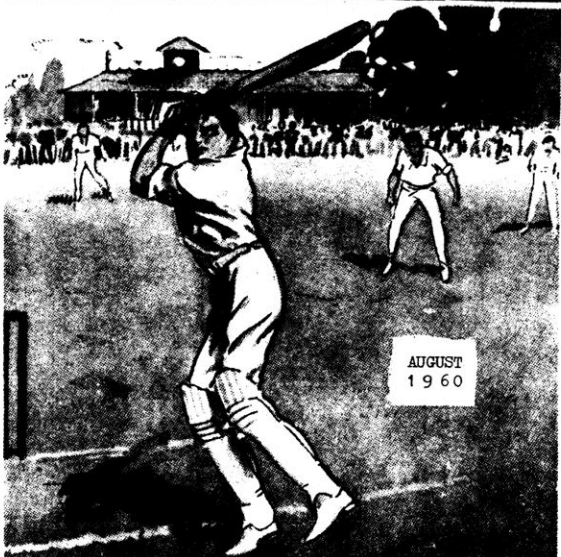


164
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AUGUST
1960

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The Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

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Price 1s. 6d.

AUGUST, 1960

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,
Grove Road,
Surbiton, Surrey.

* * * *

From the Editor's Chair

MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD. Edinburgh is the first great town in the country to have its Museum of Childhood. This is not a children's museum, it is about children, but for adults. It is a collector's paradise.

Digest reader, Mr. E. Thomson, wrote us recently as follows:

"The Museum of Childhood is really a wonderful place. Councillor Murray founded it several years ago, and it contains all the toys of childhood - spinning tops, cigarette cards, dolls' houses, dolls' furniture, toys from all the countries in the world, some of them dating back 200 years. There is a section of Old Boys' Books, containing Magnet No. 1, Greyfriars Heralds, S.O.L's, Jack Harkaways, Victorian Bloods, Triumphs, Hotspurs, etc.

Councillor Murray has now been in touch with this magazine, and a copy of Collector Digest will now go each month into the Museum. He writes: "I enclose a copy of the Museum Guide, and I will send a list of 'Juveniles' when it is reasonably up-to-date. You will notice some 'properties'. A No. 1 Magnet, and what proved far more difficult to get a No. 1 Eagle. There are some mortifying absences, of course - no Rainbow, no Comic Cuts..... This is, I believe, the first museum to put these papers on permanent display. I would particularly esteem it a favour if you could - by any means - complete a full collection of your Digests for the Edinburgh Public Libraries. I have been on your trail for some time, but lost track of the only man who knew anything about you. My badly documented treasures were a particularly sore point with me, and it must have been pure mental telepathy that brought Mr. Thomson in."

We feel honoured that the Digest is to take its place in this unique museum in Edinburgh. The attention of readers is drawn to the advertisement for early copies of the Digest, to be found in another page. We are indebted to reader Thomson for putting Councillor Murray in touch with us. We shall hope to publish reports on the progress of the museum from time to time.

THE CUP CONTEST. We are now in the 4th year of the Rowley Greyfriars Cup Contest. Each of the past three years has been extremely successful, and, so far, the names of three different branches of the Club appear on the Cup - a most satisfying result. This does not mean that the rules of the Contest, every year, have been beyond criticism. On each of the three past occasions there have been certain ambiguities and some vagueness in the rules, which have led to last-minute quandaries in the clubs.

This year, competitors are required to supply three short stories, one of which must

feature Sexton Blake. Rule 4 says: "No specified number of pages to each story, but magazine not to exceed 20 pages." Presumably, this means that entries of less than 20 full pages will not be penalised.

In any case, the man who undertakes the task of editing the complete entry, will have a big headache. As we see it, he must decide on his three writers - and allocate to each a limited number of words. If he accepts his stories without previous planning, he is likely to find himself in Queer Street.

To possible writers we suggest that they do not make promises unless they are certain they can carry them out. A promise which is not kept is worse than nothing at all. Good luck to all our clubs - may the best team win.

We understand that Mr. G. R. Samways has kindly agreed to act as judge of this year's Contest.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

WANTED: GEMS 313, 315, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322, 328, 331, 332, 333, 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 385, 387, 392, 457, 459, 493, 773, 935, 946, 948, 950, 951, 953, 954, 956, 964, 967, 968, 970, 976, 977, 979, 980, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 138, 141, 195, 295, 238, 277, 318, 319, 325, 344, 345, 346, 353, 357, 358, 386, 389, 400, 411, 417, 347, 388, 469, 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, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 370, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 466, 474. ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

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, 469-88, 469, 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.I.

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.

WOULD COLLECTORS with copies of Popular, Gem, U.J., B.F. Libs, Schoolgirls Own Library, kindly help me with data for my catalogues. All letters answered. A. J. SOUTHWAY, P.O. BOX 4, BEACONSFIELD, CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

WANTED to complete set. S.O.L. 58. Also Boys Friend Green 'Un - 762, 764, 780, 1042, 1257, 1264, 1294 to 1298. Nelson Lee Old Series - most numbers before 129. TOM PORTER, OLD FIELDS, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

WANTED: Union Jacks 620, 641, 646, 651, 655, 662, 668, 673, 677, 684, 689, 698, 711, 747, 767, 796, 812, 814, 838, 842, 844, 847, 848, 858, 860, 864, 868, 869, 890, 892, 894, 897, 916, 919, 927, 933, 937, 942, 966, 983, 985, 988, 996, 1278, 1279, 1280, 1281, 1286, 1269, 1290, 1299, 1300, 1301, 1302, 1305, 1309, 1312, 1315, 1321, 1322, 1323, 1329, 1333, 1335, 1338, 1348, 1354, 1357, 1370, 1372, 1373, 1377, 1389, 1392, 1395, 1397, 1399, 1400, 1402, 1404, 1406, 1411, 1412, 1416, 1420, 1428, 1442, 1466, 1472, 1476, 1480, 1484, 1486, 1493, 1499, 1500, 1502, 1504, 1505, 1507, 1510, 1512, 1513, 1515, 1519, 1524, 1526, 1528, 1529, 1530, 1531. R. W. STORT, 70, BERWICK AVENUE, TORONTO, 7.

OFFERS: S.O.L. 181, 336, 339, 342, 345, 372, 375, 378, 381, 384, 405. WANTED URGENTLY American Film Magazines 1911 to 1929. T. JOHNSON, 18 RABY PARK ROAD, NESTON, WIRRAL, CHESHIRE.

THIS MONTH'S COVERBy Robert Blythe

The series, of which the illustration on our cover this month is a part, concerns the arrival of Terry Dodd, an Australian, in The Remove. It is a cricketing series for Terry is a first class player.

He arrives from Australia with instructions from his father to devote himself to his studies and under no circumstances to play cricket. In this his father has my sympathies, for Terry is one of those characters who seem to hibernate during the winter months and only come to life at the beginning of the cricket season.

This story, with the rather melodramatic title, tells how he first plays with his father's consent. As a result, he is chosen to play for a local team against a county side, where he proceeds to make them the County, look very small beer indeed. Stemming from this, in devious ways, he is chosen by England's selectors to play for England against Australia in the current Test Match. (I can just imagine England's selectors doing this!) Needless to say, he covers himself with glory and his fellow Australians with confusion.

There had to be a certain amount of skulduggery to enable Nelson Lee to do his stuff. This is provided by a covey of furtive Burmese whose sole object in life, it seems, is to brand Terry with the Sign of the Twin Stars on his 15th birthday. Why this was necessary I'm not quite sure. It had something to do with his father marrying a Burmese pin-up in his hectic youth. (She died of a snake-bite a couple of weeks later, so the proprieties are observed). However, I imagine it must have been quite expensive for a collection of Burmese to travel, first to Australia, and then to England, searching for his son.

This is rather an obscure series and one that is hardly ever mentioned. As a matter of fact, this series is so seldom mentioned that a few years ago, when I wrote an article for the Annual entitled "How They Arrived", I forgot to mention Terry Dodd at all! For those who like cricket it's well worth reading, for Brooks was always a master at describing sporting events, and this series is certainly no exception.

OVER 1000 ITEMS OF HAMILTONIANA. The Hamiltonian section of the London O.B.B.C. Library has over a thousand different items relating to Greyfriars, Rookwood, and St. Jim's, but like *Oliver Twist*, we are asking for more. Why should this be so, you may ask. We are not just greedy, but we have over 80 borrowers on our books, and more names are added each month. Some of our oldest members have nearly read their way through our stock, whilst other members who have collections of their own find it difficult to discover in stock a story they have not read before. So we wish to expand even more. If you are thinking of disposing of any Magnets or Gems prior to 1931, or Schoolboys' Owns prior to 1935, will you please give the library a thought? We pay top prices for books in reasonably good condition, and you will also have the satisfaction of knowing that the books you sell us will not lie dormant for years in a private collection, but will be giving pleasure to scores of readers for many years. Please write to:
ROGER JENKINS, "THE FIRS," EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

SALES OR EXCHANGE: Holiday Annuals 1923, 1926, 1928. Lees 333, 335, Schoolboy's Own 18
WANTED: Monsters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6; Lees 384, 389, 397, 457, 459, 470, 545, 551. 2nd new 125, 141, 142, 144-146; Schoolboy's Owns 169, 170, 198, 206, 226, 228, 230, 234, 236, 258, 268, 272, 317. THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST, 14.

YOU'RE ALL IN THIS, SO—



Come Into the Office, Boys—and Girls!

By W. O. G. Lofts

The American Billy Bunter! A fifteen year old New York boy is nearly 8 feet in height and weighs 25 stone 12 pounds. He takes size 35 in boots - and he is still growing!

A telegram which arrived before it was sent!

The Cat which wrecked a War-ship!

When did Frank Richards first write for the 'Magnet'?

Do the above items interest you? If so, it's more than likely that you were a reader of the 'Magnet' in the 1930s, when you probably read that very interesting editorial column entitled 'Come Into The Office Boys and Girls.'

Since the commencement of the 'Magnet' in early 1908, there have been quite a number of editorial title headings. There was 'My Readers Column' in 1912, changing in the same year to 'My Readers Page'. 'The Editors Chat' started sometime in the early 20s followed a little later by 'To and From Your Editor' - whilst probably the best and most popular Editorial of them all, and the subject of my article commenced in 'Magnet' No. 1092, January 19th, 1929. The 'Girls' was actually added later in issue No. 1416, April 16th, 1935, when girl readers had complained at being left out of the 'office'.

Now strange as it may seem, this editorial column was not conducted by the chief editor - Mr. C.M. Down. He was far too busy having several Companion papers and Libraries under his control, apart from the yearly Annuals. This column was not even written by

the chief sub-editor Mr. Hedley O'Mant, who, though being responsible for its inclusion in the pages of the 'Magnet' each week, only subbed the written copy, and included a short piece either at the beginning or the end of the chat giving details of the following Greyfriars story to appear a week hence. The man who originated the idea for such a column at the suggestion of Mr. O'Mant was Mr. E. L. McKeag, who, although a member of the Amalgamated Press staff, had no connection with the 'Magnet' office at all! Mr. McKeag, whom I know personally, was also a most prolific boys' and girls' story writer - more of which I will reveal later.

Unfortunately, it is perfectly true that in the early days of the 'Magnet' under the editorship of H. A. Hinton, many of the letters appearing on the reader's page were fictitious. Some were actually penned by the editor himself, who firmly believed that such type of epistles were bound to raise interest amongst readers, and perhaps increase the circulation figures! Scurrilous letters accusing the editor of evading war service were also made up by the editor, who served in the Coldstream Guards a little later as a Captain, whilst the letters alleged to have come from the Presidents of the anti-Magnet leagues, whose one aim in life was to stop other boys from buying the dear old 'Magnet' each week, were again only created in the vivid imagination of the editor.

With the 'Come into the Office Boys and Girls' column, however, there is certainly a different story to tell, as every letter published in its columns was from a genuine reader. Several thousand letters were received weekly from readers in all parts of the world, and there is no doubt that this weekly feature was very popular indeed, with readers everywhere.

All letters received were carefully sorted out by the office staff and many were replied to promptly. The most interesting and those most likely to be used for publication were handed to Mr. McKeag for answering. 'Often I used to get readers letters on subjects which I had never heard of before' Mr. McKeag confessed to me. "I clearly remember one such query from an overseas reader on Snake-Stones."

The keen enthusiast of 'Come into the Office Boys and Girls' feature may have noted that many of the interesting parts, questions, queries, and facts were of a nautical nature. There was a good reason for this, as in this field Mr. McKeag was in his element, having served in the Royal Navy as a full Lieutenant in both world wars, and having also travelled round the world many times, and visiting in the course of this many foreign lands, he obviously had a vast general knowledge on all world subjects. Therefore his technical knowledge

was used to good advantage.

Every consecutive issue of the editorial was written entirely by Mr. McKeag right up to 'Magnet' 1446 in 1937, a grand total of 354 issues - an achievement which any author could feel proud of. Shortly after the 1935 period however, and owing to the extra long Greyfriars stories this feature had to be cut down a great deal in size. Such was the pressure on space some weeks that the feature did not appear at all. Mainly owing to this, and finding then that writing such an editorial was not all that remunerative, Mr. McKeag gave up writing this very fine feature. The 'Come into the Office Boys and Girls' column however, continued right up to the last 'Magnet' issued in 1940, but at the time of writing I do not know the identity of the author who wrote the column.

As stated earlier, Mr. E. L. McKeag, was a juvenile story writer in his own right, having written hundreds of stories for various papers and different firms. I feel sure then that my brief notes of his writing career will be of great interest to all readers.

Mr. McKeag was born at Newcastle though he can claim to be partly Irish on his father's side. At the age of 16 he joined the Merchant Navy where he travelled round the world several times. Returning to England during the first world war in 1916 he then joined the Royal Navy as a Midshipman rising in rank to a full Lieutenant. On his demobilisation in 1919 he became a newspaper reporter. When the Lloyds Newspaper Publishing firm brought out a new boys paper in 1921 entitled 'British Boy' - Mr. McKeag had his first boys story accepted and published. Under the editorship of Reginald Heber Poole, probably 'British Boy' is the scarcest of all boys papers. The only collector I know of who possesses a copy strangely enough lives at Newcastle!

Later Mr. E. L. McKeag wrote a great deal for the Aldine Publishing Co. under the editorship of the late Walter Light. Most of these stories were of a sea and naval nature. In 1923 he joined the staff on the girls papers at the Amalgamated Press under the editorship of R. T. Eves. Then, when the A.P. brought out the new girls paper 'Ruby', to combat the rival from Thompson's, 'Blue Bird', Mr. McKeag wrote his first girl's story as a stop-gap for an author who had not submitted his copy on time. This story was considered quite good and on the strength of this he was given more commissions. So he was ensured of a good living in this field in the future.

Numerous boys stories were also written by him for the 'Champion' and 'Triumph' under the pen-names of 'Pat Haynes' and 'Jack Maxwell' whilst many Colwyn Dane detective stories which appeared in the 'Champion' were also from his pen for many years under the pen-name of 'Mark

Grimshaw'. Colwyn Dane was actually a creation by E. R. Home-Gall who wrote the early stories, but they appeared anonymously.

A mine of information on the old authors of days gone by and a friend of many, Mr. McKeag was a personal friend of the late Gwyn Evans and was one of the six that attended his funeral in 1939 which has been related elsewhere. For the Nelson Lee enthusiasts, Mr. McKeag knew Harold May the popular editor of the Nelson Lee Library (1915-28) and was invited to his wedding in 1925. He also wrote some stories in the Nelson Lee Library but not of St. Franks.

In closing this article, I feel sure that all the old boys books enthusiasts everywhere will join with me in giving hearty thanks to Mr. E. L. McKeag for his work in juvenile literature, and especially for his writings in that grand 'Magnet' feature --

Come Into The Office Boys and Girls.

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WANTED Sexton Blake Libraries. 1st series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Union Jacks Nos. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 820, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.

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

Gentlemen! I am a beginner Collector among you, seeking the less expensive type of old weeklies and preferably of any date prior to 1929. Kindly offer me the following books, with covers on, pages complete, decent condition, stating dates, at reasonable prices - Rockets, Nuggets, Marvels, Plucks, Targets, Union Jacks, Chums, Pals, Scouts, Triumphs, Champions, Young Britains, Modern Boys, Thrillers, Sport and Adventures, Football and sports favs., Boys Magazines/ Realms, Friends, Cinemas, Heralds, Leaders or other similar weeklies. (No Magnets, Gems or Annuals).

JOHN KING, 7 WHITE HART LANE, LONDON, N.22.

THE MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD at Edinburgh is seeking a complete run of this magazine. Copies are required from No. 1. If you can offer any runs of the magazine, please write to the Editor, COLLECTORS' DIGEST, indicating price required and details of condition.

continued from page 212.

The Bunter Annual comes along about September, and the same plump person will be having another run on Television this summer, from about the middle of July. All of which keeps me busy and cheerful, as I hope to continue for umpteen years to come.

Kindest regards and best wishes to all,

Always your sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS

That delightful message from our Grand Old Man gave a perfect start to a happy meeting.

Nelson Lee Column

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

With the holiday season in full swing, something light in mood is obviously the very thing. So here is another "Special" from the pen of Charles Churchill. Just the story to idle over in a spare hour or so.

FIVE-STARRED SINGLES OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

No. 4. "THE REMOVE TO THE RESCUE"

All Lee fans would agree that E. S. Brooks was an adept at writing stories with unusual plots and those with humour to the fore, but in "The Remove to the Rescue" (N.L. Old Series, No. 385 21/10/22) he combined both these qualities in a very entertaining yarn.

The "star" of this story is Phipps, "gentleman's gentleman" to Archie. Apart from the "Lagoon Island" series, in which we were told a little of Phipps' past, I think this was the only story in which we read anything of his private affairs.

In chapter one we find the pride of the Glenthornes in the Ancient House lobby, chatting of this and that with sundry Removites.

Suddenly three forms loom up out of the gloom and a loud voice exclaims 'Fathead! What's the good of doing that? I'll show you the way to kick it properly; just watch this!'

There is the sound of a boot meeting a football. The next second something comes hurtling with fearful force into the lobby. It catches Archie beautifully under the chin and he sits down violently.

The culprit is Handforth, and to Archie's indignation, instead of apologising he blames Archie for being in the way.

Archie, bespattered with mud, and bewailing the fact that Phipps is out, suddenly brightens up as brisk footsteps sound from the Triangle. To his amazement his valet hastens in and ignoring his young master, hurries along the passage. Archie, staggered, noticed that Phipps had a scared look in his eyes, his face was white, and that he gave a quick furtive glance over his shoulder.

Archie dashes to his study and rings for Phipps, but the latter only appears after many rings of the bell. He still seems shaken and uneasy, but refuses all Archie's pleas for enlightenment, claiming that he is merely out of sorts.

Later, rather a common looking female arrives in the Triangle, giving the name of Miss Arabella Pringle and enquires for Phipps. The

..... juniors are amazed when she belabours Handy with her umbrella, because he innocently enquires whether she is Phipps' aunt. She then states that Phipps had deserted her eight years earlier in Australia. The unfortunate valet then appears in the Ancient House doorway and, on sighting Miss Pringle, beats a hasty retreat. She, denouncing him as a scoundrel gives chase and finally all finish up in Archie's study. A terrific row ensues, with Miss Pringle accusing Phipps of having proposed to her and jilted her. She creates such a scene, shouting, that she will insist on damages that the noise brings Nelson Lee on the scene. He soon succeeds in "persuading" the irate Miss Pringle to leave the premises; the crowd disperses and Phipps is left to the tender mercies of Archie.

Phipps, seeing that Archie is upset and worried, tells him that in 1914, while in Sydney, he was invited to a party given by Arabella's father. To his embarrassment, she became very gushing and clung to him all the evening. Bored stiff, he became reckless and took too much wine, with the result that he became fuddled. He had no clear recollection of what then occurred, but was told later, to his horror, that he had proposed to Arabella who had accepted. After some days, during which wedding arrangements were started, he managed to leave Sydney, escaping quietly by ship and assumed on arrival in England that he had heard the last of the matter. Now, eight years after, Arabella had turned up, stating that she would force him to marry her or claim heavy damages. Phipps assures Archie that he had no recollection of ever proposing and felt certain his drinks had been tampered with in order to make him confused and so fall a victim to Arabella's wiles.

Arabella's brother, Jim, turns up and accosts Phipps in the Triangle - proceeds to bully and threaten him. The argument gets heated, Pringle knocks Phipps down just as Handforth & Co. arrive on the scene with other Removites. The juniors swarm to the attack, grab Pringle, frog-march him around the Triangle and end up by tossing him into the fountain.

Next day, Archie awakes and finds, to his consternation, that Phipps has departed in the night, leaving a note stating that it is best in the circumstances for him to beat a strategic retreat for fear of bringing more trouble upon Archie. When the latter arrives downstairs he is further horrified to learn that the Head's study has been broken into during the night and that £150 is missing. Furthermore a handkerchief is found nearby with Phipps' name on it. In view of the valet's flight, things look black against him. The police are called in and then it is learned that Phipps is at Glenthorpe Manor preparing to leave on the first train for London. Before he can get away, however, he is arrested and over £150 in notes found on him. Archie refuses

.....

to believe in his guilt.

Phipps arrested! And the money found on him! Archie is staggered, and while in the Triangle trying to think what to do, the Pringles arrive, searching for Phipps. More or less by accident, Archie notices that Jim's coat has had a small piece plucked out and remembers that a similar coloured strand had been found on the scene of the burglary. Archie takes the precious pair to his study and accuses Jim of the theft, whereupon Arabella loses her nerve and "blows the gaff." Jim, panic stricken, attacks Archie and succeeds in binding him up with his own torn up table-cloth. Then Jim and his sister hurriedly depart.

Nipper and Co., spotting this, dash to Archie's study to hear the news and find him helpless. On releasing him they hear the story and decide to give chase. Nipper takes Nelson Lee's racing car and loaded with juniors, races to Bellton station, arriving just as the train pulls out. They espy Pringle at a carriage window and then race on to Bannington and get there just as the London train is about to leave.

Arabella is looking out of a carriage, so the boys rush up, open the door, and drag Jim to the platform. Commotion! The guard and station master come on the scene, the police are fetched and all depart to the police station, where things are sorted out. Jim Pringle is found to have the stolen notes on him and so Phipps is exonerated and released. The notes in his possession were proved to be his own, as the stolen ones, luckily, had had the numbers on them noted by the bank when the Head withdrew them the previous day. Phipps expresses grateful thanks to the juniors for their efforts on his behalf. They all return to St. Frank's and the story ends thus -

"Your jacket, sir, is considerably ruffled," said Phipps. "I might also point out that the necktie does not match the shirt."

"No?" said Archie, startled. "Gadzooks! I thought it was rather a priceless combination, don't you know. But it only shows, old horse, how absolutely necessary it is for you to be constantly hovering about in the offing."

"Quite so, sir."

Phipps had become himself again!



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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.

The concluding instalment of Walter Webb's "Century-Makers" will appear next month. Individually, some instalments may have been more interesting than others, but I am quite sure you will all agree that Walter has done a fine job of work for which he deserves a hearty vote of thanks.

September Blakiana will, amongst other things, present an article by Keith Chapman on a Blake matter that has been in the minds of us for a very long time. Although very remote, there are just faint 'possibilities' arising from the article. As for what it is all about - you will know in September!

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

CENTURY-MAKERS
(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB

Instalment Seventeen

New Look

The Blake tree, a sturdy specimen of good old British oak, had weathered many a storm during its 61 years of life. Recent drastic pruning made necessary by troubled world affairs had shorn it of much of its heavy foliage, but its trunk was as substantial as ever and its vigorous roots cut deep into solid ground. But even the hardiest giant of the Forest will crash if its foundations be weakened, and the storm which lashed the Blake field in the summer of 1956 and continued through the autumn and winter months, substantially weakened those of the Blake tree to a perilous extent. It has to be recorded, with more than a little touch of irony, that the S.B.L., having survived two world wars through the loyalty and devotion of its subscribers, was almost killed off by the violent apathy of some of them towards the new look given to it by a new editor.

Now, with the subsiding of the tempest, the old oak has assumed its former erect stature, the mud thrown has hardened into something resembling healthy soil, the sparse foliage, like the surrounding grassland, looks fresher and greener than ever before. In short, relations between reader and editor are on the old cordial footing

once more. To the Blake newcomer, unaware of what led up to the controversy, some sort of explanation is due.

The axe began to fall amongst the old guard in March 1953; it descended heavily and in a wide arc. Casualties were heavy, survivors few. First to feel the impact was artist Eric Parker. E.R.P., as all his drawings were signed, began to do the S.B.L. covers regularly in 1930, and continued to do them without a break and unassisted by any other artist until that fateful month in 1953, a period of 23 years, easily beating Arthur Jones' unbroken run of 14 years in the period of 1915-29. Thereafter, E.R.P. did the covers only periodically, his last drawing appearing on the jacket of No. 320, in September 1954.

Those bold, sweeping outlines gave strength of character to the face of the Library; they who took over the task, good enough in their way, had not the ability to give to it more than a very ordinary look, certainly nothing to distinguish it from the rather weak and dissipated faces of other members of the same family. Indeed, looking through a shop window in those days, there was nothing in the appearance of the S.B.L. to differentiate it from its sister papers, and for several years it was a feminine rather than a masculine face which sought to attract attention amidst the sea of those of his contemporaries. Although the titles did give some indication of the reading matter, the definition between the covers of the Library and those of the purely romantic monthlies of the same size was not sufficiently clear to avoid the probability of errors in purchase being made, particularly as the words "The Sexton Blake Library" were now being printed in type smaller than they had ever been before. The extremely narrow margin dividing the format of the S.B.L. from the aforementioned romantics is particularly well illustrated on the cover of S.B.L. No. 347.

Outwardly, the Blake tree looked strong and healthy despite its leanness. From the outside looking in, there was no apparent need for change. But those on the inside with facilities for closer observation were able to discern serious inconsistencies which were badly hampering its development. Anxiety was rife when a new editor took over in November 1955 and realised that drastic measures taken immediately were necessary if a life which had survived the passage of 62 years and another which had triumphed since 1915 were to be saved. In his capacity as editor (132) W. HOWARD BAKER proceeded with his plans for the survival of his new project; then, as author, he began to carry them out. The axe was raised high in his hand at the end of the year and since the mark of its impact will herald the New Order and the demise of the old, it will be appropriate if we forestall the descent sufficiently long enough to append details of the statistics as they stood

in December 1955. Rex Hardinge had just pipped Anthony Parsons for the distinction of becoming the ninth author to subscribe 100 Blake novels. Details:-

Rex Hardinge (101); Anthony Parsons (99); John Hunter (54).

These three authors, who had formed the backbone of the Library for the last ten years, were all to suffer the impact when the axe descended early in 1956. Anthony Parsons stayed sufficiently long only to produce his 100th novel and then disappeared. As far as the S.B.L. is concerned, his total stands at 99, the single which netted him his century coming from an original story he wrote for a SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL. John Hunter was to extend his innings by two and then, like Parsons, declare it closed. Rex Hardinge, recalled later to submit two novels, seems to have created an unfavourable impression, for both efforts have caused some controversy, with the result that his future as a subscriber seems uncertain.

Other casualties included Walter Tyrer, John Drummond and Hugh Clevely, who we had come to look upon as regular contributors, and Stanton Hope and Warwick Jardine not quite so consistent in their appearances. The laying off of these eight writers and the sudden reversion to the American style of story-telling, with all-out action punctuated with crisp, forceful dialogue, brutal situations and several sex-sprinkled interludes, evoked sharp criticism which intensified when Blake was whisked unceremoniously from his snug apartments in Baker Street and deposited in luxurious offices in Berkeley Square. Worse, he was given a new look to match that of the new format of the Library; the thinning of his hair was arrested; beneath the deep black V of the new growth his thick eyebrows assumed a satanic slant, whilst the blue-grey eyes beneath, hitherto wont to view with somewhat detached interest the presence of the opposite sex, now had a more perspective gleam in them. Tinker, who had always had that particular gleam, was also given a little brushing up. A few more years, with experience added, was given unto him, plus an added responsibility which eventuated with the extension of the business. Its thriving was bound to necessitate additional staff, so a secretary, a receptionist and a typist were engaged.

First to arrive to fill the first position was Paula Dane, blonde and vivacious, whose face and figure were alike in their attractiveness to warrant a second and, often, third glance. She stepped on to the Blake stage a very frightened lady (S.B.L. No. 359) but, having regained her composure long since, is now both a very efficient and highly-regarded member of the firm. Marion Lang, younger, more slightly-built and dark, stepped breathlessly behind the reception

desk and even now finds difficulty in breathing evenly when her employer is around. No male heart-throb of cinema or T/V screen ever took away the breath of his most ardent fan in quite the same way as Sexton Blake took away Marion's. No nonsense about the third arrival, Miss Louise Pringle - who introduced mature level-headedness into what is now known as Sexton Blake Investigations and brews tea at the appointed times of such excellence as to be beyond reproach.

In recognising the need for drastic changes in the S.B.L. one could not help but feel regret at the passing of the old guard. Good writers all, they suffered perhaps from writing too much women's fiction. For that market a lot of sentimental foolishness was of more importance than the development of a powerful writing technique, and the old sickly romantic situations could be dug up again and again without the slightest fear that readers would get tired of them. Woman or girl, housewife or spinster, they came back for more. The gulf between that kind of romantic rubbish and the standard of detective fiction demanded by the S.B.L. was wide. Too wide, it seemed, for some of the old guard to bridge.

As far as I was concerned, it was the departure of the ninth author - Hilary King - which caused the greatest regret. The class and depth of writing in the first story he wrote for the S.B.L. - "Partners in Crime" - convinced me that here was an author whose inclusion in the ranks could not but strengthen materially its depleted forces. Certain incidents in this novel were retained in my memory long after I had read and forgotten those in stories published months afterwards. As for instance, that which occurred at the old disused well on Thetford Heath, in East Anglia, when the American crook and German spy, Herman Axel, arrived one dark night by lorry with a quantity of cement which he intended to drop down the well in order that it would mix with the water at the bottom and so embed and conceal the body of a man he had just murdered, unaware that Tinker had just descended and had at that very moment discovered the body. Unaware too, that Sexton Blake was at the top of the well ready to haul up his assistant at the given signal. The fight on the lip of the well between Blake and the American remains fresh in my memory as being one of the most thrilling incidents in the old order. I like, too, the author's portrayal of Tinker. Anthony Parsons and John Hunter were



LEON KES

apt to lay stress on that young man's weakness where girls were concerned, particularly red-headed ones; but here was Hilary King turning his mind away from feminine architecture to that of the more solidly enduring kind. It was as they were motoring into Lincoln by way of Newark, Tinker, driving at exhilarating speed, as was his wont, and somewhat to Blake's trepidation, stops the car just before they enter the city with the river Withan no great distance ahead. He has become entranced at the beauty of the cathedral on top of the hill in the clear morning sunshine, and pauses awhile to look at it in silent wonder. After the breathtaking interval he voices his approval, which Blake shares by agreeing that in his opinion it is the finest Church in England. And, although outside Lincoln there were those who would most probably have pressed home the claims of York and Canterbury, it made pleasant reading, for since the days of Teed, Graydon and Blair, there has been a general lack of interest apparent in the Blake writer to recognize and appreciate the many beauty spots in the land in which he lives and writes. Topography has been sacrificed for speed of narration and the results are by no means wholly satisfactory, for even in these days of high-powered action and slick writing, the class penmanship of an author of the Hilary King school will prevail.

AIRE

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Let the Blake author of today run into a literary traffic jam more often, get him to take stock of his surroundings, transfer them to paper, and the story will benefit materially by arousing keener interest amongst those who like to learn a little bit from their Blake reading. Many enjoy tearing along the Queen's Highway, but more still use the public footpath.

Getting back to the present, the New Look was now well in its stride, and the newcomers were about to go on parade.....

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ON AUTHORSHIP

Mr. S. Gordon Swan's perplexity (see Yours Sincerely, July) on the authorship problem is understandable, and one gets some inkling of the reason for the anonymity under which the stories were published in the old days when faced with a story obviously written by a certain author and yet credited to another whose style is in complete contrast to the originator's.

S.B.L. No. 5, "Midst Balkan Perils", was definitely written by W. Murray Graydon, and so was No. 36 "Perils of Petrograd". How E. S. Brooks and Andrew Murray came to appear in the official records as being the authors of the above can only be guessed at. If they received payment for the stories, one can only assume that there was an arrangement between them and Murray Graydon in which all three were satisfied participants in a financial agreement.

On the Plummer question one has to tread warily. One point, however, is quite clear. The originator of the character was neither Lewis Carlton, nor John W. Bobin, but Michael Storm, who is said to have died in 1910, two years after creating the character. Norman Goddard took over Plummer in 1910, and Lewis Carlton also wrote tales around him. An author named William Freeman wrote about him for "Pluck", I believe, and Arthur S. Hardy was responsible for one solitary story in "U.J." The theory that Carlton and Goddard may have worked together in collaboration on the stories between 1910-15 cannot be discounted - the literary style is uneven in some cases, though, on the whole, Goddard seems to have written the bulk of them.

John W. Bobin, who created Aubrey Dexter, took over Plummer when Goddard was killed in France during the first world war. Then Walter Shute (Walter Edwards) wrote one or two yarns and, finally, the character was passed on to G. H. Teed permanently. Now our popular contributor in the New Order S.B.L., Arthur Maclean makes at least the eighth author to pen his exploits.

And in answer to Mr. Swark's last query: Norman Goddard was the author's real name, though he was perhaps better known as "Mark Darran" a nom-de-plume he used quite often.

WALTER WEBB

ODDS AND ENDS

by Gerry Allison

"**STILL GOING STRONG**" On the occasion of the Northern Re-Union in Manchester, Frank Richards wrote....."I am very pleased indeed to send a word of greeting to the gathering of old friends; wishing them an excellent lunch, a merry meeting, and happy lives as long as my own! I am sure they will all be pleased to hear that the Old Boy keeps in remarkably good health for his time of life, enjoys the passing hours, and still looks forward with cheerful anticipation to the future! In fact my approaching 84th birthday has moved me to verse, after Tennyson:

What shall I be at ninety,
 In my cottage by the shore,
 If I find the world so jolly,
 When I'm only eighty-four?

Our old friend Bunter will be with us again about the end of August, in a new volume called "Bunter Keeps it Dark", which I had on T.V. some time ago in a potted form.



HAMILTONIANA



ECHO ANSWERS 'WHO?'

Who really drew the two schoolboys at the head of this page? That is the question.

Without giving a great deal of thought to the matter, we assumed that they were by Warwick Reynolds. But Bob Whiter, who has an acute artistic sense, was of the opinion that, though Reynolds might have drawn the Tom Merry sketch, the other one, of Gussy, was probably drawn by Blake.

Other readers have now come into the picture. Bill Lofts writes: "I feel certain that Bob Whiter is right and the Gussy drawing is by Blake. A Reynolds' Gussy had a much longer face - monocle without cord, as a rule - and always a suggestion of the mouth being slightly open."

Peter Walker comments: "I remember that when these pictures were first published, I always had the impression they were Macdonald's and close examination of the technique suggests they are, especially the drawing of Gussy. I am pretty certain they are not Reynolds'!"

George Sellars says: "I believe Bob Whiter's hunch is correct. I am certain it is not Reynolds' work."

The case rests.

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BUNTER, THE HYPNOTIST

Do you remember "Taplow" the angel-faced youth with the sly, Gioconda smile, whole made such a terrific impression in the earlier

Jimmy Edwards Chiselbury T.V. series? Peter Black, writing in the Daily Mail, commented that the "Whack-O" films were never so good after they lost Taplow and nothing truer was ever said. John Hall was the lad who played "Taplow."

The BBC obtained the services of John Hall for the new Bunter series, which commenced on T.V. on Saturday, 16th July. John Hall would make the ideal Skinner, as any Hamiltonian could have told them. Did John Hall play Skinner? He did not. He played Snoop - and did not have a word to say. It would be laughable were it not so infuriating. When will the BBC engage a casting director who knows his Greyfriars?

Frank Richards' latest playlet, "Bunter the Hypnotist" is good. It is well-written, less knock-about, and far more subtle than many of the series have been. Gerald Campion gave a delightful performance of the fat boy who thought he had mastered the art of hypnotism. With competent support, there would have been a smashing climax as Quelch, trying to humour the youth he feared to be suffering from mental aberration, slowly realised that Bunter imagined himself as a mesmerist. That, obviously was what the author intended.

But the actor who played Quelch was miscast. His Remove master was far too fluffy and rabbit-like, and in the final scene in the form-room he was inept. He let down the playlet - and the smash-climax was lost. The youngsters will have loved it all - but Hamiltonians may well have gnashed their teeth. It was no fault of the author - or of Billy Bunter.

Presentation was helped by one or two stock shots of a number of boys walking in their school quad.

The Famous Five were portrayed by a new crop of schoolboy actors, though it seems a pity that it was necessary to make yet another change. They did quite well in their small parts.

But, I personally, will never forgive the BBC for the waste of John Hall.

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ADVANCE GOOD NEWS

Present at the Surbiton meeting of the London O.B.B.C. were the eminent stage, film and T.V. stars - Miss Bernadette Milnes and Mr. Michael Anthony, who are directors of City Stage Productions. Also present was Mr. Michael McLoughlin, the author of the two Billy Bunter plays which have been presented on the London stage. They gave the glad news that a new Billy Bunter play will once again brighten the West End landscape next Christmas season. It is hoped that the show will be staged at the Victoria Palace, but the Digest will give you all the

news about this welcome event in due course.

Mr. Twyman, late editor of Union Jack, who was also an honoured guest at the meeting, welcomed the announcement, and passed the opinion that, ere long, Billy Bunter would be of the status of Peter Pan, as Christmas entertainment, and would merit evening as well as matinee presentation.

It looks as though Billy Bunter may be having fun and games on a stolen holiday in Switzerland this year - so get your skis ready. We promise you a whirlwind swoop of laughter on the bob-sleigh run.

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THE MAGNET LIST

We draw our readers' attention to a little booklet which has just been prepared containing the titles of every Magnet story from first to last. This list, bound in a pleasing orange cover, is available for the low price of 2/-, and it is a "must" for every Hamiltonian. While copies last, you can obtain one if you write to Robert Blythe, whose address is 2 Oxford Place, Press Road, Neasden, N.W.10. Don't forget to enclose your P.O. and allow for postage.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

Bunter had cut off, or had been cut off at the exchange. Mr. Quelch stood with the receiver in his hand and an expression on his face that would have put his Form on their very best behaviour, had they seen it. For some minutes, the Remove master was at a loss. Only one thing could have comforted him - Bunter and a cane, in juxtaposition. And Bunter was far away.

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"Come on!" said Coker briskly. "We can get lunch at that hotel."

Potter and Greene smiled. Coker, after all, had his agreeable ways. He had plenty of money, and a readiness to spend it. He never expected Potter and Greene to "part". His comrades had been about to fall upon him, and smite him hip and thigh. They were glad now that they hadn't.

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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. If the Editor finds it suitable for publication, you will receive a book prize.

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. 41. "LET ME HAVE MEN ABOUT ME THAT ARE FAT."

So said Julius Caesar to Mark Antony, according to William Shakespeare. So, perhaps, said the Editor of the Companion Papers to Charles Hamilton in 1915.

There is no question but that the great success of Billy Bunter led to his duplication at the other Hamilton schools, though whether it was a wise policy is open to some mild doubt. The duplication of outstanding popular characters gave a bewildering impression of plagiarism, and, at the same time, an undeserved sense of sameness about the three main schools. Undeserved, because fundamentally there was a wide difference between Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood. Were it not so, the degree of popularity won by each school would be exactly the same - but such is far from being the case.

The difference in the schools is evidence of the skill of the common author and creator, and I think it even possible that St. Jim's and Rookwood suffered from being landed with prototypes from Greyfriars.

Fatty Wynn was, of course, one apart. He was the first of the fat boys, a brightly-etched character, poles apart from Billy Bunter. In the blue Gem and in the 1939 Gem he was delightfully presented - and his neglect in the interim was due to the prominence given to the Bunter type. He must have been an odd reader who did not feel affection for Fatty Wynn.

When "Billy Bunter's Weekly" was presented in the Popular, it was described as being edited by Billy Bunter and "his four fat subs" which was something of a psychological error, for Fatty Wynn, apart from appetite, had nothing in common with the other fat boys. An editorial blunder, undermining the careful character work which the author was putting into his stories.

There was, of course, more than a superficial resemblance between



"BAGGY HAS A
FIVER ..."

An illustration from the Gem
issue of October 5, 1929

Billy Bunter, Trimble and Tubby Muffin. It is more than likely that, cashing in on Bunter's popularity, the editor intended the other schools to have their Bunters. But, our author being what he was, matters did not turn out exactly that way. There was a considerable difference between Bunter and his copies. Only with the substitute writers, with their understandably more slapdash scratching at the characters, did Bunter, Trimble and Muffin seem ejected from the same mould.

I have always loved Billy Bunter, but I have never liked Trimble. I always thought him rather a blot on the Gem.

Trimble was not another Bunter. Bunter was the type of fellow who was unpleasant to know but delightful to read about. Trimble, somehow, was not even pleasant to read about.

Nowhere is the difference more clearly shown than in the Gem's "Too Good for St. Jim's" series. Trimble, sly and loathesome, hit on the idea of becoming smug and sanctimonious, a quirk entirely in character. "Good Trimble" became a thorn in the flesh to Tom Merry and Co., and stirred up much trouble. It was a brilliant series, and, paradoxically, enough, in view of my previous comments on Baggy, one of the Gem's most outstanding.

Later, in the Magnet, an attempt was made to feature Bunter in the same role. It was not nearly so successful - because Bunter was not Trimble.

Tubby Muffin was much more lightly sketched than either Bunter or Trimble. He was neither one nor the other, though there were similarities. Muffin had his own slight individuality.

It may be safe to assume that Trimble and Muffin were intended to be Bunters - and I think it fortunate that, the way things turned out, they were not Bunters. Had they been, I feel certain that Billy Bunter would never have become the national character who is so popular today.

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

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 39. BACK TO THE BEGINNING

TOM PORTER. The point about the early Hamilton school stories dealing with seniors is also borne out in "The Fifth Form at Fernley." Here Charles Hamilton wrote a fine tense story about seniors - and in this connection I wonder what might have been the future of the Magnet if "A Very Gallant Gentleman" had never been written.

"The Fifth Form at Fernley" is liked "Pledged to Silence" in another respect. It, too, would have been lengthened to several stories had it been written 12 years later. So, too, I think, would Nos. 1 and 2 of the Magnet. The story of Harry Wharton's

arrival and settling down at Greyfriars would not have been covered in just two Magnets if it had been written in later years.

The obsession for certain names can be explained by the fact that each of us, in some mysterious way, finds certain names touching a hidden chord within us. Milton, Keats and Shakespeare were constantly repeating names. So with Frank Richards in early days.

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No. 38, UP, THE SCHOOL (Continued from previous issue)

GEOFFREY WILDE. Whilst fully recognizing the justice of your remarks on the subject, I fear I am still one of the critics of Charles Hamilton's treatment of sport. For one thing, the insistence of the evenly-fought nature of every match. Both senior and junior matches with Highcliffe are regarded at Greyfriars as tough fixtures, though all the evidence points to Highcliffe as being decidedly weak.

Individual performances, especially in cricket, are even more absurd, particularly in the way a hat-trick or century is seen as a kind of single accomplishment like hitting a six or taking a middle stump. These remarkable bowlers who perform the hat-trick two or three times in a match might surely as well take four or five wickets in as many balls, just as a cricketer of Lancaster's quality might hit an innings of three or four hundred - feats which are known to school cricket. But no, they continue to provide the statutory contribution and no more, every time they play. Failures, both of teams and of individuals, only occur under dramatic circumstances, whereas in real life we all know there are those odd days when the better teams lose, or the star player just doesn't come off.

In spite of all this, I continue to enjoy the Hamilton tales enormously, because, as you so rightly say, they display to perfection the atmosphere and setting of the game and never fail in the characterisation of the players. I was surprised that you did not include the Da Costa series among your list of great cricket series in the Magnet - a series in which I find the psychology of the game most acutely observed.

BILL HUBBARD. I have read only two of the cricket series mentioned - the Lancaster series and the Vernon series - and I feel that, from the realistic and technical angles, the descriptions of the various games of cricket in these are not up to standard. In these descriptions it is obvious that the games are not "real" but are merely vehicles to enable the author to build up the effect that the hero of the story was an outstanding cricketer.

One has only to read the description of the game at Lords in "Schoolboy Grit" by Gunby Hadath to see my point. Here is a game that "lives" with characters other than the hero playing a considerable part. In fairness to Mr. Hamilton, however, I may say that I have a strong suspicion that in this particular yarn Mr. Hadath was describing a match that actually took place, a fact that gave him considerable advantage.

I cannot agree with you that a detailed description of a match can spoil the literary value of a story when it is in the hands of authors like P. G. Wodehouse and J. N. Pentelow. In their yarns, the details of the matches appear to help the development of the story and are an aid to characterisation, not only of the hero but of all the characters taking part in the game. You must remember that Cricket, with its sudden changes of fortune, is very curiously like Life, which probably explains its great hold over the minds of most British people.

GEORGE BELLARS. Mr. Hamilton's cricket stories were so good, so interesting, so exciting with a charming atmosphere that I could almost imagine I was there watching the game. How we all enjoyed Fatty Wynn or Inky doing the hat-trick, or Tom and Talbot, Wharton and Smithy, smiting the leather all over the field and out of it. Gussy must have made quite a few ducks in his time, but we all knew him for the great sportsman he was.

PETER HANGER. I have never found anything lacking in any of Frank Richards' descriptive writings, least of all in his cricket matches.

Sexton Blake Today

Tres potencias tras una
mujer y su secreto...



Apart from the English edition, which is on sale throughout the English-speaking world, the Sexton Blake Library is published in Spanish, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Portuguese, Danish and Hindustani. Our picture shows the Spanish edition of Peter Saxon's famous story "Last Days of Berlin."

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NEW SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES

JULY ISSUES

Reviewed by Walter Webb

MURDER COMES CALLING! (No. 455) Desmond Reid.

There was not much that Paula Dane knew about her Uncle Martin. It was only when he "died" and left her in sole possession of a large detached house situated in the middle of Dartmoor that Paula began to realize just what kind of a man he had been.

Uncle Martin was a crook, leader of a gang, who had committed a series of robberies. Doublecrossing them, Martin Braid had purchased the lonely house, and, with a single confederate, had gone to earth with his ill-gotten gains.

Devil's Tooth Lodge. A sinister sounding name, but aptly descriptive

of such a retreat, which acts in no way of a deterrent to Uncle Martin's old confederates, who arrive one by one to claim their share of the loot. Anthony Skene at his most bizarre hardly conceived such an oddly assorted group of crooks as these, but Blake, unusually bewildered at first, rallies to form an impassable barrier between them and their designs.

Atmosphere is cold and out-of-season; snow covers Dartmoor's craggy tors and rugged rocks, but the story is lively, the dialogue bright.

Rating Very Good

HURRICANE WARNING! (No. 456)

Richard Williams

Blake, Tinker and Paula arrive in Rabaul in New Britain, on the strength of an urgently written letter which Blake had received from a colleague of earlier days. Matt Conrad has stumbled on to something big enough to place his life in danger, and Blake,

not being the man to turn a deaf ear to any pleas from his friends, hurries to the spot. But in time only to avenge his friend, not to save him.

In such tropical surroundings as we used to enjoy in the Rymer and Plummer tales, Blake experiences two hurricanes. It is the one in the svelte, feminine and brief swim-suited form of an underwater swimmer, against whose fury he battles, that he comes nearest to reaching the end of his adventurous career.

It may have been hot and oppressive work for Sexton Blake Investigations, but to many of us a most refreshing novel.

RatingVery Good

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GENERAL COMMENTARY

The selection of what one considers to be the six best illustrations to grace the covers of the New Look S.B.L. is a good idea of Frank Unwin's. But, doubtless, like many others who read his interesting little article, I cannot help wondering why he felt it necessary to exclude the work of E. R. Parker in making his selections and to consider only the work of the other artists. As the two covers by Mr. Parker were part of the new order S.B.L. and were considered to be the most attractive, they really should have been included in the writer's half-dozen of the best.

With regard to the under-dressed, over-curveous females, it must be taken into consideration that an artist not infrequently draws from editorial instructions. And what is wrong in presenting in the new order in 1960 what was not an unusual occurrence in the old order in the 1920's, the 1930's and the 1940's? The scantily-draped young female is no stranger to an S.B.L. cover, and you cannot in all fairness ignore the work of today's cover artist for doing what E. R. Parker did in the old order S.B.L. Take a look at the cover of a 1936 issue - No. 524, in the second series, entitled "The Crime at the Crown Inn", by Martin Frazer; observe the extreme dishabille of the girl held in the arms of the sinister-looking male figure and compare it with the covers drawn by Carosetti and Co., today.

Taking my pick from the entire 98 covers which have comprised the New Look so far, the six which gave me the most pleasure were:

1. Frank Daniels' picture of Blake carrying the resisting brunette, Marynelle Rolls up a flight of stairs in issue No. 399, the four colours, red, green, black and yellow being admirably merged.
2. Putzu's arresting cover design for "Touch of Evil" (No. 438).
- 3 and 4. The drawings of No. 362 and 389, respectively, both seem to be by the same artist, but are neither stated nor signed. The design of settee and carpet on the cover of No. 362 has been particularly well produced.
5. E. R. Parker's presentation for "A Cold Night for Murder" (No. 441) and finally
6. Sandri's Jungle scene, showing Paula in white blouse and brief blue skirt being menaced by a native with up-raised dagger, with Blake in the background, rifle at the ready. Action and colour is splendidly combined here.

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OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

REPORT OF MEETING BETWEEN NORTHERN/MERSEYSIDE O.B.B.C.
AT NEW MILLGATE HOTEL, MANCHESTER ON SUNDAY,
26th JUNE, 1960.

This years Inter-Club Reunion was held in Manchester.

British Railways deposited eleven of us in Exchange Station sixty-five minutes late, but this was the only thing to mar an otherwise most enjoyable day. We were met at the station by three of our Manchester members and within a few minutes had joined the other six already in the hotel, where we sat down to a late but very satisfying lunch.

A room had been booked for the afternoon's meeting and the chair was taken by Gerald Allison, who extended a warm welcome to everybody and then proceeded to give us a roll call of all the 44 northern members, though unfortunately they were not all present. Apologies for absence were received from Eric Humphreys and Stanley Smith. Stanley said that though he was absent he was with us in spirit.

Gerry then read out a letter of greetings from Frank Richards.

Harry Dowler gave us a short talk on one of his best friends - "Our beloved Herbert" and we could almost see him ambling into the room with the everlasting cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth and his collection of books and papers under his arm.

I said a few words on the Australian Club and passed round a copy of the "People" containing the article on the old books and old schools for those who had not seen it before - and also the first issue of the "Golden Hours Magazine" which had arrived just in time to take. This drew favourable comments and our congratulations to Syd Smyth and all who helped in the production.

A short discussion was held on the C.D. and though peoples' views differed, it was agreed that Eric Fayne was carrying out an excellent job in his most difficult task of producing the C.D. and the Annual.

Various games were played, and a discussion on anything in general was held, where we learned from Norman Pragnell that the Liverpool Club do not hold a formal meeting to deal with the business but gather equally round a Round Table.

The final item was the ever popular Twenty Questions where the team of Mollie Allison, Harry Dowler, Norman Pragnell and Bill Williamson got all the answers.

We had to close the meeting at 5.30 p.m. when tea was announced, after which appreciation to Harold Ogden for the trouble he had taken in the hotel arrangements, which made our day perfect, was expressed by Gerry on behalf of everyone present.

On leaving the hotel afterwards we were all shot by Mollie Allison - fortunately on a cine-camera, so we are soon hoping to see ourselves again in full colours.

By now it was time to split up and make our ways homewards to Liverpool, Stockport, parts of Manchester, Huddersfield, Bradford, Leeds and surrounding districts.

We were only sorry no more Liverpool members were present nor any from the Midlands.

Those present were -

Mollie Allison, Myra Allison, Gertrude Banks, Mrs. Beardsell, Doreen Hodgson, Elsie Palmer, Dorothy Robinson, Gerald Allison, Cyril Banks, Cliff Beadsell, Frank Case, Harry Dowler, Frank Hancock, Bill Harrison, Ronald Hodgson, David Lancake, Harold Ogden, Norman Pragnell, Phil Warren and Bill Williamson.

R. HODGSON, Hon. Sec. Northern Section.

MIDLANDMeeting held 27th June, 1960.

As holidays, business commitments and, in the case of Beryl Porter, illness, accounted for the absence of five of the regular members, only nine turned up for this second meeting at the new headquarters. It was Norman Gregory's first night as Chairman and, for all the small attendance, proved to be a very successful meeting. As three of the missing people were scheduled for items, we had to improvise.

Norman's quiz of twelve Hamiltonian questions were nicely varied and ticklish. I was the most successful with six right. Naturally there were a few of the usual caustic remarks, but all in good fun.

Win Partridge obliged with the second item, a composition of her own with a view for insertion in the forthcoming Greyfriars magazine. Admirably read by the authoress herself and the subject being Greyfriars (under the cires, we cannot say any more about it for obvious reasons.) It was warmly received by the rest of us, but how I wished it had been a Sexton Blake item instead of a Greyfriars. Which is a reminder! Cannot someone oblige with a yarn featuring the great detective? For all that, jolly good, Win Partridge.

The main item was a discussion introduced by myself - Frank Richards and Cricket. The idea was suggested to me by a recent article in the C.D. The writer confessed that though the cricket matches which took place in Frank Richards' school yarns did not give many details of scores and certainly not a lot of technical details, they were entirely sufficient for him. To some extent I agreed with him, but in my introductory talk, enlarged on a few points of general interest which I thought could have been included, adding also a few oddities which had aroused my interest. Though on the whole the keen Hamiltonians had to concede most of the points I raised, the general opinion was that as the yarns were written for a certain age group who wanted very little in the way of detail, Frank Richards' "cricket" would do for them likewise. The people who wanted anything different could resort to the usual newspaper reports of county matches or "Wisden."

W. H. BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERNMeeting held, Saturday, July 11th.

The park opposite the clubroom was glowing in golden sunshine, as the Northern Clan arrived at 239 Hyde Park Road for the July Meeting. Holiday absentees had reduced our number to fourteen, but we were glad to have Ernest Whitehead with us again, and to see Jack Farrar for the second time.

Business consisted mainly of a report of the Manchester meeting on June 26th - one of the redletter days in our history. A new postal-member, Mr. W. S. Alder of Leicester was welcomed into the Section. We now number 44. A recent acquisition of Populars and Magnets was announced, also a gift of a Thriller by A. E. Brueton.

Gerry Allison then read the third instalment from 'The Boy Without a Name'. Next month our guest, Roger Jenkins, will take over. The story will be completed in September.

Finally, after refreshments, Jack Wood gave us a 40 part quiz, based on Frank Richards' literary quotations. Three members tied for first place with 35 correct. They were: Elsie Palmer, Geoff Wilde and Gerry Allison, and they will collaborate in providing next month's brain teaser.

"Northerner"

MERSEYSIDESunday, July 10th 1960

Nearly all our regular members were in attendance on this fine July evening. Accounts and general correspondence were soon dealt with by the Chairman and a discussion on the Greyfriars Cup Competition was soon under way. Two of our entries were read out and discussed by the branch as a whole, so that suggested improvements can be dealt with by the author.

The report of a trip to Manchester a fortnight previously, by Frank Case and the writer of these notes was then given by Frank Case himself. The visit was without doubt a huge success and it is hoped by all that a similar day can be arranged next year.

Pat Laffey gave a most amusing musical quiz, with a strong Greyfriars flavour. Don Webster won this with fifteen points, while Jim Walsh and Bill Windsor were second and third with thirteen and eleven points.

Tea and library business followed and then we were soon racking our brains over Frank Case's general knowledge quiz. Frank Unwin topped this one with fourteen and a half points, followed by Jim Walsh and Don Webster with thirteen.

To complete the evening a most interesting "criss cross" quiz was presented by Frank Unwin. Split into groups of questions ranging from pre-war Blake to all the Hamilton schools, this really had us all thinking hard. In fact so lively was this part of the programme that by ten o'clock we were still only half-way through, so it was agreed that it would be finished at the next meeting. Altogether a most pleasant evening.

All members will be advised as to the date of the next meeting.

NORMAN PRACNELL - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

Midwinter found attendances below expectations, but those who did brave the elements found it well worthwhile when they gathered at Cahill's Restaurant on Thursday, 14th July for their usual cheery get together. Members were sorry to hear that Bruce Fowler had been ill and hope that he will be fit again for our next meeting.

The chairman, Syd Smyth, opened proceedings by giving a very favourable report on sales of the club magazine and members were pleased to hear that issue No. 2 will be available just as soon as some minor printing difficulties are overcome. We hope you've enjoyed our little effort from "Down Under" folks, and that subsequent issues of our club magazine will also add to the enjoyment of our hobby.

A letter from Tom Dobson who lives down south at Brighton, Victoria, brought the welcome news that he plans to holiday in Sydney next month so we are looking forward to welcoming him to our August meeting. It was also pleasing to hear from Laurie Turner, also from Victoria, who wrote offering items of Hamiltonia for exchange.

Blake enthusiasts were most interested in a letter from Martin Thomas received by the Secretary in connection with the recent controversy on the New Look Blake. Needless to say this letter provided most stimulating discussions without in any way changing the original verdict given by club members in favour of "Blakiana."

As always, letters from our good friends in the other clubs brought the news and views from overseas - our thanks to Ron Hodgson, Frank Unwin (Mr. Foghorn) and Ben Whiter for maintaining this friendly contact with us.

An enjoyable, informal evening which passed all too quickly - from 6 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on meeting nights are the shortest hours on the clock, but proof positive that a good time has been had by all. Looking forward then to a bumper August meeting.

B. PATE - Secretary.

LONDONMeeting held at Surbiton, Sunday, 17th July, 1960

A distinguished gathering of 37 sat down to tea at the July meeting at 'Excelsior House', Surbiton, Surrey, which must have been very gratifying to the worthy host, Eric Fayne. Amongst the guests were Miss Bernadette Milnes, production manager of the successful Christmas show, 'Billy Bunter Flies East', Maurice McLoughlin who wrote the production, and Michael Anthony who played the part of Major Ducles in the show. Bill Loftis had brought along H. W. Twyman and from Maidstone came John Wernham.

Chairman, Len Packman, addressed remarks of welcome to the distinguished guests who suitably replied.

A special Greyfriars quiz for these guests was won by Maurice McLoughlin which augers well for future Bunter shows that he will write. Second place was taken by Michael Anthony and Miss Bernadette Milnes was third.

There followed a reading by our Roger Jenkins, a very appropriate one. 'Desert Island Books' by Ray Hopkins, a quiz by Bob Whiter and, of course, the highlight competition of our Eric's - a team game in which School House, led by Roger Jenkins, defeated New House, led by Bob Whiter after two ties. Suitable prizes were given by Eric with very appropriate remarks, Miss Milnes presenting the awards.

A very happy occasion indeed.

More to follow at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22, on Sunday, August 21st. Kindly let Len Packman know if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

* * * * *

Yours Sincerely

(INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG)

ROBERT FARISH (Longtown). A warm thank you for the June number. The colour of the cover was refreshing, while the drawing of Macdonald brought back memories. There was never an artist like R.J.M., and to me there was always something wrong with a Gem which had been illustrated by someone else. I leave you with a question which I have often asked myself! How did Martin Clifford win and retain the interest and affection of his readers, remembering that in many cases they had nothing in common with the schools and schoolboys he wrote about?

F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS (Hendon). The Digest has an admirably "professional" touch about it. I like especially the smaller type used on some of the pages. Oddly enough, this smaller type seems even more easy to read than the larger kind. The illustrations, too, are excellent. It would be interesting to see, now and again, some articles about such papers as the old Big Budget, Boy's Leader, and about some of the lesser-known journals such as Boy's Life and Boy's Best Storypaper (Newnes).

ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby). The production of the Sexton Blake Library is excellent, and the covers are getting better, now that the nearly-nude ladies appear less and less. I have lost count of the number of times Paula Dane's legs have been described - readers should know by now that she has a nice pair.

PETER WALKER (Westbury-on-Trym). May I be permitted to congratulate you on a splendid editorial this month. How I agree with what you say! And how I envy you! I've never been to Ireland, but one day I'm hoping to do so, and, with the so-called "March of Progress", it seems as though I had better not delay too long. I think that one of the chief reasons I still enjoy adventures of our schoolboy chums is because most of their activities take place in a world of country lanes, woodlands, old buildings in country towns, and wayside stations where the "local" comes puffing in, and there are dusty lanes in summer and deep snow in winter. In other words, the world of my boyhood between two world wars.

GERALD ALLISON (Ilkley) The Chapman cover was simply wonderful - the happiest picture of Bunter I have ever seen.

(And so have said scores of readers - ED.)

JIM COOK (Wembley) I am enjoying the Digest so much these days that I would like to see it make a fortnightly appearance. There can be no end to our hobby, there will always be something to talk about so why not more editions of the C.D.? Most of us are getting well advanced into life, and whereas we had all the time in the world when we were reading those famous old papers, the shorter moments are upon us now, and we need more time. That long stretch of time between the issues of the Digest could at least be halved if there were another edition every two weeks.

K. F. KIRBY (South Africa) I feel that I did not misunderstand Mr. Samways at all. He was asked whether he considered Charles Hamilton the greatest school story writer, and replied that he did not. The implication is unmistakable that he considers somebody else greater, and is reinforced by his reference to "The Hill", "David Blaize" and "Jeremy at Crale". Ergo, he is the one who started making invidious comparisons. In fact I felt that there was a fair amount of "damning with faint praise" about much of his evidence. And I am still looking hard for the humour in "Jeremy at Crale", but can only conclude that either I have no sense of humour or Mr. Samways is confusing the book with some other.

JACK WOOD (York) Ref. Mr. Chapman's queries in July Digest. Brooks had several stories reprinted by Swan's under the names of Reginald Browne and Edward Thornton. I seem to recall reading in an early C.D. that E.S.B. said these stories were reprinted without his knowing anything about it, but it sounds unlikely. The reprints came from original Boy's Realm stories. Willy Handforth arrived in N.L.L. small series No. 386 "Handforth's Minor." Etons were abandoned with the end of the 1st series and the institution of the Detective Academy, which meant that the lads were in lounge suits when the new St. Frank's appeared.

FRANK HANCOCK (Leeds) Many of us will remember a series of films made in Hollywood about a Chinese detective named Charlie Chan. They were inexpensive productions, without any great stars, and yet very good entertainment. What a pity our film producers didn't get cracking with Sexton Blake on similar lines. Let us hope the T.V. people will seize the opportunity. "Bunter and His Noises" by C. L. Letley was very interesting and very true. Frank Richards always seems to pick just the right word to convey the exact shade of meaning required. 'Yapped' and 'Grunted' are two more he often used in exactly the right place. You can get the exact mood of the speaker from them.

EDWARD DAVEY (Solihull) "Let's Be Controversial" fully deserves its great popularity, and I am very interested in "Gems of Hamiltoniana." This intriguing new idea is a splendid one, and I shouldn't be surprised if you have a bumper post bag. There must be scores of these gems; not necessarily always funny, but apt, pithy and scholarly.

NORMAN PRAGNELL (Liverpool). One point that puzzled all our members on Sunday - what was the "Star of David" doing at the top of the June issue? Please convey to Walter Webb my appreciation of his articles. I always find them first rate.

(Alas, our ignorance! We hadn't even realised it was the "Star of David". It was just decoration. Welcome bouquet passed to you, Walter Webb. - ED.)

IRISH STEW

Under the heading "IRELAND ENCHANIS ANOTHER BRITON" in large black type, the famous newspaper "Irish Weekly Independent", in a charming article, reproduced part of our July Editorial, "Irish Stew". The writer of the newspaper article was Tony Glynn, who is always on the lookout for the chance to say something really nice about the Digest. The result was that our Letter-Bag, already massive, burst at the seams with heart-warming letters from many Irish folk. Each letter has received a personal reply from the Editor. Grateful thanks, too, to scores of Digest readers who have written complimentary messages, expressing their enjoyment of our July editorial.

THE ANNUAL

THE ANNUAL IS COMING. And WHAT AN ANNUAL! In our next issue will come your ORDER FORM for the Annual. Once again we warn readers that the issue will be very limited. Copies will be printed only to meet the requirements of those who have ordered in advance. Last year a great many readers suffered disappointment, because they ordered too late. WATCH FOR YOUR ORDER FORM in our SEPTEMBER ISSUE.

The Annual is the best medium in the Collecting World for advertisements. Small announcements are accepted at 2d. a word, serial numbers counting as ONE WORD. Quotations for full-page or half-page displayed advertisements can be obtained from the Collectors' Digest office.

YOU WILL BE INVITED TO ORDER YOUR ANNUAL in September. Don't be too late.

