sorry about this mistake on my part!

Owing to reasons of space I am altering the order in which the main Blakiana features will appear in the next few issues. They will, however, be the titles as stated last month.

I have now received the articles from Victor Colby and Eric Copeman (both Australians). The former's article is entitled "Wal I'm Derved". Mr. Copeman's shorter article appears in this issue together with Walter Webb's "Who Was Lady Molly?".

Josie Packman.

*** * ***

WHO WAS LADY MOLLY?

by Walter Webb

To the Sexton Blake enthusiast whose reading of the famous character has been confined to the pages of the "Union Jack", "Sexton Blake Library" and "Detective Weekly" the name of Lady Marjorie Maxwell is not likely to revive any distant memories. A product of the Edwardian era, Lady Molly was not of the usual trend of heroines of that period - she was no timid, shrinking violet whose feminine heart beat flutteringly under the battery of admiring male eyes, or failed her altogether at the merest sign of danger from the villain whose object it was to win her at any cost. On the contrary, she was a most aloof young woman and, according to the author who related the stories featuring her exploits in the "Penny Pictorial" between the years 1908-9, a

proud and haughty one as well. Assertive to the point of dominance, she was hardly an endearing sort of person, and it is a matter of some surprise that Blake, whose strength of character and force of will is a byword, should have allowed himself to succumb so tamely to her imperious commands. However, this may be explained by the fact that in the short stories in the "Pictorial" he was a younger and less mature Blake than when featured in the larger tales in the "Union Jack" and for that reason was more susceptible to the wiles and charms of the opposite sex. Be that as it may, an invitation to tea from the lady, as in "The Case of the White Satin Dress", was tantamount to a command, and it was more than Blake dare do to refuse.

Daughter of a rich man, and being under no obligation to work for her living, Lady Molly found idleness so irksome to her restless and impetuous nature that she decided to follow in the footsteps of the man she so secretly admired, who was even then becoming famous in the profession he had decided upon - Sexton Blake.

A lady detective was something of a novelty in those days, but if they made any sort of impression it was not strong enough to prompt the editor of the "Unuon Jack" to team Blake up with one. Anyway, no reader's letter reproduced in the pages of that paper appeared to favour the introduction of such a character so it may be accepted that such a move would not have had universal acclamation.

Lady Molly made her debut, as far as I can trace, in No. 488 of the "Penny Pictorial", dated 3 October 1908, in a story called "The Two M's", and was described therein as "Sexton Blake's understudy". She was featured so prominently that Blake himself was almost crowded out. In fact, it was only in the last column that the detective put in an appearance, fortunately for Lady Molly, who, having fallen into the clutches of anarchists, was being tortured by them for the purpose of extracting from her information which would have been invaluable for the furtherance of their plans.

Of the stories - little more than half-a-dozen in number - little enthusiasm can be felt, for their quality was but mediocre, and to bestow any sort of praise at all one has to turn to the illustrations, which were admittedly very well done by the late R.J. Macdonald. The famous "Gem" artist was responsible for the bulk of the drawings to the Blake stories in the "Penny Pictorial", his place being filled by J. Louis Smythe on the occasions of his rare non-appearances. Smythe, whose work adorned the pages of film comic weeklies such as "Film Fun" and "Kinema Comic", amongst other well-known juvenile periodicals, was a very pleasing as well as a most able deputy, and between these two

artists of contrasting styles there was really little to choose.

So much then for Lady Molly Maxwell, who, having failed to make the grade, needs must go on record as being another assistant of the famous man of Baker Street - then in practise at Norfolk Street - the only difference in her case, apart from her sex, being in the fact that whereas Tinker, We-wee and Wallace Lorrimore, Topper and Barry were paid for their services, her ladyship gave hers voluntary. Her reason for teaming with Blake was never made clear, but reading between the lines one came to feel that she was ever secretly anticipating the fact that Blake would one day ask her to be his life partner.

But, as history has told us, Blake was content to be wedded only to his chosen profession, much to the heartfelt regret of a certain beautiful but lonely red-haired girl from Bingabong, in far-off Australia, who would willingly have sacrificed her considerable riches to have been mated to the firm, strong, yet kindly man to whom she so completely lost her heart.

A HOLIDAY WITH SEXTON BLAKE

by E.V. Copeman

We came home from our annual holidays a week ago. We went to the seaside, my wife, my small son and myself - but instead of warm sunny days on the beach we saw grey skies, turbulent seas and a Bunter-like quota of RAIN. But we're not complaining, because we took a friend with us.

The name of the friend: SEXTON BLAKE.

Yes, even young Robert (aged $3\frac{1}{2}$) knows Sexton Blake and can pick him out on the covers of the S.B.L. At the end of our holidays he could tell us without hesitation exactly which Blakes out of our "holiday batch" both Mummy and Daddy had read.

We decided to be up-to-date and see what Blake was doing lately so we took all the 1955 case-books with us for our "spare time". We didn't expect to have quite as much spare time as we did, so it was as well we were prepared. A new bedside reading-lamp in our holiday flat helped things along too.

I began with MURDER IN THE AIR by John Hunter and found it brisk and well-written and I fancy it contains three of the best-described fights I remember in any of the S.B.L.'s. Then I tackled THE CASE OF THE FORBIDDEN ISLAND by Walter Tyrer. Usually I enjoy Tyrer but this one was a real flop and it was as much as I could do to read it. I fancied it had been written ages ago for a boy's paper and then altered

to include Blake and Tinker. Definitely much ado about nothing and I couldn't get interested. To make up for it I next tackled a "ring-in" from 1954, THE SECRET OF THE MOROCCAN BAZAAR, which was Anthony Parsons at his best. Followed again with the most recent Parsons effort for 1955, THE CASE OF THE FRIGHTENED MAN, and was very intrigued at the detail of Tinker's prison experiences (a lot of thought given to that), and enjoyed brief interludes with Venner and Belford. Next was W. Howard Baker's THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH, which was a big improvement on the flirty, flashy Blake of WITHOUT WARNING. I like Baker's style, so long as he keeps Blake to character and doesn't have three women flinging themselves at him in each book. But who told him poor old Couatts still wore a uniform (Page 20) and that he was thin and bald-headed (Page 46)? So back to Anthony Parsons again for THE TRAIL OF THE MISSING SCIENTIST which was good stuff and quick (even though Parker's "stolen" cover wasn't in the story and Pedro, as usual, not mentioned, though in the illustration). From Parsons over to John Drummond for a very competent job on THE TEDDY-BOY MYSTERY, then across to Parsons again for THE CASE OF THE INDIAN WATCHER, another excellent story. Then to Rex Hardinge for THE MAN WITH FIVE ENEMIES which I completed while we experienced one of the most torrential downpours we've ever had in this area.

Meanwhile, my wife read two Parsons case-books in a row, THE SECRET OF THE ROMAN TEMPLE and THE CASE OF THE FRIGHTENED MAN, then tried Howard Baker's WITHOUT WARNING and returned hurriedly to Parsons for THE CASE OF THE SIX O'CLOCK SCREAM and finished up with Rex Hardinge's 1954 yarn, THE VOYAGE OF FEAR.

Legitimate adult novels as well during our holidays? Sure. Four novels by good old ex-Blake/ex-N.L.L. writer EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, two in his role of Victor Gunn and two as Berkeley Gray. We've discovered E.S.B. is now a split personality. My wife favours Victor Gunn, but give me Berkeley Gray every time! (But why oh why doesn't he write just one Blake now and then? It would be a treat because he hasn't lost his punch and you can't put him down).

And as for young Robert, he had his favourite Blake yarns too, MURDER IN THE AIR (because it has an aeroplane on the cover), THE FORBIDDEN ISLAND (because Blake and Tinker are readily recognisable), THE MAN WITH FIVE ENEMIES (because the bathroom sink was like the one at our "holiday house"), Jardine's RIDDLE OF THE GREEN CYLINDER (because "poor Tinker couldn't call out to his Mummy and had his mouth taped up"), Parsons' PRISONER OF THE HOLD (because the gangway to the ship was green), THE TEDDY-BOY MYSTERY (because the boy wore a bootlace tie), Drummond's

TWO-FACED SWINDLER (because the leering cover amused him.)

Altogether a happy holiday despite the weather.

Because we were with SEXTON BLAKE.

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UNION JACK TITLES - YEAR 1920 (July - December)

No. 873	The Man Who Died (Crim. Con.)	R. Murray.
" 874	The Chessington Towers Mystery	E. S. Brooks.
" 875	The Death Spider (Zenith)	A. Skene.
" 876	The Shadow (Crim. Con.)	R. Murray.
" 877	The Jewel of Muralpoor (The Owl)	A. Murray.
" 878	The Island of Death (Losely & Lob.)	C. Hayter.
" 879	The Clue of the Death's Head Moth	H. G. Hill.
" 880	The Man in the Smoked Glasses (The Owl)	A. Murray.
" 881	The Colour Line	-
" 882	The Man with Two Faces	W. M. Graydon.
" 883	The Mystery of La Perousse (Losely)	C. Hayter.
" 884	The Case of the Cotton Syndicate Fraud	A. Murray.
" 885	The Heir to Chiverton	A. Murray.
" 886	The Case of the Bogus Judge (Kestrel)	L. Jackson.
	(First coloured cover, dated 2 October 1920)	
" 887	The Dog Detective (Crim. Con.)	R. Murray.
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" 889	The Case of the Crystal Gazer (Zenith)	A. Skene.
" 890	The Mist of Sleep (Kestrel)	L. Jackson.
" 891	The Case of the Paralysed Man (Kestrel)	L. Jackson.
" 892	The Case of the Chinese Antique (Waldo)	E. S. Brooks.
" 893	A Bid for Billions (Crim. Con.)	R. Murray.
" 894	The Strange Case of the Elsingham Legend (Zenith)	A. Skene.
" 895	The Extreme Penalty (Crim. Con.)	R. Murray.
" 896	The Mystery of Littlethake Cottage	C. Hayter.
" 897	A Price on His Head (Kestrel)	L. Jackson.
" 898	The Case of the Toxic Tulips (Zenith)	A. Skene.

(Number 873 is dated 3 July 1920, and number 898 is dated

25 December 1920.)

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HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by Herbert Leckenby

Gilbert Harding told a story in his column in "The People" on April 15th which seemed appropriate to retell here: It concerned a friend of his who went to visit his twelve year old son at a boarding-school. After a chat to the Head who seemed very pleased with things, and a look at a Soccer game he set off to find his son. I quote:

"First he met a prefect. He gave him 'an absolute cert.' for the 3.30 race, and it came in at 100-8!

Then, passing a shrubbery, the proud father smelled the smoke of the finest Virginia tobacco and glimpsed three figures and a flash of playing cards.

A little surprised, father passed by and eventually found his twelve year old son.

In the bulging pocket of the boy's blazer he noticed the corner of a crumpled but familiar green-and-gold packet!"

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Except that Cutts, Loder & Co. never seemed to pick one like that prefect.

Now to continue with Roger Jenkins' defence of Rookwood. As I anticipated what he said last month created a lot of interest.

THE MAGIC OF ROOKWOOD

(Continued)

The shortness of the stories and the unusual set-up of the main group of characters are two factors which distinguish Rookwood. The third factor is undoubtedly the characterisation of the masters.

Let me make it clear at once that I do not think that Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout were ever equalled, let alone surpassed, by any other masters Charles Hamilton ever depicted. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that it was not until after the Rookwood series in the "Boys' Friend" had finished that these two Greyfriars masters really came into their own. Considered in their proper context, therefore, which is of course 1915-1926, the main Rookwood masters were definitely well in advance of any others depicted by the author at the time.

Dr. Chisholm was a fine character drawing indeed: hasty, impatient, brusque - what a bad headmaster but what a well-drawn character! He

was the flint which sparked to life many a fine Rookwood story. He may have lacked the calm courtesy and penetrating wisdom of his counterparts at St. Jim's and Greyfriars, but he was far more human in his failings and more readily believable as a person.

Mr. Greely was more than a faint copy of Mr. Prout. Both were portly, pompous, and possessed of an assurance that they would make ideal headmasters. But whereas Prout would usually go his own sweet way, Greely had a tendency to go out of his way to ask for trouble, as he did when he took it upon himself to give lectures to the juniors on deportment. Mr. Greely regarded himself as leader of the staff common-room, but his good intentions (together with a sad failure to live up to them) were never so apparent as when the masters went on strike, and he led the deputation to Dr. Chisholm. To quote:-

'Dr. Chisholm raised his hand.

"Mr. Greely and gentlemen, discussion is futile. I shall be obliged if you will allow the matter to rest."

The Fifth Form master drew a deep breath.

"That, sir, we cannot do!" he answered.

"What!"

"We have requested, sir, in the most respectful manner, the reconsideration of Mr. Bootles' dismissal. We are now compelled sir, to proceed further, and protest against that dismissal."

"We protest, sir!" said Mr. Bull firmly.

"An act of injustice to one is an act of injustice to all!" said Mr. Greely. "It is our duty to support our colleague, sir, at this crisis. Therefore, sir, we protest."

The Head's lips were hard set now.

"You protest?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir, most emphatically."

"Very well," said the Head, with grim urbanity. "You protest, and I will duly make note of your protest. I regret that it cannot influence me to alter my decision with regard to Mr. Bootles. And now, gentlemen, I am compelled to remind you that my time is of value."

The unhappy deputation looked at one another.

Monsieur Monceau made a strategic movement towards the door. He backed out, and Mr. Flinders nearly backed into him.

But Mr. Greely maintained his firmness.

"Very well, sir", he said, - "very well! Oh, very well!"

It was always a matter of regret with Mr. Greely afterwards that he could not on the spur of the moment think of anything more

crushing than that.

With that he stalked out of the study, bumping into Mr. Bull and rather spoiling the effect of his exit.

The staff crowded rather confusedly into the corridor.

Mr. Greely popped his head back the next moment.

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"Well, Mr. Greely?"

"The matter does not end here, sir,"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Greely. It does end here. Will you have the goodness to close the door after you?"

Slam.

The staff retired!

Mr. Greely had other differences of opinion with the Head, the most famous of which was probably on the subject of his black eye, which was caused by an accident with a punchball. Dr. Chisholm told him brusquely that such a disfigurement was unseemly in a Rookwood master. Shortly afterwards Hansom's father was attacked by some rogues, and Mr. Greely gallantly went to his rescue, for which he was rewarded by further disfigurements. Without waiting for an explanation, the Head even more brusquely informed him that his resignation was expected. The upshot was that Hansom's father opened a rival school and appointed Mr. Greely headmaster, but it was all too soon apparent that Mr. Greely had not got what it takes to be a headmaster.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, was a remarkable character to be found in the realm of schoolboy fiction. Most masters fall into one of four set types: lax and pleasant, like Mr. Prout; strict but pleasant, like Mr. Railton; strict and stern, but fair, like Mr. Quelch; or stern and unfair, like Mr. Ratcliffe. Mr. Bootles fell into none of these well-defined groups. He was pleasant, mild-mannered, but with a curious habit of interspersing his phrases with "Ah!"s and "Er"s. He seemed at times hardly to have the courage of his own convictions, yet there were unsuspected depths to his character, as on the occasion when he countermanded the Head's order to Jimmy Silver in public, when Jimmy was about to be punished for a trick played by Leggett. He had a quiet dignity about him, too, when he subsequently interviewed the Head:-

"Well, sir, I shall not place my resignation in your hands. To do so would be to acknowledge a fault - which I definitely refuse to acknowledge. I shall not, sir, under any circumstances whatever, resign my post in this school."

"Then it only remains for me to dismiss you, Mr. Bootles."

"You have the power in your hands, sir, to add one injustice to another," said the Form-Master, with dignity. "But I shall certainly not make the path of injustice, sir, easy to you! I refuse to resign, and if you care to carry injustice to the length of depriving me of my position here, I leave it to your conscience, Dr. Chisholm."

The Head set his lips hard.

"Very Well" - his voice was low and incisive - "Mr. Bootles, you are dismissed."

"So be it", said Mr. Bootles.

"I expect you, sir, to leave Rookwood at the earliest possible moment convenient to you. The matter of salary will be arranged to your satisfaction."

"I am not concerned about that, sir; that is a trifle to which I have given no consideration whatever," said poor Mr. Bootles. I have the honour to bid you good morning, Dr. Chisholm."

And more jerky than ever, the little gentleman whisked out of the study.

Later, in the story, when it became apparent that Leggett was the real culprit, the Head showed no signs of relenting towards Mr. Bootles, though all came right eventually. Mr. Bootles' departure came in a later series, his decision to leave Rookwood having been influenced by his sudden inheritance of a great fortune. (The real reason was that there was already a Bootles at St. Kit's and the editor thought that no suplication of names should take place.)

Mr. Bootles was a very individual character, and his departure was a great loss to the Rookwood stories, just as St. Jim's gained nothing when Mr. Kidd left. Mr. Dalton, like Mr. Railton, was likeable enough, but both were drawn too much on stock lines to be able to efface fully the memories of their more unusual predecessors.

Rookwood was surprising in another instance - it was free from the old style tyrant masters. It is true that a tyrant master could at times provide the mainspring of many a good plot, whether it was a full scale rebellion or merely a tale of how the juniors got their own back by a ruse. But there is no blinking the fact that masters as stern and unyielding as Messrs. Ratcliff, Selby, or Hacker would not have kept their positions for long in any reputable public school. Quite apart from the improbability of their having retained their posts, there is the further point that people so wholly unpleasant as these do not occur very frequently, thank goodness. Most bad characters have some redeem-

ing features, but you would have to look fairly closely to find any good points in these three masters. Mr. Selby had perhaps the excuse that he suffered both from indigestion and the practical jokes of the Third Formers, but it would be difficult to find any excuses for Mr. Ratcliff or Mr. Hacker. For this reason I usually find that, although I am prepared to enjoy a tale circulating around the misfortunes of one of these three masters, I nevertheless invariably make a mental reservation that the tale is removed at least one stage from reality; I like all human beings to be portrayed as living characters, with convincing reasons for their bad moods and irritating behaviour. Rookwood had no real counterpart of these three tyrant masters.

What, you may ask, of Mr. Manders, that acid-tempered housemaster on the Modern side? It is true that he was a tyrant master, but he was different because his character was sketched with such a wealth of detail. Messrs. Ratcliff, Selby, and Hacker were rather crudely drawn and seemed to be just caricatures for most of the time, but Mr. Manders was taken a stage further and became a living character because we were told so much about him, and because all that information fitted together in such a way that we could literally hear his unpleasant rasping voice and see him in our mind's eye, gaunt, angular, fussy, interfering, inquisitive, with a passion for science and double-entry book-keeping, fond of elastic-sided boots and down on the three Tommies because they were so cheerful - every story in which he appeared told us more about him and brought him more to life. You could read the Magnet and Gem for a decade and find out less about Ratcliff and Selby and Hacker than the Boys' Friend would tell you about Manders in a few months. For instance, one of his pleasant habits was to snoop round the junior studies in search of incriminating evidence; another was to invite juniors to tea in his study when they happened to be playing in football matches, though Owen Conquest never told us in so many words that Manders issued the invitation specially to stop them playing. It need hardly be added that Mr. Manders did not support his colleagues when they went on strike - indeed he did his best to dissuade Mr. Flinders, a Modern master, from endorsing Mr. Greely's protest to the Head. Perhaps the most revealing stories of all were those serials written for the Gem in the nineteen-thirties, ten years after the original Boys' Friend series had come to an end: one set of these Gem series was later reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library No. 362 entitled "Manders on the Spot", and related how Dr. Chisholm's wallet was stolen by a tramp, who hid it in one of Mr. Mander's overcoats. Every time the Modern Housemaster went out for a walk he was attacked by a tramp who attempted

to steal his overcoat. Nearly every facet of his unpleasant character was depicted with amusing yet penetrating insight in this famous story. There can be no doubt that Charles Hamilton never succeeded so well in drawing an unpleasant master as he did in the case of Roger Manders.

Finally, there is the still unanswered question - why do some keen Hamiltonian collectors find that they are not so fond of Rookwood? The answer to this is, I think, that the juniors seemed much younger than their counterparts at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. I have already mentioned the cheerful nature of the stories, and this is really another aspect of the same factor - the youthfulness of the central characters. I would venture to suggest that Jimmy Silver and Co. were a far more accurate portrayal of fifteen-year old schoolboys than were the Terrible Three or the Famous Five despite the undoubted superiority of the Magnet and Gem groups as character drawings. The juniors at all three schools had their worries and troubles, but at Rookwood these were soon forgotten in the light-hearted manner of youth. In addition Jimmy Silver had a touch of irresponsibility about him - for example when he joined in Lovell's scheme for using cribs in class - which produced a gayer and lighter atmosphere about the stories which was probably more in keeping with the age of the heroes in question. In the result, therefore, the Rookwood stories were simpler and lacking most of the great dramatic themes which constituted some of the finest Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories, but there was compensation in having a more even tenor of existence and a more consistent quality about the story telling. I think I can conclude with a personal touch which illustrates my own attitude to the three schools: very often I go to the bookcase which houses my collection to take down a school story to read; I almost invariably ask myself "Am I in the mood for a Greyfriars or a St. Jim's story?" Whilst I am trying to resolve this difficult problem, my eye lights on the Rookwood stories, and I take down a volume of them without a second thought. I have to be in the mood for Harry Wharton or Tom Merry, but I can read about Jimmy Silver at any time. That is the magic of Rookwood.

FOR SALE: Collectors' Digests Nos. 11, 12, 13, 15, 23, 25, 111.
Best offer for whole or part secures. J. HEPBURN, 1 SIXTH AVENUE,
BLYTH, NORTHUMBERLAND.

Wanted: "School Friend Annual" years 1928, 1929 and 1930. Your price paid. LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON S.E.22.

SOLUTION OF C.D. CROSSWORD No. 2.

ACROSS 1. "I Say You Fellows". 7. Pedro. 10. If. 11. Stags.
 13. "Ale on Draught". 16. Twin. 17. Brat. 18. "Mac".
 19. Henry. 21. Vis. 23. Hilda. 27. Epic. 29. Ail. 31. Net.
 32. Dreamy Daniel. 35. Resales.

DOWN 2. Swell of St. Jim's. 3. Yellow. 4. On Wednesdays.
 5. Century. 6. Bright. 11. Sabre. 12. Aga. 13. Admired.
 14. Etc. 15. Nihil. 20. Castle. 21. Vicar. 22. Finis.
 23. Hie. 24. "Aida". 26. Mee. 28. Pro. 30. Lal. 33. Me.
 34. Ne.

The first correct solution received by the Editor was sent in by W. L. WILLIAMSON, LEEDS., to whom a postal-order for 5/- has been dispatched. The second solution was sent in by LEONARD PACKMAN, to whom a 2/6 book of stamps has been forwarded.

Another Cross-word next month.

"LORD BILLY BUNTER" by Frank Richards (Cassell. 7/6)

Review by Eric Fayne

This is an extremely well-written and readable story, with all the authors well-known pen magic. Billy Bunter is kidnapped while wearing borrowed plumes, and by one of those freaks of coincidence which never seem like freaks when the master-author dishes them out, is rescued by the one and only Arthur Augustus. There is no unexpected twist in the plot, which is a feast of pure nostalgia for the old reader who has really read it all before, - a feast to set before a king. Even Mr. Chapman's motor-bus must have been rolling along the roads in the roaring thirties. It is Frank Richards at his brightest and best, with Bunter's ventriloquism thrown in to add to the fun, and a very welcome peep of St. Jim's, - even if Mr. Chapman's picture of Mr. Railton is rather reminiscent of the Acid Drop.

Old readers will sigh with pleasure, and put the new Bunter on one side with reluctance, while the modern schoolboy will find it a thrilling and altogether satisfying experience. And, as we always maintained, it is proved that Bunter's home is at Reigate, in spite of the printer's error in the later years of the Magnet, which offended our sense of what we knew to be correct by placing Bunter Villa at

Redgate.

LORD BILLY BUNTER

This new Bunter novel, the 18th in Frank Richard's Greyfriars series, is a welcome addition to the familiar scene. It breaks with precedent in that it is the story of something which has already been televised, but in the reading it comes up as fresh and new, thanks to the Master. Like P. G. Wodehouse, Frank Richards has a command of words which defies broadcast or television, and the reader is the better for it. Here we have Bunter kidnapped because, setting out to visit Gussy at St. Jim's, he is newly swept and garnished in Mauly's Sunday suit and hat. The hat blows off, is "fielded" by an American "snatch" expert who consequently mistakes Billy for the noble earl, and promptly kidnaps him. How Billy is finally rescued by the St. Jim's Fourth Formers, and the kidnapper captured by the Famous Five, makes an enjoyable yarn, with some fine characterisation, a leading role, too, for Gussy, and some excellent Chapman drawings.

J. P. WOOD.

FOR SALE: 70 Gems Blue & White 568 - 769, 2/- each. 23 Gems, 1030 - 1094, 2/- each. 16 Gems 1182 - 1398, 1/9 each. 44 Gems 1406 - 1556, 1/6 each. 49 Gems 1557 - 1660, 1/3 each. 5 Green Gems 429 - 431 - 419 - 418 - 428, 3/6 each. 11 Magnets 1239 - 1390, 2/- each. 15 Magnets 1426 - 1500, 1/9 each. 42 Magnets 1501 - 1552, 1/6 each. 73 Magnets 1554 - 1683, 1/3 each. 5 Penny Populars, 12 Greyfriars Herald's, 21 Triumphs, incorporating the Gem, £1. 6. 0. the lot. Postage extra, send for list, S.A.E.

LITVAK, 70 CRANFORD AVE.,
ASHFORD, MIDDLESEX

American Collector wishes to purchase old dolls and old buttons. 18th and 19th centuries. Any amount! Write:- THEO OLBERTZ, PALAIS ALBERT IER, VILLEFRANCHE SUR MER, A.M. FRANCE.

WANTED: "JESTERS" dated 1917-1918 containing serials "Secrets of a Great City" and "The Dauntless Three" complete. Your price given. STANDEN. 33 GRASMERE AVENUE, HEATON CHAPEL, STOCKPORT.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

By Jack Wood, Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

My goodness, Frank Unwin did start a controversy. And it is still raging. Walter Fleming comments:-

"I was very interested in Frank Unwin's article on Edwy Searles Brooks. In general, I am compelled to agree with him, I could, however find some excuse for his drawing of Nipper. Nipper was not my favourite character, but one must remember that he was supposed to have been trained by Nelson Lee. As Lee was later in turn, a Housemaster and Headmaster of St. Franks, it must be assumed that he had some academic qualifications. This must make him an ideal person to teach Nipper - add to this, his brilliant qualities as a detective, is it any wonder that Nipper was pictured as a lot smarter than his schoolfellows? In company with Lee, he must have been around a lot, met many people and seen many things. No, I do not really think he was overdrawn. The character I think was most exaggerated was that of William Napoleon Browne, but none the less I thoroughly enjoyed any yarn in which he played a prominent part.

As I have remarked elsewhere, my personal favourite was Handy and I think a series which really portrayed the many facets of his character was the series in which his brother - in - law, whom Handy had not met, took a post as Remove Form master.

I don't know if any of our St. Franks brethren saw it, but I found a book written during the past two or three years, by ESB under the name of Berkeley Gray (for children) entitled "Lost World of Everest" and it was quite readable, but I missed our favourite characters. I believe I still have it, if anybody would like to borrow it.

An old friend, Bill Champion, entitles his observations "CHANGING HIS SPOTS", and continues:-

"I would like to make it clear from the start that I agree with most of what Frank had to say; but I disagree, and very much so, on two points. A: the last thing I would do would be to characterise Nipper as a "bore": I unhesitatingly place him second to Tom Merry in the popularity list of schoolboy skippers of fiction, and reading of his many escapades and outstanding leadership over the years have

given me an unbounded wealth of pleasure. B: Frank made a somewhat scathing reference to Fullwood's speedy passage from the world of the "Nuts" to the realm of the "Elite", and it is about this latter point that I wish chiefly to protest.

Looking back, in retrospect, I think Brooks' whole handling of this delicate, though more or less major episode in the annals of St. Frank was brilliant in the extreme. To put it in a contemporary nutshell: "he boxed very cleverly!" And was it, in fact, a "speedy passage"? Frank calls it "a matter of weeks" but as the whole transformation covered a period of thirteen weeks, one could as correctly term it "a matter of months".

Brooks' approach to it was simple yet contained the essence of ingenuity: he removed Fullwood from his smug, unhealthy local, and with one swift stroke of the brush deposited him, for eight whole weeks, in the midst of the hundred-per-centers-----sans Gulliver and Bell and all the other undesirables.

How did he do it?

Easily: by arranging for Lord Dorrimore to invite, for the summer vacation of 1925, the whole of the St. Frank's Fourth to a cruise in the South-Seas in his luxury yacht, the Wanderer. Naturally, not many parents allowed their sons to accept this generous invitation, having made other plans; but Fullwood is one of the lucky ones-----very lucky as things turned out ----- seeing that he is the only member of the "Cad's Brigade" who is given the official parental sanction.

But, it must be sadly admitted, we do not see much improvement in his general behaviour during the first few days.

In fact, on the second day out, with the Wanderer skimming over the waters of mid-Atlantic, the one-and-only Ralph Leslie gets himself into a spot of bother: he insults Clive Russell, one-time page-boy, but now a guest of the genial millionaire, gets himself floored, and is almost sent to Coventry by the rest of the party.

I think the first real sign of a re-awakening in the breast of Fullwood comes soon after the Wanderer has anchored in the beautiful lagoon of Paradise Island, where Clive's father discovered pearl oyster-beds years before. Fullwood has penetrated the jungle-like undergrowth in order to indulge in a surreptitious smoke, and when discovered by Willy Handforth & Co. guiltily throws his cigarette away, pretending he has been searching for twines. Normally, he would have carried on smoking, regardless.

Soon after this, Fullwood once again insults Clive Russell. They are alone on the deck of the Wanderer, and in the ensuing fight the St. Frank's junior watching his adversary cooling-off, suddenly notices a menacing fin cleave the water, and realises with a shock that a shark is about to sample Fullwood. Without a moment's hesitation, he grabs a golf-club that is lying on deck and dives to the rescue. It is touch and go, but eventually both lads are safe on deck, where Fullwood gets his first revulsion of feeling. He shamefacedly thanks the Canadian boy for saving his life, and later, in his own cabin, looks at his reflection in the mirror.

"Gad!" he mutters disgustedly. "What a bally cad you are!" And for Ralph Leslie to address himself in such terms is indeed an indication that he is not completely bad. In fact, I think it is at this precise point that the reader suddenly warms towards Fullwood and takes a little more interest in him, begins to watch his actions more, realises that perhaps something big is shaping.

Well, the weeks roll by, and the boys have the time of their lives on Paradise Island, including the usual scraps with cannibals, the inevitable tidal-wave, and so on, Fullwood becoming more and more "one of the lads" as it were. He is accepted by Nipper & Co. as one of them for duration; and, what is more, Winnie, Reggie Pitt's sister, who is also in the party, finds herself drawn to Ralph Leslie, much to the amazement of Irene Manners and Marjorie Temple. She can see more good in him than they can, and there is no doubt that this fact does help a lot in the cad's reformation.

Near the end of the vacation, Clive is seized in the tenacles of some weird denizen of the deep and Fullwood rescues him, only to be, himself, attacked by this frightful creature and swept away. However, he is saved in the nick of time, and soon the party is on the way home to England.

Brooks keeps our interest in Fullwood alive right to the very end of that memorable vacation.

At the end of the return voyage, with Caistowe in sight, the school-boys and the rest of the party are thronging the rails. Nipper and Clive Russell are talking, and the latter is enthusing over the fact that he is due to commence studies at St. Frank's in the Autumn.

"My dad's arranged it all," he says. "I shall be at St. Frank's next term! We're going to have a good time—eh, Fully?"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood grins.

"You bet!" he replies heartily. "I've made up my mind that this term is going to be the best one I've ever spent in my life!"

'And there is something about his tone which causes Nipper to look at him keenly. The old Ralph Leslie wasn't so apparent as it had been. Fullwood was greatly changed these days!

But, back in the "Old Country" BIG trouble awaits Fullwood. His cousin, Eustace Carey, an undergrad at Oxford, has murderously attacked a fellow-undergrad, leaves him critically injured, and disappears with a load of stolen cash. On the train journey back to the school with his old companions, Fullwood discovers that Gulliver and Bell somewhat grate on him, and there is a deal of ill-natured chaff because Ralph Leslie refuses to indulge in a smoking-concert in the privacy of the railway compartment. When they discover that the now notorious and "wanted" Carey is their friend's cousin, they behave as one would expect them to behave. They make it quite clear to Fullwood that he can implicitly rely on their friendship for just as long as he is prepared to pay for it. Then Grayson, of the Fifth, an old gambling and drinking associate of the Fourth-former, tells Fullwood to refrain from speaking to him in public --- although he can continue to do so privately!

Later on, Fullwood gets a terrific revulsion of feeling when he discovers that all the fellows he has previously looked down on --- fellows like Nipper, Pitt, Handforth, and so on, are all very friendly to him. In fact, in his efforts to let Fullwood know that he cannot be held responsible for his cousin's scandalous behaviour, Handy nearly goes too far; but the erstwhile cad realises, gratefully, that the burly Fourth-former's intentions are sound.

Still later on, Carey comes on the scene, forces his cousin to hide him near the school and even in the school for a few weeks, and one way and another, Fullwood really goes through the hoop. However, the friendship of Clive Russell and Winnie Pitt, plus the fact that Ralph makes quite a name for himself on the footer-field, helps him through his baptism, as it were; and, eventually, the attacked undergrad recovers, Carey is publicly chastised by his irate father, and the air clears.

In other words, Fullwood stands the test and emerges with flying colours. He moves into Clive's study, becomes a regular selection for the junior football and cricket teams --- and never looks back. And I must confess that I find the transformation easy to follow, easy to read, and understandable from start to finish.

Sorry, Frank!"

And now, Norman Pragnell takes over with the first article in an eagerly awaited, and typically forthright, series.

THOSE UNPOPULAR THREE YEARS.

There is no doubt at all in the minds of all Nelson Lee readers that the period of its life, comprising the Second New Series, was the most unpopular. Constant changes in editorial policy annoyed beyond all measure those of us who were really fond of the 'Old Paper' and who had read some of the great series of earlier years. Nevertheless, the 161 issues were not wholly bad, as some of us might be inclined to think. Judging by the stories that are discussed and analysed in our Column, we would imagine that there are many of us who hold the opinion that the Nelson Lee Library terminated altogether in December 1930. Over the past four years we cannot remember one story that has been seriously discussed, that was written between 1930-1933. And yet - at least to the writer of these notes - there appeared four series during these years that in his opinion compared favourably with any of the stories that appeared in the "First New Series".

Let us be quite frank about the stories that appeared in the period of 1925-1930. The one passing note in many a fine yarn was the over-emphasis given to Edward Oswald Handforth: This was noted particularly in the front cover illustrations, when the fact of Handforth was the predominant feature. This was most noticeable where the covers were drawn by Arthur Jones. In the Northestia series, which is the writer's particular favourite, the one false note was the large amount of space given to the antics of Handforth. The real star of this amazing adventure was without doubt Nelson Lee himself and had more space been given to Lee and less to Handforth this story would have reached near perfection.

Those of us who have read most of the stories in the Second New Series will remember the series in which Nelson Lee and all of his cub detectives were shanghied and eventually found themselves lost in the Sargasso Sea. This was a gem of a story and here Nelson Lee was given the starring role, and Brooks made no mistake about it. Handforth was not in the story - he was back at St. Franks, and the series was all the better for his absence. At a future date the writer will be discussing this series at some length, and will try to show where it was a better story than some of the popular, more well-known ones. It is a remarkable fact that Brooks seemed to write better when his stories were not illustrated by Kenneth Brookes. The writer of this article has never hidden his intense dislike of the illustrations by Brookes, and this is a view partly held by E.S. Brooks himself.

When the Second New Series appeared in 1930 there was introduced some first rate detective and adventure yarns, and although we noticed a change of artists as compared with the latter half of the First New Series, we felt they were of a reasonably high standard. The decline in Brooks' writing seemed to date from the time when St. Franks reopened and Kenneth Brookes took over the illustrations. Some of the stories that appeared still make us shudder - K. K. Parkington, Dr. Scattlebury, Jake Diamond, and many others that were most regrettable. And yet when E. S. Brooks went back to his high standard of storytelling gives us "Island above the Clouds" we noted they were not illustrated by Brookes. Rather odd no doubt, and something we cannot explain.

To sum up our opening article on our series on "Those Unpopular Years" we would make these observations. By and large the Second New Series was not a success to those old readers of the Nelson Lee Library. Nevertheless, a few series appeared that were really great, this being partly due to the character of Nelson Lee being given his full scope, and the part played by Handforth being well played down. In our next article we shall discuss the first of these five stories, "Dacca - The Devil Dwarf" and give our reasons for so thinking.

P.S. ESB did old Leeites proud in the Grand National! As one might expect, Kenmore let us down in the Lincoln! J.P.W.

WANTED: "School Friend Annual" years 1930, 1931, 1932. Your price offered. Also wanted, "Schoolgirl's Own Annual" for the year 1926 only. L. PACKMAN, 27, ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON S.E.22.

URGENT. Many S. Blake Libs. wanted (1st and 2nd series) complete with covers. Serial numbers, series and price please. Also any U. Jacks in good condition for the years 1917, 1918. JOSIE PACKMAN 27, ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON S.E.22.

OFFERS INVITED FOR: 165 Popular, Amateur Gardening, 1953-1955, 17 Popular Handicrafts 1952-1954, 20 Readers' Digests 1952-1955, 16 Science Fiction, 6 Argosy, 2 Sat. E. Post, 100 Country Life 1952-1954, 1 Chatterbox Annual, 51 National Geographics 1934-1951, 1 Zane Grey, 1 Holiday Annual 1935, ANY OR ALL. L. ASHLEY, 23, MOUNTJOY, BRIDPORT, DORSET.

OLD BOY'S (140) BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

It was a triumph for Nelson Lee at the April meeting held at Wood Green as in the debate Nelson versus Sexton Blake, the voting was seven to five in favour of the former. Furthermore Frank Vernon-Lay reported better results in his Nelson Lee section of the library. The debate was a very good one and the result shows how close the issue was after six very good speeches. Roger Jenkins was the umpire and done the summing up ere the vote was taken.

Roger's very good Greyfriars' names quiz was won by Bob Whiter, second was Len Packman and in third place was Bob Blythe and H. Brooks. The latter new member was paying his first visit to a meeting along with his son David.

Bob Blythe, continuing with the Nelson Lee interest gave a very good talk on the travels of the St. Frank's juniors and illustrated these travels with a map of the world on a blackboard.

Bill Lofts gave a talk on the "Dime Novel Round-up", an earnest listener to this talk was the doyen of the club, Arthur Lawson. The club's quota of "Lord Billy Bunter" was available and those interested collected their copies. Postal members copies will be mailed during next week.

May meeting at East Dulwich on Sunday, 27th, fourth Sunday owing to the Whitsun holidays.

Thus the score of members present had another enjoyable agenda, good catering and the promise of another good time with the Packmans next month.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, APRIL 14th, 1956

This was the Sixth Annual General Meeting and Treasurer Gerry Allison's report showed that the financial position is a very healthy one. This, despite the fact that we have lost a few members. Those that remain, however, are stalwarts every one.

The officials were re-elected en bloc except that Jack Wood took the place of Stanley Knight as one of the auditors. Altogether there was a very happy atmosphere with everyone satisfied with the state of affairs.

Business disposed of came top of the bill for the evening; Secretary Ron. Hodgson's talk "Highlights of the Northern Section Club". Ron had evidently spent a considerable amount of time swotting up the minutes, and as a result he had built up an engrossing story of

memorable and happy events selected from the 72 meetings held in that room. There was just a sad note when he referred to the deaths of Reg. Hudson and Harry Stables, who in the time they were allowed to be with us, did so much for the Club. Only King Death has been unkind to us for he also took Jack Munro away from us after a few months membership.

Ron received a well deserved round of applause at the close of his talk.

To wind up we had a Twenty Questions Quiz. Gerry Allison, not the least worried by the fact that he recently became a grandfather, had set us some brow-wrinklers. Nevertheless, the team, J. Breeze Bentley, Jack Wood, Stanley Smith and myself, succeeded in getting nine objects out of ten, thus feeling very pleased with ourselves. Altogether a very pleasant and nostalgic evening.

Next meeting the 7th, Saturday, May 12th.

H. LECKENBY.

Northern Section Correspondent.

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING, MARCH 30th.

The main item on the programme for tonight was a talk, illustrated by readings, on Edward S. Ellis's American Frontier stories, given by Mr. Handley Junr. Very interesting it was too, John had evidently done a great deal of research and well merited the hearty applause which greeted the end of this talk.

A very interesting point which emerged was that the frontier was gradually moving further West, and the more familiar "Wild West" of "Buffalo Bill" and the good old "Magnet" Texas Series, was not reached until some 50 years later than Ellis's time, which was about 1800.

It is interesting to reflect, though, that although pioneering days seem so romantic, the great North American Continent formerly inhabited by about a quarter of a million Red Indians who hunted and warred and frequently starved, nowadays supports at least a hundred times as many people who enjoy great material prosperity. Hollywood, swell autos, nylons, cosmetics, coke and what not. More seriously^{er} though, even now in the middle of the twentieth century, the mineral wealth of Canada for example, is not much more than being scratched.

Returning to our meeting however, the talk and subsequent discussion naturally took us a good part of the evening. However we

did try Harry Broster's latest puzzle, "How many boys with the name of Dick at Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood?" Gratters to the winner Tom Porter.

Tom then gave us an impromptu talk on the latest Tom Merry book pointing out how Frank Richards' literary skill was still as much in evidence as of yore.

EDWARD DAVEY.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION, 8th APRIL, 1956

There was quite a good attendance at Waterloo House, most of the regulars being present.

The chairman in his opening remarks informed us that Herbert was unable to be with us, due to unavoidable circumstances; needless to say we were all most disappointed, and sincerely hope that he will be able to visit us in the near future. We have happy memories of the last occasion he spent in our clubroom.

A hearty welcome was extended to a surprise visitor, Frank Case, who tried to bear up manfully under the barrage of good-natured chaff occasioned by his long absence.

There was a long discussion on the Exhibition which opens on the 9th April in the Bootle Public Library; a great deal of work has been expended by the committee, and we most sincerely hope their efforts will be rewarded in the result. It was thought advisable to have a member of the club in attendance at the exhibition to deal with possible enquiries, and no difficulty was encountered in forming a rota of volunteers to perform this useful service.

The meeting concluded with a team game based on "Twenty Questions" this was greatly enjoyed, and the final result - a close one - was of little consequence compared with the entertainment provided. At least, that's the tale of a member of the losing side named

FRANK CASE

SALE HOLIDAY ANNUALS, 1934, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941. Fair condition, 9/- each, plus postage.

STILL WANTED P.O.P. Vols. 43, 63. ANTHONY BAKER, CHRIST CHURCH VICARAGE, BARNET, HERTS.

by Charles Wright

The two main venues for our meetings have been Wood Green and Dulwich, and too much praise cannot be given to Eileen and Bob Whiter and Josie and Len Packman, as quite a lot of work goes into catering and making the meeting a success. The club has been more than fortunate in having such a splendid secretary as 'Uncle Ben' Whiter, who works much harder for the club than he tells us.

The standard of the meetings, quizzes, games, readings etc., has remained very high over the years. The formation of a Library has also been very popular, as it is a boon to many, especially postal members, who are out of personal touch. Books are rather more scarce now than when the club was first formed, and at the early meetings I can remember Len Packman or Bob Blythe, or both, staggering in with a load of papers on approval from Bill Martin, and much business was done in those days. Some few of us have been fortunate enough to penetrate Bill Martin's almost impregnable fortress and have seen the amazing piles of papers he has obtained from far and near, not forgetting his own fine collection; and speaking for myself I have always found him cheerful and helpful, provided one knows what one wants and doesn't upset a thousand or so books to spend a bob!

Some very fortunate members have had the pleasure of meeting our old friend (if I may so call him) "Frank Richards", but descriptions of those visits will be found in various C.D.'s.

One highlight in the club's history was the famous joint meeting of the London and Northern sections at Hume House, Dulwich. I remember spending the next day with the late Reg Hudson, who was their very popular chairman, exploring the alleys and byways of Limehouse and Wapping, at his request. I made the same journey with Harry Dowler of Manchester on one occasion, finishing up in the Tower of London.

We have our own badge, designed and registered by Bob Whiter, and it is used by all branches of the O.B.C.C.

Over the course of years much research work has been done and much new information has come to light: the first Sexton Blake story; the story the A.P. forgot; the famous Maxwell Scott Diary; the discovery of artists, authors and editors; broadcasts, in one of which our chairman Len Packman took part in company with Mr. Chapman and Mr. Down,

one time editor of the 'Magnet', and Jack Corbett, the Midland branch chairman.

Publicity has been very great, with articles in magazines and newspapers, though whether this fact is good or not is open to debate; in fact, in the early days it was rather heatedly debated, some being for and some against.

The only disappointment I can remember was what was supposed to become the 'Annual Dinner'. A sub-committee was set up, and after about three meetings, when all arrangements had been made and the hall acutally hired at the 'Friends Meeting House' in Euston Road, the whole thing fell through for lack of support; but perhaps this is a plant that might bloom one day in the future.

I could go on to the formation of the Sexton Blake Circle by Harry Honor, being an offshoot of the parent club; of the opening meeting at the Charing Cross Hotel; the meetings at Greenwich and Dulwich, also at Bill Colcomb's house at Southend; the research work done by members, and so on. But I think this article is quite long enough, and I will close by saying that the memories have, for the most part, been good ones. The chaps and chappess's that we have met over the years have all been 'jolly good fellows', and the times spent at meetings all over the place have, indeed, been gatherings of the 'Brotherhood of Happy Hours' - many, many happy hours - and my earnest wish is, that in the years to come we will be able to look back on many more "Memories and Highlights" of the O.B.B.C.

WANTED: No. one of Rocket, Ranger (2nd Series), Cheer-Boys-Cheer, Empire Lib., Magic Comic, (Thomson's), Bo-Poop, Magnet (Good Price for this copy if in good condition). ALSO WANTED: No.'s. 3, 10, 13 of Gem ½d. series to complete set of 48; Young Britains, No.'s. 185 to end of this series.

SALE: "Boys Own Annuals" 1928, 1929, 1930, 7/6d. each; "Champion Annuals" 1938 and 1940, 3/6 each plus postage. "Young Britains" No's. 51 to 87 (consec. and No's. 103 to 128 (consec.) 6d. each post free. "Thomson Annuals" Pre-1939, 3/6 each plus postage. "Chatterbox" 5/- each, post paid. ENQUIRIES TO:- MR. JAMES R. SWAN, 3, FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, LONDON W.10.

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