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VOLUME 13, NUMBER 149

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MAY 1959

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# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 13 No. 149

Price 1s. 6d.

MAY, 1959

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

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

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*From the Editor's Chair.*

THE 150th Number. Yes, next month we shall be halfway to the second century of our little family magazine, as I like to look upon it. Well, it has been decided to mark the occasion with a specially enlarged number. The extra pages will be devoted to a story from each of the O.B.B. Clubs in the recent Greyfriars Cup contest, St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Rookwood and Jack Wood's St. Frank's one.

Clubs (including Australia) have very kindly agreed to helping with the extra cost so there will be no increase in price. If there had been it would have been about 9d. Now, there are a number of subscribers who, for many reasons do not belong to any of the Clubs. If they feel they would like to contribute so as to lighten the cost to the Club's, well anything they would like to send along will be gratefully received.

In return, I feel confident I can promise you a specially interesting number, with a cover showing Bob Whiter at his best.

\* \* \*

THE ANNUAL. I have just been checking and I find that there is still about £14 owing on last years. This is very disturbing and disheartening. It only adds to my difficulties if I have to write to the forgetful ones individually, so I do hope they will respond promptly to this appeal. It is really time the books were clear,

isn't it? - seeing the forms for the new Annual will be going out in two months time. So send along and all will be forgiven.

\* \* \*

WONDERFUL WALTER WEBB. I feel I must add my tribute to Josie Packman's concerning Walter Webb's latest marathon effort. Walter says he gets inspiration whilst watching a game of cricket. I've a fellow feeling for I've often got ideas for the C.D. whilst sitting in the sunshine (you can sometimes) at Headingley and other places. I have always had a soft spot for King Cricket. I shall have a larger one now. What a lot we owe to chaps like Walter Webb. Who knows better than

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

\*\*\*\*\*

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# Blakiana.....

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

As the opening instalment of Walter Webb's "Century-makers" is shorter than those which follows, I have just managed to squeeze in a short article by Bill Lofts. Blakiana's sleuth certainly does ferret things out!

Walter's further instalments will be as follows:-

- (2) The Graydon-Darran Era.
- (3) Mainly Statistical.
- (4) The Coming of E.S. Brooks.
- (5) Enter G. H. Teed.
- (6) War Years.
- (7) Recruits Galore!
- (8) Teed - Record-breaker.

In addition to these, all of which I already possess, there will be several more, and as each instalment appears I am sure you will all agree with me that it is some of the most informative work Walter has ever written for Blakiana,

JOSEIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

## CENTURY-MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB

### INSTALMENT ONE

### "THE MEN WHO SET THE PACE"

Not an article on cricket, as the title might indicate, but since that was the source from which inspiration was born, it may be said to be not entirely unconnected with the great summer game. It was during a day spent watching the second innings of the first Test Match between England and the West Indies, two season ago, at the greatly improved County Ground at Edgbaston, that I was first moved to write the resultant article, and the two players mainly responsible for giving birth to the idea were Peter May and Colin Cowdrey, the captains of Surrey and Kent respectively.

It was a scene which would surely have gladdened the heart of that grand old cricket expert, the late John Nix Pentelow, and

undoubtedly would have inspired him in the writing of those splendid cricket yarns he used to spin so fascinatingly for the old Boys' Realm, way back in the 'twenties. A hot, sunny day, with only a few fleecy white clouds drifting lazily in the blue above, a rich green turf, also dotted with white - in this case, the flannelled figures of the West Indians, scudding far from lazily in their quest of the leather which May and Cowdrey were hitting to all parts of the ground after having tamed the West Indies attack in general and the wiles of Sonny Ramahdin in particular.

As Peter May reached his century amidst enthusiastic applause, thoughts of other centuries occurred to me - not those achieved in the form of runs made along the green carpet of the cricket field, but of stories written and published on the green, white and pink paper of the old boys' story books. How many authors, I wondered, succeeded in writing a hundred or more Sexton Blake stories? And, as one query led to another, others cropped up too. During the drowsy afternoon heat of the tea interval, the following notes were mentally jotted down:

- (1) HOW MANY AUTHORS WROTE 100 OR MORE S. BLAKE STORIES?
- (2) WHO ACCOMPLISHED THIS FEAT FIRST?
- (3) WHO WROTE THE MOST S. BLAKE STORIES?
- (4) (a) WHO HOLDS THE RECORD FOR THE HIGHEST YEARLY OUTPUT (U.J. ONLY)?
- (b) WHO HOLDS THE RECORD FOR THE HIGHEST YEARLY OUTPUT (S.B. LIBRARY ONLY)?
- (c) WHO HOLDS THE RECORD FOR THE HIGHEST YEARLY OUTPUT (ALL PUBLICATIONS)?
- (5) WHO HOLDS THE RECORD FOR THE FASTEST HUNDRED S.B. STORIES?
- (6) HOW MANY ACCOMPLISHED THE DOUBLE - 100 STORIES FOR BOTH U.J. AND S.B.L.?

After which, the cricket lost just a little of its attractiveness, despite Peter May's terrific assault on the bowling and Cowdrey's delightfully free scoring all round the wicket, as my thoughts continually strayed in the direction of Blake and those authors who were responsible for describing his many and varied adventures.

Since the very early Blake's were published anonymously, a complete accurate record is not possible, because in some instances the authors cannot be traced. But, these instances are few enough to make no difference to the actual findings, for the reason that these particular writers were responsible for only one or two stories, and, therefore, would have been mentioned but briefly in this record, in any

event. For the purposes of it, the UNION JACK and SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY have not alone come under the microscope, but a much wider field has been toothcombed, and those Blake stories which appeared in comics, such as CHIPS, FUNNY WONDER and JESTER, and early well-remembered papers like the ½d. MARVEL, the 1d. BOYS' FRIEND, DREADNOUGHT, BOYS' HERALD, PLUCK, BOYS' JOURNAL, and the monthly BOYS' FRIEND 3d. LIBRARY have also been probed, as well as the first issue of the SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL, which contains a number of original stories; in fact, every Blake story known to have been printed in any publication has been considered, in order that endeavour be made to ascertain the name of the author which might have been revealed, accidentally or otherwise. Only those short stories which appeared in the PENNY PICTORIAL, and the even briefer ones in ANSWERS, have been ignored, as considered, in their brevity, as being unworthy of inclusion.

In writing this article in its right perspective, it follows as a matter of course that our second query is bound to be the one answered first.

Who was the first author to write 100 SEXTON BLAKE STORIES?

Well, there were plenty of runners at the starting post at that meeting in the closing years of Queen Victoria's reign, though it was to transpire that not one of them would finish the course. The change-over in the UNION JACK from a ½d. weekly to a penny number was a hurdle at which nearly all fell, the handicap being overcome in only two or three cases.

Who were the starters who commenced Sexton Blake on his career of crime investigation, extraordinary in those much quieter, less hurried days of the 1890's, when television and radio were yet to be thought of and when even the gramophone and the cinema were still to be discovered as a popular means of entertainment and relaxation? With the figures in parenthesis in front of their name denoting the order in which they entered the field of Blake fiction, here are the names - and pen-names - of those men, who, as already stated, began but were destined not to finish the course, and, thereby, having failed to attain a minimum of 50 published manuscripts, forfeiting their claim to a place amongst the distinguished company who reached and surpassed that figure. From a full complement of stories published, also data sifted from my own records, I find that 19 authors wrote 50 or more Sexton Blake stories, four scraped home with a hundred, and four failed to achieve the feat by a hairsbreadth. Who were these authors will be revealed at the end of this article, when the final placings and figures are given; but, for the present, our concern is with those who set the pace from 1893,

and here they are in as near their correct order as it is possible to give:-

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| (1) Harry Blyth          | (2) Viscount Mount Morres (Patrick Morris) |
| (3) W. Shaw Rae,         | (4) Arnold Grahame,                        |
| (5) Melton Whyte,        | (6) Herbert Maxwell                        |
| (7) Henry St. John       | (8) Maxwell Scott                          |
| (9) Campbell Brown       | (10) Paul Herring                          |
| (11) Christopher Stevens | (12) Mark Darran                           |
| (13) Percival Cooke      | (14) Alec G. Pearson                       |

The placing of Henry St. John at No. 7 may be somewhat presumptuous, for his name certainly did not appear in any paper under the title of a Sexton Blake story at that time. Yet "Shadowed and Haunted", a really outstanding serial that ran in the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. UNION JACK in 1896, between April and July, was so reminiscent of his work, that, were it possible to dive into the dusty archives of Fleetway House, with freedom to inspect the ancient record books which may possibly be still there, I feel certain it would be found that payment for that serial was made to Henry St. John. Although, at the time of writing, St. John's Blake stories have not been brought to light, there is proof that he did indeed write several, for this was acknowledged in a Round Table chat by a later editor, Mr. H. W. Twyman, following an interview with "Willie" Back after a reader had asked the former to supply details of the origin of Sexton Blake.

These 14 authors all wrote of Blake before the UNION JACK attained the status of a penny weekly; and then, when it did, over half of them dropped out of the running. As a result, the names of Blyth, Mount Morres, Shaw Rae, Graham, Whyte, Brown, Stevens and Cooke take no further part in this record.

The name of "Campbell Brown", which was assigned to only one story, was a pen-name of the author who wrote also as "Shaw Rae". The probable reason why the latter pseudonym was not used in that particular case was because the story was set in the Wild West and the name Campbell, a familiar enough name out there, would add a little to the atmosphere. There is no definite proof of this being so, but the fact that Rae's created character We-Wee ("the little beagle") appeared in it, and all the mannerisms with which the latter's previous yarns are punctuated were to be found there, leaves no room for doubt.

Prior to the week when the U.J. appeared as a penny journal for the first time, W. Shaw Rae had written 23 Blake stories, easily the highest number any author had attained up to that time, and his output of 6 stories in the year 1897, and again in 1898, was, up to that time,

a record for any one year.

Faced with such a moderate figure, it was obvious that it was going to be easily broken, and that in the very near future.....

\* \* \* \* \*

THE BLAKE AUTHOR WHO WAS A TRAMP

By W. O. G. Lofts

In London, not far from where I live, is a Salvation Army Hostel. Several times a day I have to pass it, and I often see outside the building the unfortunate men who live there. Pathetic old men, ragged men, nearly all down and out, waiting to book their beds for the night.

What stories they could tell of their experiences, tramps some of them, of life on the road. The word tramp is not a complimentary word, but tramps many of them unfortunately are.

Seeing them so often had me thinking; Josie Packman has appealed in her Editorial for articles of interest for inclusion in Blakiana, so perhaps this little article of mine will interest readers - the Sexton Blake author who at one time acutally was a tramp!

One of the most picturesque stories ever related about a Blake author concerns that very popular writer Donald Stuart, otherwise Gerald Verner, which I understand is his real name. Stuart, as we will call him, was reported in one of the London papers just before the last war as having written his first Blake story whilst down and out on the Embankment.

If this is true it must have been written for the Sexton Blake Library at a time when the author's name was not given, for in a recent conversation with the former editor of the late "Union Jack," Mr. H. W. Twyman, he could not recollect Stuart's first tale coming to him in that manner. (For the record, Stuart's first S.B.L. yarn was No. 105, dated August, 1927, entitled "The Clue of the Second Tooth" and the first U.J. No. 1379, dated March 1930, entitled "The Green Jester".)

In my opinion the account of Stuart's first story is not true. Donald Stuart was by nature a showman to his fingertips, as many of his friends know, and he must have been pulling the newspaper reporter's leg. But, showman or not, Donald was a very likeable man with a great sense of humour. Still alive, and living in London, he has made quite a name for himself with his Gerald Verner novels and adapting the Peter Cheney novels for stage plays.

Like the words of the popular song of some years ago, "The Lady

was a Tramp," I would now like to tell the authentic story of the Blake writer who was a tramp.

Joseph Stamper is his name, and he wrote Sexton Blake Library 3rd series No. 51 "The Shipyard Menace". It is true he only wrote the one Blake story; but he was a 'Blake Author' all the same, and has as much right to be written about as any of the well-known authors of the Teed, Evans, Skene, Baker, Story and Maclean class.

Joseph Stamper was born at St. Helens, Lancs, in 1886. He was educated at an ordinary Council School (incidentally, the same as that to which Eric Parker the famous Blake artist went). At the time of leaving school his parents died, and he went to work in the local foundry as an iron-moulder. On the eve of manhood a strike occurred in the foundry industry and, like thousands of others, he was thrown out of work. After a lot of hardship, hunger and unemployment, and despairing of ever getting work again, he had no alternative but to go on the road and become a tramp!

It was early autumn, about the year 1905, when he first went on the road, with no luggage and only the clothes he stood up in. His work tools he still kept, but apart from these items he had no other equipment.

"I was a shy and inoffensive youth" was how he described himself in his autobiography. "I was a lonely youth, never had any friends, was religiously inclined, and about 5 ft. 8 inches tall and fairly broad." (This was due, no doubt, to his heavy work at the foundry.)

His autobiography, entitled "Less Than The Dust" or "The Memoirs of a Tramp", was published by Hutchinson & Co., in the 1930's, and gives a very vivid picture of his life on the road - the different types of people he met, his various companions, and incidents encountered during his travels all over England.

Having had such a vast experience of these conditions, it was not to be wondered at that Stamper, in the late 'twenties, finding he had a flair for writing decided to write about slum and tramp conditions in general. These writings were an instant success in the publishing world. He had articles published in the "Novel Magazine", "Clarion", "Weekly Telegraph" and many other periodicals. Apart from his already mentioned autobiography, he had several novels published in book form. One was entitled "Violence" - "A Novel of a Strike", and he certainly had the knowledge to write about this subject.

I do not know the full story of how he came to write a Blake yarn, but I believe it came about this way....

Around 1940, with the early part of the second World War and the whole of the juvenile field of literature thrown into chaos, with

papers closing down through paper shortage, and authors being away on war service, he was able to get a Blake story accepted and published in the S.B. Library. (I might add that those brilliant writers, Teed, Evans and Robert Murray Graydon had all died round this time.)

After this single effort (and quite a good one at that) Stamper appears to have retired to the town of Barrow-in-Furness. Whether he is alive today I do not know, for all efforts to trace him have failed. Maybe he is..... Perhaps, with the unsettled conditions of the last war, he decided to go on the road again. And what if he did?

It gives me great pleasure to write about such a courageous man and to record in Blake lore the Sexton Blake writer who was a TRAMP.

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## HAMILTONIANA

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\*Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

We haven't had the pleasure of publishing a letter from Frank Richards laterly. However, here is one with some good news - the return of Bunter to the T.V. screen in a new series:

9th April, 1959.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thank you for the C.D. and your letter therein. I was much disappointed not to have seen the Old Boys on T.V., but I did not hear about it till after it was done...since when I have heard very much indeed, and gather that it was an extremely good and interesting show.

Very interesting indeed is that article from the "Times" which you reproduced in the C.D. I quite agree with the writer that "Billy's the Boy" - in fact, I couldn't agree more. I do not often see the Times, but immediately on getting your tip on the subject, repaired to the telephone, and secured delivery of a copy. I have long ago given up keeping Press cuttings, but I shall certainly keep this one. When the stately Times pronounces that Billy Bunter is the most famous schoolboy in fiction, that is that, and the last word has been said.

It may interest some of the readers to hear that Billy is booked for another run on T.V. this summer. I have just finished No. 8 in a new series of Bunter plays for television, to begin according to present schedules, the 6th June. So it will just about coincide with the hundred-and-fiftieth C.D.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(Eric Fayne turns the spotlight on comments made by the famous, the not-so-famous, or even the infamous. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on any of the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

NO. 26. SOMEBODY SAID. (Second spasm)

".....CHARACTERS WHO HAVE A SPECIAL PART TO PLAY IN ONE SERIES CAN OFTEN OUTLIVE THEIR USEFULNESS." (Roger Jenkins, C.D. Annual, 1958.)

This is true. The writer was referring to Jim Valentine, who played a sterling part in his own outstanding series, and appeared again, minus his previous characteristics, in the Brazil series. Our second meeting with Valentine was nostalgically pleasant, but little beyond.

Another Valentine - Valentine Outram - starred in a superb couple of stories in the Gem. The Outram stories are among the Gem's very best. Powerful, touching, with brilliant characterisation, the plot is original to this day - an abnormally strong boy who fell into trouble because he could not control his use of his strength. There was an intriguing mystery when Levison recognized as George Purkiss this lad who could prove beyond doubt that he was Valentine Outram.

Eighteen months later, Outram appeared again in a double-length Gem story, "Shadow of the Past", a yarn which was of good average quality, but did not reach anything like the perfection of the original pair.

Soames, one of the Magnet's really great adult characters, made a terrific impact in the first South Seas series. He appeared again in a Christmas kidnapping series, lacking his previous colourful background, but with considerable success, because this series was a logical sequel of the South Seas series, and it was splendidly written.

Later, he starred in at least two more series - the Christmas "Cigarette Case" series and a Spy series. In both of these Soames was adequate for the parts he had to play, but he made little impact any more as a great character study.

Which brings us to the point as to whether Ken King and the Rio Kid were successful when they appeared in the Magnet stories. My own impression is that they provided merely a novelty interest. The Kid, certainly, was only a shade of the wonderful character we had loved in the Popular. I am by no means certain that there was not an anachronistic slip in associating the Kid with Harry Wharton and Co. Though the original Rio Kid series do not date, one gets the impression that the Kid's Wild West was that at the turn of the century.

Then was it a mistake to re-introduce characters who had played with great success in earlier masterpieces? I don't think it was, for there was happy nostalgic reminiscence in meeting them again, even though their former characteristics were dimmed.

"MY PET AVERSION IS THE VENTRILOQUISM OF BUNTER AND VAN RYN."

VENTRILLOQUISTS CANNOT REALLY 'THROW' THEIR VOICES." (David Lancake in a letter to Echoes).

Writers, since the year dot, have tried to be funny with tales of ventriloquism. My father used to talk of a story of this type, "Valentine Vox", which he thought wonderful in his youth. I, myself, seem to recall finding delight, as a small boy, in a series of tales of a ventriloquist called, I think, "Valentine Fox" which may have appeared in Puck. Can any reader verify this?

It is true that Bunter, as a ventriloquist, was far larger than life, but the stories were amusing if the theme did not get out of hand, as it often did when substitute writers handled it. I remember, however, a droll and quite entertaining substitute story of this type which appeared, for some reason, mid-way through the "Toad of the Remove" series.

Frank Richards was not entirely consistent in presenting Bunter's gift. Frequently the Owl was shown as a voice-thrower, but there were occasions, in the thirties, when his gift was limited to a remarkable faculty for imitating voices - far more credible than voice-throwing.

But probably we nearly all agree with David Lancake when he sums up: "Still, we must allow the author some latitude - and Frank Richards will always be my favourite."

"THE PRODUCER OF 'EMERGENCY - WARD 10' CONFIRMS THAT HIS TOWN OF OXBRIDGE ORIGINATED FROM TAKING THE FIRST SYLLABLE OF OXFORD AND THE LAST OF CAMBRIDGE." (Mid-April issue of T.V. Times)

Master Dicky Nugent was thirty years ahead of "Emergency - Ward 10". Dr. Birchmall claimed to be a graduate of Oxbridge University. Maybe the T.V. writer was a St. Sam's enthusiast.

"NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO THE MAN WHO DOES NOT HAVE TO DO IT HIMSELF."  
(Earl Wilson)

A useful point to remember should we ever be tempted to slam our hard-working Editor with complaints about "too much Hamiltoniana", "too much Blakiana", "too many printing errors", etc. It's dead easy for an Editor to please every one of his readers all of the time - I think - so long as I'm not that cheery, happy, willing slave, our Editor.

That's just how I look at things! I may be wrong! Why not write to me and let me have your views?

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 24. TWO YEARS OF CONTROVERSY

BILL LOFTS writes: "It is an undoubted fact that the Magnet ceased in 1940 as a result of the paper shortage, but I am told, on good authority, that the sales had been dropping for years, from a peak of 200,000 to 80,000 in 1940. A good circulation of a boys' paper was considered to be 150,000, which was that of Champion in 1940 - the reason why the Magnet ceased and the Champion carried on. If the powers-that-be thought that the Magnet would make a reasonable profit today, they would not hesitate to revive it.

Since the war, the A.P. have brought back in some form the St. Jim's tales, re-written by a friend of mine, Alf Wallace, and, of course, the Greyfriars yarns have appeared in the Comet, but they evoked but little response from the young readers of today. The Bunter strip in Knockout has been the most successful, due probably to the popularity of Bunter on T.V.

You state "British Boys' books do not lead the world today for the simple reason that they do not exist. We are told that they would not sell, but how does anyone know when none is published?" In reply to this, I would remind you of "Boys' World", "School Cap", "School Yarn Magazine", "Boys' Favourite", and the well-known "Silver Jacket", the latter admittedly having good circulation in Australia. Others, still being published with a healthy sale, are "Comet", "Sun", "Lion", and "Tiger".

Obviously, the A.P. do not consider publishing the Holiday Annual because they think it would not sell. The year before last, just after Christmas, I saw hundreds of Bunter Annuals being sold off at half-price at Foyle's in Charing Cross Road. Yet Annuals which contain picture strips do sell very well indeed. We, of course, having been brought up on the fine stories of Greyfriars, condemn the present picture-strip type of stories, but we have to face up to the fact that they do sell well."

ROGER JENKINS writes: "I should not say that the strict discipline of the Hamilton Schools has become old-fashioned; indeed, modern views seem to be turning against relaxation of standard. In any case, I doubt whether it would have been all honey to be a master at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch got by alright, it is true, but when one thinks of the various misadventures that befell Prout, Capper, Hacker and poor Monsieur Charpentier - to say nothing of the veiled impudence from

boys like Vernon-Smith that seemed to be their daily lot - I fancy that they earned their salary, high as it was.

I do not feel so certain as you that the Magnet would sell today. Paper is no longer cheap, and advertising revenue has become all-important. Periodicals with marginal circulations have to go the way of Picture Post. This is not meant to imply that there would not be a fair-sized market for weekly Greyfriars stories, but it might not be large enough to be profitable.

I do believe that a better chance would exist for a revival of the Schoolboys' Own Library with a monthly clientele, and there seems to be no doubt that the Holiday Annual would sell at Christmas time like hot cakes, as you say. The 1941 Annual sold well enough in September, 1940, after all the other school publications had ended, and we are told that there was a large demand for a 1942 Annual. I feel certain, however, that we shall never see any more editions."

FRANK HANCOCK writes: "I agree that the Magnet would be a success today - many of the old tales could be reprinted with a little tactful sub-editing here and there. This applies even more to the Schoolboys' Own Library. The A.P. has continued to publish the Sexton Blake Library, and, at the same price, they should have done the same with the S.O.L. I am certain that, as you suggest, the Holiday Annual would be a sure-fire success. Still, it takes two to make a bargain - wheels within wheels - nuff said."

RAY BROWN writes: "I certainly believe that the Magnet and Gem would be popular today, but the presentation would have to be changed, I feel. The papers that sell now seem to be all attractively presented and most of them appear to be monthlies. I therefore envisage a monthly Magnet on glossy paper, about 36 pages, with an attractive front cover, and selling for 1/6d or thereabouts. The contents could be a reprint of a Magnet story (I suggest starting period circa 1925) with the remaining twelve pages or so a Gem reprint. The paper would sell, of course, on Bunter's present popularity - in fact, use could be made of the pre-war slogan 'Billy Bunter's Own Paper'".

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "Discipline must be maintained in schools, for it is the essence of character development, and makes boys and girls a credit to their parents and the community. With regard to the Hamilton schools, strict discipline can never be old-fashioned.

For a long time I have thought that the Gem and Magnet would be a success if published today. Some while ago I visited a Junior Public Library, and I asked the librarian whether Frank Richards' books were

popular with young people. The answer was that there is a big demand for them. It has always been a mystery to me why the Holiday Annual has not been published since the war and, like you, I am certain that it would have been a great success, even in these modern days."

ERIC FAYNE adds: "I do not doubt the good faith of Mr. Lofts' informants concerning circulation, but I think it is wise to treat such figures with some reserve. It is so easy for one person to pass what is merely an opinion, and for this opinion, as time goes on, to be repeated as gospel truth. In 1939-1940, periodicals of all types were ceasing publication, and I see no reason why Hamiltonians should be asked to accept the premise that the Gem and Magnet would have finished, war or no war."

As long ago as 1940, a friend of mine at the Fleetway House told me that the Magnet would never be published again. His reason, nothing at all to do with circulations, was an unwritten law in the publishing trade that a paper which ceases without prior formal notice if finished for good.

If the Champion's sales were indeed double those of the Magnet, I wonder that we do not find more Champion fans among C.D. readers. It seems odd that our Editor does not have to face a demand for "Hamiltoniana" to be replaced by "Championiana."

Of the post war failures mentioned by Bill, I have only seen "School Cap", and had not even heard previously of any of the others excepting "Silver Jacket". The failure of "School Cap" is no criterion for, in my view, it was not within miles of the standard of the Magnet. To my mind, also, "Sun", "Comet", etc., however successful, are comic papers, and it is impossible to compare them with the pre-war Hamilton papers.

Is it feasible to believe that a possible lack of enthusiasm accorded the scrappy travesties of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, published in "Comet" and "Sun", gives any real indication that the Schoolboys' Own Library would be a failure?

The hundreds of Bunter Annuals which Bill saw on sale at Foyle's rather gives the impression of a special arrangement between the publishers and the booksellers. In any case, it is my experience that all Annuals are sold off at half-price after Christmas.

\* \* \* \* \*

"MAGNETS" WANTED - 1097 (to complete a series), 1180, 1181, 1182, 1186, 1187 (to complete China Series). 1253, 1273, 1326, 1598, 1643.  
R. MORTIMER, 115 WALTON ROAD, EAST MOLESEY, SURREY.

THE UNPLEASANT MASTERS AT THE HAMILTONIAN SCHOOLSBy Roger M. JenkinsNo. 4 - Mr. Roger Manders

Of all the unpleasant masters at the Hamiltonian Schools, none was so finely drawn as Roger Manders, the housemaster of the Modern House at Rockwood. Mr. Manders specialised in chemistry and, according to Charles Hamilton, "His ideal schoolboy was a fellow with a bumpy forehead, a pair of spectacles, an absent-minded manner, peering into pots in the school lab; which was not the Rockwood ideal at all. If a fellow could have thought in geometry and talked in algebra, Mr. Manders would have been almost kind to him."

Mr. Manders was far from being a cardboard figure of fun. We were told so much about him that his personality seemed very real and believable - in fact, too real at times. He had sharp features and wore elastic-sided boots. He was never able to let well alone, but would always be peeping and prying like the busybody he was. One of his favourite habits was to prowl round the junior studies on the off-chance that he might find something amiss. It was unfortunate on one such occasion that Jimmy Silver decided that it would be a happy surprise for the occupants of Tommy Dodd's study if a snowball came through their open window and landed on their tea table. It came through the open window alright, but it reached Mr. Manders before it could reach the table.

Mr. Manders was disliked not only by the boys but by his colleagues also. When the masters remonstrated with the Head about Mr. Bootles' dismissal in Nos. 920-924 of the Boys' Friend, Mr. Manders was the only blackleg on the staff, and he also attempted to dissuade Mr. Flinders, another Modern master, from joining in. Again, when he became headmaster during Dr. Chisholm's illness in Nos. 1076 - 1082, he incensed the staff by sitting-in on their lessons and then criticising them in front of their forms. His disagreement with Mr. Dalton was so serious that he almost succeeded in manoeuvring him into a false position at the very moment that Dr. Chisholm was expected back. Of all the unpleasant masters, Mr. Manders was the only one who actively schemed and plotted. He would go out of his way to look for trouble.

All the unpleasant masters had scant regard for games, but Mr. Manders would at times deliberately interfere in order to ruin the juniors' hopes. "Moyny's Master-Stroke", a story specially written for the 1924 Holiday Annual, was a delightful example of such interference, Mr. Manders affecting to be unaware that the detention of the

star player was a matter of any importance at all:-

"I am not closely acquainted with the important affairs of the Lower boys," said Mr. Manders with a freezing smile.

"Silver is the junior football captain, Mr. Manders. Surely you are aware of that?"

"Yes, I am aware of that."

"His presence is required for the match on Wednesday -"

"And all discipline and order may be thrown aside, in order that a junior game may not be interfered with?" inquired Mr. Manders.

Mr. Dalton did his best, but Mr. Manders was clearly not having any.

The penultimate Rookwood series in the Boys' Friend (Nos. 1275-1279) featured Mr. Manders in a most memorable role - that of uncle of Marcus Manders, the unpopular sneak of the Modern House. There was little to choose between this series and the earlier series about Bartholomew Ratcliffe in the Gem, though the Rookwood series was undoubtedly much better written. Marcus was every bit as detestable as Bartholomew, and Mr. Manders was even more disposed to pursue his nephew's grievances than was Mr. Ratcliff. Both nephews turned out to be blackguards as well as sneaks, and both were sent home in disgrace. This contrived to remove them from their respective schools, but it was perhaps something of an artistic flaw to mix the character of a sneak with that of a blackguard.

Although the regular Rookwood series in the Boys' Friend finished in 1926, there was a delightful epilogue in the Gems of the late 'thirties which showed that Owen Conquest had not lost touch with the Hampshire school over the previous decade. One serial was reprinted in No. 362 of the Schoolboys' Own Library under the title "Manders on the Spot" and related how a tramp stole Dr. Chisholm's wallet and hid it in the lining of Mr. Manders' overcoat. The house-master's life then became plagued by assaults from a tramp who attempted to steal his overcoat. There were many fine little descriptive touches which all helped to build up a comprehensive portrait of Mr. Manders in many moods and situations. Perhaps the most amusing of all was when he intercepted Lovell en route for the Head's house and made him hand over the wallet Lovell had found. Mr. Manders never lost the opportunity of ingratiating himself with his chief, and was anxious to lay the wallet before Dr. Chisholm himself. Unfortunately it was not the missing wallet: it contained not money but a piece of paper bearing the word "Fathead." Not for the first time Mr. Manders' plans went awry.

Although Mr. Manders was the most finely drawn of all the unpleasant masters at the Hamiltonian schools, he never featured largely in any of the really first rate stories as Mr. Selby seemed to do so often at St. Jim's. Most of the outstanding Rookwood stories revolved round the Classical side, and Mr. Manders was left, like Mr. Ratcliff, to act a part at a distance, as it were. But though Mr. Manders never seemed to star in really memorable stories, he was undoubtedly a really memorable character, the last and most successful of all the unpleasant masters created by Charles Hamilton in his three main schools.

\* \* \* \* \*

RESULT OF QUIZZLE NO. 5

Solution to Clue Down - Herbert Leckenby. Hidden words:- "The Falstaff of the New House."

First correct solution received from Clifford Smith, 104 Headroomgate Road, St. Anne's, Lancs., to whom 5/- has been sent.

WATCH FOR QUIZZLE NO. 7 in next month's SPECIAL 150th ISSUE of THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST. Greatly increased prize list to celebrate this great MILESTONE in the history of our paper.

\*\*\*\*\*  
WANTED - Sexton Blake Libraries - 1st series: 11, 17, 37, 41, 105, 109, 111, 197, 198, 201, 202. 2nd series: 102, 111, 213, 236, 243, 272, 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667.  
 Boys' Friend Libs. 3d. 1st series: 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series: 392, 396. Union Jacks; 881, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1179, 1180. MRS. JOSIE PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED certain Magnets, Boys' Friend 3d. Library No. 319 and Picture Show No. 1. YOUR prices paid. Send lists to:  
 DAVID STACEY, WICKFORD, ESSEX.

WANTED - Magnets: 799. S.O.L's: 60, 68. ½d. Gems: 16, 37. Gems: 279, 359, 364, 433. B.F. Library 1st series: 237 King Cricket, 334 The Jungle Patrol, 383 After Lights Out, 497 Adventure Creek.  
 DR. ROBERT WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

SALE OR EXCHANGE - 64 Nelson Lees, New series. 51 Gems, would exchange on agreed basis for Magnets or sell.  
 M. ENGLAND, 2 HIGH STREET, PRESTEIGNE-UPON-LUGG, RADNORSHIRE.

# Old Boys Book Club

LONDON SECTION. Once again we met at Neasden and viewed the complete Nelson Lee Library collection, saw the "Sexton Blake Libraries" that are printed in foreign languages, thanks to Len Packman, and delved into Hamiltonia with such experts as Eric Fayne, Roger Jenkins, Bob Whiter, Eric Lawrence, Charlie Wright, etc. Yes, classical Don was present and one and all must congratulate him on the fine quiz that he conducted. Our Hylton Flatman present again after his indisposition and the ever welcome Ray Bennett from Tipton making the long journey swelled the attendance to 23. George Sewell assisted by Bob Whiter had compiled a teaser of a quiz, the famous quotations which Frank Richards mentions in his writings. We had to complete the blanks and state where they came from. A very fine effort. Ray Bennett gave us his "Ramblings and Reminiscences of an Amateur Collector" which was greatly enjoyed.

It was stated that there are now over 700 books in the Hamiltonian Section of the club library and it was agreed to extend the lists of borrowers to members of the other clubs and there will be further notice of this in due course. The usual sales and exchanges plus the good feed and chats took place and then Don proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the hosts, Bob and Laura Blythe. Next meeting at 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London, N.22, on Sunday, May 10th. Guest of Honour will be Les Rowley. Kindly let Bob Whiter know is intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN SECTION 9th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, April 11th, 1959. It would not be strictly true to say that it was a mixture of business and pleasure, for the simple reason that the business was all pleasure too.

The Balance Sheet for instance. It gladdened the heart, showing as it did the Club in a flourishing condition, far, far away from Carey Street. For this happy state of affairs a vast amount of credit, as all agreed, goes to our tireless Librarian and Treasurer, Gerry Allison. The amount of business the Library had done proved that. The election of officers was a mere formality for all were re-elected. The Chesterfield trip, a firm annual event now, was discussed, and, if Midland agrees, June 28th will be the day. A series of Desert Island Books talk with 12 members taking part were arranged. Harry Barlow then put on a novel game, one which must have given him a lot of work in advance.

continued page 135

QUIZZLE No. 6.

The letters in the numbered squares, if placed in sequence in the lower grid, will spell out something surely announced at Friardale Station.

CLUE DOWN: It's reputed to be as noisy as its owner at Greyfriars. (6,5,4)

CLUES ACROSS:

- A. The bootboy with whom Nugent quarrelled.  
 B. The sort of batsmen Tom Merry and Talbot are.  
 C. The Dawn of Ken King.  
 D. A fair cousin in the locket he lost.  
 E. Though damp, a suitable place for the Co. to have a punt about.  
 F. Prefect expelled from St. Jim's.  
 G. Bob's pater.  
 H. Bunter eats his by putting his face in it.  
 I. Is this one, where Lowther was Stage Struck, still open in Wayland?  
 J. Mr. Dalton expects his form to.  
 K. A St. Jim's master might be a learner driver in confused traffic.  
 L. Captain of the Fourth at Cliff House.  
 M. Ancient Greek at Greyfriars?  
 N. He was really responsible for White Cover Days, the hun!  
 O. Gussy can see through it. How singular!

\* \* \*

Write on a postcard the words in the lower grid and the answer to the Clue down. 5/- for the first correct solution received by the Editor. 10 points to Club Branch, if any.

\* \* \*

SALE: 31 vols. CAPTAIN 5/- each; 38 Gunby Hadath Books 4/- each; 33 S.O.L.'s 299-408 2/6 each; 20 BILLY BUNTER Series 6/- each; List from R. GUEST, 5 RALEIGH GARDENS, BRIXTON HILL, S.W.2.

A	1		2				
B			3		4		
C			5				
D	6	7					
E			8	9			
F	10	11					
G			12	13			
H			14				
I					15	16	
J			17				
K							18
L		19					
M			20				
N	21					22	
O							23

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	

There followed a Bunter Drive, and a short "Ask me Another" based on the B.B.C. feature, Points were awarded and there were splendid prizes for the two who had the highest grand totals. And - wait for it - this was the result: Doreen Hodgson, 180 points; Myra Allison, 172 points; Runner Up, Harold Busby 171 points. Did someone suggest we change the name of the Club? But, no, the obvious alternative would hardly do, would it? Anyway, hats off to the ladies! Next meeting, May 9th. HERBERT LECKENBY. Northern Section Correspondent.

O.B.B.C. MIDLAND SECTION. Meeting held 23rd March, 1959, Ten members attended this meeting which should have been a bumper affair as apart from one of George Chatham's films shows being the star turn, we were assigned the Club lounge by the Chamber of Commerce. This is where we had the T.V. telerecording and also where we entertained Herbert a year ago, (or did Herbert entertain us?). Illness and business commitments just cannot be helped, but to offset one disappointment in not seeing some of the regular stalwarts, it was refreshing for John Tomlinson to put in an appearance - all the way from Burton and on top of that - right from work. How's that for keenness? One who had sent in an apology was George and therefore there was no film show. Instead we had 300 Nelson Lees to browse over. These had been given the Club by our new member Mr. Bradbury to whom again many many thanks from all of us. After this there was a "name" quiz of Hamilton characters, set by myself. This simply was how many personee of the main schools, Greyfriars, Highcliffe (plus Courtfield), St. Jim's and Rookwood have the christian names of 1. Dick (Richard), 2. Tom, 3 Herbert, 4. William, 5. George. Actually there are about 60 bearing these names. John Tomlinson came first with about 20. There was no prize to reward him. To finish up an excellent night's programme Madge Corbett read to the company, a Greyfriars yarn written by her son Ian, some years ago, and for so young a boy, this was exceedingly good. Another one knows his "stuff". The Secretary announced the acquisition of two new postal members and a possible 'live' member for next meeting which is on April 27th in the "End Study" this time. HARRY BROSTER, Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - 12th APRIL. Members were very pleasantly surprised, upon arrival, to find that that delightful couple, Beryl Russell and Tom Porter, had paid us an unexpected, though most welcome, visit. Thus, the section was very grateful for the chance to convey to them our warmest congratulations on their recent engagement. It was another satisfactory attendance, for, as well as our two guests, we

had present Frank Case, Eric Coldwell, Bill Greenwood, Pat Laffey, Norman Pragnell, George Riley, Frank Unwin, Jim Walsh, Don Webster and Bill Windsor.

The meeting opened by Chairman Don, began with the usual routine business, and we were then entertained by Frank Case's ingenious literary quiz, which was entitled, "Number Please?" This was typical of Frank in its careful and painstaking preparation, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and very fittingly won by Tom Porter, with Bill Greenwood second, and Jim Walsh, Bill Windsor and Frank Unwin jointly third. The debate: "That class distinction as portrayed in the school stories was entirely unjustified and all too deliberately over-emphasised" provided an excellent subject for argument, and, as usual, opinions were divided.

An unusual quiz, "Know your Merseyside" was then presented, and was won by (need I say it?) Frank Case, with almost maximum marks. Second came Jim and Eric, with Bill Windsor third. Frank certainly "knows his Merseyside!" Don provided a very jolly few minutes with his "Pet Aversions", and then we enjoyed the "Desert Island Books" selections of George Riley, Bill Windsor and Jim Walsh. Finally, the "Bullets" entries were judged. The example given was "No Flies on Quelch", and pleasingly, Elsie Webster's proved the winner with her "He Prefers the Swot" bullet. A nice effort this. Well another wonderful meeting passed all too quickly. We hope you enjoyed it, Beryl and Tom, as much as we enjoyed your company. Thanks for coming. Next month, on Sunday 10th May, we shall have two more welcome visitors, Herbert Leckenby and Sir Frederick Bowman. In consequence, please note that the meeting will commence at 5.30 prompt, because we have a long and enjoyable programme prepared. FRANK UNWIN.

THE GOLDEN HOURS CLUB, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. The flu epidemic raging in Sydney cut a swathe through the members attending the April meeting held on Friday, 17th at C.E.N.E.F. House. And after great anticipation the disappointment was in proportion when it was learned that Bill Hall, our Treasurer, would not be able to deliver his lecture on "The Bloods" - a treat deferred but something choice to which we may look forward. The Secretary had several interesting letters to share with all the other members, a most comprehensive Newsletter from our good friend Harry Broster, and a letter from Ron Hodgson giving the interesting details of The Greyfriars Cup Competition - our sincere congratulations to London, on their wonderful effort in winning this trophy - our Hamilton Enthusiasts are looking forward to reading some of the stories in the special issue of the C.D. The suggestion for

this special edition, in a letter from our man at the helm was endorsed most enthusiastically and full financial support was pledged by those present without hesitation - we send our best wishes for the success of this venture. Stan Nicholls, dependable as always, stepped into the breach and gave a most colourful and lively lecture on his beloved Cigarette cards - a new field to most members but thanks to Stan's infectious enthusiasm, one in which we are all gaining an interest. His talk was illustrated by most diverse examples from his huge collection, and there were quite a few envious sighs when these treasures were viewed in his most artistic displays. But all good things come to an end and so it was with our trip into this, to most members, new field of collection, and the meeting broke up, regretfully, at 8 p.m. B. PATE - Secretary.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 I have several hundred duplicate Magnets for exchange only. Nos. between 661 and 1683 including several complete series. Numbers required are - 517, 520, 533, 648, 740, 742, 743, 745, 747, 749, 753, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 766, 767, 768, 771, 773, 880, 882, 884, 920, 921, 933, 952, 953, 954, 1037, 1142, 1191. Most generous exchanges will be made for any of the above numbers.  
 Write: LOFTS, 56 SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Bad Boy Memories, Triple Alliance, Chums of St. Olaf's, Fortesque of the Fourth, Holiday Annual 1935, Little Folks 1899, Champion Annual 1926, Young England 1906-7, Sunday Talks 1904, Chatterbox 1917, Pictures 1898, Magnets 449, 466, Gems 306, 308, Boys of Bonnyford School, S.O.L. Number 15.  
 Offers: LAWRENSON, 44 BLEAK HILL ROAD, ST. HELENS, LANCs.

WANTED (to complete the set of "Nirvana" stories) Union Jack Nos. 1161 and 1208. Can anyone oblige? Your Price Paid.  
 LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

Collector seeks copies of "Felix the Hunchback" - "The Divorced Queen" "The Sea Sprite" and "Belle Vue" - in any of the various editions in Henderson's Weekly Budget Peoples Pocket Story Books. Offers to:  
 M. c/o THE EDITOR OF THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST.

WANTED - S.O.L. No. 58.  
 TOM PORTER, OLDFIELDS, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

By JACK WOOD, Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

\* \* \* \* \*

I have, at the time of writing, received no further communications from our Roving Correspondent at St. Frank's, Jim Cook, so presume that he has not recovered from the 'flu epidemic which hit the old school some weeks ago. I hope to hear from him again before long with more news of the lads.

The lack of news, however, enables me to pass on the first instalment of some more Random Recollections by another old friend, James Sutcliffe. Lack of space prevents me giving all his article in full at one sitting, but I am sure readers will agree with me that the continuation will be well worth the wait.

So, here goes with:-

## RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS by JAMES SUTCLIFFE

### "THE TEN TALONS OF TAAZ"

Appearing in Gem as a serial in 1934, this full of thrills story was one of the best written by Edwy Searles Brooks after the Nelson Lee passed away.

Had it been written a year or so earlier it could have, with some elaboration of the plots, have made a first class series of five or six full length stories in the Old Paper. Take the opening chapter, headed "The Wail of the Wind!"

"A wild tempestuous autumn evening; the wind screaming out of the south-west, blustered and whirled round the grey old buildings of St. Frank's. Overhead, the low, ragged clouds were scudding restlessly across the leaden sky."

An opening chapter such as this has launched many a fine series in the past. A run through the successful stories will revive the memories of those who read it at the time, and I hope, whet the appetites of those who have not. On such a wild night it was only to be expected that a ship would be forced on the treacherous rocks at Shingle Head. The unfortunate vessel was a fair sized sailing ship and besides the Caistowe lifeboat, there is also one which we are told was the Rundle Bay boat.

While Nipper and Co., are watching rescue operations, a large

steamship appears round the Headland, being driven to the Devil's Reef. Led by Nipper and Handforth, a party launches the old disused lifeboat which is stillserviceable and reach the ship as the crew are abandoning her. Left on board are Raa-ok, High Priest of the Taaz Temple with his retinue of lesser priests bound for the forbidden land of Tibet, and with priental stoicism they refuse to leave the doomed ship because Raa-ok is in a trance-like sleep in his carved chair with the image of the Vulture God above him in the ship's saloon!

Handforth, with his usual impetuosity, rudely awakens Raa-ok from his trance and at the same time knocks the veil from his face, exposing it to all the juniors in the saloon - and to gaze on the face of the unveiled High Priest means to unbelievers, death! However, the juniors are saved from immediate death at the hands of the priests by the intervention of Raa-ok himself, who, acknowledging that they came to the ship on a mission of mercy, grants them a reprieve providing that they acquit themselves to his satisfaction when called in turn for a test of courage to atone their "offence".

"The Clutch of the First Talon"

Vivian Travers was the first of all the ten "marked" juniors to be summoned, "willed" by the Tibetan priests influence to the old quarry on Bannington Moor, he is given the choice of jumping two hundred feet to the jagged rocks below or being stabbed in the back - certain death which-ever he took, so rather than show cowardice he jumps and after only a few feet finds himself saved by a net and is then lowered to the bottom and lands in a pool of muddy water. Here he is commanded to walk across a carpet of white hot charcoal. Again rather than suffer an ignoble death he walks and to his amazement finds that the cunning priests by lowering him into the pool of liquid had introduced a chemical to his feet which resisted the glowing charcoal. He satisfies the priests that his courage is of sufficiently high degree to expiate his offence. To be continued,

\* \* \* \* \*

JACK WEBB

S.B.L. REVIEWS - MAY, 1959.

INVITATION TO A MURDER (No. 429)

JACK TREVOR STORY

They were young, pretty and - according to their ambitions - aspired to become film actresses, or models. All had at one time or another, been pupils at Yock's Drama Academy under the personal supervision of its proprietor, Irwin Jock. All five died..were murder by whom? When Janet Masters, the fourth victim, is found dead in woods flanking the River Thames, not far from Putney Heath, three days after

leaving her lodgings in Notting Hill Gate, Sexton Blake Investigations, at the request of the bereaved parents, take over, without, however, the wholehearted approval of "The Duke" - Superintendent Dukelow of the C.I.D., Scotland Yard. The call for the feminine lead, for which the case cries out, is not left unanswered by Paula, who, acting the lovely decoy, ultimately brings the murderer - or, to be correct, one of the two murderers - to book.

The usual Story quips are not so much in evidence here, and the lack of suspects is likely to result in the identification of the slayer being quickly spotted, though the novel is very well put over and attains that standard of merit one has come to take for granted in the S.B.L. these days.

It's quite a family affair, all the Blake organisation taking parts of varying importance; Mrs. Bardell, in at the death, gives us a flash of her old self, and even Millie, the pet Siamese cat, raises its head from the comforting warmth of Paula's lap to beat the curtain by a fraction with a farewell miaow.

A pleasant, relaxing sort of novel likely to suit the taste of all Story fans. Rating.....Very good.

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SAFARI WITH FEAR No. 430.....Rex Hardinge

Sexton Blake and Tinker in Africa. This is the sort of story which the name of Rex Hardinge has been familiarly associated with over a great many years, and to those who remember his debut in the Union Jack way back in January, 1928 - just over 31 years ago - this latest novel from him will revive pleasant memories of an outstanding case; for this one is set in the same surroundings. Visiting an old friend, the manager of the Bemspruit Citrus Estates in an obscure district of the Eastern Transvaal, Blake with his two principal assistants, Tinker and Paula Dane, is crossing the veldt in a Land Rover when they encounter a sun-downer, one Dan Myer, whose amazing experience in the rondavel of Landon Ward and subsequent murder on the veldt pitchfork them into as deep a mystery as it has ever been their lot to unravel for many a long day. There was a connection between the killing of a woman in the St. Antoine Quarter by Bonaventure, in Montreal, Canada, and the murder of Landon Ward, a South African rancher on the Bemspruit Estates, in Africa. In hunting the missing link Blake almost has to confess to failure; but when Louise in far-off London unexpectedly supplies it, Blake goes full steam ahead with results of a particularly ghastly but deserved nature befalling the obnoxious character who has been pedalling dope amongst the natives. Rating.....Excellent.