

# Collectors' Digest

VOL. 14, No. 159

MARCH  
1960

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# The Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 14. No. 159

Price 1s. 6d.

MARCH, 1960

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,  
Grove Road,  
Surbiton, Surrey.

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## *From the Editor's Chair*

THE WHO'S WHO. "The idea of the separate Who's Who is brilliant," wrote Harry Broster, the Secretary of the Midland Club - and Harry's sentiments have been echoed by scores of readers who have written to us during the past month.

So far, in fact, there has been only one dissentient voice. The Rev. A. G. Pound writes us: "I know you won't mind my mentioning it, but I am one of those who would prefer the Collectors' Who's Who to be part of the Annual. I have always regarded it as an essential and attractive part of the Annual." We fully understand the Rev. Pound's reactions, and we are grateful to him for the loyal support he is nevertheless giving the new venture.

Completed questionnaires have showered into this office, but there are still many more to come. If you have not yet completed yours and returned it, please do so NOW. We want to be able to present the most useful and comprehensive little booklet possible, and we can only do this with your backing. If you are a reader of the C.D., you should appear in the Who's Who. Don't miss the chance by neglecting to return your form.

TOUCH YOUR TOES, C.D.! The C.D. has been given twelve of the best across the Blakiana portion of its anatomy; the wielder of the birch was the Sexton Blake Library, personified in the famous author, Mr. Martin Thomas, who reads this magazine in the spare moments he has between writing first-class Sexton Blake stories.

Three whole columns of small print, headed "The Quick and the

Dead" are devoted, in S.B.L. No. 445, to a vigorous attack on Blakiana. The gist of the complaint is that our popular Column deals with the ancient history of Sexton Blake and his chroniclers, to the almost total exclusion of consideration for the present-day Sexton Blake Library.

Mr. Thomas writes: "At best, a newcomer would gain the impression that no Blake stories published since the war have been worthy of discussion. Here is the Blake saga, revitalised and flourishing, with great things ahead, attracting new readers. On sampling the C.D., those new readers find a feature immersed in the remote past, virtually oblivious of the Blake of the present and future."

Mr. Thomas also asks a question, and answers it: "To a newcomer, what is there in the C.D. to suggest that the Sexton Blake Library is even still in existence? ONLY those able reviews by Walter Webb." (The capital letters are ours,)

The Collector's Digest is by no means out of sympathy with the views expressed by Mr. Thomas. We concede that there is truth in his arguments. Since his criticism appeared we have received many letters on the subject from readers - some, but not all, fully agreeing with his comments. It is, perhaps, fair to add that between the beginning of December and mid-February, well over a thousand letters arrived at this office, and not more than one or two contained any criticism of Blakiana.

We assure our readers that it is not editorial policy to neglect the modern Blake, or to discourage exchanges of opinions on the present Sexton Blake Library. We are delighted that Blake is still with us, and hope that he will always be with us. Time may bring the C.D. a new section - the MODERN BLAKE. Nothing would please us more than to be able to present it. But we ask all to remember that the C.D. has to cater for a number of tastes and interests. With scant regard for economy, and notwithstanding the financial situation, every issue of the C.D. has been enlarged by FOUR PAGES since December, but we still seem to be in the position of trying to get a quart into a pint mug. The amount of space we can devote to Blake is limited.

It is inevitable, when criticism of this type is felt necessary, that someone's feelings are hurt. We feel it appropriate, at this stage, to pay tribute to our distinguished contributor, JOSIE PACKMAN, whose devotion and loyalty to Sexton Blake and to this magazine can never be in question. Josie has worked and is working, tirelessly and unselfishly. Her trojan efforts down the years have given joy and pleasure to countless readers, and she is assured of our gratitude and understanding.

And the Editor, as he wriggles under the weals of castigation

which have joined the cradle marks of editorship on his tender hind-quarters, promises readers that he intends, as he always has intended, to "do right" by the modern Blake.

*The Editor*

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GET WELL SOON, DON WEBSTER. Don Webster, the popular chairman of the Merseyside Club, has undergone an operation, and is in hospital. We wish him a very speedy recovery, and look forward to seeing our friend his old cheery self again.

DEREK ADLEY. Derek Adley's mother passed away early in February. On behalf of its readers, this magazine extends its deepest sympathy to Derek in his bereavement.

MR. R. RAWSTORNE of "Whitcroft", Manor Avenue, Fulwood, Preston is anxious to obtain a copy of "The Boys' Leader" No. 1, issued by Pearson's about 1903. Can any reader help him?

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library - 1st series: 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series: 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667, Boy's Friend Library - 1st series: 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series: 396. Union Jack: 689, 690, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 721, 722, 725, 727, 732, 733, 736, 740, 743, 746, 749, 751, 752, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1388, 1390.

MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.W.22.

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

We do not often have the pleasure of seeing Sexton Blake on the films, and it is for this reason that "Murder At Site Three" recently released, merits a special review in the pages of Blakiana. I am therefore leaving out the titles and authors of the Sexton Blake Library this month and am giving over the space to a young, but keen, new member of the Sexton Blake Circle. I am quite sure you will all agree that Keith Chapman has made an excellent job of this review.

Next month, of course, we shall continue our informative and enlightening lists of authors and titles of the Sexton Blake Library, and as we progress you will find the revelations more and more surprising.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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CENTURY MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB

INSTALMENT TWELVE.....ERA OF THE REPRINTS

With the much lamented demise of the U.J. early in 1933, one or two queries regarding that paper in relation to these records were answered. For example, Teed's yearly output of 21 stories attained in the year 1923 remained unbeaten, and, with a total of 201 contributions, Teed also finished with the highest aggregate, easily beating W. Murray Graydon's total of 140 (approx.) stories, though it looked likely that the latter would hold the distinction of being the only author to achieve the double of 100 stories for both U.J. and S.B.L., since Teed at that time still needed to write a further 30 novels for the S.B.L. to follow suit. Authors who wrote 50 and more Blake stories for the U.J. during its long history numbered 9, and these, including Graydon senior and Teed, were made up as follows: Mark Darran, Mark Osborne, Andrew Murray, Edwy Searles Brooks, Anthony Skene, Gilbert Chester and Gwyn Evans. Two contributors, Cecil Hayter and Lewis Jackson, just failed to accomplish this feat, whilst in Robert Murray's case it is possible that he did actually join his father and G. H. Teed in writing 100 Blake stories for the U.J., for

I've a strong theory that he commenced his career with Sexton Blake earlier than 1916, the year in which "The Detective's Ordeal" generally supposed to be his first effort, was released. Excluding his re-written Confederation stories in 1931-3, and the "ghosted" productions in the same series, circa 1925-6, Robert Murray finished up with a total of 95 tales at least. The other Murray - Andrew and no relation, was also unfortunate in missing his century, for, with his score standing at 93, death in the form of paralysis cut short his career.

Destined to write prolifically for several years to come, (93) JOHN G. BRANDON came with the reputation of being a top writer, but I found his stories somewhat dull and considered that at no time did he give Blake of his best except, perhaps, in his first two or three contributions. Although not an Australian like the previously mentioned author, John G. Brandon spent many years in that country and besides being a successful playwright also gained recognition as a useful boxer. Built on very solid lines, broad of shoulder and deep of chest, Brandon's hobby at the time he was engaged in turning out his Blake novels was that of pigeon fancier, and he was to write an S.B.L. around that particular theme in the very near future. As a foil to Blake he conceived a very likeable character in the Hon. Ronald Sturges Vereker Purvale - R.S.V.P. for brevity - world-travelling he-man, a character with whom the author had no little in common.

The only other newcomer in 1933 was 44 year old (94) FRANK LELLAND. Born 1st July, 1889, at Hillingdon, Middlesex, and a famous writer, he began his professional career at the age of 17. For the new DETECTIVE WEEKLY he wrote and submitted a story of Blake entitled "The Singing Clue" and, not wishing his real name, A. M. Burrage, to be disclosed, submitted it under the aforementioned pseudonym. For the long extinct TRIUMPH LIBRARY, published by Hendersons and which had a very short life, running to 18 issues only, A.M. Burrage wrote stories around a schoolboy character named Tufty in 1908, and such was their appeal that they were reprinted a few years later, and, in one instance at least, are still being sought after today.

With new authors being continually introduced into a Blake market which was dwindling rapidly, it was only natural that the old-timers should find themselves crowded out, and Blake fans who had enjoyed reading the exploits of their own particular favourite character, or characters, at regular intervals in the U.J., could not be expected to take kindly to the innovations, particularly as, in most cases, they did not measure up to the ability of the old guard.

(95) GERALD M. BOWMAN and (96) GEORGE E. ROCHESTER made their initial appearances in the pages of D.W. in successive weeks and were

quickly followed by (97) ROLAND HOWARD. The name of (98) LOUIS BRITTANY which appeared in the D. Weekly in May concealed the identity of none other than G. H. Teed, though why the story "Murder by Magic" should have been published under a pen-name is one of those incomprehensible happenings that have occurred quite frequently in the papers of the past, the only fact emerging with any clearness being in the reason for the choice of Brittany as a pseudonym, for Teed lived for many years on that grim, desolate, though picturesque, promontory of the Atlantic. The author's star, perhaps, was waning, as that of the D.W. most certainly was judging by the signs of unrest in the composition of its contents, and it is certainly not without its significance that Teed's name was only to appear twice more as author of an original Blake story in its pages. Like Graydon senior and several others before him, G. H. Teed had become a victim of a rapidly changing world of thriller fiction readers, who were demanding something new in technique, something which Blake's sponsors seemed disinclined to grant them, or so it seemed, for in the late summer of 1935 Blake's star in-so-far as the D.W. was concerned ceased even to flicker, and so ended a weekly run lasting over a period of 30 years.

And if in the S.B.L. the situation was not so disastrous, it was certainly not very reassuring for in 1934, instead of getting the usual yearly quota of 48 original novels, we only had 37, the remaining 11 being reprints, all of Pierre Quiroule's past stories. No weekly ration of Blake and a reduction of nearly 25% in the monthly. An ominous sign, and, however one looked at it, the inference was that Blake was fast losing his appeal.

On the 19th April, 1935 Mark Osborne, a stalwart of the pink-covered U.J. days, died at his home in Southend with 97 Sexton Blake stories to his credit. At one time it looked as if he would reach his century with ease, for by 1922 he had contributed 72 stories; but in the 13 year interval between that year and his death he could manage only a further 25 - not quite two a year - and so lost the opportunity of joining the select little band of century-makers.

(99) BRUCE CHAVERTON, a well-known CHUMS author under his own name of Fred Gordon Cook, was another debutante in the D.W. in 1934, as was also (100) GED. D. WOODMAN; then, in 1935, with the Blake stories being shortened to allow room for a second long, complete novel, to be inserted, (101) ANTHONY FORD arrived, soon followed by an author named, or pen-named, (102) FRANCIS BRENT.

In the S.B.L. the same pattern was followed as in the previous year, a reprinted novel at the rate of nearly one a month, the remainder original stories. Only one newcomer this year, but quite a famous one,



for in August, to swell our Bank Holiday reading, (103) JOHN HUNTER commenced what was to transpire a twenty-odd year association with the Library. He commenced his career some 22 years earlier in the pages of CHUMS when it was being run under the editorship of Walter Newman Flower.

The end of the year saw three more authors nearing their centuries and Teed but a boundary hit away from his third hundred, the details being as set down below:

G. H. Teed (296); Gilbert Chester (128); Anthony Skene (121); Robert Murray (103); Gwyn Evans (99); Mark Osborne (97); Allan Blair (96); E. S. Brooks (95); Coutts Brisbane (85); Lewis Jackson (63).

With both Chester and Skene in close pursuit of the honour of achieving the third highest aggregate of Blake stories at present held by the late Andrew Murray with a total of 165 contributions, the situation was very interesting to say the least, though with such a limited market for their stories the task before them appeared very formidable indeed.

A reduction in the number of reprints is to be found in the 1936 programme of S.B.L. novels, which year produced two new contributors, the 47 year old (104) MAURICE BUXTON DIX in March, and (105) MARTIN FRAZER in April. Born in London in 1889, Dix wrote only five Blakes, into the majority of which he introduced an airman-crook named Punch Bennett.

Faced with his leanest year since 1905, the Blake contributor was finding it no easy matter to sell his stories of the famous character; Detective Weekly was now a closed shop and the S.B.L. was continuing its policy of reprinting and modernising old stories. Yet 1936 and the years following it up to the outbreak of the second world war was to see the appearance of several new and popular writers congregated beneath the Blake banner.....

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MURDER AT SITE THREE  
(The New Sexton Blake film)  
By KEITH CHAPMAN

At last it has been released!

The new Sexton Blake film was made at Bray Studios in late summer 1958, and is, according to the credit titles, a Francis Earle Production presented by Regal International. The stars are Geoffrey Toone, Barbara Shelley and Jill Melford; the story is based on W.

Howard Baker's novel, "Crime is my Business" which was published as S.B.L. No. 408 in June, 1958. "Based" perhaps isn't quite the right word - "derived" might be better....

Wardour Street, for reasons best known to itself, seems to have given the pages of the original story a "Chinese shuffle" and when coming to re-assembling the pack, to have found that it had unfortunately lost a large percentage of the cards in the process.

What a great comfort it must be to Mr. Baker to be able to say: "It wasn't like this in the book!" For in Paddy Manning O'Brine's film script, the happenings are unoriginal and the plot is absurdly thin, while some of the book's most exciting scenes, such as the trapping of Blake and Paula in the garage fire, have been completely overlooked. With Britain's cinemas half-empty, I suppose the reason for these particular shortcomings is economic. If the film can be only of approximately an hour's length, the plot must necessarily be simplified, while the staging and filming of a mock fire is both a difficult and an expensive business.

But there were faults which could have been rectified at no extra cost, and therefore cannot be excused.

For instance, I could not suppress a groan on seeing Blake's Bentley. Instead of being a silver-grey Continental model, this was a shabby, open car which looked well on its way to becoming a veteran. Then there was Blake's office. Three brief shots we had of it all made it appear incomprehensibly cramped and dingy. Though perhaps minor details both these things caused me annoyance.

As the modern Blake, Geoffrey Toone was faultless in appearance, dress and action. He was the new Blake come to life. I did not, however, like the interpretation of either Tinker or Paula Dane.

To my distaste, Tinker was in many respects not the junior partner but still the boy assistant. He was not adult enough in his comments, behaviour or outlook.

As Paula Dane, Jill Melford was handicapped from the start by the fact that she does not physically resemble the pictures of Paula by the S.B.L. artists or the pictorial impression I have gained of Paula from the text. Miss Melford seemed at times to be using an affected accent, and to find difficulty in controlling the modulation of her voice.

The film-makers seem to have almost turned Paula into a sort of female Watson, and in the Berkeley Square office scene, to have used her as a foil to demonstrate Blake's medicinal knowledge. They offer, too, a gross insult to this resourceful young lady's intelligence, when, quite early in the film, she fails to recognise and neglects to inform Blake until the following day - and then in a casual, accidental

manner - of the significant and dangerous remarks of the doped Hennesey.

A performance I thought particularly good was that of Barbara Shelley as Susan Marlow; a far more experienced actress than Jill Melford, or so it would seem. I cannot help thinking that if her colouring were fairer, she would have been ideally cast as Paula Dane.

During these past few years, through the medium of the S.B.L., a convincing picture of Blake, his friends and surroundings has been built up by the writers of the New Order. These men have taken great pains to see that there is no inconsistency in even the tiniest detail. Wrote Jack Trevor Story in the S.B.L. "Mailbag" "...when dealing with Blake and Co. I find myself continuously aware that I am treading on sacred ground." I feel, therefore, that when this picture is presented inaccurately, it is inconsiderate to the writers who have worked with such meticulous care in order to please us. For we are disillusioned, and so the care they have taken has been in vain.

It is for that reason that this review has dealt mainly with faults. They are the things which made the deepest impression on me. As minor as many inaccuracies might be, they shout out at the Blake enthusiast and leave him deaf to the praiseworthy points of the film, despite the fact that these are as equally numerous.

It is many years since Sexton Blake last appeared on the cinema screen and it is good to see him there again; perhaps it is a sign that he has begun to recover the position he once held of being the most popular detective in fiction.

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**WANTED:** The Popular - 127-135, 137, 138, 141-145, 147-159, 161-163, 166, 169-171, 174-184, 186-188, 190, 191, 193-201, 203-205, 207-211, 220-229, 231, 311, 313, 314, 316-318, 320-322, 325-334, 336-343, 345-347, 349, 350, 352-357, 359-161, 380, 381, 388-398, 404, 406, 411-415, 418, 428, 449, 451, 452, 454-456, 459-463, 465, 466, 469-488, 499, 518, 544, 545, 547-551, 556-558, 560-566, 568-571, 572, 577, 578, 581, 591, 596-599. S.O.Ls - 60, 68.

DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

**WANTED:** Any Nelson Lee Libraries prior to 1926. Your price given. A. G. DAVIDSON, ESQ., 193, RAE ST, NORTH FITZROY, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. Hoping with thanks.

10/- EACH OFFERED for "Schoolboys' Owns" 169, 171. Copy of "Film Fun" with Charlie Chaplin on cover.

GORDON THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, OLDPARK ROAD, BELFAST, 14.

CALLING ALL "MAGNETITES" TO JOIN UP WITH—

# The GREYFRIARS GUIDE



## HAMILTONIANA

"BACK TO BUNTERLAND AND DAYS  
AT FAMOUS GREYFRIARS."

The following is an extract from an article, under the above title, which appeared recently in the Melbourne paper "The Age". Written by Manuel Golman, the article was sent to us by Tom Dobson.

What was the secret of the "Magnet's" success? Well, first of all, Frank Richards could tell a rattling good story. His plots were interesting and novel, they were milked with originality and imagination, he had an extraordinary feeling for just what appealed to the schoolboy's sense of excitement and fun and justice, for just what japes and puns and slapstick humour the reader would enjoy.

He had first-rate capacity to describe exciting or humorous incidents, and even to analyse character at a young reader's level. Action, once the plot was launched, arose pretty well from character. The English used was clear, grammatically and stylistically correct, and the language well-chosen. And the characters lived so that, deposited suddenly by Greyfriars, we would have immediately felt at home with everything and everyone we met.

With that rich group of characters clearly in our minds, the remainder was comparatively simple. The author just needed a good novel thread of story and then there was pleasure enough in watching these familiar, colourful figures reacting.

But perhaps what subconsciously appealed to us then, and certainly appeals to us now, was that here in Greyfriars School was that Utopia

for which we all long and which we know we will never find. After "Magnet" days, we met adult life with its illness and war and death, its bitter struggle for survival and success, where the criminal action or mean trick often is not only unpunished but frequently apparently rewarded.

At Greyfriars we look back on a world of perfect justice, of reward for virtue and certain punishment for only deliberate misdeed; a world ruled by a deity (the Head) - infallible, slow to anger, who insured in his universe that everything would always turn out right in the end, despite incidental mishap or injustice.

Now if you regard this unrealistic literature as unhealthily misleading for youngsters, may I recommend instead a good modern illustrated comic for facing the realities of life, for weighing people in the balance and finding them wanton. Before me I have a really juicy one - a rich compound of Sadism, Sex and Slang.

Here there is no question of subtle characterisation. The hero is a tough and far from law-abiding private detective - tough in body, tough in mind, tough with criminals, and, in particular, tough with dames, on whom he walks out smugly just when they want to melt into his arms.

No nonsense here about ideal justice; death strikes virtuous and wicked alike. Here gun and fist rule supreme. I stopped counting after reaching 40 pictures illustrating violent action.

This is the life, I know; this is hard reality, this is truth - not the sham world, the make-believe world of Greyfriars School and Billy Bunter. Meanwhile, let me just glance again through my "Magnet" and "Gem" and return, if momentarily, to that oasis of happiness and justice in a sad world.

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### "BILLY BUNTER'S MYSTERY CHRISTMAS"

Readers will be interested to know that the above play, written by Maurice McLoughlin, and produced at the Palace Theatre, London, on 27th December, 1958, has now been published by Messrs. Samuel French Ltd., and is available for production by amateur societies. Readers can order a copy of the play, price 5/-, from any booksellers. A most interesting souvenir of the first Billy Bunter stage play.

GILBERT WAS INDIGNANT. (We don't wonder!)

Alan Stewart sends us the following tit-bit. During the "Round Britain Quiz" on the radio in mid-February, one of the questions was "If Billy was talking to Harry, Bob, Frank and Inky, what was Ink's

name?" Dennis Brogan came straight out with the correct answer, but Herbert Phillips had never read the Magnet. Gilbert Harding was most indignant. "Never read about Greyfriars?" he snapped. "That's something you should rectify right away. Frank Richards is still writing."

SHHHHH! BILLY BUNTER ON INDEPENDENT TELEVISION

A little girl sent Bruce Forsyth a poem which introduced our fat old friend, Billy Bunter. Mr. Forsyth read it out during the performance of Sunday Night at the London Palladium on February 6th. The following week, in another edition of the same show, Mr. Forsyth had some more jolly things to say about Bunter.

It may be interesting to note that the Palladium Show of Feb. 6th had the highest audience rating of any T.V. show for that week. Trust Billy Bunter to be in on something big.

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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. 36. THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

E. M. Remarque wrote the following: "To forget is the secret of eternal youth. One grows old only through memory. There's much too little forgetting."

Such a thought is somewhat startling, for our entire movement is surely based on remembering. Does it mean that every Gem we read brings an extra furrow to our aged brows? Is each Rookwood story a stepping stone to the bath-chair? Have all our white hairs got Greyfriars stamped on their roots? Each time we look back, do we die a little?

I have heard it suggested that this hobby keeps us young. Does it? Remarque might claim that it merely deadens our sense of the passing years. We don't notice them go - but they go, just the same.

Some years ago, when a case was put forward for the re-publication of the Magnet, the appeal was dismissed with the scornful comment "The only people who want it are nostalgic adults."

Nostalgia sounds such a nice word. To spend a nostalgic hour before the fire, with a volume of Gems or Magnets, sounds blissful. But, according to the dictionaries, nostalgia is "melancholia" or "morbid memory." It is a disturbing thought, if we take it seriously.

Mere collectors may be immune. The icy finger of time may pass them if they collect for the sake of collecting. A gentleman who wrote to me recently collects cheese labels. The man who makes the club's etched glasses collects beer-bottle labels. Surely there can be no nostalgia in the collection of labels.

But those of us who write for the C.D. had better have a care. Maybe, as we peer into the past for inspiration, Old Father Time is sharpening his scythe. And those who read the C.D. are warned. Too frequent dipping into our pages may put beyond the dippers' reach the chance of eternal youth. Or maybe it's too late, even now.

A few weeks ago the London O.B.B.C. decided to restrict its discussions and competitions to papers published not later than 1940. Can it be that the members do not realise the risk they are running of premature old age descending on them over night?

No doubt Remarque was thinking of people who brood with the idea that the best is past, and who find no worth in the present and little hope for the future. Or we might agree that it is wearying to remember our rent and rates and income tax - and even our C.D. subs. It might be easy to keep our youth by shirking our responsibilities altogether, and by forgetting our duties to mankind in general.

I'm inclined to think that Remarque was talking through his hat. I can't believe that remembering the Gem, the Magnet, the Nelson Lee, and the Union Jack is going to hasten the departure of what is left of youth. If it does, it's a pleasant way to grow old.

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

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### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

#### No. 33. STRAWS IN THE WIND

BASIL ADAM writes: "I think it true to say that usually it is possible to obtain an insight of an author's outlook of life through his books. The works of Somerset Maugham, Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells are cynical, so one could not expect these people to have deep religious convictions.

You have only to read a few of Frank Richards' best stories to see that he believes in Christian ideals of goodness, honour, chivalry, and the breeding that goes with these qualities. Harry Wharton is the personification of all these things.

I think Frank Richards fails in his portrayal of Europeans: he makes them more like caricatures. This is amazing for someone who has travelled widely in Europe.

However, we must be eternally grateful to him for keeping alive all that is best in British tradition."

ANTHONY GLYNN writes: "I would say that an author can write with "tongue in cheek" and be convincing. A case which comes to mind is Ethel Mannin's novel 'Late Have I Loved Thee.' It was hailed as a great Catholic novel, and many people thought it marked Miss Mannin's return to the Catholic faith. Later, however, she made it clear that she was a materialist and likely to remain one.

Coker's remarks about Americans celebrating the day they were bunked out of the British Empire is quite fatuous and goes on to show that if American history was taught at Greyfriars, it was taught very badly. Let us be patriotic by all means, but let us also be historically accurate.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's fatuous question, "What was American push-and-go doing when British enterprise was getting to work?" might be answered with the observation that the United States just didn't exist when "British enterprise" was getting to work.

These empty, biased, and thoroughly silly remarks concerning the United States belong to a stereotyped attitude which might have been acceptable in the 1920's. Since then, let us remember that the people of the U.S., when they were not at war and when we were undergoing the attentions of the Luftwaffe, sent us mobile canteens, ambulances, blood plasma, 'bundles for Britain', food and Eagle Squadron."

DON WEBSTER writes: "I don't think one can glean many facts from an author's writings. I think the majority of their characters are based on living persons. In the case of Charles Hamilton we know the origin of some of his characters, but I believe he set Frank Nugent as a pattern of himself. As you say, Frank Richards was patriotic, and very tactful regarding Colonials, etc. What a diplomat or ambassador he would have made. On the other hand, E. S. Brookes quite easily discards school stories in favour of modern detective yarns. Furthermore, how does one weigh up James Hadley Chase - or am I treading on dangerous ground?"

MARGARET COOKE writes: "I have always felt that writers reveal their own characters in their books. What you said of Charles Hamilton could also be said of William Howard Baker, as far as pride of race, loyalty to Queen and country, and deep religious feeling are concerned. I think he is a man who looks life in the face and who tries to understand his fellow men.

Can we judge Jack T. Story by his works? Is he the eternal joker,



or a knight tilting his words instead of lance at those cranks and potterers whose weird creations deface the fair name of Art? Was he serious or not when he wrote: "Tinker was giving to pondering a good deal on those people who seemed to live in the cracks of life - people who seemed to miss reality altogether - fiction writers, artists, and types of crooners." ?

As an ex-artist, I deny the suggestion that I have missed reality or that I live in a crack. Life has had a deeper meaning and an added zest, because I was an artist. Does J.T.S. feel that he has missed the best in life because he is a writer?"

(Miss Cooke's quotation is taken from J. T. Story's S.B.L. novel, "Invitation to a Murder.")

\* \* \* \* \*

### THREE YEARS OF CONTROVERSY

"Let's Be Controversial" is three years old with this issue. For thirty-six long months these articles have come your way, to interest, bother, or bore you. For some reason the series seems to be as popular today as when it started, and we do not propose to pension it off just yet.

In spite of its title, the series, with its valuable and fascinating "Echoes" has remained kind, courteous, and friendly, and we have tried never to hurt the feelings of anyone.

We invite our readers to send and tell us which, in their opinion, has been the most interesting Controversial, taking into consideration also the "Echoes" on the topic. A BOOK PRIZE will be awarded to the sender of the entry which is considered the best by experts. Entries will be judged by two people unconnected with the C.D. Staff. Literary quality will not be taken into consideration, but originality of thought will. Entries should not exceed 250 words and should be marked "Controversial". Closing date for British Isles readers is March 31st.

A SECOND BOOK PRIZE will be awarded to the sender of the best entry from OVERSEAS. The closing date for overseas readers is 30th April.

We shall hope to publish the prize-winning entries in the C.D.

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ARE YOU SELLING MAGNETS before 1297, GEMS before 1290, S.O.L's before 262, NELSON LEE's before 296? Write, state price.  
 J. HUGHES, 16 NORMAN STREET, EAST BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA.

# Nelson Lee Column

(Conducted by JACK WOOD, 328 Stockton Lane, York.)

In the January issue, I warned of the apparent lack of interest in Lee affairs. There was no immediate response - hence the non-appearance of the familiar Column last month, as pressure of work and shortage of staff combine to make things difficult for me at present. However, an old friend, Charles Churchill, has weighed in with the first of an intriguing series of articles which I am sure will rouse a great deal of interest and nostalgic enjoyment.

I have been asked to dispose of a large number of Nelson Lee Libraries for a client. If anyone likes to let me know his needs, I will try to help. The copies are Small series and New series, with the school stories intact, but Detective Supplements missing in some cases.

\* \* \* \* \*

## FIVE-STARRED SINGLES OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

By Chas. Churchill.

I have picked out six single stories which I think are most unusual in different ways. I propose to review these in six articles, and trust they will be of interest to Leeites. I have chosen three St. Frank's and three non-school yarns, and all of them are out of the ordinary.

As a beginning, I select old series No. 103, dated May 26th, 1917, entitled "The Sheriff of Blazing Gulch" or "Nelson Lee in a New Role." In chapter one, Nelson Lee and Nipper are travelling on an express train from Los Angeles, bound for New York and home. They become acquainted with an American named Kenway Stone, who tells Lee of a small town named Blazing Gulch, situated in the State of which he is an official. A reign of terror has arisen in that district, instigated by a band of outlaws headed by one, Silver Mask. No one knows his identity as he always wears a silver-coloured mask when on his outlawful occasions, hence his nickname.

Stone tells Nelson Lee that nobdy can be found to take on the post of sheriff at the Gulch, owing to the fact that at least three sheriffs have been "liquidated" there during the period of Silver Masks's activities. He adds that a reward of 50,000 dollars is offered for the capture of the outlaw, dead or alive.

Shortly after this conversation, the train is labouring up a gradient when a volley of shots sounds, and the train grinds to a halt. A body of masked horsemen board the train, and, at pistol point, order all to hand over their valuables. Mr. Stone, very alarmed, tells Lee that it must be Silver Mask's gang, as Blazing Gulch is only a few miles from their present position. As luck would have it, Silver Mask himself appears, and all are ordered to throw their valuables on the floor.

Nelson Lee, however, does a "lightning draw" and shoots the firearms out of the grasps of Silver Mask and his assistant. The outlaws make a rapid exit and, to the relief of all, make off quickly into the countryside with the remainder of the gang. Lee is so incensed at the holdup that he arranges with Mr. Stone to get appointed sheriff of Blazing Gulch, with Nipper as his deputy.

In chapter three, the famous pair arrive at Blazing Gulch. Lee is wearing riding breeches, soft shirt, and wide-brimmed hat, and Nipper much the same. Nipper has his face stained and adorned with a small moustache, to make him appear older. They adopt the names of Spike Langton and Kid Lewin.

Soon after their arrival, Lee and Nipper, accompanied by another deputy, Ed Taylor, decide to visit a saloon run by one known as "Pyzen Karson" (probably owing to the quality of the liquor he sells) in order to show themselves to the local population. Ed Taylor now has great admiration for Lee, owing to the latter's performance on horseback on the journey from the railroad. Lee and Nipper had left Ed well behind in an impromptu horserace.

In the saloon they are greeted with ribald remarks, especially from a huge ruffian, Brimstone Joe. Ed had previously told Lee that Joe was suspected of being a member of Silver Mask's gang. Joe now proceeds to show his respect for the new sheriff by loosing off both his revolvers, and making a pattern of bullet-holes in the floor around Lee's feet. Lee, icily cool, grabs the guns from Brimstone and proceeds to batter him insensible with a show of brilliant boxing. Brimstone ends up by being carried off unconscious, for treatment by the local medico - Doc O'Hagan.

Lee, then, is engaged in conversation by a quietly dressed man, who introduces himself as James Quinton Foss, a local ranch owner. He complains that he has been systematically robbed by Silver Mask, and expresses a hope that Lee will capture the outlaw. Lee and Nipper return to their office, and later are phoned by Foss with the news that, on his return home, he found that he had had a visit from Silver Mask, which ended up with his house being set on fire. Lee,

Nipper and Taylor set out for the Foss ranch, but on the way are ambushed by Silver Mask's gang, and rendered unconscious after a fight.

On regaining their senses, Lee and Nipper find themselves in a terrible predicament. They are stranded in an alkali desert, with nothing in sight but an arid waste under a blazing sun - without food or water, and with no means of knowing which way to search for deliverance. After stumbling a mile or two, they come upon some derelict wagons, and manage to construct a big box kite from the tattered remnants of the wagon covers. They manage to get this into the air, and consign themselves to the mercy of the strong wind.

Luckily, they are blown clear of the desert and manage to drop into a river and make the bank. On their way from the river, they meet Ed Taylor, who has escaped as Silver Mask considered him too unimportant to bother with. These three, while making their way back to the Gulch, meet Foss, who is staggered at the sight of Lee and Nipper. Lee has a clue, however, for Foss has one ear bandaged and the detective remembers that, in the melee with the gang, he damaged Silver Mask's ear with a blow. When challenged, Foss flees, but Lee and Taylor quickly return to Blazing Gulch, and organise a posse. They trail Foss, but eventually the crooked rancher is cornered. He misses retribution at human hands, however, for he stumbles into a waterfall and is killed. Most of his gang are captured, the reign of terror ends, and Lee is acclaimed the most successful sheriff that Blazing Gulch has known.

Do you not agree that this is a most unusual story, out of the run of ordinary detective tales? The above-mentioned incident of Lee and Nipper escaping from the desert by kite is referred to by Lee in the "White Giants" series, when the St. Frank's party, searching for Col. Kerrigan, reach an Indian village, and the locals say of the colonel: "Him went up in sky!"

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S.O.Ls REQUIRED by COLLECTOR. (Reasonable price and condition)

Rookwood 6, 12, 20, 28, 32, 36, 43, 48, 60, 68, 76, 84, 94, 100, 104, 108, 112, 118, 124, 128, 132, 138, 146, 150, 154, 158, 162, 166, 170, 174, 182, 198, 202, 206, 220, 224, 262, 268, 272, 276, 278, 284. St. Frank's 4, 27, 54, 56, 120, 282, 381. Can exchange one or two rare items. H. HOLMES, 13 ST. LUKE'S STREET, BARROW IN FURNESS, LANCS.

WANTED: Holiday Annuals 1920 to 1926. State price.  
J. HUGHES, 16 NORMAN STREET, EAST BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA.

# CUP CONTEST

The Northern Club is the holder of the Greyfriars Cup for 1960. Here is one of their winning entries.

## "THE BATTERED FABRIC OF GREYFRIARS"

O R

Smithy's Tour of "Antiquities"

by Tom Redwing

A number of the Remove were standing chatting by the school gates on a recent half-holiday when Quelchy bustled up, accompanied by an impressively bearded and bespectacled old bean bearing an armful of papers.

"My boys" said Quelchy, "this is Dr. Cassubon, the eminent antiquarian, who has come to look over the historic features of Greyfriars. Unfortunately, I have myself been suddenly called away for an hour. I would be greatly obliged if some of you would conduct Dr. Cassubon round points of interest, and then show him to my study in about an hour's time."

With a final word to his learned guest, the beak departed somewhat distractedly, forgetting, no doubt, amid the cares of school-mastering, that few fellows would be exactly eager to give up a half-holiday in the cause of antiquarian research.

To the general surprise, however, the Bounder - of all people - spoke up and offered, politely, to act as guide.

"Since it is so near, sir" said Smithy, demurely, "perhaps you might like to see the tuckshop first. It is believed once to have been an abbot's lodge, and is certainly one of the oldest parts of the fabric." He paused in front of Mrs. Mible's establishment to allow the old bean to survey it with a scholarly eye.

"But I don't understand" said Dr. Cassubon, rather querulously, "I see little sign of antiquity here. This woodwork for instance, is quite modern."

"Well, yes" agreed the Bounder, apologetically. "I'm afraid a good deal of restoration has been necessary. The original work sustained a good deal of damage during the siege."

"Siege?" exclaimed the old gentleman, diving into his papers. "I don't think I have any record--"

"Oh, it was quite recent," explained Smithy, innocently. "The Remove barricaded themselves in against a temporary headmaster, and the attempts to shift them caused a good bit of destruction."

Visibly shaken by this evidence of vandalism, the venerable antiquary continued his examination in some distress, before finally allowed Smithy, still gravely courteous, to lead him away.

And that was only the start. During the next hour he saw a good deal more of the - more or less - ancient fabric of Greyfriars. There was, for instance, the Remove staircase and dorm, with the modern panelling installed after the havoc of the Brander barring-out, and the sixth-form studies with their traces of renovation from the "no fagging" war. By the time he was shown Prout's study, with the ceiling Bunter once fell through, and its woodwork entirely re-surfaced after being painted by the Secret Society, he felt the time had come to call a halt. Smithy showed him into Quelch's sanctum, where he, no doubt, had a few things to say about wasting his time looking at modern buildings.

As for the Bounder, I have an idea he rather enjoyed that lost "halfer" after all!

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(To represent the Northern, we selected the above clever piece of fun for the neat way it revives memories of many grand Magnet series. Next month we shall divulge the name of the writer. ED.)

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ODDS AND ENDS  
by Gerry Allison

A SHOCK FOR UNCLE BENJAMIN! Alonzo Todd's proudest possession was a huge volume entitled "The Life Story of a Potato." It was a present from his dear Uncle Benjamin, and Alonzo was never happier than when reading this good book.

Alas, however, even the vegetable world seems to have been infected by the modern looseness of morals. On February 8th, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, these opened a play with the distressing title "The Night Life of a Virile Potato." One feels that Uncle Benjamin Todd would have been shocked - nay, disgusted!

SEXTON BLAKE GETS A MEDAL. I recently read "A Manual of Children's Libraries" by W. C. Berwick Sayers, a most interesting book on juvenile literature. The author tells how much he enjoyed the 'bloods' of his boyhood, Deadwood Dick, Buffalo Bill, Nick Carter, etc., and states that there is an excellent case to be made out for them.

"For instance" he says, "Sexton Blake and his wonderful boy

continued on page 95...

# Sexton Blake Library Reviews

FEBRUARY - 1960

MISSION TO MEXICO (No. 445)

ARTHUR MACLEAN

Patriotism, courage and integrity were virtues essential in all those who worked unrewarded and without recognition in the service of Craille, that ancient and knowledgeable head of the British Counter Intelligence of Belgrave Square. Blake was one of his most trusted agents, but, hitherto, Tinker's ability and truthworthiness to carry out the tremendous tasks demanded of all Craille's agents had been in doubt. Now, here he is faced with his first major overseas operation, a member of the British Secret Service, his assignment to try and prevent a Communist inspired revolution in Central America, which, having its origin in Guatemala is to be followed by a similar uprising in British Honduras, with a resultant threat to world peace. Tied up with the impending revolution is a renegade Englishman, who had successfully carried out an armed robbery in the States, and, by means of his haul - four million dollars worth of diamonds - was financing the revolution. He is none other than George Marsden Plummer, one of Blake's and Tinker's oldest adversaries. Get Plummer and the diamonds and with the loss of the loot the revolution will be averted. Such is Tinker's intention. His personality somewhat overshadowed by that of the Revolutionary, Thaddeus Trautmann, Plummer is nevertheless quite well characterised by Arthur Maclean, but the greatest personality of them all - Blake himself - is sadly missed.

A thriller, pure and simple, it is tersely and straight-forwardly written and will undoubtedly be well received.

Rating..... Good

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MURDER MADE EASY (No. 446)

DESMOND REID

Concerns the strange friendship of an English baronet and a common burglar and pickpocket. When the latter - Albert Everslade Vedge - is knocked down and mortally injured by a car on the Southend road, the series of events which transpire as a result run parallel with the non-stop vehicle, to wreck other lives and bring together Sexton Blake and Chief Detective-Inspector Coutts in one of their most bizarre cases.

Vedge and the baronet - Sir Robert Rose - had met during the

evacuation of Dunkirk, when, having had his life saved by his superior officer, Vedge had vowed to repay the debt should the opportunity ever arise. That opportunity was soon forthcoming because Sir Robert was a fanatical collector of rare and beautiful objects, which, due to the reluctance on the part of some of the owners to part with them he could not possess, and so had the idea of stealing them. Vedge's dubious training made him ideally suited to carry out this task. It was a pact which ended tragically, for in the process of robbing Robert's uncle, Sir Cornelius Rose of his priceless collection of antiques, the latter was murdered and Vedge charged with the crime, his acquittal only coming about due to the evidence of Sir Robert.

It was the riddle of Vedge's strange last words gasped out just before death that puzzled Blake, and he took the case from there. Slow moving at first, this novel works up to an exciting climax.

Rating.....Very good

WALTER WEBB

\* \* \* \* \*

The Sexton Blake Library has at last caught up with the month which it lost owing to the printing dispute. As a result, we were able to present to you last month our reviews of the current, January, issues. To keep your records complete, however, here are a few points about the December stories, each of which is illustrated by Eric Parker, an artist so popular with Blake enthusiasts.

"A COLD NIGHT FOR MURDER" (No. 441).....MARTIN THOMAS

When an unworthy character is found murdered in Soho Square a few nights before Christmas, Blake investigates to clear the name of a young garage mechanic. The clues are fairly presented, and there is no glut of characters to confuse you, but you will find it difficult to detect the culprit. As is usual with this author's work, Blake's summing-up is both sound and convincing.

Rating.....Very good

"GUILTY PARTY (No. 442).....REX DOLPHIN

Who fired five bullets into little Caroline Marleigh's teddy bear?...and why? That is the problem which Blake, Tinker and Paula are called upon to solve, at a rambling old country mansion in the seasonable atmosphere of a white Christmas. "Guilty Party" is Rex Dolphin's third and best Sexton Blake novel, a story which greatly enhances his reputation as a tip-top writer. Rating.....Excellent



FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT IN NEXT MONTH'S (MARCH) SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES

"THIS MAN MUST DIE" by Wm. A. Ballinger. A swift-moving novel of finely-drawn characterisation and chilling suspense.

"BRED TO KILL" by Martin Thomas. A powerful mixture of Science Fiction and the Occult, from that master of the macabre and the bizarre, Martin Thomas.

ORDER YOUR COPIES TODAY

Yours Sincerely

(Interesting items from the Editor's Letter-Bag)

MEMORIES FROM NEW YORK

FRED GRIFFIN (New York). My introduction to the old papers started at the end of 1917. A friend of mine, a few years my senior, showed me "The Boy's Friend" for which I hold fond memories. He took the paper every week, and used to read the stories aloud to me. He went away to a town, some fifty miles distant, and, after about six months, came back for a weekend.

He had a new paper for me, a blue covered Gem. Later, I discovered for myself the Magnet and the Nelson Lee.

The stories I liked most in the Boy's Friend were the Cedar Creek series, and a fine tale "The Sports of St. Clive's" by A.S. Hardy. The latter was reprinted in the B.F.L. and I am trying to



locate it. Another favourite series in the Boy's Friend was the Redclyffe one about Barker, the Bounder.

I liked the Gem better than the Magnet, and I particularly recall the Toff stories and the Dirk Power series.

I thought the Nelson Lee fine, also, my favourites being the Amazon-El Dorado series. I read a few of the Wycliffe stories too, one of them being "Prefect and Fag."

I have a fair-sized collection of books, including many post-war Bunter and Tom Merry stories, and plenty of the pre-war periodicals. In my youth, I read The Boy's Realm, once in a while. It was a good sporting paper.

### COMIC PAPERS

PETER WALKER (Bristol). I can add a note to the article by Anthony Glynne on "Comic Papers." You will recall that he makes reference to the drawings of Weary Willie and Tired Tim in "Chips" being drawn by Tom Browne. I would not like to swear that Mr. Browne expired as a result of not being able to sleep, thus being reduced to a nervous wreck, but I do know that when I was an apprentice of about sixteen, I studied lithographic drawing under a man named Herbert Steventon who, at that time, was probably the greatest lithographic artist in the country, and who was responsible for the reproduction of many of Tom Browne's masterpieces. Tom Browne was, of course, a great painter, and some of his water-colours are amongst the best ever turned out in Britain.

This Herbert Steventon reproduced some of these pictures so accurately that it was impossible to tell the original from the reproduction. I think it can be safely said that, due to the accuracy of Steventon's work, a very wide public was reached, and Tom Browne's work became very well known. Of course, Browne had been dead many years before my time, but Steventon used to tell me about him, and I believe it is true that strong drink was his undoing.

There is, in Nottingham today, a firm of colour printers still trading under his name.

### THE LESS-KNOWN PAPERS

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge). I hope you will be able to find room for occasional articles on some of the lesser quoted papers, such as the Marvel, Chuckles, etc. I also wonder if there is much information now extant about such 19th century papers as "Boys of the Empire." This knowledge must be passing rapidly into the limbo.

BETTE PATE (Australia). I enjoy Rex Dolphin's stories very much. I

feel he has been most successful in his blending of the old and new; and his Blake and Tinker are more like the folk I first knew, the real English detective with no hint of the brash American "private eye."

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OPINIONS, PLEASE. No. 4

KEITH CHAPMAN (reviewing the new Sexton Blake film in this issue) says: "To my distaste, Tinker was in many respects not the junior partner but still the boy assistant. He was not adult enough in his comments, behaviour or outlook."

Would you prefer Tinker as the junior partner or the boy assistant? If you have any views on this, jot them down, keeping them short and snappy, and post to the Editor.

K. F. KIRBY (South Africa) writes: "Frank Lay is right off the beam when he says that Wodehouse's school stories are only just about readable today. Let me mention only the story 'Out of Bounds' in the 1927 Holiday Annual, which is not only a most entertaining study of schoolboy personality, but shows the most intimate and exact acquaintance with the game of Rugby football of any school story I have ever seen. In this respect it is immeasurably superior to 'Jeremy at Crale'. As a representative of a country whose national game is Rugby, I think I can claim to speak with authority.

I simply do not understand how G. R. Samways can deny Charles Hamilton the title of greatest of school story writers. If he is not, then may I ask who is? Certainly not Hugh Walpole or H.A. Vachell who were not really writers of school stories at all. In any case 'David Blaize' and 'The Hill' and 'Jeremy at Crale', even if they do not, as I suspect, contain a great deal of autobiography, have defects which, in my opinion, put them right out of the running.

For they are largely humourless and much too sentimental. Let the other writers try to maintain Charles Hamilton's standard while producing one tenth of his output! The only writer I would put anywhere near is Talbot Baines Reed, but none of his other stories came up to the standard of the quite brilliant "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's"

CHARLES CHURCHILL writes: "Mr. Arlington Wilkes was a very good character. Unfortunately, he was introduced in the Nelson Lee just as sales began to fall. It is significant that he is so rarely mentioned, as this proves that the stories then were on the decline in attractiveness.

# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## NORTHERN

Meeting February 13th, at 239 Hyde Park Road.

We had a very cold night for the 119th meeting of the Northern Section, but 16 members braved the elements. Six less than last month, when the attendance was 22 - not 20 as stated in the February C.D.

Correspondence has been heavy, and during the 'business' many interesting letters were read out. A 'Prize' of the Club notepaper from the London Club, on our winning the Greyfriars Cup was gratefully received. Later this year we hope to have a talk from Tom Hopperton entitled "Some Things that have Puzzled Me." Tom says in his letter that several of these he would hesitate to put into print!!! Sounds good.

Then came the main item of the evening, a talk by our Secretary, Ron Hodgson on "The School for Slackers." Ron had obviously been doing a lot of research at High Coombe, and gave us a vivid account of this school, which Frank Richards once averred was his most polished production. To end with, the speaker read us the delightful scene where Jimmy McCann finds the Master of the Fifth, Mr. Chard, asleep in front of his class, and instead of awakening him, takes over the class. A grand talk!

After refreshments and chin-wag we had two games. First a 30 point quiz by Ron, won by Jack Wood, with the writer as runner-up. Then a little game I thought up and which I won myself - quite fairly! Geoff Wilde was in second place. Geoff by the way will be the speaker at our next meeting on March 12th. His subject 'The Crooks and Criminals of Charles Hamilton.' Those who heard Geoff's talk on Claude Hoskins last year will not miss next month.

GERRY ALLISON

## AUSTRALIA

### The Golden Hours Club

The first meeting of 1960 was held at Cahill's Restaurant on Friday, February 12th, but all members did not attend, apologies being received from Stan Nicholls and Bill Hall, our treasurer, who were unable to join us. Election of office-bearers for the year was deferred until the March meeting, when it is hoped all will be present to vote.

The Secretary advised members that congratulations had been sent to the Northern O.B.B.C. on their well-deserved win in the Greyfriars

Cup, and this was heartily endorsed by the Sydneyarders, who are now awaiting word from Ron Hodgson of the Cup's presentation.

A letter from our postal member, Jack Murtagh in New Zealand, was read with interest, and I'm sure the Merseyside folk will be flattered to know that Jack had written over to borrow their tape recording - so their fame has crossed the Tasman to the land of the Kiwi, and we are happy to accede to Jack's request. Hope he has as much pleasure listening in as we did.

Syd Smyth, our chairman, reported that the proposed club magazine is progressing well, and the cover is now being designed with the expected date of publication late in March.

The Hamilton enthusiasts were very pleased to receive the official programme of the Bunter show, which Ben Whiter had so generously sent out. Also the photos taken backstage, which Eric Fayne had kindly sent to the secretary, were eagerly scanned, and members have asked me to express their sincere thanks to Eric and Ben for the interest they have shown in keeping our club up to date with the news.

Letters from Frank Unwin, Ron Hodgson, Ben Whiter, Don Webster and Bill Gander were passed round, as well as two Newsletter from Harry Broster, bringing interesting details from the Midland Club. A considerable part of the evening was spent discussing the news and views contained in this correspondence.

The Annual has now been received by most members out here, and the verdict expressed was a most favourable one with a hearty pat on the back for Eric and Jack Wood for their sterling work on this difficult assignment, and a special mark of appreciation to Eric for the grand job he is doing for the C.D. Believe me, the Aussies are with you all the way!

The evening ended at 8 p.m. Next meeting, Friday, March 18th, at 6 p.m.

B. PATE - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE  
Sunday, 14th February.

The most bitter Sunday so far this winter did not stop all our regular members from attending, and a cosy gathering was soon under way. The branch's financial position was given by the chairman, and was agreed to be satisfactory.

The question of the proposed "Who's Who" was the first item under discussion, and a prepared memoranda was read by the Chairman. Considerable comment was caused by this, and, as a result, an amendment was made to suit all members. This will be forwarded to the Editor of the C.D. in due course.

As there is great interest in the current Sexton Blake Libraries amongst the members of the Merseyside Branch, the very critical letter by Martin Thomas, which appeared in a February Sexton Blake Library, was read out verbatim by the secretary. This letter, being critical of certain aspects of both the C.D. monthly and the C.D. annual, came in for much discussion. The Merseyside Branch believes that the expressed views of Martin Thomas are in line with our own, and it is hoped that future issues of the C.D. will contain more articles and comments on the modern Sexton Blake saga.

Refreshments followed, and fifteen minutes were spent in informal discussion. A brilliant new-type quiz, based on Greyfriars, St. Jim's and St. Frank's, was then presented by Frank Unwin. A sequence of events was read out, and from this we had to deduce what had led up to it. The investigation as to why Smithy had to spend the night in the wood shed, and why Skinner was sporting a black eye the next morning was very funny and surprisingly accurate. We were in two teams, and the result was a tie, each getting 18 points.

Another new quiz was presented by Bill Windsor, based on the idea of "Nuggets", except that the answer had to consist of two rhyming words. One of them really tickled us: "The Remove boy's successes. You never hear of them in the Magnet." Answer - "Skinner's winners."

Next meeting, Friday, 11th March at 6.30 p.m.

NORMAN PRAGNELL - Secretary

LONDON

East Dulwich, 21st February, 1960

Despite the absence of our chairman, Len Packman, vice-chairman Frank Lay, and secretary Ben Whiter, we had a very jolly gathering of 18 members. There was some discussion concerning the Hamilton Library. After many years without mishap, the librarian had to report the loss in the post of a parcel of books worth £5 10s. A vote was taken, and it was decided to carry on as usual.

Bob Blyth hopes to have the Magnet list ready by next month. Winner of David Harrison's quiz was Roger Jenkins, with Bob Whiter in second place. Eric Fayne then had us in fits with a reading of two entries for the Greyfriars Cup: "The Case of the Missing Treaty" and "Checkmate, Cardew"

Bill Lofts' quiz was won in a dead heat by Eric Lawrence, Roger Jenkins, and Bob Whiter. Millicent Lyle gave her Desert Island Books, all Magnets, and rounded off her choice with a reading from "My Lord Bunter."

As a final treat, Roger Jenkins gave us two chapters from the Methuselah Hiking series.

In the Chair - Roger Jenkins. Next two meetings: March 20th and April 24th. Venues to be notified later.

ROBERT WHITER

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th January, 1960

Despite the unavoidable absence of Tom and Beryl Porter and Joe Marston, we had an enjoyable meeting of ten of the regulars. In the quiz, all Hamilton questions, John Tomlinson was successful in getting all 32 items correct.

Jack Corbett entertained us with his selection of eight books for his Desert Isle. The next item, for the benefit of St. Frank's fans, was "Why was Willy Ratty?" read by John Tomlinson - one of the Midland entries for the Cup contest. This was followed by a Greyfriars tale, also selected from the Cup entries. It was with surprise and pride that members learned that Jack Corbett was the author of this fine story. After the interval with refreshments, came a general discussion.

Next meeting - February 29th.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

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THE LONDON CLUB WISHES TO PURCHASE THE following books to replace copies lost in the post. Gems 753 - 758, S.O.L's 179 and 272, MAGNETS 118, 229, 249, 338, 460, 558. FOR SALE - Gems 571 to 585 (except 581) and Magnets 446, 461, 541, 543, 640, 787. SAE with offers to Roger Jenkins, "The Firs", Eastern Road, Havant, Hants.

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GEDS AND ENDS continued from page 86

assistant Tinker, have four 40,000 word adventures monthly - (he was writing in 1932) - and must, in the time measure of their adventures, have lived through several centuries. These stories are often quite well written.

I met with a description of a foggy night in London in one Sexton Blake story, which in its vividness, recalled the fog in Bleak House, and was moreover, in really good English.

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QUIZZLE No. 16

|   |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|--|
| A |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |    |    |  |  |
| B | 4  |    | 5  |    |    |    |  |  |
| C | 6  |    |    |    | 7  |    |  |  |
| D |    |    | 8  | 9  |    |    |  |  |
| E | 10 | 11 |    |    |    |    |  |  |
| F | 12 |    | 13 |    |    |    |  |  |
| G |    |    |    | 14 | 15 |    |  |  |
| H |    |    | 16 |    | 17 |    |  |  |
| I | 18 |    | 19 | 20 |    |    |  |  |
| J | 21 |    |    |    | 22 |    |  |  |
| K | 23 |    | 24 |    | 25 |    |  |  |
| L |    |    | 26 |    | 27 | 28 |  |  |
| M | 29 |    | 30 | 31 |    |    |  |  |

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |

The letters in the numbered squares, if placed in sequence in the lower grid, may explain what some readers mean by saying "Was your journey really necessary, Mr. Blake?"

**CLUE DOWN:** A. How Green was my Mother.

**CLUES ACROSS:**

- A. Did Edgar Wallace catch him on the hop? (3, 4)  
 B. Is this how Fatty Little liked his cakes.  
 C. Bunter's specs don't seem to leave them.  
 D. Where Charlie Brown used to flutter by?  
 E. How Seven Boys and Solomon found their route.  
 F. Should we expect Johnny Bull to bowl these?  
 G. The colour of Sherlock Holmes study.  
 H. Those of Mr. Lascelles are vulgar.  
 I. Call Sexton Blake to investigate this.  
 J. Is this how we found it, when waiting for the next instalment?

- K. Some of us are, and most of us will be, some day.  
 L. Marie Rivers gave in her notice. (5,4)  
 M. Prefect finds a learner in the wrecked larder.

(If you care to send in the hidden words in the grid and the solution to the Clue Down, you may win a Book Prize, awarded for first correct solution received.)

**WANTED URGENTLY:** Sexton Blake Annuals in good condition. £1 each offered. Also Gem Xmas No. for 1917. £1 offered.  
 L. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, S.E.22.

DON'T FORGET TO FILL UP AND RETURN TO THE EDITOR  
 YOUR WHO'S WHO QUESTIONNAIRE!