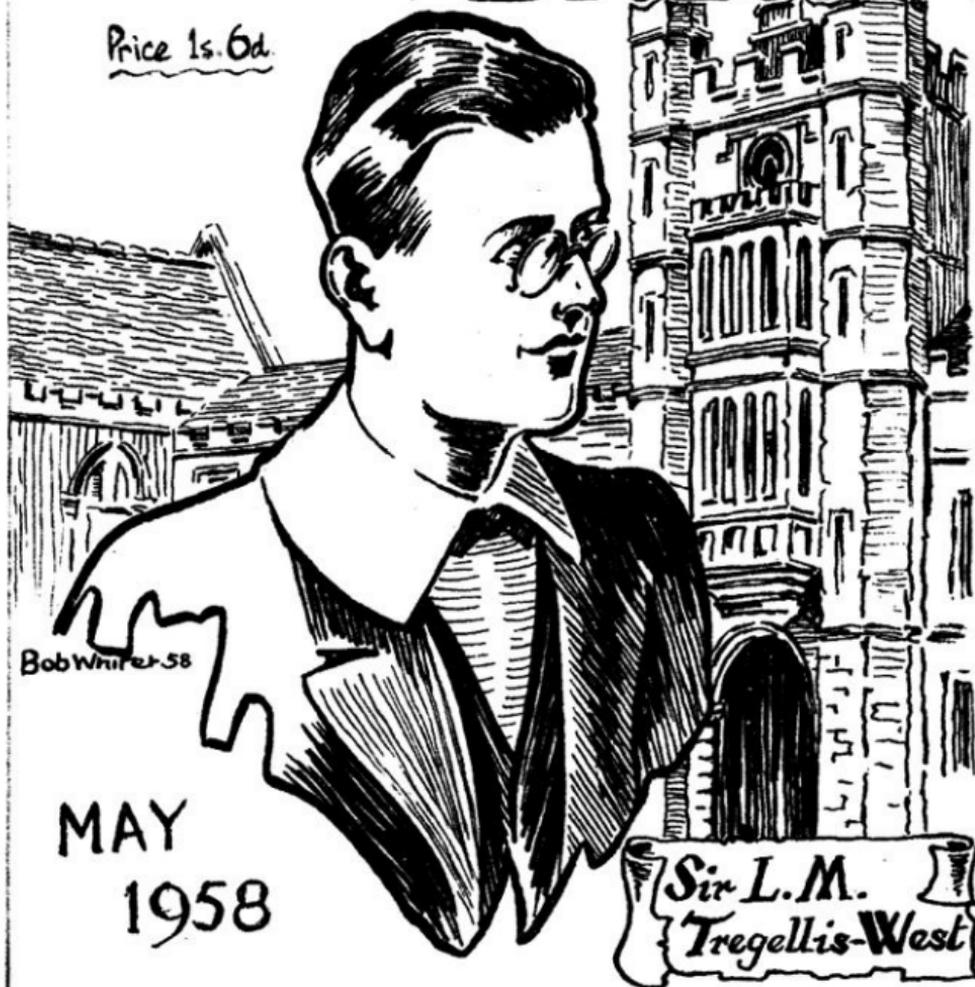


The Collectors' DIGEST

Vol. 12 No. 134

Price 1s. 6d.



Bob White '58

MAY
1958

Sir L. M.
Tregellis-West

The "Golden Hours Club" of Sydney, Australia have had their third meeting. They had the excellent idea of sending fraternal greetings to each of the English Clubs with an account of their activities. Here is what Secretary Bette Pate said:

The Secretary,
Old Boys Book Club,
Northern Section, etc.

Dear Mr.....

The Members of the "Golden Hours Club" - the Australian counterpart of your Old Boys Book Collectors have expressed a wish to send greetings to the members of your club and as their Secretary, I am writing on their behalf to fulfil this very pleasant request.

As yet, our club is small, comprising Arnold Keena (our Chairman) Victor Colby, Stan Nicholls, Syd Smith, Bruce Fowler, Frank Jones, Ernie Carter and myself, but the enthusiasm shown at our meetings to date gives great promise for the months ahead.

Doubtless the names of some of our members will be familiar to you as contributors to the Collectors Digest so you will see that not only have the two clubs much in common but it will be a case of old friendships strengthened and new ones established by this interchange of greetings across the seas.

To date our meetings have been held monthly on a Friday night from 7.30 p.m. to 10 p.m. in a very comfortable room at the Y.M.C.A. in Sydney. Our next meeting is scheduled for May 9th when we are hoping to hold our best "get-together" to date.

As I have said, our club is small in numbers, a mere two months old, but already it is showing itself to be a very lusty infant and we are confident that in the months ahead it will grow into a sturdy youngster - perhaps one day comparable to its big brothers in England.

So on this note of optimism I will conclude and hope that we may have the pleasure of hearing from you in the near future.

With warmest greetings from Australia,

Very sincerely,

BETTE PATE

Secretary.

MAY, 1958

Editor: HERBERT LECKENBY.
12 Herbert Street,
Hull Road, York.

c r

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
12A The Shambles, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

TIME GALLOPS ON. It seems like only the other day that we were talking about preparing the 100th number of the C.D., yet here we are with No. 137, more than a third of the way to the second century. In a way it's almost frightening the way the years seem to pass on. Happily so far as the C.D. is concerned, they pass smoothly and bring more and more new readers into the circle. Never has its circulation been so high, and still the material flows in from our loyal supporters to maintain the interest. I told one of the reporters who interviewed me recently that never once over the nearly twelve years of the C.D. and eleven Annuals had I been short of copy. Neither had either been late in appearing. He said it was really amazing for usually it was a very different story with magazines which did not claim to be professional.

Well, very soon the usual forms will be going out for the Annual which will make the round dozen. But before that happens, let's have a serious word about the eleventh. Regretfully I must appeal to the score or so who have not yet paid for it. What a pity I have to make such an appeal year after year. It disheartens me somewhat. Now, come on you chaps, to whom it refers. Do please let me have clear books by the time the new forms go out, at any rate.

THAT PUBLICITY. My word! that gratifying article in the Manchester Guardian did create a lot of interest and no mistake, for letters are still reaching me as a result of it. One morning I had letters from two strangers in Auckland, New Zealand. Both referred to a "very interesting article" which had appeared in a newspaper there. From what I could gather it would appear to have been taken from the Guardian. Naturally, I am trying to get a copy of the paper through one of our members there.

Something else from "down under" which interested me greatly was a photograph taken at that Sydney dinner round Christmas time. Members thereon were, Bette Pate, Frank Jones, Ernie Carter, Vic Colby, Arnold Keena, Bill Hall, Syd Smith, Bruce Foster and Stanley Nichols. What a happy little party it looked. That they may get together on many more occasions is the hearty wish of

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

 Further to my advert in February C.D. I can offer in exchange for any of my wants almost any original Hamilton Magnet from 1919 to 1922. Particular wants 882, 903, 904. Particulars on application. Please write airmail. CHARLES VAN RENEN, BOX 50, UITENHAGE, SOUTH AFRICA.

SALE - Magnets 1938 - 40 - S.O.L. St. Frank's - Holiday Annual 1921 - Chums Annual 1926.

WANTED - Magnets 1553-4-6, 1585-6 1589-91 1609-11-13-16 S.A.E. KNIGHT, 288 HIGH STREET, CHELTENHAM.

WANTED - in good condition, the following: "Wizards" - any numbers between 400 - 526, 811 - 893. If you have any between Nos. 1 - 1000 will be glad to hear of them!

MAGNETS - Nos. 1150, 1169, 1170, 1172, 3, 4, 5, 1189, 1191, 1194, 5, 6, 1203 to 1224.

J. R. SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, LONDON, W.10.

WANTED URGENTLY - I offer 10/- each for any copy of Chips from January 1916 to October 28th, 1916. In good condition.

LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

Blakiana . . .

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I had a nice letter from Mr. L. Morley this week; he very kindly sent me a snippet of news from a recent copy of the "Picture-goer". This was to the effect that there is a project in hand to make a Sexton Blake film. Norman Wooland will probably play the great detective, and Michael Medwin his assistant. I only hope the film will be a decent one, not cluttered up with a lot of "sexy dames!"

If, from time to time, any more of my readers have little items of interest for inclusion in Blakiana, I shall be very pleased to receive them.

Finally, you will be interested to hear that there is every prospect of some fine articles appearing later in the year from the pen of - someone who is famous where Blake matters are concerned.

* * * * *

THE ROUND TABLE WAS NO FRAUD!

By W. O. G. Lofts

In issue No. 10 of the DETECTIVE WEEKLY dated 29th April, 1933, Eric Copeman wrote a letter to the editor saying that he had been informed that the Round Table was a fraud, and that the letters were all "made up" by the editor himself. This, of course, the editor (Mr. Twyman) repudiated.

Twenty-five years later, in a letter to Mr. Twyman I asked him the same question. Here is his reply:

"As to Eric Copeman's suggestion about the Round Table letters, you can tell him emphatically from me that his belief that I wrote readers letters myself is wrong and couldn't be wronger. The reverse is true. There were so many that sometimes I was so busy there wasn't time to read them until days after they'd been received, and it was the lucky ones who got an answer days after that. In fact it was quite impossible to answer some of them at all and eventually they had to be thrown overboard. It was quite unfair to the reader, and

bad business policy, but not our fault in the office. We were understaffed and could have used two extra typists for that job alone, but the firm didn't consider it necessary to go to the expense. The same trouble was true of the whole department, and I know of at least one editor who so believed the lack of replies to readers was damaging to the paper he was running that he used to take bundles of them home to answer at the weekend. Curiously, he still survives. I believe it is correct about Hamilton Edwards and Hinton writing phoney letters for insertion, but I believe that too is bad policy. They were neither of them clever enough as writers to concoct a letter as a boy could write it, and most of their readers, young as they were, must have seen through the fakes."

Well, that settles that little question. Now we come to something intriguing: WHO WAS FRANK LELLAND?

"Next week you will be introduced to a new author..." "Frank Lelland" a well known writer with several best sellers to his credit, for the time being I have promised to keep the identity of "Frank Lelland" a secret..." so went the Editor's Chat in the Round Table of DETECTIVE WEEKLY No. 33 announcing the following week's story "The Singing Clue."

(The Editor of the D.W. at that time was Mr. Len Berry, who had taken over from Mr. Twyman.)

Later, "Frank Lelland" wrote another story for the D.W. - No. 106 "Murder at Full Moon"; but no revelation was ever made as to who "Frank Lelland" really was, and the author's true identity has remained a mystery to this day.

No author or editor with whom I have conversed has been able to offer a clue, except that all Frank Lelland's work was submitted through a literary agency - the firm of Stephen Aske of London, but despite hours of searching through the old records and files, the present manager of this firm could find no trace of any other name, and it may possibly be that Frank Lelland was the author's real name.

What of the merits of "The Singing Clue"? In the words of Mr. Twyman who has read the story:

"The plot of this story is wearily tame and Blake spends most of his time going out for walks and coming home to meals - a very commonplace and human sleuth. But on the other hand the writing is quite good and probably by some mature and practised person, though he certainly had not written a Blake before."

And there the matter rests. If, however, any reader is in a position to supply any further information regarding "Frank Lelland"

perhaps he or she would like to write to Josie Packman who would be pleased to publish it in Blakiana.

* * *

ANSWER TO MEMORY TEASER NO. 10 (April, 1958 C.D.)

In C.D. No. 118 F. Vernon Lay said: "We want Blake as he was at the height of his powers, and if this means 'forcing ourselves to wade through a lot of outdated cliches in order to provide us with doses of nostalgia' well, then, that's what we want!"

The Sexton Blake story from which I quoted last month comes up to that standard - and there was no 'forcing' required to read it through. This tale in which Blake's bloodhound Pedro played such a prominent part was written by Pedro's creator, W. Murray Graydon. It appeared in S.B.L. No. 71 issued in November, 1926, and the front cover, in red and blue, was a close-up of the old hound drawn by Arthur Jones. The title was THE BLOODHOUND'S REVENGE.

This story was described at the time as "a tale of fascinating detective work, and featuring Pedro, the unequalled tracker of criminals"! While copies of such yarns still exist, Pedro will never die.

* * *

"A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER"

(The following letter, written by the late G. H. Teed, was published in Union Jack No. 953, dated 14.1.1922. I feel it is so interesting as to warrant reproduction in Blakiana, together with the "Skipper's" introduction. J.P.)

"As a sidelight on the methods which find favour amongst the men who write for the "U.J." I will quote the following letter, which I have received recently, since a personal visit of the writer to my office:

My Dear Skipper, - Since my call upon you in your office the other day, I feel I must write and tell you how good it felt to be in the old surroundings again, and to meet my old friends on the staff of the UNION JACK.

Although it was impossible for me to continue writing the Yvonne and other stories which seemed to be so popular while in the Army, I kept in constant touch with the old paper. It is extra-

ordinary in what queer places and under what odd circumstances the UNION JACK kept bobbing up, and I was immensely glad to see that through the stress of war and the shortage of paper and labour difficulties, you still carried on at the same high standard.

I am now back to write, and I hope all my old chums who used to appreciate my efforts in the Yvonne, Wu Ling, Huxton Rymer and other stories will like the new series of yarns which I am now preparing.

As you know, I have just completed my second circuit of the globe. This time I left Liverpool for New York, put in some time there with old acquaintances, but mostly went looking for material for stories - and got it, together with plenty of adventure.

Then I went on to Albany and Buffalo, and from there into Canada. I did the journey to 'Frisco by easy stages via Chicago, Salt Lake, the Great Salt Desert and over the Rockies at 8,000 ft., through forty miles of snow-sheds. These, as my chums will know, have been built in the Rockies to throw off the snow-slides and assist in keeping the railway-tracks clear of drifts in the winter.

We dropped in about two hours into Sacramento and palms. I hadn't seen 'Frisco since before the earthquake, and I found it greatly changed. But the famous Barbary Coast still exists, and I have some of that to share with UNION JACK readers later on. My friends there were too hospitable, but I finally got away, bound for Hong Kong.

Then followed three months of lazy travel, through the Pacific, Honolulu, from where I went to Molokai, the leper settlement, and through the plantations which begin with the tropical cocoanuts at the beach, and range through sugar to grains of the temperate zones and end in grass and trees set high against the tips of the volcanoes - a wonderfully beautiful sight.

Then to Japan - Yokohama, Tokyo, Kobe, and the peerless Inland Sea, a riot of Eastern colour and ancient temples. Then, liking the mysterious, I got some wonderful material in Shanghai and Hong Kong, with one particularly adventurous experience in Canton Macao, the Portuguese fortified possession. At the mouth of the river there, incidentally, is one of the biggest gambling places in the world.

My companion during this part of the wanderings was a retired merchant skipper who had seen everything worth seeing on the China coast for thirty-four years. He knew - wanted to see and to know at first hand - and he certainly showed me.

Down to Manila we went, and into the interior, then back to Hong Kong, where I had to wait three weeks for another steamer. There

my friend left me, to run some guns up to Port Arthur for the Americans.

I went on to French Indo-China, and the night I arrived in Haiphong saw a French officer shot over some gambling row. Then to Hanoi and Manog to get down to Saigon, the Paris of the East.

It is a wonderful place - utterly Eastern - with one beautiful square and an opera-house, and a hundred opium dens. I have a story to write of Saigon.

Incidentally, I got pretty well into the interior of the country there, but the Tonkinese and Annamese of French Indo-China are a treacherous lot. Then Bangkok, the Venice of the East, which is very hot and dirty and full of canals (and don't they smell!) and on to Singapore. I did not go to Java this time, as I had already been to Batavia and Soerabaja.

From Singapore I made Columbo, and from there went up into India - Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, with a run across the Bay of Bengal in a coolie labour ship to Rangoon.

India took many months. It is so vast, and so full of that mysterious crust of Eastern intrigue and secret bazaar-plottings which is so hard for the European to break through.

I spent many months in Cochin, Alleppey and Calicut, in the heart of the Moplah Country, and, as you know, was in Calicut during the first Moplah uprising, though, thanks to the magnificent way in which the Superintendent of Police, Mr. H -, and his assistant, Mr. J - handled the mob, nothing very serious happened that time.

That coast is a series of wonderful palm-girdled lagoons, more like the Bismark Archipelago or the Solomon Islands than anything I have seen. From there I returned to Columbo, and so on to Egypt, and home.

It is my second time round. The first I took in Arabia (two years there), South Africa, South America and the West Indies. I have collected some fine material, and I hope all my chums will like the stories into which I have put the experiences of my travels. At any rate, I shall do my very best to make them full of interest, and should particularly like to know how they like the new Yvonne yarns.

When next you speak to your reader-chums, please tell them how glad I am to be back in the service of the old UNION JACK.

I hear eight bells going, so good-night, Skipper -Yours
"ONE OF THE OLD BRIGADE".

(How interesting and appealing Mr. Teed's subsequent stories proved to be, is known only too well by we of the "Old Brigade." If only

this fine writer and vastly-travelled man was still alive and writing for us today! J.P.)

* * * *

HOW'S YOUR MEMORY? - TEASER No. 11

By E. V. Copeman

PEDRO, Blake's faithful bloodhound, featured in last month's teaser. He features again in this - but can any of you as readily indentify story or writer?

Clues? The author is quite well-known but has only written eleven Blake stories.

Here is the extract:

The door of the guard's van opened. A great tawny shape sprang out and hurled itself at Blake. People all over the platform turned to look, as the huge bloodhound, rising on its hind legs, thrust its paws on Blake's shoulders and tried ecstatically to lick his face.

Pedro always behaved like that. If he was separated from Blake for a few hours, he greeted him with as much enthusiasm as if he had been away a year.

Blake punched Pedro in the ribs, pulled one of his ears, and said in a harsh, savage tone: "get down, you brute, or I'll cut your liver out with a dogwhip!"

Pedro took not the slightest notice of that. He knew every inflexion in Blake's voice, and this brutal threat meant nothing to him. He only jumped up more frantically, and his long tongue, finding its target, gave Blake a good wet lick across the right eye.

Blake laughed, and put a hand against Pedro's chest, thrusting him away.

"That will do, Pedro. Down boy," he said quietly. At once Pedro became a model of quiet good behaviour, standing by his master's side, waiting for further instructions. That quiet tone was the tone he was accustomed to obey.

"Isn't he lovely?" a young schoolgirl said. "Can I pat him?"

"I don't suppose he'll eat you," Blake told her. She patted him and he gave her a mournful look out of his droopy, slightly bloodshot eyes, and licked her face. Pedro was a very amiable dog, and any child could pat him, or push him around without in the slightest degree, disturbing his tranquil good nature. Like master, like dog, people say, and there was some truth in it where Blake and Pedro were

concerned. In moments when danger threatened, the big good-natured bloodhound could be transformed into a fearful enemy who would fight to the last gasp.

Makes nice reading, doesn't it? Can you recall who wrote it and the title?

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HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

The Sunday Times recently had some interesting correspondence on "Honorable Aliens". It started off, I believe, with this one, on 9th March:

HONOURABLE ALIEN

Sir - In Public School fiction there has long been a tradition of including a foreign boy among the heroes' friends.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nawab of Bhanipur, in the 'Magnet' stories, the Japanese boy (what was his name?) in the Teddy Lester stories, Ram the Babu in 'The Luck Stone' which P. G. Wodehouse and W. Townend wrote together under the pseudonym of Basil Wyndham in "Chums" in 1908.....these are a few.

Can any of your readers tell me where this tradition started, and when? And, for that matter, why?

RICHARD USBOURNE

The following Sunday two letters appeared, one from Frank Richards telling why he introduced Inky, and another mentioning other foreigners at Greyfriars:

Sir - As the author of the Greyfriars stories in which "Hurree Jamset Ram Singh" has appeared for so many years, may I reply to Mr. Usbourne's query? The answer is in fact given in my recent Autobiography, from which the following is an extract:

"The author did not forget that his young readers were growing up citizens of a great Commonwealth that included many dusky millions. By making an Indian Boy a comrade on equal terms with English schoolboys he felt that he was contributing his mite towards the unity of the Commonwealth, and helping to rid the youth-ful mind of colour prejudice. And he has reason to believe that he did some good in this direction."

FRANK RICHARDS

Broadstairs.

Sir - Mr. Usbourne's reference to " a foreign boy" is an under-statement as far as Greyfriars was concerned. As well as Hurree Singh there were a Chinese (Wun Lung) a French Boy (Napoleon Dupont), an Afrikaaner (Piet Delarey) and an American (Fisher T. Fish). The Commonwealth was also represented by an Australian (Sampson Quincey Iffley Field).

FRANK LITTLER

London, N.W.6.

Still another correspondent quoted those "famous words" of the late George Orwell.

Sir - May I draw Mr. Usbourne's attention to an essay by George Orwell entitled "Boys' Weeklies"? Referring to the "Gem" and the "Magnet" he says: "... their basic political assumptions are two; nothing ever changes, and foreigners are funny. In the "Gem" of 1939 Frenchmen are still Froggies and Italians are still Dagoes. Mossoo, the French master at Greyfriars, is the usual comic-paper Frog, with pointed beard, pegtop trousers, etc. Inky, the Indian boy - is also the comic babu of the "Punch" tradition...." It would seem then that the purpose of any foreign character in a story of this kind is the providing of comic relief. Since, in fact, only the more famous public schools can boast non-European pupils from wealthy families. Orwell was probably right in saying that they are featured in the stories to lend an added glamour to the establishments described. According to him the chief model for the "boys weekly" stories is "Stalky and Co."

BRIAN COZENS

Cannes.

Two other correspondents asked about once popular characters who although they don't come under Hamiltoniana I'll refer to because they do interest some readers. One asked who the Japanese boy was who appeared in John Finnemore's fine Slapton School stories. He soon got his answer - Ito Nagao. The other wanted to know who wrote the stories of Handsome Harry Ching Ching and Co. He was told - E. Harcourt Burrage.

Many more aliens could have been mentioned of course, but the correspondence proved what a great interest there is in the stories and characters of old.

My acknowledgements to Mr. W. H. Clough, of Sale for the cuttings.

* * *

Now for the usual contribution from our "twins" Roger Jenkins and Eric Fayne. An Australian chum said in a letter the other day that the way they kept it up month after month (to say nothing of the Annual) never ceased to amaze him. And so say all of us.

Which do you prefer?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 5 - Gem 229 (1425) or Boys' Friends 1201-1204 (S.O.L. 335)

A good theme was never the worse for being taken out of the cupboard and given a second airing after a decent interval, and sometimes the second edition of the theme was so skilfully handled that many readers probably never saw any resemblance between the two versions. The two stories about the boy who was trapped in the Head's safe, however, were so closely alike that one is obliged to look for points of dissimilarity rather than points of resemblance.

In both the St. Jim's and Rookwood versions of this story a new master arrived (Mr. Fitzgerald and Monsieur Victor Gaston) who was denounced as a cracksman by another master (Mr. Selby and Mr. Greely). The accusation was treated as absurd by nearly all the school, but for base reasons it was believed by one junior (Levison and Peele) who contrived to get himself locked in the Head's safe. This it was that the new master was obliged to give up all hopes of starting a new life and was compelled to reveal himself as a cracksman by forcing open the safe to save the life of the junior trapped inside.

The Rookwood version was the later one, and has many points of advantage. It was extended to form a series of four numbers, which allowed considerable improvements - a rising trend of suspicion, for example, and subsidiary accusations which all helped to build up the right atmosphere. Dr. Chisholm played a memorable part in telling Mr. Greely that since he was so injudicious as to make his accusation in public he must expect to be asked for his resignation if he should fail to prove his point. There was something rather touching in the picture of the pompous Fifth Form master taking a last look at the

school which he knew others would not be sorry to see him leave. And whereas Levison himself pulled the door of the safe shut (not realising that it could be unlocked from inside) it was Dr. Chisholm who pushed it shut on Peele - a masterly touch, in which the autocratic headmaster was brought to realise that he was not so infallible as he has always thought himself.

Yet when all this is said and done, it is impossible not to retain a liking for the earlier St. Jim's version which spanned only one number of the Gem. Dr. Holmes was never the well-drawn character that Dr. Chisholm was, and one Gem story, even in the spacious days of yore, could not provide scope for development equivalent to four numbers in the weekly Boys' Friend Library. But there is no doubt that the sour-tempered and mean-minded Mr. Selby was the more likely character to make such an accusation in the first place and to persist in it afterwards even when apparently proved wrong; Mr. Greely was not cast in the right role as an accuser (possibly Mr. Manders should have taken on the job). The glory of the Gem story was its portrait of the Third Form master who changed from bitter dislike of the new master at the beginning to understanding magnanimity and forgiveness at the end. For once, Mr. Selby ceased to be a caricature of a tyrant and became an understandable human being.

For this reason I would acclaim the St. Jim's version of the theme as being slightly the better of the two, but the margin is nevertheless a close one.

Which do you prefer?

* * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

No. 14. ARE THE MASTERS CREDIBLE AT THE HAMILTON SCHOOLS?

I think so. True, the system of teaching has altered but little in fifty years at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. In real life, the days of the form-master, teaching general subjects, is past. Today, specialists teach their pet subjects throughout a school - a practice which has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. The specialist never gets to know his pupils as a form-master does; masters and pupils are often merely names to one another; the less brilliant

pupil often gets neglected.

At Greyfriars we have Mr. Lascelles for maths, Monsieur Charpentier for French, Mr. Woose for Art, and there was once a Herr Gans for German. Mr. Quelch seems to teach everything else - and I, for one, would not have things otherwise.

Few will disagree when I suggest that the best character group of masters is at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch is the finest master in the whole of school fiction, and, temperamentally contrasting, Mr. Prout runs him a very close second. The imitated but never equalled Mossop is a clever study, and others on the staff have interesting qualities.

In comparison, the St. Jim's masters are weaker, though we all have affection for Mr. Railton. As a character study, perhaps Mr. Selby is the most outstanding, though he has not been consistently handled down the years. At times he has presented a brilliant picture - hasty, irritable, disliked by his pupils, a teacher made and not born, having many of the human weaknesses of his kind.

Mr. Ratcliff, crude and something of a caricature of a severe and unjust man, was seldom believable in the Gem, though he has been modified in his few appearances since the war.

Of the Headmasters, probably Dr. Chisholm is the most interesting though not the most likeable study - dogmatic, petty and obstinate, not an ideal Headmaster, but a clever piece of character work.

Looking back at certain matters on which we felt strongly at the time, we might not, at this stage, will things to have been different from what they are. Such a case is the retirement of Mr. Bootles. Rookwood lost an interesting character when Mr. Bootles, to provide a couple of excellent series, was swept from the scene. There almost seems an analogy here with the polishing off of Courtney by Pentelow.

Mr. Dalton, like Mr. Lascelles, his prototype, seems colourless. Of all the masters, I think I like Lascelles the least. Is Frank Richards more convincing in his pictures of older men? Did Rookwood lose something by replacing Mr. Bottles with the athletic Mr. Dalton?

The removal of Mr. Linton by a substitute writer, for no good reason at all, is hardly worth considering. After so many years of Mr. Linton at St. Jim's, it was a blow against tradition, and we can be glad that circumstances brought Mr. Linton back in the fullness of time.

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

* * *

No. 12. Which was the better written of the two Wharton, the Rebel, series.

BASIL ADAM writes: "You have put down everything I think myself as to why the 1925 series was better than the 1932 series. I agree with you that the 1925 series was powerful drama, and although I was only eleven years of age when I first read this best of all Frank Richards' series, the characters of Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and the rest were stamped on my memory for ever, just through this one series.

This most moving story in this great series was 'Friends or Foes', which brought out strongly the difference in character between Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. The fight at Stonehenge was high drama at its best. How I loathed Bunter for his treachery!

In the 1932 series there is no story to compare with 'Friends or Foes'. Although the second series is very readable, it does not bear the mark of greatness which truly belongs to the first series. I have never read any school story by any author, living or dead, to come up to it."

ROGER JENKINS writes: "I was particularly interested in your comments on the two Wharton, the Rebel series, and would agree that the first series was the more powerful as well as having more realistic endings. Utterly absorbing as it is, however, I have never been able to conquer my feeling of distaste at Wharton's behaviour in getting Mauleverer elected captain and then using him as his stooge. That Wharton might have trod the path of blackguardism is not inconceivable but that he would betray his last remaining friend for the sake of spiting others who would not remain on friendly terms with him seems to me to be quite impossible. For this reason I prefer the second series, which is more mellow. To some extent, this is all a matter of hair-splitting. I would term both series masterpieces.

Charles Hamilton's comments on this matter will probably interest the readers. Many years ago he wrote to me as follows: "With regard to the 1925 and 1932 series, probably it is a matter of taste, but I certainly think the second series the better of the two; in actual fact, the second series came to be written because, looking over the first, it seemed to me that the idea could be much better worked out in a different form. But you can never tell! To compare small things with great, Milton preferred Paradise Regained to Paradise Lost: a judgment in which certainly no other person ever agreed with him."

DON WEBSTER writes: "I must cast my vote in favour of the earlier series. I always think the first of any story or series is better because of the new theme it presents to the reader. The individuality of the Famous Five seemed to stand out more, and Bunter was portrayed in his most obnoxious mood. The latter series - particularly the climax - seemed to me a bit incredible.

I especially liked Frank Nugent's change from bitterness to sympathy in the closing issues of the first series, and Wharton's 'give a dog a bad name' attitude was a fine piece of characterisation. In my humble opinion, this was the finest series ever to appear in the "Magnet".

* * *

BOYS WHO NEVER GROW UP

By Arthur T. Rich

(This article is by a Presbyterian Minister in Devon, and it appeared in the Evening News on January 17th, 1939. Sincere and touching, the article was found in the scrapbook of Bob Mortimer, and we felt it to be well worth reprinting. It is slightly abridged).

He looked at me from a bookstall on King's Cross Station and I, the tailor's errand-boy, on my way to fetch finished work from Aldgate, had unwittingly made a life-long friend. When Tom Merry entered my life I had never heard of Thomas Hardy or Rudyard Kipling. But I entered a realm of literature that profoundly influenced me.

Gladly I suffered for Tom Merry, for often he got me into trouble at school. It was an art to rest the Gem on my knees and keep two ears on the master, one eye on the blackboard and one on Tom Merry.

One never-to-be-forgotten day my precious Gem was purloined. In sympathy for my lack of literary taste, I received from the master not the cane but a copy of Stevenson's "Treasure Island" that I might know what blood and thunder I had been wasting my time upon.

But never shall I forget coming upon my teacher in the deserted classroom, after hours. He was enjoying five minutes with my hero and, to my unbounded delight, he was shaking with laughter. He returned the book later. I believe he had read the story right through and enjoyed it.

Jack, Sam and Pete seem to have gone the way of all flesh; Sherlock Holmes is as dead as Spring-heeled Jack; and Tom Brown lies neglected like a forgotten old boy having completed his course with

credit. But everywhere I meet staid grown-ups, who, in secret, spend a passing hour with Tom Merry and those schoolboys beside whom Peter Pan must seem a centenarian.

One memory of these boys stands out most vividly. It was during the war. I was bending over a dying sapper. Was there anything I could do for him before the end came?

There was one thing. Would I read to him the remainder of the Tom Merry story send to him from England?

Pathetic, but in a way glorious. Probably he had never heard of Sir Walter Scott or Arnold Bennett, but his last hours were brightened by the long, long memories of youth.

Literary critics may squirm, but here's to Tom Merry, Bob Cherry, Gussy, stout Billy Bunter and all. May they live long to entertain generations of British schoolboys in their clean, healthy way.

And may they never grow up or advance in school by so much as a single form.

Magnets for sale - continued from page 147. 1631, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1639, 1640, 1641, 1642, 1643, 1644, 1645, 1646, 1648, 1649, 1650, 1651, 1655, 1656, 1657, 1658, 1659, 1660, 1661, 1663, 1664, 1665, 1666, 1667, 1668, 1669, 1670, 1671, 1672, 1673, 1674, 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683 (last copy published)
 C. Digests Nos. various 1955/1957. Collectors' Digest Annual, 1955, 1957. Chums June 29, June 1932. Holiday Annuals, 1924, 1925, 1935, 1939, 1940. Champion Annual 1926. Chatterbox Annual 1912.
 Billy Bunter's Own, 1957. ALL IN GOOD CONDITION. Offers invited for all items, single copies or all copies. Please write:
 M. GORDON, 113, NEWINGTON GREEN ROAD, LONDON, N.1.

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

The latest meeting at 'Cherry Place' was truly representative as we had Beryl Russell, Tom Porter, and Ray Bennett from the Birmingham Club, Stanley Smith from the Leeds Club, and as is now customary, Don Webster from the Liverpool Club. Not to be outdone, however, a letter

from Bette Pate, Secretary of the "Golden Hours Club", Sydney, Australia was read out by the Chairman. Thus all five Clubs were together in the spirit as it were. The usual very enjoyable time was had with good readings, quiz competitions and sales and exchanges. The visitors were in sparkling form as Tom Porter and Stanley Smith each won a quiz, Beryl Russell must have been pleased as Bob Whiter read a very good article on Biggles. Entirely unaided Miss Lawrence won her fathers very good quiz. Frank Lay read Bill Jardine's very amusing Greyfriars Remove form versus Remove Old Boys at Football. Next meeting to be held at Hume House, 136 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22 on Sunday, 18th May at 3.30 p.m. Time once again for call over and last to leave were three of the Bristol quartet, Fred and Norah Rutherford plus Cliff Lettey, the other member of the 'famous four', Eb. Worsell having left earlier with I trust, very pleasant memories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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NORTHERN SECTION MEETING - APRIL 12th, 1958

There was a splendid attendance for the Annual General Meeting. We had two surprises, one a very pleasant one the other not so welcome. We had just settled down to business when in walked Tom Porter and Beryl Russell from the Midland Club - that was the pleasant surprise. The other came during the re-election of officers when Stanley Smith announced that due to the calls of business, he found it impossible to get to meetings regularly, therefore he considered it would not be fair for him to carry on as Chairman. This was a blow to all of us as for throughout his term of office he had been ideal, always ruling from the chair with tact and judgment. If he had allowed his name to go forward he would certainly have been re-elected. However, a worthy successor was soon found. That stalwart Bill Williamson, a foundation member, was proposed and seconded, and unanimously carried. The other officials were re-elected. Before vacating his chair, Stan paid a well deserved tribute for all the hard work, Treasurer - Librarian Gerry Allison had put in over another year, and Stan himself got a hearty round of applause as he handed over to Bill. The Balance Sheet showed the Club to be in a flourishing condition, and aroused no criticism whatever. Programmes for the summer months were arranged and June 29th suggested as a suitable date for the meeting with the Midland Club at Chesterfield.

The ladies were also heartily thanked for the very good way they

had prepared refreshments during the year. It's something we are inclined to take too much for granted, but we would soon realise what we owe them if some month there weren't any.

I was able to announce that I had just heard from Roger Jenkins that the Greyfriars Jubilee Cup had been engraved and sent off to it's temporary home at Birmingham. Temporary, I say for of course we shall do our best to take it off them in the next contest.

There was time left for another look at Stan Smith's wonderful game "Billy Bunter's Postal Order" and one or two of Gerry Allison's best efforts.

Next meeting, May 10th. Main feature Ron. Hodgson's talk - "Packsaddle School - Texas".

H. LECKENBY,

Northern Section Correspondent.

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MIDLAND SECTION

Meeting held 31st March in Room No. 8 Chamber of Commerce, Birmingham.

We were all happy to learn that although he was not able to attend, our Chairman Jack Ingram, was "up and about" again. Jack Corbett took the chair and was able to give a hearty welcome to Mr. Dyer, absent for a few months, also our new chum Archie Hazel, was on the mark! First we were treated to one of Ray Bennetts very interesting and amusing talks on his four selections for holiday reading. He chose for his St. Frank's story - "The Schoolboy Channel Swimmer" starring Tom Burton. For his St. Jim's favourite piece he thought "Tom Merry and Co. in Italy" was most suitable. Though he would like to put "Jimmy Silver and Co. in Canada" first in his Rockwood selection, he preferred personally the "Silver Cloud" yarns. Coming to what he liked best of Magnet summer holiday stories, he could really select three. The "Texas" series when Wharton and Co. met the Rio Kid and the "Hiking" series were very good, but he gave the palm this time to "Billy Bunter's Coronation Party". A nice selection and very admirably put over. George Chatham's film show took us on "holiday". First we went beyond the Tweed (and the Clyde for that matter) up to the Northern Highlands of Scotland. All the scenery of loch and glen in their typical beauty was portrayed by the magic of the screen. A trip by boat to the Western Isles was a fitting climax. A second good film took us along the coast of North Wales to Snowdon. No need to

describe the enchanting beauty of that journey, grand show, George.

A quiz set by the Secretary conducted by Tom Porter was won by Jack Corbett. The night ended by Madge Corbett reading from a C.D.A. - Highlights of the Blue and White Magnets.

Next meeting will be 24th April - Study No. 5 - when the Greyfriars Jubilee Challenge Cup which we won will be on show.

HARRY BROSTER
Secretary.

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MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - SUNDAY, 6th APRIL

The Easter Meeting was a most successful one and there was nearly a "full house" gathered at 7 p.m. To add to the Easter mood we had a most welcome surprise in an unexpected visit of Tom Porter and Beryl Russell from the Midland Branch. The Chairman, Don Webster, opened the meeting promptly at seven o'clock, and on behalf of us all made a special welcome to our visitors. The financial position was then given and details of additional items to the Club Library.

As a change from the usual quiz the Secretary then read an imaginary story dealing with events prior to a football match played between Greyfriars and St. Frank's. The story was broken off at a point where tempers on both sides were inflamed and unpleasant incidents likely to occur. All members then wrote their own conclusion to this story. The entries were judged by Tom Porter. The best three entries were those of Mr. Unwin, Mr Morgan and Mr. Steen to whom suitable prizes were given. One St. Frank's fan, who shall be nameless, took advantage of the story to make the result seven - nil in favour of the St. Frank's team. Tea and chat followed, and our brains were then tested by Tom Porter's Greyfriars Quiz, given in two parts. This was a real twister and we all had to put on our thinking caps. The result - first place to Don Webster. All together a very fine evening and there is no doubt that everyone enjoyed themselves to the full. Date of next meeting, May 4th, starting 6.30 p.m. prompt.

NORMAN FRAGNELL,
Secretary,
Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

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News is full this month from Jim Cook, whose monthly letters from St. Frank's are meeting with a great deal of approval from Leites.

This time he has had a very busy life and I'm sure he would like to hear from members of the clan how they appreciate his work. We can smell the budding Spring in the leafy lanes of Sussex, Jim!

He writes:

I have just returned from a most enjoyable visit to London. I have been to Nelson Lee's chambers at 131a Gray Inn Road, W.C.1., and although when I set out to see the Junior XI play Helmford I had no idea the car in which we were travelling would get a puncture at a tiny village called Little Haddow, a hamlet on the Helmford Road, about halfway between Bannington and Helmford.

Barry Stokes, whose car it was, had commenced to mend the wheel when Nelson Lee drove up in his fast Jaguar. As a result, Barry left his car by the side of the road and we both went to the match in Lee's car. Barry could telephone a garage to collect the car as soon as we got to a telephone kiosk. This very small village seemed without a garage and a 'phone. However, an Inn called the Thatcher's Arms provided a 'phone, after which we continued our journey.

I would like to describe the battle between St. Frank's and Helmford College, Barlowe, the junior skipper, scored the first goal in a matter of minutes from the kick-off, but Tregellis-West equaled just before half time. The game finished without any more goals being scored, although, I really think Reggie Pitt's shot was just put over the goal line by the Helmford custodian.

As the match was drawing to a close, Nelson Lee remarked he was on his way to London, rather timidly I mentioned I had never known for certain where his place was in Grays Inn Road. Was it at the Holborn end or the King's Cross part, and he said it would be better if he showed me exactly where he lived. And that is how I was invited. What a great man Lee is. What a wonderful companion and friend. Although I did most of the talking on that run to town, on

reflection, I realise I did most of the listening.

He explained at great length on a variety of subjects that cropped up, as they will do when you are with a famous man. It is perhaps hard to imagine him leading such a precarious existence, when it would be so easy to exchange it for the calm of school life. Most of us are by now fully acquainted with the haphazard and dull routine, dangerous and thorny incidents that may accompany a detective as he builds a case. But, Lee explained, the pleasant and sometimes, exciting life at St. Frank's went a great deal towards making a trouble-some problem a lot easier. For he said, after a tussle with criminals and sordid associations there always lay St. Frank's at the end of it. And I knew exactly what he meant.

When we reached Gray Inn Road, it seemed to me only a few minutes ago we were on the Helmford Road making our way to the match. The time had just melted away, for suddenly we were crossing the Thames and darting through traffic gaps to Holborn.

Mrs. Jones, Lee's housekeeper, was there to greet us, and I badly wanted Nipper to complete the picture, although I knew him to be down at the school. It would have made my happiness full. But there's always another time, atoms splitting permitting.

I won't dwell on my stay there. It would take up too much space. I was shown over the rooms I had known so often in my imagination, and the laboratory and living room, and the cosy consulting room were just as I had always pictured them. At my request, Mr. Lee took me along the secret escape route that led to the roof and down to the street which, on many occasion, had come in very useful.

I realise now, there is such a lot more detail to the cases you read that only the fringe came to us by the chroniclers. The real adventures are in the dossiers that Nipper and tabulated and which I was permitted to examine. The William K. Smith affair makes thrilling reading, and the aftermath which was not reported by Brooks mainly because, I suppose, it didn't come within the orbit at the time, was really an International Incident.

I tried to get interested in the massive library. Lee's volumes are crowded with all sorts of aspects of crime. Such tomes as Gross's "Criminal Investigation" Soderman and O'Connell's "Modern Criminal Investigation" and "Elements of Medical Jurisprudence" by Dr. Farr were quite beyond me, and didn't stay in my hands long.

After a while, Nelson Lee was called to the telephone and he announced at the end of the conversation he would be going to the Home Office sooner than he expected. He told me then, the reason for his

dash to London was connected with a message he had received at St. Frank's, but now his presence was desired immediately, rather sooner than was thought. So he apologised for a hasty departure and suggested I stay on for a while and look over the rest of the place. Which I did. Later on, he phoned to say he would not be returning but would have to examine some documents with the Home Secretary, which I took to mean I would be going back to St. Frank's by train.

Well, now I am back at the school again. I returned by train from Victoria, changing at Bannington, since that particular train did not go through to Bellton, as they sometimes do. I intended walking from Bellton as it was a nice day, so after alighting from the local branch line station I went straight on and out to Bellton village.

I encountered Handforth and Co. on the way back and had a very pleasant talk. He was rather annoyed when he learned where I had been. The same old Handy! He's as jealous as ever. He doesn't merely ask he demands. Why hadn't he been asked to go to London? Was Mr. Lee working on a case? And all the time Church and McClure were grinning. I didn't realise until then the dangerous possibility of flying fists and battles that may accompany these little meetings, but everything went off all right. Meeting them in the flesh for the first time did not prevent me having the same fright each time I met them afterwards. I had the feeling there were alarm bells ringing, and this is how you react when you are in Handforth's company.

As it happened to be a Wednesday afternoon and therefore a half day off, I expected to see many juniors and a sprinkling of seniors about, but Bellton Lane was deserted after Handy and his chums left me. I continued to walk up to the main gates of the school. Entering the main gates of the school old Josh Cuttle, the head porter, waddles towards me. This was the first time I had met the lugubrious old man, and I decided to have a few words with him for recording.

"Hello sir" he said, sorrowfully, "So you are the young man who's here to report about the boys. Mr. Lee reckoned I should be seeing you."

"Young man yourself, Josh" I replied, "according to Mr. Brooks you were about my age, and getting younger!"

"This Mr. Brooks never saw me properly, he only listened to gossip. And why did he listen to gossip? Ask me. 'Cause of them boys. Anyways yelling their heads off, and laughing and playing about. Why was they playing about? 'Cause they don't have enough work to do."

"But old man, sorry! I mean Mr. Cuttle, you can't expect young men not to play about, as you put it, sometimes. Too much work is not

good for anybody."

"Nor too much play either. That's what those boys get. That's the trouble with the world, sir, too much play! Why was there too much play? Ask me, because a man don't do an honest day's work today. Like them boys, always larking about, playing games and gossiping and sleeping. And with that thrust which would have deterred a claimant for higher wages he waddled to his lodge, shaking his head. Yet he looked quite happy and healthy. Brooding over the fate of the human race had not left any scars on old Josh! The sad and gloomy old porter is assured of a place in our memory, however. Perhaps there is too much entertainment. Too much talk. Perhaps...here, I'm getting like him already.

I noticed Ralph Leslie Fullwood standing near the fountain in the Triangle as I crossed to enter the Ancient House. He smiled as I passed. "Has old Cuttle found the panacea for the world's troubles, yet?" he asked.

"If he had he didn't inform me" I replied.

"Well, don't ever publish it if he does tell you. He'll have nothing to live for!" And Fullwood walked away laughing.

I looked after the retreating figure of Ralph Leslie and thought hard. It seemed impossible that he was at one time an unutterable cad and rascal. A scheming figure and plausible scoundrel! Many a time during his early life at St. Frank's he had come to within an ace of getting the sack. And now, as I looked I saw a chap who should never give cause for complaint. He seemed so different to what I had imagined him to be. So open and honest, strong and healthy. Even his name, Ralph Leslie, isn't one you would apply to a cad. Maybe Brooks had always the intention from the beginning of converting him.

S.B.L. REVIEWS

MAY - 1958

High Heels and Homicide (No. 405)..... Desmond Reid

Many years ago there was a famous character named Dr. Huxton Rymer. He was one of several popular kings of crime created and developed by the late G. H. Teed. By those who still remember past S.B.L.s in which he once regularly appeared, he was recognised as a genuine, worthwhile character.

He appears again in this story, but no longer as a worthwhile

character. He is a subordinate of the Syndicate, a sort of rather more ambitious version of the old Criminals Confederation, and under the command of the head of the London cell of that notorious organisation. "A middle-aged man with flat, dead eyes" the author tells us. Surely as such he is unlikely to command the interest of the present generation? I feel that a character like Rymer should have the story written around him and not, to suit the requirements of the narrative, have his personality altered to such an unrecognisable state.

He becomes involved when three identical travelling bags are misappropriated from a plane landing at London Air-port from Lisbon. The Syndicate is jerked into sudden and violent action, for in one of the bags carried by a courier are vital secrets. The story - somewhat confusing - described their efforts and those of Rymer, in regaining possession of these secrets.

Rating..... Moderate

* * *

The Fatal Hour (No. 406)..... Edwin Harrison

Manuel Cordoba was the male partner of a dancing team that entertained at the Bola de Oro in the notorious seaport quarter, the Barrio Chino, in Barcelona. His mysterious death by poisoning followed by that of Domingo Vargas, the bull-fighter, in the arena of the famous Plaza de Toros Monumental by the same means is sufficient to arouse all the detective instincts inherited in Sexton Blake. Spring in Berkeley Square becomes Spring in Barcelona for Blake and his efficient Secretary, Paula Dane.

Who threw the poisoned wine bottle from which Vargas drank deeply after his successful encounter with the bull? And why did the murderer desire his death? Why also was Valeria O'Mara, the beautiful Irish girl so much in love with Domingo, reluctant to accept Blake's help in solving the riddle of the bull-fighter's death?

Edwin Harrison's style is unspectacular yet pleasing, and since it is more English and less American than the majority of the stories published today, it naturally adds a little extra variety, very welcome these days when the stories suffer somewhat from a sameness of literary style. It is good to welcome back artist, E. R. Parker as a contributor to the magazine section. But as one who first became associated with Sexton Blake 36 years ago, E. R. P.'s proper place is on the cover.

Rating..... Good

WALTER WEBB.

LETTER BOX
HAIL COLUMBIA!

(Here's a letter from another new chum, typical of the friendly, no time for formalities style, of our overseas members. May that Club develop and flourish. H.L.)

5212, Clarendon Street, Vancouver 16, B.C., Canada.

April 3rd, 1958.

Dear Herb;

Since last writing you I have made (thanks to Bill Gander) a couple of excellent contacts in the Old Country, and at the moment am expecting a shipment of mags from Tom Lambert of Norwich, plus a very special find: Volume 2 of "CHUMS"...in addition, I have written a couple of other chaps whose names appeared in the C.D. Annual for 1950...I have also contacted Ben Whiter and at the moment am in the process of sending off a letter to him which will make me a fully-fledged member of the O.B.B.C. of London. Funny how nothing ever came up during my first 3 years as an amateur collector until I met a friend of the late Peard Sutherland's. Then, all at once, almost overnight I'm able to get almost everything I want in the mag line, plus the odd copy of "CHUMS" and the opportunity of writing and getting letters from chaps all over the world. It's really wonderful and has given me quite a new interest I can assure you. The 3 of us who get together every now and then are still trying to locate more fanatics (to date we have come up with a couple) and still have the idea of forming a group of some kind or other based, of course, on the O.B.B.C. of London. Perhaps later on we can get permission to use their crest on our stationery (if we ever get to the point of needing it!)

At the moment however, it's a little hard to say just what will happen. I see by the clock that it's getting on to 8 o'clock and I'll have to stop and get the kids to bed....the wife's night out you know!

So, Herb, for the time being it's "so-long good hunting...and keep up the good work" Now that I'm a regular subscriber, like the others no doubt, I'm looking forward very eagerly to the next issue.

Sincerely,

John

(John P. Davis)