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The COLLECTORS' ①/6 DIGEST

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JULY
1960



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The Collectors' Digest

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JULY, 1960

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,
Grove Road,
Surbiton, Surrey.

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From the Editor's Chair

IRISH STEW

From the Editor

If there is an Irish flavour about this issue of the Digest it is due to the fact that much of it was compiled on the wild and mysterious shores of Connemara.

To enjoy a holiday in Ireland, it is not essential to be an O.B.B. enthusiast - but it helps. If you are accustomed to the warm friendship of our collecting clan, you will find yourself enjoying a familiar glow under the warm, happy-go-lucky cordiality of the Irish. If you can really see the Terrible Three strolling along under the old elms, you will be the very ones to see the leprechauns dancing in and out of the rocks on the lonely Galway coast. If you get a kick out of Billy Bunter you will be quite at home with the giant meals which Irish hospitality sets before you. If you thrill with Nelson Lee, you will find an odd delight in walking over the bogs, when every fourth step brings the peril of sinking knee-deep into the mire.

In the stone cottage, with its thatched roof, you will find Mrs. Moriarty, who looks so sinister that you need little persuading that she is related to Sherlock Holmes' old adversary. Even the delightful smell of her peat fire may fill you with a sense of foreboding. When you kiss the Blarney Stone, poised over a void of nothingness (that's Irish for you), you will be Tinker in one of his near-to-death adventures, even though a brawny Irishman with iron muscles is standing precariously on a shiny steel bar, ready to snatch you back to safety at the eleventh hour. Even by the glorious

lakes of Ould Killarney you will find the Sexton School of Dancing. Sure, and it's no wonder that the sentimental lover of ould boys' books makes up his mind to come back to Erin, Navournoon.

The whole atmosphere of Central and Western Ireland is redolent of the days when our favourite papers were first published. Horse traffic, cows milked by hand in the open air, no teddy boys. Very little motor traffic at all. Everybody - men, women and children - wave and cheer as you pass by. It's exhilarating, begorra! If you drop in at a Church, any time, any day, you find people at their devotions - men, women, boys and girls. The Irish have a wonderful anchor in their religion.

The films in the cinemas are oh, so very old. One cinema, outside Limerick, announces its prices as 4d, 6d, 9d and 1/-. Surely, in that quaint little paper-shop at Castlebar, you are bound to find the latest stories on sale - "Tom Merry & Co. in Ireland", "The Hidden Horror", "Illgotten Gains", "The Case of the Bogus Judge", "Dorrie's Christmas Party."

The day passes slowly and leisurely in Western Ireland. Nobody bothers about time. The peat carts, drawn by delightful "neddies", rattle by; cows stroll on the narrow roads.

When another twenty years have dawdled away, things may be different. The glory that is Western Ireland may be swept aside - the Churches may be empty, teddy-boys may wolf-whistle on the street corners, new hospitals may be built and packed to overflowing with road casualties, petrol fumes may replace the sweet-scent of the peat fires, sex and sadism may bring their X-certificates to the cinemas unless television has arrived and closed them all. Then Western Ireland will know that civilisation has caught up with it at last.

THE ANNUAL. Mighty foine articles are coming in for the Annual, preparations for which are going on apace. We want plenty more. Please get cracking, chums, with your pens and typewriters.

OUR COVER. Our cover, which will surely delight you all, has been specially drawn for this issue by Mr. C. H. Chapman, the famous Magnet artist. Many, many thanks to a very splendid gentleman.

For next month, we advise our Nelson Lee fans to keep a sharp look-out for our very special cover. We fancy they are going to be delighted.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

WONDERFUL MR. REED

by Andrew Langman.

TALBOT BAINES REED was born at Hackney on April 3rd, 1852. He died at Highgate on November 28th, 1893, aged 42.

The initial weekly number of the Boy's Own Paper was dated January 18th, 1879. Amongst the earliest MSS received by the editor was one of which he thought so highly that he gave it a place on the first page of the very first number. This was an article entitled "My First Football Match" - and the author was Talbot Baines Reed. A fortnight later the first of a short series of papers from the same pen appeared, under the title "Boys of English History". Then, towards the end of March, came a brief article on the forthcoming boat-race "Oxford or Cambridge?" From that time, Mr. Reed was appointed the Boy's Own Special Correspondent for the great inter-collegiate contest and described the doings of the Dark and Light Blues with characteristic vivacity.

He wrote a series of athletic sketches, which were published in book form years ago under the collective title of "Parkhurst Days." In the August of 1879 came his first school story, in two chapters, "The Troubles of a Dawdler". It was the skill shown in this unpretentious little sketch that induced the Editor of the B.O.P. to suggest to Mr. Reed that he should try his hand at something more ambitious, the result being his first serial, "The Adventures of a Three-Guinea Watch." This started the 3rd volume in October, 1880. With this superb story a new epoch in Mr. Reed's literary career began, and his name now appeared for the first time in connection with his work.

"The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" appeared in 1881 and "My Friend Smith" in the following year. "The Willoughby Captains" came next, in 1883-4, and "Reginald Cruden" in 1885. "A Dog With a Bad Name" started the ninth volume, 1886-7.

"The Master of the Shell" was prepared for volume ten. "Sir Ludar", an Elizabethan story, was published in the eleventh volume, but in "The Cock House at Fellsgarth" (1891) Mr. Reed returned to his favourite ground, public-school life. This was followed in 1892 by "Tom, Dick and Harry", another sparkling story.

All the above were subsequently published in book form, and most of them still sell well today. His last book, on which he was at work when he died, was "Kilgorman" a story of the rebellion of 1798. This was published by Nelson and Son, and it is the only one I have never seen, lacking from my otherwise complete collection.

Few writers have the gift of writing so that their work does not date. Frank Richards is one. Talbot Baines Reed is very definitely another. Events, and social conditions, put his stories into period, but his easy style is as readable and fascinating today as when he first wrote.

Which was the best of them? - for they were all first-class. My own favourite is "Dog with a Bad Name", followed closely by "My Friend Smith" and "Tom, Dick and Harry."

After Talbot Baines Reed's death, another author paid him the following tribute in the pages of the B.O.P. - "Not only boys, but men also, whose hearts retained something of youth in them, have been guided and saved by reading his stories. I am glad, not ashamed, to own that I began to enjoy them long after my boyhood was past, and through doing so have reaped unspeakable benefit at a time when perhaps nothing else could have saved one from the world which was becoming too much for me. I feel I have lost a personal friend. Had he but written "My Friend Smith", and nothing else, he had done a splendid service for God."

WANTED: GEMS 313, 315, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322, 328, 331, 332, 333, 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 376, 385, 386, 387, 392, 457, 459, 493, 773, 935, 946, 948, 950, 951, 953, 954, 956, 964, 967, 968, 970, 976, 977, 979, 980, 984, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 325, 344, 345, 346, 353, 357, 358, 386, 389, 400, 411, 417, 347, 388, 469, 717, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 868, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 936, 940, 942, 943, 944, 946, 948, 949, 950, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 730, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 466, 474.

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B L A K I A N A

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I am afraid there is no room this month for any S.B.L. titles. However, there will be an extra quota of them next month, to make up for it.

Walter Webb's instalment of "Century-Makers" in this issue is particularly interesting, in as much that it clarifies the difference between ghost-writers and substitute authors, and thereby solves what has probably puzzled a good many - the ghosting of "Midst Balkan Perils" (S.B.L. 1st series No. 5) by E. S. Brooks for W.M. Graydon.

Bill Lofts, too, is to be thanked for his initiative in contacting Stanley Hooper. Nice work, Bill!

JOSE PACKMAN

* * * * *

CENTURY MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB.

INSTALMENT SIXTEEN

Concluding THE CHESTER STORY

Like many other struggling authors, Gilbert Chester had one overriding ambition. This was in the successful completion of a best-selling novel, or other work, which would obviate the necessity of his having to turn out many more hundreds of thousands of words of considerably lesser successful material in order to maintain a living which, due to the precarious circumstances in which his chosen profession was surrounded, was both an insecure and unremunerative one if the writer had to depend entirely upon what he received from his graft with the pen to pay his way. And this was the situation in Chester's case, for his dream of financial independence with the publication of a best-seller remained forever a dream, which, in its unfulfilment, was unfortunate for the author if not the Blake reader who so appreciated his work, which, of its type was very good indeed.

A firm believer in and an expert exponent of astrology, Gilbert Chester first became acquainted with this fascinating subject when he was asked by the editor of the S.B.L. to write a Blake story with it as the theme. In researching for the story the author became interested to such an extent that he quickly learned practically all there was to

know about it. In 1932, the year of the memorable Proud Tram Series, in which six authors, Chester himself, G. H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, Anthony Skene, Donald Stuart and Edwy Searles Brooks took part, Gilbert Chester and G. H. Teed obviously met, and one of the subjects they discussed in conversation which naturally must have followed was that of astrology. That Teed became interested seems indisputable, for he either asked Chester or was invited by the latter to have his fortune predicted by means of his - Chester's - astrological knowledge, for pencilled details of Teed's birth date and place of birth, doubtless supplied to Chester by Teed himself, are contained in a memorandum of the former's and seem conclusive evidence since the latter would hardly have given incorrect data on such an occasion if he wanted the correct reading of his horoscope given. As will be seen, these details differ rather considerably from those set down in the Teed article published in the C.D. over two years ago, written by Bill Lofts and based on information supplied to him by Mr. H. W. Twyman. These notes set down in Chester's handwriting read as follows: "George Heber Teed...born December 9th, 1886...birthplace, Woodstock, N.B. (New Brunswick, obviously)...hour unknown...present age (in 1932) 46 years..." There follows a mass of astrological details quite incomprehensible to one not conversant with the subject, but that these particular details are authentic there seems little doubt. It appears then that the leading Blake author of all time died not at the age of 61, as previously stated, but at the comparatively early one of 53 years.

To an editor of the A. Press, now retired, Gilbert Chester claimed to have "ghosted" for Andrew Murray for some time before the latter's death. These stories were published outside the U.J. and S.B.L., and appeared under the names of either "Agatha" or "Andrew Murray", perhaps for ANSWERS LIBRARY, or similar publications, which catered for the purely romantic novel. As stated previously, in these columns, there were also three early U.J. stories, 1922 vintage, which are supposed to have been written by Murray, but were actually penned by Gilbert Chester. These issues bear the numbers 975, 979 and 987, and are all officially, yet erroneously, credited to Murray.

To get a clearer slant on this matter of substitution is to understand fully the functions of the ghost-writer as distinct from those of the more commonly utilised substitute writer. The sub. is a stand-in for the original writer when that worthy is unable for one reason or another to fulfil his obligations to his editor. A ghost-writer is one who executes literary work for another who passes as the author. It will be appreciated, therefore, that although the name of the sub. writer does find its way into the official records, that of the ghost-

writer does not for clearly obvious reasons.

It is not the intention of this episode to cast the slightest doubt on the authenticity of the official records, which, in so far as acceptance of and payment to the author is concerned, is readily conceded to be one hundred per cent accurate; but, in the interests of the said accuracy, the presence of the ghost-writer and what he stands for must be recognised. In so far as Blake lore is concerned, this phantom hand has struck but very rarely, and, in research spanning many years, I am satisfied that its imprint has been left on only four occasions - the three just referred to and one other, this being a very early issue of the S.B.L. entitled "Midst Balkan Perils". Published in January, 1916, the name of the author is given as E. S. Brooks, and although one is ready to accept the fact that Mr. Brooks was paid for this novel, no-one, knowing his distinctive style, will believe that he wrote it, nor even that short Nelson Lee story thrown in as makeweight. Only Edwy Searles Brooks himself can tell how his name has become associated with a novel most certainly written by W. Murray Graydon and featuring a character created by that writer.

To return to Gilbert Chester, but briefly. A very knowledgeable writer, slow-speaking and deliberative, he had, at the time of his retirement, submitted a total of 176 Sexton Blake stories. His place at the head of the field was taken by Lewis Jackson, the veteran author of the Kestrel stories, with a total of 89 contributions. By steady progress Rex Hardinge was challenging strongly, and at this point had 81 stories to his credit. Anthony Parsons, scoring quicker than either of them, could show a well-balanced 62.

With only 11 more to get his century, it looked "in the bag" for Jackson; but, unfortunately, the sands of time were running out for him pretty fast and soon we were bemoaning the departure of yet another old favourite. However, we had our compensations, one being that Warwick Jardine returned to the fold after an absence of nine years.

An instance without parallel in the history of the S.B.L. occurred in the autumn of 1950, when, owing to a strike in the printing trade, no issues were forthcoming in November. New authors were now the exception rather than the rule, but in February of the year just mentioned, a writer using the name of (127) HILARY KING made an impressive debut with a novel one hoped would not prove to be his one and only contribution. Nor was it, though we had to be content with only five.

In July of the following year we bid goodbye to that popular veteran with the Dimpleby figure, Lewis Jackson, who first appeared as a Blake writer in 1915, and felt rather regretful that during the 36

years he was occupied as author he failed to reach the coveted century, being out for a laborious 90, evenly divided between the U.J. and S.B.L. Retirements and deaths continued to occur at regular intervals. First, the death at the age of 82, at Norfolk, of that fine old historian and writer of several early Sexton Blakes, D. H. Parry, followed by that of George Dilnot, a regular subscriber to the old U.J. Detective Supplement and writer of a few S.B.L.'s just before the war. He was 68 years of age.

December 1951, saw the introduction of another new name on the cover of the S.B.L.....(128) STEPHEN BLAKESLEY, and an interesting struggle between Rex Hardinge and Anthony Parsons for the right to become the ninth author to submit 100 Blake stories. Details at the end of 1951, as follows: Rex Hardinge (88); Anthony Parsons (74); sad to relate, only one other author was to be seen even dimly in sight of these two. He was John Hunter, with a total of 44, all of which he wrote for the Library.

November 1952, marked the occasion of the entrance into the Blake arena of (129) HUGH CLEVELY. Remembering the extremely good stories he wrote for the early issues of THE THRILLER and the not-so-early Gong-Smasher stories for the same paper, I regarded his enrolment as something of a scoop for the S.B.L. But - alas! - the Clevely of the fifties was not the Clevely of the twenties and thirties, and the eleven novels he wrote during the three years he subscribed to the Library were not outstanding in any way.

1953 was notable only by reason of the fact that John Hunter reached his 50, and that two new authors made their appearances. First came 56 year-old (130) W. J. PASSINGHAM, a native of Essex, who, being quite an authority on boxing, naturally submitted a novel dealing with that profession without, however, enhancing either his own reputation or the library's. Thirty years ago he was an instructor and lecturer in journalism and short-story writing to the Regent Institute, and contributed to foreign newspapers all over the world. His works on boxing, dating back to the very early days of the ring, have been widely read and translated into every European language, barring Russian. The other newcomer was (131) GEORGE REES, destined to be the last of the debutantes in the old order.

The summer of 1954 was nigh. In its new seasonal dress, the S.B.L. was about to take its first hesitant steps, like a mannequin running the gauntlet of a sea of critical eyes, somewhat apprehensive of its reception. Faint rumblings, which may have been heard in the distance, proved that such uneasiness was not without justification; for they were the prelude to a storm which was soon to break with

remarkable rapidity and velocity over the Blake field.

The horizon was darkening and already the first few spots were beginning to fall.....

* * * * *

AND YET ANOTHER BLAKE AUTHOR

By W. O. G. LOFTS

Jim Swan, the well-known collector of Queen's Park, London, picked up his local newspaper, which had not long arrived, and started to read the usual reports of births, deaths and marriages, and other district news of interest to him. The headline at the top of a page caught his eye. It read as follows: "Boxer-Thriller writer, and wife, celebrate ruby wedding." Jim read on until he came to the following paragraph: "He also wrote Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee stories."

'Well', thought Jim, 'Bill Lofts will be interested to see this. I'll cut it out and show him when he calls next week.'

When I did call the following Monday I was, indeed, most interested in the cutting; furthermore, I had a very good reason for wishing to contact this author - the reason being that his name did not appear in the list of Sexton Blake authors, compiled by Derek Adley and myself, in last year's C. Digest Annual.

I wrote straight away to this author, and by return of post came a very friendly reply which, by the writer's revelations, left no doubt whatsoever in my mind as to his claims being correct and that he should be included in the huge band of Sexton Blake authors.

The name of the author is STANLEY HOOPER, and here are some interesting details concerning him.

In his early days Stanley Hooper was quite a promising boxer. One of his very best friends was (and still is) Ted (Kid) Lewis, one of the greatest boxers to grace an English ring. An unfortunate injury to Stanley Hooper whilst serving with the Royal Flying Corps during the 1914/18 war put paid to any hopes he had of making boxing his career; he therefore turned to journalism. His 'break' came in 1923 when, on entering a literary competition organised by the Daily Express, out of 39000 entries he came first. On the strength of this success he was appointed Boxing Correspondent to the Amalgamated Press, writing under the nom-de-plume of "Roy Brandon". Apart from his writings for the many A.P. sporting papers, he also wrote stories on boxing for all the national newspapers.

About this time he also branched out into boys' fiction, and more often than not wrote three 30,000 word stories a week - mostly

anonymous, owing to the editorial policy of the papers concerned.

"Sports Budget", "Football Favourite", "Football Weekly", "Startler" and "Surprise" are a few of the papers to which he contributed. Do you remember the following serials in the "Startler": "The Space Machine", "Ace-Hart" and "Captain Night-Hawk"? These were from the pen of Stanley Hooper, who also created the character "Coker" in the "Sports Budget" (not to be confused with the famous Greyfriars character of the same name, created by Charles Hamilton). The short stories he wrote for various papers are too numerous to mention here. He also wrote thriller stories for the "Political Weekly", and over a long period of time investigated psychical phenomena for that magazine. Sexton Blake stories written by him appeared in the "Detective Weekly" in 1939. Readers may recall that Ernest Dudley (creator of the well-known Armchair Detective, Dr. Morelle) was writing a few stories for the "Detective Weekly" at this period. When he decided to cease writing for that paper Stanley Hooper was invited to take his place, and this he did. Stories he wrote include the following: "The Stolen Promoter", "The Secret of the Seven Blue Bombers" and "The Secret of the Loch". Other Blake stories written by Mr. Hooper are, at the time of writing this article, still pending his confirmation.

A very great friend of Alfred Edgar, Mr. Hooper was actually the last person to see this popular author before he left this country to settle down in America, where Edgar has made a name for himself as "Barre Lyndon" the well-known script writer.

As for the Nelson Lee stories written by Stanley Hooper, they appeared in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY in the very late twenties - but that is another story.

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, 353-361, 380, 381, 388-398, 404, 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.L's - 60, 68.

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

WANTED: S.O.L's: 42, 65, 66, 162, 257, 258, 259. Nelson Lee - Old Series - 236, 291. Your price plus postage paid. The advertiser has some S.O.Ls, Nelson Lee, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.



HAMILTONIANA



SEEN IN THE MIRROR

A Mr. F. Belcher, of Oldbury, Worcs., wrote recently to the Daily Mirror: "Can you please give us the name of the fat boy of St. Jim's in the famous school stories by Frank Richards? The chap we mean was the opposite number to Billy Bunter of Greyfriars."

And, under the heading St. Jim's, the Mirror answered: "Baggy Trimble, the bounder!"

A few days later the Mirror gave a black type heading of "The Fat Boy of St. Jim's" with a Macdonald illustration taken from the Gem of October 5th, 1929. A Miss Rovey of Hove had written to reprove the Mirror for selecting Baggy Trimble. She wrote: "It was Fatty Wynn. Trimble never belonged to St. Jim's."

The Mirror replied: "Trimble was undoubtedly the Billy Bunter of St. Jim's" - the 'uttah wottah', as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy used to say."

In next month's Digest we shall spotlight the fat boys.

* * * * *

HUNTER AND HIS NOISES

By C. L. Lettey

"Billy Bunter groaned". How many times have we read these words in the Magnet! "Yaroo!" yelled Bunter. "If you please, sir-----" mumbled Bunter.

Please note the words - groaned; yelled; mumbled; The fat Owl is up for a caning. "Oh crikey" moaned Bunter. He tries to escape the

wrath of Quelch: "I didn't - I never - " wailed Bunter. Notice the simple words expressing his agony; moaned; wailed. None of these out of place.

I have heard it said that the best writings of Frank Richards appeared long ago. True it is that nothing can go on for ever. Plots may have worn thin. But have you realised the wealth of these little expressive words still being used in the latest Bunter Books? Simple yet apt words surrounding William George Bunter at every turn of his speech. What would he be without his hooting and gurgling, his babbling and chuckling? How silent the dormitories without his reverberant snoring! The old corridors without the grunting and gasping as he hurries by! But such things could never be. These words clothe him with half his humour.

The other day I was going through a Cassells Bunter Book that was written not so long ago. I wondered how many of these expressive noises still adhered to our famous fat man. Like his layers of fat they nestled in abundance around him. I do not claim the list to be exhaustive. It is relative to one Bunter Book. Nonetheless a surprising variety: Gurgled, Yelled, Stuttered, Wailed, Hooted, Gaspd, Howled, Babbled, Breathed, Bawled, Chuckled, Stammered, Groaned, Mumbled, Squeaked, Moaned, Hissed, Shrieked, Snorted, Grunted, Purred, Burbed, Jeered, Snapped.

Readers may bring to mind other characteristic sounds made by our fat friend in other days. I have limited the above list to the verbs that express W. G. B's utterances. I have not included those which surround his eating proclivities such as "Munched" and "Crunched" and "Gobbled" which may interest some future investigator.

* * * * *

TOM MERRY & CO IN IRELAND

The breath of Ould Oireland in the air this month causes us to look around to find out whether any of the Hamilton stories were centred in the land of the Shamrock. The only one we can find is "Tom Merry & Co in Ireland", published in the Gem in August, 1912. This story was unique, in that the entire summer vacation was covered in a single yarn.

Fatty Wynn was seasick on the trip across from Holyhead to Kingstown (they call it Dun Laoghaire today). Fatty provided great fun, but he was in the fashion. Plenty of people are ill when crossing the Irish sea, even in 1960 when the ships are fitted with stabilisers.

Gussy went shopping in Grafton Street, still the Oxford Street of

Dublin. The chums sought the Green of College Green, unsuccessfully. They climbed the Nelson Column, still standing today in all its majesty because, so they say, Nelson had so many Irish sailors at Trafalgar. They talked to a policeman, who answered them in the "deep and rolling accent of Tipperary." They crossed the Liffey by a handsome bridge, and they strolled along the impressive Sackville Street. They rode on a tram (the last tram ran in Dublin quite a few years back) to Ballsbridge, where they attended the famous Dublin Horse Show and Gussy became the hero of the hour by stopping and riding a refractory horse. They finished up by going to a cavalry Review at Phoenix Park.

This was one of those delightful inconsequential stories, the charm of which made the Gem the most popular school story paper on the stalls in those far-off days. It was omitted when the Gem offered its reprints. By the nineteen-thirties, Dublin had become the capital of the Irish Free State, but the tale, suitably edited, could still have made a delightful interlude for the schoolboy of twenty-five years ago.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

They liked Alonzo! Everybody liked Alonzo! His society was liable to pall, after a time, perhaps! Possibly he was rather a bore! Certainly he was an ass. Still, a fellow could not help liking him.

Alonzo was rather like Peter in looks - in fact, very much like him. But he was a meeker and milder edition of Peter. He had a sweet smile such as was never seen on Toddy's visage. He had a mild voice unlike Peter's hefty tones. And he preferred draughts, as a game, to cricket or football - which was very unlike Peter indeed. In more strenuous moments Alonzo had played croquet! But draughts was his game!

* * * * *

"I feel very much alarmed," murmured Miss Fawcett. "Oh, Tommy dear, I wish you were not going on this dreadful expedition. Suppose someone should be shooting at his landlord, and hit you by mistake."

"That's all right. Irishmen are good shots," said Blake.

"You need not be alarmed, Miss Fawcett," said Mr. Dodds, remaining grave with an effort. "There is really no shooting in the streets of Dublin. I have been there, Miss Fawcett."

The good old lady brightened up.

"Ah, you have travelled in Dublin, Mr. Dodds?" she asked, speaking of that great city much as if it were the Rocky Mountains or the Caribbean Islands.

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If you have a favourite GEM OF HAMILTONIANA you are invited to copy it on a sheet of paper and post it to the Editor. Your item may be taken from any Hamilton story of any period, but the title of the story must be indicated, and the extract must be short. A selection of readers' items will be published shortly, and a special BOOK PRIZE will be awarded to the sender of the item which tickles the Editor's fancy the most.

* * * * *

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. 40. CONTACT!

Over a number of years, the Nelson Lee Library presented a feature under the heading "Between Ourselves" in which, ostensibly at any rate, the author of the stories exchanged views with his readers. There seems no reason to doubt that this feature was personally conducted by Mr. Brooks, and if one treats the matter with some reserve it is due to the fact that we know the methods of the A.P. editorial offices in those days.

Ernie Carter, one of our gifted Australian contributors, referred to "Between Ourselves" in his excellent article in last year's Annual. In a further article, one that will be read with keen interest by Lee fans, in this year's Annual, he makes a shrewd analysis of the column, and it provides fascinating reading.

This, of course, is nothing to do with Hamiltoniana, but Mr. Carter comments that "even the Magnet, Gem and Union Jack could make no claim to such a friendly touch between author and reader. They had Editor's Chats but never an Author's Page."

Which brings me to the point of "Contact!" I asked myself whether the Magnet and Gem would have benefited by an Author's Page



in the same way that the Nelson Lee benefited from "Between Ourselves."

To reach any conclusion, it was necessary to become familiar with "Between Ourselves," and in recent weeks I have read through several dozens of Mr. Brooks' chats. It is obvious, of course, that the impact on an adult, in a new age, is probably quite different from the impact the feature made on a schoolboy of the "twenties."

The inescapable impression that I obtained was that the author was editing the paper. If my impression is correct to any degree, I should think it not a good thing for the paper. The Duke of Wellington was an excellent soldier but an indifferent statesman.

Admittedly, the column contained a fair deal of interest for the youthful Leeite, but there is a sense of repetition as the months went by. One is reminded irresistibly of the Hinton editorials. There is the printing of letters of criticism and abuse, presumably intended to rouse the ire of the loyal reader. There is the boy who started his letter "Dear Fathead."

There are frequent little homilies, the facetious bits of by-play, the ponderous chunks of advice. "Your excuse for your bad writing is that you burned your fingers. I've heard that one before."

The advertising is blatant - the Monster Library, for instance, is plugged to death; the St. Frank's League is put over in a stream of printer's ink. Reasonable in an Editorial, it seems tasteless in an Author's Page.

Surely, the author must have felt embarrassment at having to comment enthusiastically, week after week, on his own stories. Surely some readers must have been embarrassed by it, too.

Was it fair to an author to expect him to deal with readers' letters in this way? Boys who write to the author of their favourite stories, even when they are encouraged to do so, are obviously in a minority - sometimes a noisy and unrepresentative minority. Is it not, therefore, likely that an author may find himself influenced in his work by that minority?

Mr. Brooks himself sums up this danger very practically when he writes as follows, in late 1925: "During the week I've come to a decision. Or, to be more exact, the Editor and I have come to a decision. From now onwards we're going to plan stories, etc., entirely ourselves. In other words, all you readers are left out in the cold -

AND TWICE AS GOOD!



you won't have any voice at all.

"That sounds a bit grim, doesn't it? And it's meant to be grim. The Editor and I are so jolly grim that our only course is to come out with a bold statement. Naturally, he's left it to me. In a nutshell, we're both fed up with the present state of affairs. We're confused too - absolutely bewildered.

"And why this thushness? Well, for many months - ever since this 'Between Ourselves' of mine started - you readers have been suggesting things. With so many contradictory suggestions, we've juggled with them during these months, and the stories have been written according to the majority vote. Well, what's happened? Jealousy! Rank, green jealousy! We've pleased lots of readers, but we've displeased lots of others. The discontented ones wouldn't have said a thing if the Editor and I had been solely responsible for the changes. But it's a different thing when those changes were brought about by fellow-readers.

"My most successful yarns were those I wrote without any suggestions from readers. And I'm going back to that policy."

Mr. Brooks' summing-up contains the soundest of common-sense. He had discovered a weakness in the policy of "Between Ourselves" which should have been obvious to the editorial direction from the first.

I am prepared to believe that an Author's Page may have benefited the Lee - that readers delighted in that contact between themselves and their author.

But I do not believe that a similar plan would have benefited the Magnet or the Gem. I think that the Hamilton papers lost nothing by the aura of mystery which always surrounded their author. My enjoyment of a film is not increased by having the trick photography explained to me.

I cannot imagine Frank Richards ever having the time or the inclination for a readers' column conducted by himself - and I am thankful that he never attempted it.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

NO. 38. UP, THE SCHOOL!

BILL LOFTS: How the late Herbert Leckenby would have liked to join in this Controversial! One of Herbert's favourite topics was giving details of inaccuracies in Charles Hamilton's stories of cricket - and comparing them with the accurate and detailed descriptions in the yarns of John Nix Pentelow. Personally I think that Mr. Hamilton's writings on the great summer game became more mature through the years. Certainly, in the very early days of the Gem, there were stories of cricket matches which were really fantastic to

the schoolboy mind - which made the whole situation really laughable. Gem. No. 15 (1907) "The St. Jim's Curate", probably mentioned for the first time the existence of Greyfriars School, when they visited St. Jim's for a cricket match. Captain of the side was a George Yorke, who played a Ponsonby of the Upper Fifth in his eleven. (Strange how these boys were never mentioned in the Greyfriars yarns appearing a year later.) To get their own back, St. Jim's played the curate in their side. Here were the scores:

Greyfriars 1st Innings:	All out in 15 minutes for 0.
St. Jim's 1st Innings:	100 for 0, declared in 15 minutes.
Greyfriars 2nd Innings:	All out for 0, in 10 minutes.
Result of match:	St. Jim's won by an Innings and 100 runs.

It is, of course, possible for the above scores to happen, but to my knowledge of cricket it would take the Australians playing against a Kindergarten XI to do it.

DON WEBSTER: You have touched on one of my favourite subjects - cricket. To a critical reader, occasional errors were noticeable in Charles Hamilton's reference to cricket, but as an ardent enthusiast (and player) I passed these by. However, I must disagree with readers who admired J. N. Pentelow (who was never the editor of "The Cricketer"). His stories credited juniors with prodigious scores, and though Charles Hamilton's yarns often resulted in a last-wicket or one-run victory, and there was always a cloudless sky (we wouldn't have it otherwise), the atmosphere, as you say, was always perfect.

TOM PORTER: I think you made your point very effectively. You write "Far more important than the game is the characterisation of the players and the atmosphere of the narrative." How just is your observation! One has only to think of Dingley Dell v All Muggleton in Pickwick Papers, of the cricket match in George Meredith's "Evan Harrington" and of the Hugh de Selincourt's "The Cricket Match", a truly wonderful story with wonderful characterisation and atmosphere.

COLIN WYATT: I agree entirely with your comments in "Up, the School". I have always found Charles Hamilton's sporting descriptions more than adequate, and, like you, I find that over-long descriptions leave me cold and bored stiff. I noticed this particularly in the substitute story "School and Sports", where at the beginning of the tale there is a description of, I think, a football match, covering about 3 pages. I soon put that book down, believe me. To my mind, nothing can better a genuine Hamilton story where a game of cricket or football is covered in maybe just a page or even a few paragraphs, yet leaves the reader entirely in the picture as to what has gone on. With plenty of fine atmosphere, too.

IAN DAVEY: I think Frank Richards' descriptions of games were quite adequate, but one criticism I have is that some of his characters were too good. Goals for Greyfriars First were nearly always from Wingate's boot, and it is strange how all the main characters were centre forwards - Tom Merry, Wharton, Silver, Wingate, Kildare, etc.

One or two sports stories I found a little irritating. "Squiff of the Remove" in 1937 Holiday Annual presented a miraculous cricketer, better than Wharton or Smithy at batting, and the equal of Inky at bowling. After his first wonderful game, he took his normal place in the Remove XI. However, the Bertie Vernon series was first-class for cricket, and there was a grand match in "Bad Hat of the Remove" (1937) - a perfect picture of a summer afternoon, with Maily entertaining the girls, and Smithy's usual scowl as his wicket went down. Atmosphere and characterisation more than made up for minor faults.

HARRY BROSTER: We must not lose sight of the fact that Charles Hamilton was writing

for an age group which did not want details of each over. As Eric Payne says, the atmosphere of the game was perfectly presented, and the author was well supported by the equally perfect illustrations of C. H. Chapman and R. J. Macdonald. The sports contest in the Gem, to which Eric referred, was a series by a substitute writer. There was also a series, where the Greyfriars Remove ran a tour of the southern counties, and I think this was in the Popular. All right for those who want a full report of each over and each ball bowled, positions of fielders, bowling analysis. All right for the critic who likes to read of the "pass out to the left wing," "the centre from the right," "offside traps" - all the jargon we expect from newspaper reporters. Charles Hamilton gave you just enough to make the yarn palatable, and you did not need to be an expert to enjoy it.

I, personally, would have liked less vagueness in his teams. For instance, one Gem story gave me to understand that Figgins was last man in for St. Jim's Junior XI. George Figgins, next to Tom Merry and Talbot, maybe the best bat in the lower school. Another little thing which intrigued me - of all the characters of Charles Hamilton, at any of his schools, was there ever a left-handed batsman or bowler? Can anyone mention one? Or does it matter? Also, why did most of the cricket matches have to be won by one run, by the last man in, or the deciding goal have to be put in in the 89th minute by the hero of the current yarn?

(UP, THE SCHOOL, has brought in more letters than any previous Controversial. A further selection of readers' views on this topic will appear in our next issue. - ED.)

WOULD COLLECTORS with copies of Popular, Gem, U. J., B.F. Lib, Schoolgirls Own Library, kindly help me with data for my catalogues. All letters answered.
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SPECIAL NOTICE

Owing to the August Holidays, "Collectors' Digest" will go to press next month a few days earlier than usual. It will be of great assistance if Contributors, Secretaries and Advertisers will kindly send their material to reach the Editor by the 18th July, or earlier if possible.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

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

Two articles this month, both full of interest for regular St. Frank's readers. Next month I hope to include another in Charles Churchill's series of articles.

THE HUMOUR OF E. S. BROOKS

by R. J. Godsave

It is interesting to compare the humorous vein in the writings of various authors. Some depend on funny actions of characters to amuse their readers, whilst others, including E. S. Brooks, have a more gentle type of humour.

"Wembling at Wembley" O.S. 522 of the Nelson Lee is an amusing account of Handforth being smitten with the charms of a waitress in one of the restaurants at the Wembley Exhibition. The waitress turns out to be a married woman, and had Handy been observant as his brother Willy, who pointed out the ring on her finger, he would have saved making an ass of himself.

With the inclusion of young ladies as Lord Dorriemore's guests on his yacht during the summer holidays, Brooks invariably took the opportunity to have some light-hearted fun. In the "Treasure of El Safra" series O.S. 213 - 220, Handforth got rather sweet on Violet Watson, and by his habit of hanging around her simply asked for his leg to be pulled. With the dusk of the falling night, aided by a slight disguise and a borrowed frock of Violet Watson's, Pitt successfully impersonated this young lady and led Handforth on with such a speed that within a few minutes of their conversation together, Handy's nerve went to pieces when the spurious Violet offered to let him kiss her.

In the "Petticoat Rule" series O.S. 398 - 407, there was the occasion of the Remove form-mistress Miss Teezer's introduction to the Remove. Pitt, asked by Miss Teezer what his name was, replied "Reggie" and was complimented on being a good little boy with a nice name. Then came an incident of a powder puff, having been heavily dosed with pepper and placed within the form-mistress's desk, which she used with telling effect after some flattering compliments paid to her by the boys.

Not all the humour is connected with the opposite sex, as in the series when Pitt first came to St. Frank's O.S. 170-177, Handforth, for a brief period, became captain of the Remove and considered it his duty to warn Starke, the sixth form prefect, that bullying must stop. Nobody else but Handforth would ever dream of going to Starke's study single-handed. Naturally Handforth emerged from the study somewhat of a wreck, and was left lying on the floor of the passage. On his return to the Remove quarters, he was asked rather needlessly, by Watson, if anything was the matter, where-upon Handforth, with bitter sarcasm, informed him he had done it himself. At a subsequent meeting the Remove captain asked the fellows to look at his face, whereupon Nipper innocently asked Handforth if he had just found out what a silly ass he was and punched his own face by way of a change.

These are a few incidents in some of the old series of the Nelson Lee and give some indication of the humorous side of E. S. Brooks.

* * * * *

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

By H. Chapman

The one and only "Handy". In my opinion the most amusing character in the best stories for boys ever to appear in a boys' paper. (N.L.L. Old Series). Miles in front of Bunter and Gussy, one wonders why he has been allowed to disappear while they carry on.

He appeared in the first St. Frank's stories (N.L.L. No. 112), although not so prominent as he became later.

Rather ugly, aggressive, noisy, clumsy and usually a complete ass, he still had many good qualities. Very true to his friends when not punching their noses (poor Church and McClure) very generous and good hearted. In spite of being such a chump, he always seemed to choose the right side in a dispute, sometimes against all the evidence.

Had a great weakness for the girls, especially Irene Manners and was always extra clumsy and awkward in their company. I must say Irene seemed to return his regard.

He always had a grouse over something. Although goalkeeper in the Junior team, he would rather have been centre forward. As the best batsman in the cricket team, he should have opened the innings instead of being No. 4 or 5. And, of course, he was a good bowler, but they wouldn't let him bowl. (Not wanting to see anyone killed), and he really should have been captain of the Remove. While admitting Nipper was almost a Superman, he thought he was just a little better. It was only jealousy kept him out.

Perhaps his biggest delusion, however, was that he fancied himself cut out for detective work, although really the world's worst; strange to say he often stumbled on the truth by accident even before Nelson Lee, although he would never admit it was luck.

He led Church and McClure a terrible dance at times, but they were very fond of him and loyal to him, and vary rarely did they rebel. Life was very strenuous in Study D.

In the later stories he took up rather too much of the limelight and was almost lost sight of other boys, such as Sir Montie, Tommy Watson, Christine, Fatty Little, etc. Even Nipper had to take a back seat.

This was rather unwise, as one can have too much even of a good thing. Still, Bunter dominated the later "Magnets" in the same way, and towards the end the "Gem" was nearly all "Gussy".

As I said at the beginning, "Handy" was a splendid character. What a pity his adventures are over!

Sexton Blake Today

COVER STORY

by Frank Unwin

What are the six best covers since the "New Look"? Well, at the outset, let me make it perfectly clear that, as a great admirer of Eric Parker's work, the two covers specially designed by that artist for the novels "A Cold Night for Murder" by Martin Thomas, and Rex Dolphin's "Guilty Party!" were, for me, the most attractive.

But, these two apart, there have been many excellent covers. It is difficult to choose the best. As far as I am concerned, you may keep those covers depicting under-dressed, over-curvaceous females. Consequently, none of these came into my reckoning when I sorted out my final twelve. Fortunately of late, we have not seen so many of these, and there is no doubt that most of the present covers are both arresting and pleasing.

So, after a great deal of deliberation, I decided that number one pride of place must go to W. S. Greenhalgh's superb piece of work for that grand story, "Passport into Fear", by W. Howard Baker. How nice, too, to find a good old British name! This appears to be his only effort for the S.B.L. More's the pity! For my second I decided on "Desert Intrigue" by James Stagg, another epic, the artist of this

appealing cover being Caraselli. Thirdly, one that has always delighted me - Jack Trevor Story's "She Airt Got No Body". De Seta was responsible for this cover, and it is most pleasing.

I could not possibly leave out the epic from the pen of Peter Saxon, "The Sea Tigers", drawn by de Gaspari. So this is my fourth, and the story exceeded even the promise of the excellent cover. For my fifth, I have chosen a cover by Olivetti for another of Martin Thomas' novels, "Fear is My Shadow". Nothing flashy about this, but most effective in its simplicity. My sixth and final choice is a joint effort from the brushes of Symeoni and Marc Stone, covering "Espresso Jungle" by W. Howard Baker. Marc Stone's share in this, the face of Sexton Blake, is, in my opinion, far superior to the rest of the picture, but, combined, they make a very fine cover.

Well, that's my cover story. You will all have your different views, and few, for a certainty, will agree with my selections. Get out your Blakes and see! And then what about writing to the editor of the C.D. giving your opinions?

NEW SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES

JUNE ISSUES - Reviewed by Walter Webb.

MAN ON THE RUN! (No. 453)

ARTHUR KIRBY

Framed on a murder charge, and slammed into a Spanish gaol. Such is Splash Kirby's lot. Fortunate for him he could count amongst his friends Sexton Blake. With his uncanny aptitude for wriggling out of tight corners, Blake found this an asset in helping Kirby out of his own predicament. Then, it was not only one man on the run, but two! From Spain, into Portugal, and so into Algiers.

There is a woman involved. Where has Splash Kirby gone, but that a representative - and a beautiful one at that - of the opposite sex has not had her footsteps following close in the wake of his own? Or, more often, vice versa.

To further her own ends - the appropriation of treasure buried by the Nazi Government Mission in its hurried flight from North Africa, in November 1942 - Gabrielle Darrieaux held the columnist in a firm grip. Yet it was in Kirby's that she died. It is the latter's experience, told in his own words, but the novel is Arthur Maclean's. Is further recommendation necessary?

Rating.....Very Good

DESIGN FOR VENGEANCE

MARTIN THOMAS

Orlando Dante is not the first criminal to have come out of

prison with revengeful intent against the man who put him there - Sexton Blake. Nor is he the only man to have taken it upon himself to plot the detective's downfall by discrediting him in the eyes of his fellow men. Dante's scheme succeeds to the extent that Blake faces the jointly humiliating charges of blackmail and murder. It is an inconvenience which Blake accepts with that characteristic calm we have come to regard as an essential part of his make-up.

A vengeful artist and his beautiful blonde model are reminded of the wisdom of the old maxim "crime does not pay" when opposed to an equally vengeful detective and his blonde and no less beautiful secretary.

Written in Martin Thomas' best vein, and of wider appeal than his previous novel, this, I confidently predict, will be well received.

Rating.....Very Good

GENERAL COMMENTARY

MAILBAG: This enterprising section of the S.B.L. offers interesting reading this month. Keith Chapman comments on the suggested change from the present S.B.L. format to that of the pocket-book paper-backs of the Pan and Fontana types. In a critical survey, the writer considers the advantages and disadvantages of such an undertaking, and although he gives four favourable reasons for such a move as against three unfavourable, the latter collectively constitute a much stronger reason for staying put. When one recalls what DETECTIVE WEEKLY did, or rather, failed to do - for Blake when taking up the reins from the UNION JACK, one is inclined to doubt the wisdom of such a move, unless the situation demanded such a risk being taken. And a risk it certainly would be, with the odds on Blake's survival being by no means in his favour.

Martin Thomas gives an emphatic and convincing reply to the accuser, Miss Sandra Hall, over an alleged major error, but now Margaret Cook takes up the attack and the author is back on the defensive again. But not alone, for a lady residing in Kingston, Jamaica, praises the novel which has prompted such criticism from two other members of her sex.

On the Blakiana controversy, Robert W. Story, of Canada, gives a sane and well-balanced review of the situation as he sees it, and voices the thoughts which must be uppermost in the minds of practically all Blake lovers. In particular, Mr. Story's last paragraph sums up the situation in a nutshell.

GEORGE MARSDEN PLUMMER....LEON KESTREL. From Worcester the former's return is welcomed and Kestrel's would be, could it be arranged. But the master-mummer was an incredible sort of character relying principally on his skill of disguise and ability as an actor to further his ends. The disguise mania was rife among Blake authors in the old days; they would not get away with it now. Besides, no author would be able to handle Kestrel as his creator, Jack Lewis did, so I think, albeit reluctantly, that the idea should be shelved.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Caroselli again supplies the cover designs, that of No. 453 being quite good.

ODDS AND ENDS

by Gerry Allison

THE B.O.P. AND ALL THOSE. Continuing his memories in "The Methodist Recorder", John Epworth writes: "While, as I said last week, we Methodist children of long ago were carefully shielded from the wickedness of the Magnet, the Gem and the Boy's Friend, we were positively encouraged to read the Boy's Own Paper.

In those days it had a rather dull orange-coloured cover and its editor was a Dr. Gordon Stables, R.N. who had an invincible belief in the virtues of cold baths and long walks. He wrote, I remember, an interminable serial called "From the Slums to the Quarter-Deck" - and that was what it was all about. It was wearisome in its moralising and rather nauseating in its condescension to the poor boy from the slums.

Modernised and freshened up, the B.O.P. still lives, but I imagine it must feel the competition of the Rev. Marcus Morris's Eagle pretty keenly."

ANOTHER BLUEBELL. Many thanks to Stan Smith and others for putting me on to the source of 'Bye-bye, Bluebell'. One other Bluebell to whom I said bye-bye with the greatest possible regret was Bluebell Joy. Who does not recall the delightful stories of Bonnie Bluebell the Fairy School-girl and her friend Frank of page 2 of the Rainbow? What was Frank's surname by the way?

THE YORK FESTIVAL. I shall be visiting York on June 18th to hear Ralph Kirkpatrick play Scarlatti in the Church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, and after the concert I shall make my way to the Cemetery where lies the remains of the man who has brought so much happiness into my life and that of hundreds of others - Herbert Leckenby.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held 30th May, 1960

It was anticipated that a full muster of members would attend this Annual General Meeting, which was an important incentive if the novelty of a new club room was of no account. As it was, eleven of the stalwarts turned up. There would have been twelve only Tom Porter (the Club is proud of the fact that he is now a town councillor) could not get away from his new official duties in time. John Tomlinson has not recovered from his spell in hospital and Joe Marston was otherwise detained, so we were short of the two Burton members also. Nevertheless, the eleven who did come along to the new

headquarters in Edmund Street had a very enjoyable night as apart from the official business which went off without any "hitch", we were entertained in his own amusing style by Ted Davey. His talk was "Why he liked Greyfriars". He maintained that Greyfriars was the best known of all fictional schools. The stories had more than the customary share of humour, Frank Richards' English was perfect and he thought could not be beaten. The various characterisation were, by reason of their contrasts, of the most interesting standards. Ted quoted Quelch, Prout and Dr. Looke, Mossoo and Capper amongst the masters - Wharton, Vernon Smith, Skinner, amongst the boys. I thought Ted was very fair when he said that, in his opinion, Bunter was definitely overdone, and you could have too much of Coker (I gather Ted preferred Coker's Aunt Judy to Coker). Stories which Ted compared with the Greyfriars Saga were Vachells "The Hill" and "The Red Flag" by Gunby Hadath. This was a fine talk and invoked quite a debate when he had finished. (Norman to the fore as usual in this sort of "battle").

The library raffle won again by Madge Corbett. As expected Norman's balance sheet was very



good and without any dissent, he was again chosen treasurer. As is obvious, the writer of these notes was again unanimously re-elected as secretary. Beryl Porter entered her next year as librarian and gave a good report of the financial state of our library. The important office of chairman was another unanimous decision. On the proposal of myself and seconded by Beryl, the popular choice was Norman Gregory. Madge becomes vice-chairman.

This was a night of congratulations. Apart from those awarded the elected office, we had to congratulate Tom Porter on his appointment to the Rowby Regis town council and also Ted Davey in securing a more important post, though this means Ted leaving Birmingham for Coventry. A resolution was passed that to accommodate at least four of the founder members we change our meeting from Monday to the last Tuesday in each month, starting from the July Meeting. The voting was ten to one for, so the Secretary has the matter in hand to arrange with the Hope and Anchor people.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 5th June, 1960

The number present was somewhat less than usual, due to the fact that the meeting was unavoidably held on Whit Sunday. Amongst the absent was our energetic secretary, Norman Fragnell, but we were most pleased to receive a telephone call from him during the evening from Brighton, where he is on holiday.

Despite our depleted numbers, a most enjoyable meeting was soon in full swing, opening with the financial report, and a general discussion on the club matters brought to our notice by the chairman. We were very interested in the "Who's Who" - a really capital production, indispensable to all club members and sections.

After refreshments came a series of quizzes, both original and entertaining, and not unduly difficult. The first, a Hamilton quiz, submitted by Don Webster, was won by Frank Unwin, and this was followed by two devised by the latter. The first, which was in the nature of a memory test, was won by Don Webster, and the second found a worthy winner in Pat Laffey. These quizzes certainly keep us on our toes, and are a most enjoyable feature of the monthly get-togethers - our main complaint is that the time passes all too quickly, making us look forward to the next meeting with eagerness. This will be held on 10th July next, at 6.30 p.m. when we hope to see our regulars back in full force, fresh from their holidays and ready for the fray.

FRANK CASE

AUSTRALIA

Meeting held 9th June, 1960

We were all pleased to welcome back Arnold Keena, who had been absent from the meetings for some time. We learned with regret that Mr. M. McGrath had resigned owing to heavy business commitments, and the members expressed their appreciation of his generous donation to club funds and hope it will be possible for him to rejoin the club when things are a little easier.

The chairman reported that the club magazine is selling well, both here and overseas, and members were pleased with the telegram of congratulations received from our old friend in New Zealand, Jack Murtagh. We are looking forward to your contribution in the next issue, Jack.

Stan Nicholls was congratulated on his appearances on T.V. in a weekly children's play, and we were interested to learn that he is now writing some of the scripts as well as acting in them.

A new postal member, Mr. A. V. Holland of Wellington, 250 miles west of Sydney,

has been added to our ranks and we offer a warm welcome to this long-distance member: whose enthusiasm is strong enough to bridge the miles between.

Mr. Holland is interested in blue Gems, Populars and Comics, and vintage copies of Punch and would be pleased to hear from anyone who shares his interests. His address is 68, Thornton Street, Wellington, N.S.W.

The Blake section discussed the current Martin Thomas - C.D. controversy. After an interesting debate, members re-affirmed their support of Blakiana and Eric Fayne's official stand as stated in the May C.D.

Letters from overseas were then passed around, and members were able to enjoy a leisurely news coverage from our good friends Ron Hodgson, Don Webster, Frank Unwin and Harry Broster, with the always interesting "Foghorn" and "News Letter" to give us those excellent bits of gossip.

Our heartiest congratulations to Eric Fayne for the really excellent production of the recently-published Who's Who, which we find invaluable for reference out here, and particularly handy in its new format.

Cheerio, folks. I hope to be sending all the news from "Down Under" again next month. Our next meeting, July 15th.

B. PATE - Secretary

NORTHERN

11th June, 1960 at 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds.

The weather was again kind to us for the meeting at which we were pleased to welcome our newest recruit, Jack Ferrar of Halifax.

Our thanks to Bill Thurbon of Cambridge for another collectors' item he so generously gave to the Club Library. This time a bound volume of Henty Union Jacks.

Also our congratulations to Geoff and Mrs. Wilde on the arrival of their son on Whit Saturday.

Final details were arranged for the visit to Manchester on the 26th June, where we are to meet our Manchester members and also some of the Merseyside section.

The second instalment of "The Boy without a Name" was read by J. Breeze Bentley who carried on the good work started by Geoff Wilde.

Bill Williamson, the winner of the quiz last month, gave us another - this time 12 questions with a possible total of 36 points. Frank Hancock and Jack Wood tied with 25 points each, and Jack promised to do the necessary for next month.

R. HODGSON - Secretary

STOP PRESS: The Northern Section celebrated its 10th Anniversary by a grand get-together of old and new members on Sunday, June 26th. This was held in the New Millgate Hotel, Manchester, and two dozen members met for lunch at 1 p.m. After lunch, a meeting lasting 2½ hours was held in the T.V. lounge of the hotel, which had been booked for the occasion. Tea followed the meeting at 5 p.m. A full report on the "do" will be given next month.

LONDON

Meeting held Sunday, 19th June, 1960

Although some of the prominent members, including Len Packman (Chairman), Ben Whiter (Secretary), and Eric Fayne were on holiday, a goodly crowd enjoyed a merry meeting at Reuben Godsave's home at Leytonstone. Vice-chairman Frank Lay took the chair and yours truly acted as secretary. After the usual preliminaries, the meeting got off to a good start with George Sewell's choice of Desert Island Books, which proved to be all stories by Frank Richards.

Roger Jenkins then gave an excellent impromptu talk on the different aspects of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, which was followed by a discussion which proved very interesting.

To celebrate his first meeting since his stay in hospital, Don Webster gave a novel storyette of his own composition, following on with 17 questions based on it. Eric Lawrence came first with George Sewell second.

I was then lucky enough to get two of the names from Eric Lawrence's letter quiz, with Reuben Godsave, Don Webster and George Sewell each guessing one.

The Magnet catalogue, duly completed and brought along by the Rev. Dockery, was shown round, and several readers purchased their copies. After a fine tea-break, including raspberries from Reuben's garden, the meeting was treated to a reading by your humble (lucky people) taken from Magnet No. 1328 entitled "Bunter, the Ventriloquist."

As usual, the time went all too quickly and before Billy Bunter could have said "Jam Tart" we were all looking forward to the next meeting which will be at Surbiton.

BOB WHITER - Acting Secretary.

Yours Sincerely

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG

HOW I SEE OTHER FELLOWS!

By Frank Nugent.



PERCY BOLSOVER.

JOHN WERNHAM (Midstone). As a great admirer of Macdeald's work in the Gem I was intrigued to see that you had duplicated him for your June cover. Pity you had no room for the other half of the illustration which is a really excellent drawing of "Paris from the Air". Mac's work varied a good deal, but it was always interesting to watch his style develop over the years. Do you remember Cousin Ethel playing cricket in early days and the same incident and story in the re-print days? The young lady in a long skirt, delicately poised to make a catch in about 1913, and the curvaceous creature in a gym slip covering ground to get that ball! Always provided me with a good laugh. I have often thought I would like to make up a scrap book of Mac's drawings. What do you think?

GERALD ALLISON (Ilkley). The Who's Who is an excellent job. I gave you credit for a bit of witticism which I don't think you deserved. That spectral Owl looming through the front cover, and hooting "Who's Who? Who's Who?" all round the border struck me as deliciously funny. But on opening the first page it turned out to be Frank Lay's trade mark of something! Or was it done on purpose? (We should love to claim credit for the witticism but alas, we must understudy George Washington.)
ED.

GREAT OFFER OF FREE FOOTBALLS TO READERS SEE PAGE 7.

1/2 COMIC-LIFE



VERA NICHOLLS (Leeds). The Digest gets more interesting every month. I agree with your correspondent who says that sentimentality is nothing to be ashamed of. Instead, we get far too much brutality today.

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds). Mr. Lawrence (June issue) is quite right, of course. I suppose I felt instinctively that the Secret Seven would avoid action against the absent Head, but Frank Richards explains that they were left no choice in the matter; and Prout had clearly moved some of his belongings into the study. Either Smithy's memory had misled him along the same lines or there was a slip in Tom Redwing's reporting.

H. CHAPMAN (Barton-on-Umber) Did E. S. Brooks write under the name of Reginald Browne during the war? I read a story by that author, published by Swan, which was the same, word for word, as one by E.S.B. in Nelson Lee, March 1931, called "Capper's Captured Caps." At what date did St. Frank's change from Etons to ordinary clothing? In all my Lees I am not able to find the date on which Willy Handforth made his appearance at St. Frank's.
(Can any Lee enthusiast oblige?)
ED.)

TOM DOBSON (Brighton, Australia). I have just obtained No. 1 of the Penny Popular, 1912. Would this be the first series? Can you recall if the Penny Pop ever had any Double Numbers? I cannot remember seeing one advertised. (The very first Penny Pop was dated October 11th, 1912. The only double number in the history of the paper was at Christmas, 1917. ED.)

S. GORDON SWAN (Western Australia). As an old Sexton Blake fan but a new subscriber to the Digest, I wish to commend you and all those responsible for the quality and material embodied in this periodical which, for me, fills a long-felt want. As a newcomer, I approach with some diffidence the suggestion that, in the list of titles and authors of the S.B.L. from No. 1, there may have been one or two slips, possibly misprints. No. 5 "Midst Balkan Perils" is credited to E. S. Brooks. Now if the title itself did not suggest W. Murray Graydon, the name of the chief character, Laban Creed, certainly would do so, for he wrote several later tales about this criminal. Another.

No. 36, "Perils of Petrograd" said to be by A. Murray, was, I am sure, by Graydon. I remember the unmistakable style of the author very well. Another point, which puzzles me is that, while the majority of the Plummer and Dexter stories are credited to J. W. Bobin, No. 24 "The Man with the Green Eyes" is said to be by N. Goddard. This is another story which always seemed to me to be in the authentic style of the creator of Plummer (who I always thought was Lewis Carlton, but who, apparently, was J. W. Bobin). If the author's names are their real ones, who, then, was N. Goddard? (Passed to you, Blakiana! In fact, by a coincidence, in this month's Blakiana, Mr. Webb sheds a light on Mr. Swan's first query.) ED.

BOB WHITER (Wood Green). Thought the last Digest better than ever - but may I be so bold? Is the D'Arcy picture in the cover heading by Reynolds? I don't think so. Might I suggest Blake? Compare it with the D'Arcy drawings in Holiday Annual 1920 by Warwick Reynolds. Only my hunch!

(The two schoolboys used to head our June cover, and this month heading Hamiltoniana, featured on the Gem cover for a long time in White Cover days, and were first introduced at a time when Warwick Reynolds was exclusively illustrating the Gem. It was for this reason that we decided that Reynolds had drawn them. They are certainly not Macdonald's work, and we ourselves, think them too good for Blake. We still have a feeling that they are Reynold's work, but Bob has an uncanny artistic perception, and may well be right. Is it possible for any reader to let us know for certain? ED.)

MARTIN THOMAS (London). Mr. Story's letter in Mailbag 454 struck me as a very fair and reasoned analysis of the recent New Order controversy. But even he makes an astonishing implication - that I suggested abolishing discussions of the Old Order Blake periodicals! Such an absurd suggestion never even crossed my mind, and I begin to wonder if any of Blakiana's spokesmen and spokeswomen have read what I've actually written on the subject. Throughout I have appealed for a complete Blake Circle as opposed to a segment - and the New Order alone, like the Old Order alone, would represent only a segment of the Blake tradition. I challenge anyone to quote a single sentence in which I have suggested or even implied that discussion on the old Blake should not be retained.

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