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I G E S T

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JULY, 1961

Price 2s. Od.

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE,

Excelsior House,

Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

* * *

EDITORIAL

PIERRE QUIROULE,
AuthorJERRY'S FAIRY,
AuthorMRS. HAMILTON,
AuthorROBERT COOMBS,
AuthorVERA LINSLEY,
Author

BLAKIANA SCORES AGAIN. Our indefatigable contributor, Bill Lofts, has recently traced the writer of so many pre-war Sexton Blake stories, PIERRE QUIROULE, the creator of those unsurpassed characters, Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie. Mr. Lofts has had a long interview with Pierre Quirole, the Rolling Stone (real name W. W. Sayer), and is even now preparing an entrancing article for an early edition of BLAKIANA. This will be wonderful news for Blake fans, and it is especially pleasing to me, for I have always regarded P.Q. as one of the finest Blake writers of all time. A complete bound set of his Sexton Blake tales is one of the most valued items in my collection, and, years ago, I had considerable correspondence with the author.

THE 1961 ANNUAL. Work is now intensifying on the 1961 Annual which, all being well, will be reaching you in December.

THE EDITOR.

IT'S HARRY WHARTON

RESULT OF "COLLECTORS' DIGEST" GREAT POPULARITY CONTEST

The following is the order in which Collectors' Digest readers voted the characters in our Popularity Contest. The numbers before the characters' names are the index numbers in the contest: following the names, in brackets, are the actual numbers of votes accorded to each in the poll.

THE TOP TEN

1st:	23.	HARRY WHARTON	(905)
2nd:	4.	BILLY BUNTER	(787)
3rd:	22.	H. VERNON-SMITH	(694)
4th:	6.	BOB CHERRY	(665)
5th:	2.	SEXTON BLAKE	(642)
6th:	8.	ARTHUR A. D'ARCY	(591)
7th:	13.	TOM MERRY	(547)
8th:	16.	MR. QUELCH	(474)
9th:	11.	NELSON LEE	(459)
10th:	9.	E. O. HANDFORTH	(439)

THE REST

11th:	14.	Nipper	(416)
12th:	18.	Jimmy Silver	(364)
13th:	5.	Ralph R. Cardew	(356)
14th:	19.	Reginald Talbot	(354)
15th:	7.	Horace Coker	(328)
16th:	20.	Tinker	(295)
17th:	15.	Frank Nugent	(182)
18th:	1.	Jack Blake	(179)
19th:	17.	The Rio Kid	(174)
20th:	10.	Ken King	(160)
21st:	} 3.	Buffalo Bill	(139)
21st:		Dick Turpin	(139)
23rd:	12.	Arthur E. Lovell	(122)

THE PRIZEWINNERS

Many, many long hours of work have gone into the careful recording

of the votes in this contest. Many more hours have gone into the task of assessing all the forecasts of the large number of entrants, and deciding, with the utmost care and impartiality, which entries were the most meritorious. It is with very great pleasure that we now announce the Prize Winners.

THE FIRST PRIZE OF £5 is awarded to

BRIAN DOYLE,
13, Northbourne Road,
London, S.W.4.

THE SECOND PRIZE, consisting of 2 volumes, each containing three novels, is awarded to

NEVILLE VEAR,
42, Fairway, York.

Messrs. Doyle and Vear each succeeded in forecasting 9 of the names to appear in the TOP TEN. Each placed 5 in their actual positions, but Mr. Doyle had the 1st and 2nd in their correct places, thus winning the lead over Mr. Vear who had them reversed. Our hearty congratulations to them both. We invite both Mr. Doyle and Mr. Vear, if they feel so inclined, to let us know what reasoning they adopted in making such successful forecasts.

A prize of 10/- is awarded to each of the following, whose entries came next in order of merit: F. S. Knight, 288 High Street, Cheltenham; J. W. Geal, 94 Shortlands Road, Kingston-on-Thames; John Bush, 32 Walden Avenue, Chislehurst; Victor Smith, 111 Whateley Crescent, Castle Bromwich.

A COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960 is awarded to each of the following, Mrs. E. E. Palmer, Thackley, Bradford; R. J. Godsave, Leytonstone.

A selected Old Boys' periodical (Marvel, Lot-O-Fun, Boys' Cinema, or Schoolboys' Own Library) is awarded to each of the following: H. E. Ellison, St. Annes on Sea; W. Fleming, Chingford; H. Holmes, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss E. B. Flinders, Hitchin; W. T. Thurbon, Cambridge; B. Adam, Newcastle; G. H. Wilde, Leeds.

All Prizes will be dispatched to prizewinners on the day following the publication of this issue of Collectors' Digest.

* * * * *

A SURVEY OF THE VOTING

Not the least interesting factor in this great experiment was the way that readers allotted their votes. A certain number "plumped", awarding 30 each to two characters only; rather more scattered a small number of votes to each of a selection of characters; the majority, however, made their awards in 10's and 5's.

It was, in fact, with this end in view that the rules of the contest were drawn up. The number of characters from each of the schools was carefully arranged to give absolute fairness, plus a spice, to the poll. We knew that Greyfriars fans predominate among our readers, and, by including more Greyfriars characters than any others, we tempted them to spread their votes, thus giving all our "candidates" a fair chance. In a few cases, readers used only a percentage of their votes, which was, of course, quite within the rules of the contest.

Harry Wharton took the lead right from the start, and never really looked like losing it. After the first month it was clear that he was almost certain to be top of the poll. In the same way, Billy Bunter firmly resolved himself as second. It is of very great interest that, though Bunter gets all the publicity and is the accepted star, it is, in the view of readers, Harry Wharton who has been the main hub of Greyfriars.

The third man, well ahead of the rest, is Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, and yet another Greyfriars character, Bob Cherry, is in 4th place - a striking victory for Greyfriars and glowing testimony to the most famous school in fiction.

It is a great pleasure to see Sexton Blake at 5th place, so well up in the ranks of the TOP TEN. Throughout the contest, Bob Cherry and Sexton Blake fought between 4th and 5th places. They played a continuous game of Musical Chairs, with no certainty until June 3rd as to who would finally secure either place.

Early in the contest, Gussy and Tom Merry consolidated themselves at 6th and 7th respectively. At no time did anyone come near enough to look like displacing them. Mr. Quelch, the finest schoolmaster in fiction, won a well-deserved 8th place - a position which was not to be challenged as the votes flowed in.

St. Frank's has done remarkably well with its three representatives together high up in the list, and two of them in the TOP TEN. It is interesting to see Nelson Lee himself at the head of the Lee contingent, and many will not be surprised to find Handy ahead of Nipper though the margin is narrow.

In fact, the first nine took their places in the TOP TEN almost from the beginning. The only doubt was whether Handy or Nipper was to have the honour of the place in this royal group of outstanding characters. And Handy, bless his heart, won it in the end.

So much for the TOP TEN. The main surprise has been the poor show put up by Rookwood. Though Rookwood fielded only two representatives to split the vote, neither succeeded in reaching the Royal Box. Jimmy Silver put up a fair show, but Lovell's meagre support is an eye-opener.

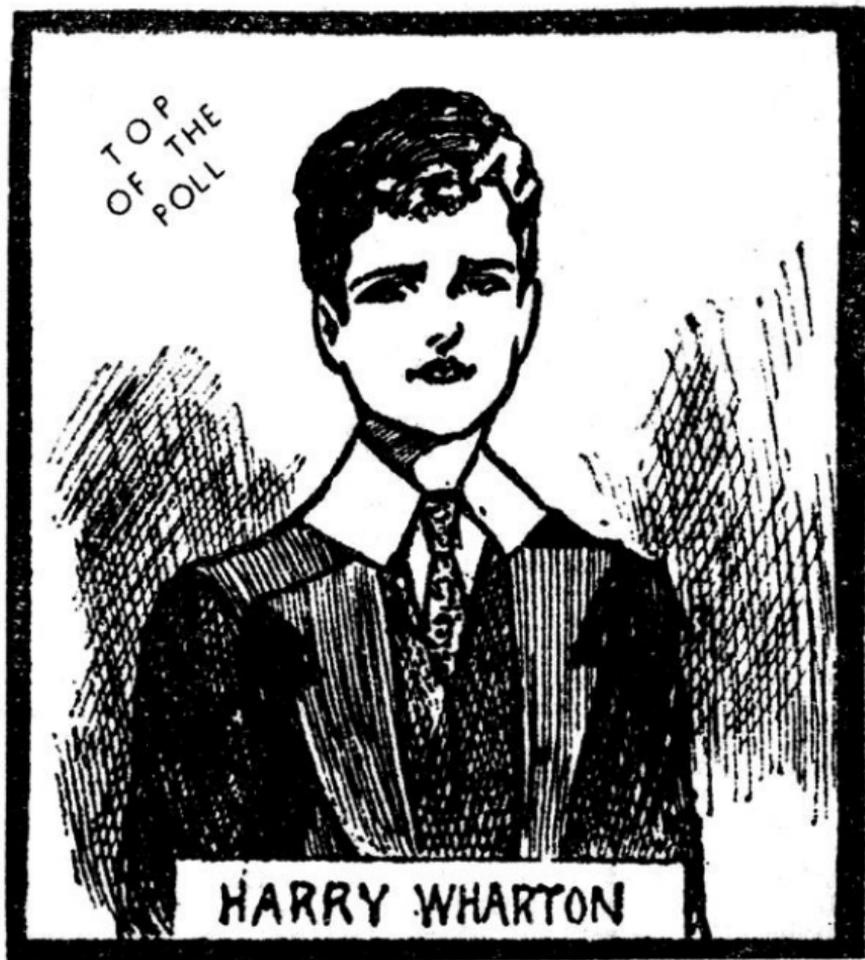
A further surprise is the comparative low placing of Tinker at 16th. Here, I think, we have the one character who might have been higher placed if the contest had been held years ago. Tinker has been rather inconsistently handled during the past decade, and the result of the contest suggests that he has lost some of his former popularity. No doubt our experts on Blake lore, Josie Packman and Walter Webb, will have their own comments to make on the fact that Sexton Blake has won glory at No. 5, while Tinker is only a lowly No. 16.

Many may well have expected Cardew and Talbot to reach the TOP TEN, but we find them both well behind Gussy and Tom Merry. Gussy, in fact, can take his bow with graceful elegance, having given his decisive reply to anyone who might have thought him outmoded in the nineteen-sixties.

The low placing of Jack Blake shows the wisdom of Martin Clifford, long ago, in supplanting him with Tom Merry. Blake is a pleasant schoolboy, but clearly not in the same class with the great schoolboy leaders.

As a matter of passing interest, the slowest starter was Ken King. Entries had been pouring in for a fortnight before any vote was registered on his behalf. He managed to climb to No. 20 as time passed, but it is obvious that the heroes of adventure are not favourites among Digest readers.

Buffalo Bill and Dick Turpin are, of course, specialised characters of limited appeal, and there is little surprise in their low placing. The biggest surprise of the whole contest is to find Arthur Edward Lovell below them - and the collector of the wooden spoon.



"Let there be no mistake, Harry Wharton was the secret of the Magnet's success, not Billy Bunter."

So wrote Roger Jenkins in an article in Collectors' Digest Annual ten years ago. Now, ten years later, we have conclusive proof that Roger was right. Digest readers, a representative cross-section of the Magnet readers down the years, have smashed Harry Wharton to the top of the poll - an easy winner. It is an exciting moment for those who have loved the Captain of the Remove for so long.

A few more extracts from that article by Roger Jenkins are appropriate here:

"The first description we have of Harry Wharton occurs in Magnet No. 1. 'He was a well-built lad, firmly developed, strong and active. Handsome indeed was the face, with its well marked features and dark eyes. But there was a cloud upon it, and in the dark eyes was a glint of suspicion and defiance.'

"To quote Frank Richards, "It has always seemed to me that a man ought not to write a story at all unless he feels that it may be to some extent useful, as well as entertaining to young readers whose characters are in the process of formation." It was the use of this formula that was directly responsible for the three greatest series in the whole of the thirty-two year run of the Magnet. And, as was only fitting, they all centred upon Harry Wharton."

Roger was referring to the two Rebel series, 1925 and 1932, and to the Stacey series of 1935. I believe that no reader, who has a really comprehensive knowledge of the Magnet from first to last, would gainsay Roger's contention. Personally, I still regard the 1925 Rebel series as the greatest school story of the century. It stands alone, perhaps, as a study of youth which is of intense interest to adults and completely fascinating to juveniles at the same time. Only a truly great writer could have produced a story which combined those qualities. I hope that one day that remarkable story will be re-issued in stiff covers and preserved for the benefit of countless generations to come.

There is little doubt that many of the readers who have voted Harry Wharton as the most popular character of the century have done so with the memory of those great Wharton series in mind.

Let us end by quoting Roger Jenkins again:

"Such then were the three finest series in the Magnet. Perhaps one of the greatest tributes to the author was his ability to make us recognize the depravity of Wharton's conduct, whilst at the same time letting us see that he was still the hero of the story and that our sympathies still lay with him. Charles Hamilton, more than any other

.....

writer of his kind, had the ability to pose moral questions like these in an interesting and compelling manner. It would, however, be misleading to imply that all series starring Harry Wharton portrayed him as rebellious and intractable as these three series did at times. As instance of other topics, older readers may prefer that famous occasion when it was finally decided that the Remove did not have to fag; younger readers may prefer the Da Costa series in which Wharton showed the pleasanter and more accustomed side of his nature; while readers of my generation probably prefer the stories about Harry Wharton as the Swot of the Remove.

"Harry Wharton was undoubtedly the greatest character ever drawn by Charles Hamilton, and it is pleasing to reflect that the vicissitudes of his career formed the main topic of his author's finest work. Certainly no character in the Magnet was so consistently the favourite of so many readers in each generation as Harry Wharton, the Captain of the Remove."

So wrote Roger Jenkins in 1951. Now, ten years later, Digest readers have proved how right he was.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Editor expresses grateful thanks to Les Rowley who generously gave the monetary prizes in this contest as well as assisting in the general project. Collectors' Digest also thanks Mr. J. Lennard for his splendid spirit in providing the volumes which are given as second prize in the contest. Finally, thanks to the readers of this magazine for their loyal enthusiasm and for sending in their votes, without which this interesting experiment could never have been carried to such a successful conclusion.

HOW THEY BEGAN. No. 9

On our cover this month, we bring you a reproduction of the cover of the MAGNET No. 1. This remarkable paper commenced in early 1908, and ran until May, 1940, a total of 1683 issues.

MERSEYSIDE BRANCH O.B.B.C. requires complete sets only Nelson Lee Library. Full details to:
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.....

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

Very little has been written about the Sexton Blake stories in the First ($\frac{1}{2}$ d.) series of the UNION JACK; neither - so far as I am aware - has a complete and detailed list of such stories been printed. I am therefore devoting some of my space this month to putting these details on record, prefaced by a short extract from Herbert Leckenby's "Memories" on the subject.

By the time this issue of the C.D. is in the post many of you will be on holiday. I hope the weather will be kind to you, and that on your return you will put your pens to paper and send me a little something for these pages!.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE THE ETERNAL

(A short extract on the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. UNION JACK taken from the late Herbert Leckenby's "Memories of Old Boys' Papers")

From what I can cull from the papers at my disposal, and with the aid of memory, I do not think a great number of stories devoted to Blake appeared in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Union Jack, but I do remember a serial entitled "Shadowed and Haunted."

Then I have before me a double number, No. 138, and this contains a story entitled "Bravo, Blake!" by W. Shaw Rae. At this time of day that story of long ago is very interesting. For instance, at that time Blake had his chambers at Norfolk House, not Baker Street. He was, even then, a "famous investigator." Furthermore, we are told that Blake had received his education at the "Public School of Ashleigh." There, he had been the hero of the school and was, in fact, known as Bravo, Blake! Years later, of course, Cecil Hayter in a succession of serials in the Boys' Herald, told of Blake's schooldays at St. Anne's School and, later, at Oxford.

Another point of interest about this "Bravo! Blake" story is that it gives Blake's age at that time as being twenty-seven. It was published at Christmas 1896, so if you want to know how old the detective now is just do a little sum! But then, of course, Sexton Blake - like Tinker, Tom Merry and others - has learned the secret of eternal youth.

Searching further I came across another surprise. The $\frac{1}{2}$ d. U.J. No. 203 announcing the story for the following week described it as "The Truman Mystery," a story of Sexton Blake and his assistant, We-wee.' Now who on earth was this predecessor to Tinker? It was the first I had heard of him, but possibly he had appeared before this No. 204

.....I have just had the good fortune to secure a further supply of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. U.J.'s, and, much to my satisfaction, to gather more information about Sexton Blake.

Firstly, it would appear that I was in error when I said I did not think many Blake stories appeared in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. series; on the contrary there were quite a number.

For instance, No. 357, 23 Feb. 1901, is an interesting find, for therein is an instalment of a serial entitled "Griff, the Man-Tracker" or "the Exploits of Sexton Blake, Detective, and Griff, his Mysterious Assistant." At first glance I thought "Griff" must have been a predecessor of Pedro, but judging from the text in this instalment he was apparently "a great, grotesque creature, who shuffled along in the dusk and whose ears pricked up like those of a faithful hound" "a man who swung his huge body up the side of a house almost as easily as if he had been walking on the ground." Evidently a useful sort of assistant to have around, though if I ever saw this particular story in my knickerbocker days my memory certainly did not help to recall it. I think if I ever did read it then, I should have enjoyed it, for it appears to have been a real full-blooded story with Blake very much up against it. In fact, in one sentence we read: "Griff, Griff! Thank heaven it's Griff," moaned Sexton Blake." The author of the story was Christopher Stevens.

Now a Christmas Double Number of 1900, No. 344. Here we have "The Ghost of Smuggler's Rock" - the story of Sexton Blake's Christmas Case - one of the strangest and most exciting of the many "Sexton Blake, Detective" stories we have published.' No author's name was given, but the illustrations were by A. H. Clarke. I was interested to note that this story brings in We-wee, the Chinese assistant, although he does not play a very prominent part

(Written by Herbert Leckenby in 1943. J.P.)

SEXTON BLAKE STORIES IN THE $\frac{1}{2}$ d. UNION JACK

No. 2	dated 2.5.1894	Sexton Blake, Detective	_____	by Harry Blyth
No. 15	" 1.7.1894	Sexton Blake's Triumph	_____	by Hal Meredith
No. 43	" 15.2.195	Tracked Round the World	_____	Anon.

No. 58	dated 29.5.'95	The Marcel Mystery	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 62	" 26.6.'95	A Clue from the Deep	Anon.
No. 65	" 17.7.'95	Sexton Blake's Stratagem	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 69	" 15.8.'95	Nalda the Nihilist	Anon.
No. 72	" 5.9.'95	The Clue of the Dead Eyes	by Arnold Graham
No. 75	" 26.9.'95	Tracked to the Death Valley	by Melton Whyte
No. 82	" 14.11.'95	Doctor Zebra's Doom	by Herbert Maxwell
Nos. 102 to 118	(2.4.'96 to 23.7.'96)	Shadowed and Haunted, a Sexton Blake serial.	
Author - Anonymous.			
No. 88	dated 26.12.'95	The Living Picture	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 125	" 10.9.'96	How Sexton Blake Won His Spurs	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 138	" 10.12.'96	Bravo, Blake!	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 147	" 11.2.'97	Chased Through China (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 155	" 8.4.'97	From Clue to Capture (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 162	" 27.5.'97	For the Shah (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 168	" 8.7.'97	Sexton Blake Among the Morriss (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 172	" 5.8.'97	Dead Man's Hand	by Melton Whyte
No. 180	" 30.9.'97	The Finger Clue (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 186	" 11.11.'97	Under the Smuggler's Flag (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 191	" 18.12.'97	A Christmas Clue	Anon.
No. 194	" 8.1.'98	'Twixt Callows and Gold	Anon.
No. 204	" 19.3.'98	The Truman Mystery (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 208	" 16.4.'98	The Phantom Photographer (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 220	" 9.7.'98	The Dagger of Dunloe (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 228	" 3.9.'98	The Third Man (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 238	" 12.11.'98	The Mystery Man (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 245	" 31.12.'98	The Cigarette Clue (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 250	" 4.2.'99	The Ghost of Strandgap Priory (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 261	" 22.4.'99	The Lancer Lad	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 283	" 23.9.'99	Shadowed by Sexton Blake	by Christopher Stevens
No. 285	" 7.10.'99	The Hermit of Texas	by Campbell Brown
No. 289	" 4.11.'99	The Secret Hand (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 299	" 13.1.'1900	The Brand of Sin (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 336	" 29.9.'100	The Parachute King	by Paul Herring
No. 344	" 24.11.'100	The Ghost of Smuggler's Rock	Anon.
Nos. 356 to 373	(16.2.'01 to 15.6.'01)	"Griff the Man Tracker", a Sexton Blake serial.	
Author - Christopher Stevens			
No. 370	" 25.5.'01	Certain to Win	by Mark Darran
No. 375	" 29.6.'01	Fortune Stone (We-wee)	by W. Shaw Rae
No. 396	" 23.11.'01	Sexton Blake's Lost Clue (Wallace Lorrimore)	by Percival Cooke
No. 400	" 21.12.'01	£10,000 Reward (Jefferson Hart, New York Detective)	by C. Stevens
No. 411	" 8.3.'02	Tracked Across the Sea (Maxwell Grey)	by Alec G. Pearson
No. 420	" 10.5.'02	The Clue of the Freckled Hand (Believed to be by H. St. John Cooper)	Alec G. Pearson
No. 426	" 21.6.'02	Enemies of the Sea (Maxwell Grey)	Alec G. Pearson
No. 450	" 6.12.'02	The Convict Hunt	by Paul Herring

End of Blake stories in this series.

THE ARTHUR J. PALK MYSTERYBy W. O. G. Lofts

I have read with great interest in recent issues of the C.D. (Blakiana) the remarks of S. Gordon Swan, Derek Adley and Walter Webb regarding Arthur J. Palk and Arthur H. Paterson. I do, however, feel that the subject has by this time grown out of all proportion, and, seeing that I am to a great extent involved, Josie Packman has kindly allowed me to have the last few words on the matter - that is, until something concrete comes along to put the whole Arthur J. Palk authorship beyond all doubt.

First I would like to make it quite clear that never at any time has Mr. Twyman assumed that Arthur J. Palk and Arthur H. Paterson were one and the same person. During one of my discussions with Mr. Twyman, I asked him if he could tell me anything about Arthur J. Palk. Mr. Twyman's reply was that he could not recollect the man at all. At a later date, after reading the story in question (U.J. No. 1525 "The Call of the Dragon") he still could not place the author. Quite a reasonable explanation for this may have been: (a) the story was handled through a literary agency, (b) he was away at the time and the story was accepted by his deputy, (c) it may have been one of the old stories kept in reserve, to be used when a scheduled story had not materialised. Having read the story, Mr. Twyman did mention that the style reminded him of Arthur Paterson, and that the use of the same initials (A.P. and not A.J.P.) may have some connection, but this was purely theory on his part. As the authorship of Arthur J. Palk was still doubtful when Derek Adley and myself compiled the Sexton Blake Authors Who's Who, in the 1958 C.D. Annual, we left his name blank in the "Real Name" column. The theory part having come from the actual editor of the U.J., we thought it just a point of interest to state "probably", with a short explanation, I do, however, know for a fact that Mr. Twyman knew Paterson for many years, and Twy can remember quite clearly Paterson mentioning to him one day that he had spent several years in Australia.

Walter Webb gives a very good account of Arthur Paterson's biographical details, but rather spoils his case by admitting that Paterson could have made the trip to Australia. No one has ever doubted that Arthur Paterson was born in England, but this does not mean that he could not have written an authentic story about Melbourne. I have only to mention the FRANK RICHARDS stories of India and China which, although he never visited those countries, are astonishingly authentic.

I quite agree with Mr. S. Gordon Swan that the A.J. Palk he mentions as having written a paper-backed novel some years ago could have written that Blake story, but, unfortunately, neither he nor Walter Webb can offer any proof.

I have made enquiries in Australia, but have drawn a complete blank. Either it was a non-de-plume or else Palk was a very obscure writer. In my experience in tracing 'long lost authors' I have become too wary to accept any similar name as fact until the writer has been - where possible - contacted. Before I traced the right Horace Phillips I had been in touch with several writers of the same name. And I could name many more! Walter Webb has the good sportsmanship to admit that he 'boobed' - to use his own expression - on the "Anthony Skene" affair, and I feel that he will fall into the same trap again if it is suggested that there cannot possibly be two Arthur J. Palk's in this world.

In closing, I would like to thank Mr. S. Gordon Swan, Derek and Walter for providing some very interesting material.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (2nd series)
(continued)

No. 333	The Crook at Shanghai _____ (Rymer) _____	G. H. Teed
No. 334	The Squealer's Secret _____	G. Verner
No. 335	Doomed Men _____	F. Warwick
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 740)	
No. 336	The Brooklands Mystery _____	L. Black
No. 337	The Kennels Crime _____	J. W. Bobin
No. 338	The Secret of the Farm _____	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 339	The Murder on the Moor _____	W. Shute
No. 340	The Fatal Talisman _____	R. C. Armour
No. 341	The Embankment Crime _____	G. Verner
No. 342	The Mill of Fear _____	L. Bidston
No. 343	The House of Cellars (V. Mata-Vall, Plummer) _____	G. H. Teed
No. 344	The Ghost Trail _____	L. C. Douthwaite
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 738)	
No. 345	Green Mask _____	G. N. Phillips
No. 346	The Police Boat Mystery _____	W. J. Bayfield
No. 347	The Cruise of Terror _____	W. E. Stanton-Hope
No. 348	The Bungalow Crime _____	L. Black
No. 349	Crook's Loot _____ (Dearth Tallon) _____	F. Warwick
No. 350	The Case of the Missing Estate Agent _____	G. Verner
No. 351	The Studio Crime _____ (G. & E. Hale) _____	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 352	The Man from Dartmoor _____ (Splash Page) _____	G. A. Evans
No. 353	The Phantom of the Creek _____	G. H. Teed
No. 354	Presumed Dead _____	L. Black
No. 355	The Mystery of the Reunion Dinner _____	R. Hardinge
No. 356	The Red Stiletto _____	G. N. Phillips
No. 357	The Great Waxworks Crime _____ (Splash Page) _____	G. A. Evans

No. 358	Dead Man's Bay _____ (Aubrey Dexter) _____	J. W. Bobin
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 734)	
No. 359	The Night Safe Mystery _____	L. Carlton
No. 360	The Lincoln's Inn Tragedy _____	W. J. Bayfield
No. 361	The Murder on the Broads _____	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 362	The Crook of Monte Carlo _____ (Rymer) _____	G. H. Teed
No. 363	The Secret of Seven _____	G. Verner
No. 364	The Trafalgar Square Mystery _____	R. C. Armour
No. 365	The Survivor's Secret _____ (R. Purvale) _____	J. G. Brandon
No. 366	Yellow Vengeance _____	L. Black
No. 367	The Mystery of the Lost Legionaire _____ (Dexter) _____	J. W. Bobin
No. 368	Derelict House _____ (Zenith) _____	G. N. Philips
No. 369	The Secret of the Sudan _____ (D. Tallon) _____	F. Warwick
No. 370	Dr. Sinister _____ (Splash Page) _____	G. A. Evans
No. 371	The Mystery of the Tramp Steamer _____	R. C. Armour
No. 372	The Arterial Road Murder _____	W. J. Bayfield
No. 373	The Empty House Murder _____	G. Verner
No. 374	The Circus Crime _____	G. N. Philips
No. 375	The Black-Hill Mill Case _____	R. Hardinge
No. 376	The Isle of Horror _____ (Marie Galante, Roaxane) _____	G. H. Teed
No. 377	The Mystery of the Unknown Victim (D. Tallon) _____	F. Warwick
No. 378	The Stables Crime _____	J. W. Bobin
No. 379	The Double Cross _____	L. Black
No. 380	The Fatal Friendship _____	G. A. Evans
No. 381	The Silent Menace _____	G. N. Philips
No. 382	The Man from Dublin _____	W. J. Bayfield
No. 383	The Motor Coach Murder _____	L. Bidston
No. 384	Rogues of Ransom _____ (V. Mata-Vall, Plummer) _____	G. H. Teed
No. 385	Guilty but Insane _____	G. Verner
No. 386	Murder to Music _____	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 387	Dead Man's Peak _____	R. C. Armour
No. 388	The Hiker's Secret _____	W. Shute
No. 389	The Pleasure Cruise Murder _____	F. Warwick
No. 390	Death in the Jungle _____	G. A. Evans
No. 391	The Crook's Decoy _____ (V. Mata-Vall, Plummer) _____	G. H. Teed
No. 392	The Cinema Crime _____	R. Goyne
No. 393	The £1,000,000 Plot _____	G. N. Philips
No. 394	The Crime on the Clyde _____	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 395	The Case of the Stranded Touring Co. _____	L. Carlton
No. 396	Mr. Kilner Sees Red _____	L. Black
No. 397	The Taxicab Murder _____ (R. Purvale) _____	J. G. Brandon
No. 398	The Ivory Tusk _____	R. Hardinge
No. 399	The Great Turf Fraud _____	W. J. Bayfield
No. 400	The Secret of the Lock _____	R. C. Armour

DETECTIVE WEEKLY and THRILLER: S.B.I. (Modern series) 358 - 400; C.D. 1 - 37 and 118 - 140 WANTED. Still want Gunby Hadath and John Mowbray novels.
R. GUEST, 5 RALEIGH GARDENS, BRIXTON HILL, LONDON, S.W.2. Tel 0259.

WANTED: Cavandale Abbey Magnets Nos. 1191, 1192, 1193, 1194. £2 per copy offered.
Must be in good condition.
B. ADAM, 28 DERWENT STREET, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, 5.

HAMILTONIANA





FAMOUS SERIES NO. 9

To give you that glorious feeling of sun-drenched holidays we bring you this month a picture from the Gem's "Old Bus" series.

Probably Charles Hamilton's greatest English holiday series of all time, this story, which appeared in the early Autumn of 1923, told of a trip up the Thames from Kingston to Oxford.

The artist, R. J. Macdonald, really captured the holiday spirit, even allowing for the most unlikely positioning of the tree on the extreme edge of the towpath. The picture is taken from "Tracked up the Thames," the tracker being Coker who is receiving the business end of the boathook, wielded by Monty Lowther.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 51. THERE'S JOY IN ARGUMENT.

In its 76th issue the delightful STORY PAPER COLLECTOR presents "We Beg to Disagree", an article by Mr. W. O. G. Lofts. He returns to the old theme of substitute writers plus the quality, or lack of it, in certain phases of the editorial direction of The Companion Papers, and the article provides fascinating reading. Mr. Lofts is sparing in his personal comments, and holds the balance with strict fairness, the greater part of the article comprising an extract from the observations of Mr. Samways and a very lengthy extract from another correspondent who prefers to remain anonymous.

It seems that, some years back, our good friend Bill suggested in an article that "the present day Gem and Magnet experts" would have made a much better job of running the papers than the men who were at the helm in those far-off days. I don't remember the article, but I imagine that the words were written with gentle irony, to point out that it is so easy to find fault and to criticise.

But Mr. Samways, who has recently seen the article, says: "With this I profoundly disagree. Under these worthy gentlemen the stories would have achieved a higher literary tone, but I am sure they would have been insufferably dull, and as unreadable as the old B.O.P. stories."

Personally, I think I should not have wished the direction different from what it was, but I do not see why a story of high literary tone should, of necessity, be insufferably dull. Also, I have volumes of the old B.O.P., containing stories written over a number of years by a certain Talbot Baines Rea, and I have never found them unreadable.

The other correspondent, whom Mr. Lofts quotes at great length, has many interesting points to make. I would not agree with his suggestion that Charles Hamilton should have been paid a fee to "sub" the stories by substitute writers. I can't see him ever having had the time or the inclination to give much attention to other writers' work.

"Speaking from memory," says Bill's correspondent, "the Magnet's circulation was always higher than that of the Gem."

I don't believe it was. Long before the war, a friend of mine at the A.P. told me that the Gem's circulation was higher until 1914, and I have never doubted it. If Greyfriars was more popular than St. Jim's, why were the Tom Merry stories reprinted in the new Penny Popular in October, 1912? Surely the A.P. selected their most popular series for reprinting at that time. True, in 1913, Greyfriars went into the Dreadnought, but this, in itself, suggests Greyfriars as the

second-best selection at that period.

The correspondent goes on: "When Bob Cherry was expelled in the famous barring-out series some readers dropped the paper, and at least one wrote that "without Bob Cherry, the paper lost its pull for him." Bob, of course, came back, and those who had dropped the paper may not have known so for some time. It just shows the danger of expelling heroes."

I, myself, am modestly well-acquainted with Magnet history, and I possess an almost complete set of the paper. I can recall no occasion when Bob Cherry was absent from the stories. If the event to which reference is made is the story "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out", it could be mentioned that Bob never left Greyfriars, and his expulsion and his barring-out lasted for the length of that one story.

A further suggestion is that "the lowish circulation of both papers was due to the commercially absurd methods in producing the Hamilton material." As both papers ran for something like 33 years, I fancy they must have paid their way reasonably well, in spite of their "lowish circulations." I suspect that their circulations compared quite well with those of the many other papers for boys, on the market in those days. Perhaps the profit motive was not so highly developed before 1939.

I agree with Mr. Lofts' correspondent that "Had Hamilton's 'pull' been concentrated wholly on the Gem and the Magnet" those two papers would have benefited. I suggested earlier in this series that we had the glut of substitute stories as a result of Mr. Hamilton having too many irons in the fire. But my feelings in the matter are luke-warm when I think of the tales of Rookwood and the Rio Kid, which we should have lacked if Mr. Hamilton had, indeed, concentrated on Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

Besides, if everything had been perfect, we should have nothing to argue about today. How sad we should be!

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

TELEVISION REVIEWS

BACKING UP BUNTER. (May 20th) This, the first of the new Bunter T.V. series, was reasonably entertaining. Based on an episode in one of the post-war Bunter books, it told of Mr. Bunter's absconding secretary, one, Tregg. A little less time bestowed on the fat Owl's expressions as he tried to work, good enough though they were, might have given more footage for the sequence where Tregg was caught, a sequence which was painfully unconvincing and ham-acted.

As so often happens in these pleasant little playlets, the Famous Five seemed to

be inadequately directed. The old artifice of the boys tossing a ball from one to the other would be more appropriate to a kindergarten than a public school, even though, for a change in this episode, it was a soccer ball. In another shot, Hurree Singh, for no apparent reason at all, was shown carrying a Rugby ball.

One direction which might beneficially be given to at least a couple of the Famous Five could be to get their hair cut.

BOLD BUNTER (May 27th) An excellent playlet, far superior to the one reviewed above, and one of the best since Bunter first came to T.V. Bunter did a brave deed, portrayed with reasonable conviction, and he received his reward while Mr. Quelch was taking the Greyfriars Remove (all seven of them) for a country walk on a half-holiday. This episode brought to mind that grand Magnet story "Bravo, Bunter," in which Bunter was sold a dud coconut by a gipsy, and then rescued the gipsy's child from being run over by a train. While the Remove was on one of its infrequent walks with Mr. Quelch, the gipsy thanked Bunter, and the Owl's tall story was proved to be true.

What a pity that the train item wasn't used in BOLD BUNTER. It would have been so much more colourful.

If it is necessary for Bunter to be bumped twice in most episodes, surely Gerald Campion is sufficiently padded to ensure that the bumping can be made reasonably convincing.

All told, BOLD BUNTER is a delight. If you missed it, try to catch it when the repeat comes along.

DOUBLE BUNTER (June 3rd) A really splendid presentation, and grand entertainment from the first minute till the last. Gerald Campion has never been better, which is saying something, and the rest of the cast were adequate. The scenes at the nets were extremely well done.

The only cause for regret was the brevity. What a pity that some of these little stories cannot be carried on and made into short serials. "Double Bunter" would especially have benefited from this treatment.

HUNTER BUNTER (June 10th) was excellent entertainment. A plumpish Mauleverer received a £5 note from his uncle and, oddly enough, a cake which, he stated, came from his father. (We imagine the cake came from the producer and not from Frank Richards.) A tramp stole the fiver, and hid it in the pocket of the sleeping Bunter. The tramp realised that the note had gone through a hole in Bunter's pocket into the lining, which was another odd circumstance, as Bunter's blazer, like most blazers, was clearly lined in the sleeves only.

The noting of "odd" occurrences makes it evident that we keen Greyfriars fans should not really watch Bunter on T.V. at all, but we wouldn't miss them for worlds. And, as we remarked earlier, this was really an excellent romp.

STOWAWAY BUNTER (June 17th) Our critic missed this one, but a substitute who kept a watching brief reports that it was grand entertainment. It is the first of a series of holiday yarns, set in various Mediterranean countries. Malta was the first place visited by the Greyfriars boys who were Mauleverer's guests, with Mr. Quelch in charge.

BUNTER GOES TO CAIRO (June 24th) Though this was a pleasant enough romp for the youngsters, it was a rather ragged production. The mention of the scarab plus the introduction of a Mr. Kalizelos, will have brought happy memories of the Egypt series to Magnet fans, but there any likeness ended. Backgrounds were adequate, and, in deference to the heat of Cairo, the Famous Five discarded their school ties and replaced them with neck scarves. A producer with much imagination might have struck a holiday note by garbing the boys in white shorts and shirts and Mr. Quelch in a light suit. Fortunately, neither Mr. Quelch nor the boys seemed to feel the heat.

The sight of Quelch and the Famous Five dashing in terror from a sheet-draped Bunter was a pantomime-like absurdity, and there was rather too much farce about the whole thing for it to appeal very much to older Greyfriars fans. Still, it's always a joy to see Gerald Campion getting better and better as Billy Bunter.

BOOK REVIEW

BILLY BUNTER AT BUTLIN'S

Cassell's _____ 9/6d.

Arriving as it did, unannounced, and between two previously advertised titles, *BILLY BUNTER AT BUTLIN'S*, partly on account of its title, dropped on to the scene with the initial impact of a television commercial. The story is probably unique. Way back about 1909, Martin Clifford gave "Tom Merry at the Franco-British", and some of the Hamilton juniors visited Wembley Exhibition in 1923, but visits to International Exhibitions fell into a rather different category from visits to holiday camps.

It seems likely that there is a tie-up between the author, the publishers, and Butlin's, and so far as we can see, the effect is likely to be extremely beneficial both for the camps and for this Bunter book. Though some readers will undoubtedly hope that Bunter and Co. will not do too much of this sort of thing, it can be stated quite definitely that this is a very fine yarn. Swift-moving, bubbling over with holiday fun and seaside sunshine, it is quite the best holiday story since pre-war days. Mr. Billy Butlin, who is referred to (just a little too often) as the King of the Holiday Camps, is linked with the Greyfriars juniors in intriguing fashion and another B.B. is skilfully woven into Mr. Butlin's adventures in a pleasant and hilarious manner.

We can forsee Bunter fans in their thousands rushing off to book their chalets for Skegness, in the hope that they may come upon the "old fat man."

With its advertising angle this is a most unusual story for the Greyfriars Co. It is also a rattling good one.

WANTED: GEMS 407; most issues between 412 and 500; most issues between 772 and 842; 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129, 1150.
MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 205, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 400, 417, 422, 435, 439, 446, 469, 719, 752, 773, 809, most issues between 812 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474.
 ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

OFFERS INVITED for very nice volume of Gems, Nos. 324 - 344, bound without covers. Write Box AL, c/o Collectors' Digest.

WANTED: Magnet Nos. 1169 to 1174, 1497, 1516 to 1518, 1525, 1543, 1544. All issues for 1935, preferably bound. S.O.L.'s 312, 319, 367. I will buy or can offer some exchanges. B. J. MACILROY, 62 ASPINALL ROAD, BROCKLEY, S.E.4.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s Nos. 60 and 68. Modern Boy No. 239. Magnets Nos. 829, 862-865, 867, 868, 869, 874, 876, 877, 879, 884, 893, 896, 897, 900.
 DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOKFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

MEETING HELD 30th MAY, 1961. This was the A.G.M. and annual dinner, held in a splendid room at the Arden Hotel, and attended by eleven members and wives. An excellent meal was served by the staff of the Arden and the function was a great success.

After dinner there was the usual election of officers for the coming year. The report from the Treasurer, which showed an improvement on last year was accepted with compliments from us all to Norman. The Secretary had little to report beyond the success in winning the Greyfriars Cup outright. There had been responses to his article in the "Sunday Mercury" which was being pursued. As Norman said, we could do with many new members, and, as Win Partridge pointed out, the present comfortable headquarters, the best we have had so far in ten years, should encourage recruits. By general approval (this is getting a trifle too regular) the offices of Treasurer and Secretary were not changed.

Thanking Norman for his good work as Chairman for 1960 - 1, Jack Corbett proposed Tom Porter as Chairman for the coming year, seconded by myself. This was a popular decision, and Tom thanked us, saying that as the night had not been changed he saw no reason why his other duties would prevent him accepting the honour.

There was no programme apart from the dinner and the election of officers, so there was ample opportunity for getting together on our beloved topics of old boys books, cricket etc. We were delighted to have Jack Ingram with us again after a few months. Also, we were glad to learn of Beryl Porter's steady improvement.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERN

The meeting on June 10th was opened promptly at 7 p.m. by chairman Geoffrey Wilde, who had regretfully to announce that we were losing a member, Tony Potts, who had taken up an appointment which will entail his removal to another district. We all wish Tony the best of luck, and hope to see him from time to time. Geoff also expressed the pleasure which we all felt that the reports of the demise of the Merseyside Club were premature, and that they are very much alive and kicking down Liverpool way. This was indeed good news - long may they continue.

Gerry Allison, after giving his monthly report as treasurer and librarian, informed us that, for the first time in 11 years, we had lost a "Magnet" in the post. There was some discussion as to the advisability of having all series bound, and sending them by registered post to borrowers.

A sad note was struck when Gerry told us he had received a letter from Jim Hepburn of Blyth, telling us of the death of Mrs. Hepburn. We all extend our heartfelt sympathy to Jim, who is one of our founder members.

The forthcoming trip to Chesterfield was also discussed. It looks like being a truly representative gathering, as in addition to our own regulars there will be a contingent from the Manchester area, a Merseyside member and one from London, if present plans mature. We are all looking forward to a most enjoyable time on the 25th.

Jack Wood then gave us news of the latest Bunter book, to be published on the following Monday, entitled 'Billy Bunter at Butlin's' which seems to be in the author's usual happy vein.

Next came the reading of Frank Richards' fine story of Highcliffe, 'Rivals and Chums' in which Greyfriars also plays a considerable part. It was given this month by Breeze Bentley, and Breeze as usual, held our attention from the first - so much so that, after an interval for refreshments, he was asked if he would give us another session! He

duly obliged, and this passed the time very pleasantly until after nine o'clock when another enjoyable meeting terminated.

Next meeting, Saturday, 8th July.

F. HANCOCK - Secretary.

(Collectors' Digest expresses deepest sympathy to our reader, Jim Hepburn, in his great loss.)

MERSEYSIDE

Another successful meeting on June 11th was made even more enjoyable due to the kindness of Bill Windsor in acting as our host this month. A good attendance included Bill Greenwood, whom we were delighted to welcome back after his enforced absence over the past few months.

Proceedings opened with the Chairman's remarks on club and section topics, followed by the Secretary's report. Our financial resources at the moment justify our embarking on the purchase of fresh stocks for the library, and we should be pleased to hear from the section librarians if they have any spares for disposal.

The reading on this occasion was by John Farrell, his choice being an account of a cricket match featured in a 1915 Gem; this was not only entertaining and amusing but also topical. Then came a general discussion on the current T.V. Bunter series, but the consensus of opinion was not very favourable, it being felt that, apart from Gerald Campion, the cast and presentation are far from satisfactory and not to be compared with the recent production of the "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's."

After refreshments came a further round of the "Ask me Another" quiz. Frank Case's team managed to retain the lead, but this is of secondary importance in view of the pleasure the game affords to all taking part.

The meeting ended at 9 p.m., all too soon, as usual, and we look forward to our next get-together on July 9th at Thorndale Road.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

The Golden Hours Club, Sydney held their best meeting to date on June 15th when members gathered at the Book Bargain Bazaar. Winter is here now which perhaps sharpened members' appreciation of their most congenial meeting place. Attendance was the best this year and those present were happy to welcome back Bruce Fowler who has been absent from the ranks for several months.

Letters from Ron Hodgson and Harry Broster together with the ever popular Newsletter, were then passed around to the members to enjoy the news from overseas. From nearer home were letters from club member Arthur Hall, whose distance from the meeting does not dim his enthusiasm, and our Victorian friend, Tom Dobson, both of whom we hope to welcome to the club one day. From Canada came two letters from our very good friend Bill Gander who is always with us in spirit, thanks to the priceless little S.P.C.

Chairman Syd Smyth then announced that arrangements have been made to obtain a tape recorder and this will be available at the next club meeting on July 13th. Members were advised that the greeting to our friends of the Merseyside club would be recorded then if the expected attendance is realised.

Great interest was aroused by an extract from the "Daily Mail" dated April 26th, 1961, which the Chairman then passed around. The picture featured Billy Bunter come to life in the person of Gerald Campion in action on the playing fields of Eton for a forthcoming T.V. production. As Syd Smyth remarked, it was so well done it really seemed like a Chapman illustration come to life.

A report was given on the club magazine - most comments received have been favourable, but those who have any complaints were heard with equal interest. Articles

for issue No. 4 were discussed, highlight being a statistical scoop by Victor Colby, a genuine labour of love which took two of his three weeks annual leave to prepare. So be on the look out all you Blake fans for "The First Series Penny Popular Sexton Blake Reprints," and for the Hamilton enthusiasts there will be the first article by Mr. E. C. Snow who was an office boy with A.P. from 1919 to 1923.

As usual, the meeting was concluded very pleasantly in the nearby coffee shop at 9 p.m. with members already anticipating the next get-together.

B. PATE - Secretary.

LONDON

Another jolly meeting, this time at Paddington, with Jim Swan an ideal host. Sunday, June 18th, the date and a splendid gathering. Jim's collection lined the shelves, copies of Billy Bunter at Butlin's, were distributed and the Hamiltonian section of our library did excellent business keeping librarian, Roger Jenkins, very busy.

Marjorie and Bill Norris gave an account of their visit to Frank Richards, very interesting and enjoyable. Eric Payne conducted one of his "Missing Words" competitions and presented the winners with prizes. Bill Lofts gave his selection of "Desert Island Companions" and as a result of his choice, Tom Redwing tops the list so far as popularity is concerned. Quizzes by Winifred Morse, Charlie Wright, Don Webster and Len Packman helped to fill in the happy hours.

Bill Lofts stated that the "Gem" catalogue was going along satisfactorily.

Finally, Don Webster, Chairman in the unavoidable absence of Josie Packman, proposed a vote of thanks to the hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Swan plus sister Edith.

The date and venue of the July meeting was announced as Sunday, July 23rd, at Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey. Host Eric Payne. Kindly inform if intending to be present. Phone ELMBRIDGE 3357.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

SALE: 100 Populars 231 - 622 (1923 - 30). 16 1d. Green Populars (early Blake, Jack Sam, Pete, St. Jim's tales). Near perfect condition. S.A.E. Best offers.
H. HOLMES, 13 ST. LUKE'S STREET, BARROW IN FURNESS, LANCs.

WANTED URGENTLY: "Populars" 2nd series. Any issues between numbers 170 and 260. Very good price offered.
L. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: MAGNETS Nos. 648, 768, 771, 773, 933 and 1066. 15/- each offered or Red Magnets in exchange.
Write: LOFTS, 56 SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LONDON, N.W.1.

WANTED: S.L.O's 42, 258. Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid plus postage. The advertiser has some S.O.L's, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries 1st series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 485, 520, 667. Union Jacks Nos. 689, 691, 693, 702, 704, 711, 721, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.
MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

Nelson Lee Column

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

No. 334.

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

THREE-HALFPENCE



£10,000 TO A SHILLING

OR, LORD DORRIMORE'S
WAGER.

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's College, introducing NELSON LEE, NIPPER, and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "Missing From the Match," "The Mystery Outside-Right," "The Interrupted Match," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

This month we have an interesting letter from St. Frank's, in which our roving correspondent, Jim Cook, raises a controversial point as to whether the Sussex school juniors are less easily led up the garden path by odd masters than the Greyfriars Removites.

As staunch Franciscans, we stand by for blasting from the Hamiltonians - all in good part, though, we hope.

In the meantime, however, I have had some old-time Victoriana brought to my attention, with a view to disposal. If anyone is interested in good condition Jack Harkaways, Rupert Dreadnought, and Valentine Vox, perhaps they will let me know as soon as possible, and quote a price.

And now, over to JIM COOK.

OUR ST. FRANK'S CORRESPONDENT REPORTS

St. Frank's College,
Bellton, Sussex.

It has been mainly quiet during the summer months, although several interesting events have taken place that deserve mention. For the most part they appertain to activities connected with cricket and a new, or rather temporary, Remove Form master. Old Crowell, developed pneumonia and on the advice of Dr. Brett has gone to Switzerland to recuperate.

Consequently, the Head had to find a locum at short notice, and from an advertising journal he picked a candidate who had the necessary qualifications but not, as it turned out, the amazing forbearance which Mr. Crowell possesses. Each new master that has arrived at St. Frank's has been the subject of a detailed account, either because of his peculiar attraction or a hostile attitude toward the tenets of St. Frank's lore.

Next to politicians schoolmasters have certain fixed ideas for deciding the fate of the world, but these ideals clash violently so that the innocent schoolboy on reaching man's estate decides his own destiny by ignoring both. Whether the juniors of the Remove Form at St. Frank's would have adopted this procedure as a result of the advantageous offer by the new master is a matter for speculation, but since he came to the school with the intention of dictating to the boys exactly how the Ancient House should be run he soon found, like many another tyrant, that the boys of St. Frank's will not succumb to despotic authority.

It is amazing how the new master reacted to St. Frank's when he realised his pet theories were discredited by the entire school. Of his scholastic ability there was no question, but he wanted to discipline the Remove's activities after school hours in a manner best calculated to bring out that well known fighting spirit in the boys. For a temporary Form master his audacity was impertinent and a reflection on members of the staff who were of longstanding. Mr. Pagett, the Fifth Form master, shocked his colleagues in Master's Common Room by announcing that this paltry substitute for Mr. Crowell had instituted a system of 'fines' whereby each junior was compelled to 'donate' a sum of money instead of receiving lines.

The new idea was not appreciated except by fellows like Gore Pearce, Forrest and a few others. The showdown came when Teddy Long had to fork out a shilling for forgetting to wash his hands. Long, in his effort to borrow the amount from Archie Glenthorne, was overheard, and Mr. Pagett took it up at once. I am not quite sure what the ultimate fate was of the money this new man collected, but Ir. Stafford sacked

him forthwith.

Other points came to light when the Head started an enquiry, and it was agreed the new master's stay could not be tolerated. It appeared he had previously held a similar position of a temporary nature at Greyfriars school in Kent, but his references were unimpeachable, and if he had practised a similar trait there it had endured notwithstanding the impecuniosity of most of the fellows. No doubt, the wealth of St. Frank's had a greater attraction for him, but fellows like Singleton, Archie, Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Vivian Travers, The Duke of Somerton and a few others, though very liberal, do not throw the stuff away.

Some other time I will record the short stay of this temporary master for it makes a very interesting study of how one school can apparently accommodate on its staff such a rogue while another school exposes him almost at once. Whether, as I said in the beginning, the Remove was a Form he could not forbear perhaps his action was an outlet for his failure to adopt with success his previous money making schemes. At Greyfriars he may have had a minor victory over the boys in the Remove there but there were pickings to be had and the rich St. Frank's boys were waiting to be plucked. If he had had replies to his advertisement in the journal he would have ignored them in favour of a post at St. Frank's.

Nelson Lee took over the Remove until Mr. Crowell was able to return from his convalescence.

I really wanted to talk about circuses in this letter!! The other afternoon being very rainy and Little Side under water no cricket was possible, and the match with Bannington Grammar School postponed. So we kept in the Junior Common Room and spent the time in various ways. The subject of circuses cropped up and Handforth eagerly suggested the Remove get together again and form a circus on the same lines as they did when they ran Professor Onions' circus some time ago.

Old Handy has such wild ideas that when he does think of something good it isn't at first realised! It is really surprising how easily a circus could be formed from the boys ... such talented fellows like the Onions brothers, Reggie Pitt, Fatty Little, Buster Boots, in fact somewhere in the past there is a record of the amazing feats these juniors performed when they lent their support in running a circus.

Handforth suggested a charity show to which Nipper agreed at once. Well, we sat and talked over the time when Professor Onions' Colossal Circus and Menagerie came to Helmsford and how the Remove supplied new turns of Johnny and Bertie Onions ... of Mr. Simon Snayle ... the rascally manager... Jerry Dodd and Bud, his wonder pony ... Buster

Boots and his quick-fire publicity ... Justin B. Farman, Willy Handforth Tessa Love - later to be a pupil at Moor View School. Lots more were mentioned, and as the rain beat against the Common Room windows the juniors enlarged on the idea to form a circus similar, but on a smaller scale to aid a local charity.

Perhaps more of this happy idea later.

* * * * *

WANTED: Populars 120, 153, 160, 162, 163, 168, 169, 217, 219. Any pink Union Jacks prior to 1917. Sexton Blake Libraries, first series 1, 2, 4 - 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21 - 27, 29 - 32, 34 - 64. Fair condition; please state price.
S. G. SWAN, 51 BEATTY AVENUE, VICTORIA PARK EAST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

* * * * *

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Still come the famous to our renowned hostelry to sample the old English roast beef, the four-poster beds, and ginger-beer straight from the barrel. The latest visitor is LES ROWLEY, and before he left, sun-tanned and happy, this is what he wrote in the visitors' book:

Some people want what they don't need - others need what they don't want.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

The MAY AND JUNE issues of SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY, reviewed by
WALTER WEBB.

LOVELY - BUT LETHAL (No. 475)

PETER SAXON

That certain indispensable something which forms the root of all evil forms also the basis of this novel which sees the welcome return of Peter Saxon to the pages of the S.B.L. after a too-long absence.

From the outset Sexton Blake smelt something fishy about the death of the multi-millionaire, Gregory Rawlings, and on discovering that he was being used as a witness - and in a beneficiary capacity at that - for a murderer, he set about the task of bringing this particular individual to face the justice of a British court.

It took him on a brief journey to Spain to save Marion Lang's life, Tinker on a

shorter and equally brief journey to Birmingham's New Street and the famous "Mail" office there, and a certain confidential secretary to a late millionaire on a mission for which a return ticket proved unnecessary.

It's quite a story for Splash Kirby and the DAILY POST, and that goes for S.B.L. readers, too.

Rating _____ Very Good.

DEADLY PERSUASION (No. 476)

DESMOND REID

Whether he has "caught on" with the modern Blake reader or not, Achille Hurot, French equivalent to the American hunk of beefcake, is certainly one of the most attractively virile characters in the S.B.L. today.

In his conflict with a ring of diamond smugglers Blake found Hurot on his "home" ground in Gay Paree a tower of strength, though it was left to chic Parisian policewoman, Mamselle Julie Morel, to demonstrate once again that when emergency decrees masculine strength becomes but a pure weapon when pitted against the wiles of an attractive young woman.

For me, this was one of the most enjoyable stories yet published under the Desmond Reid by-line, and now await the early return of Achille and Julie, two characters with distinct possibilities of being able to carve out for themselves a niche of popularity enjoyed in varying measures by other subsidiary S.B.L. characters of a by-gone age.

Rating _____ Very Good.

ROGUE'S HARBOUR (No. 477)

JACK TREVOR STORY

One would never accuse Jack Trevor Story of not striving for originality, and if, maybe, the plot here does have more than an air of familiarity about it - a smuggling gang, the doublecrossing and subsequent vengeance of certain units against other units of the combine is a theme old as the hills - yet handled by a writer who combines a nimble wit with fertile imagination, it is surprising what can be produced in the way of entertainment from a plot that was growing whiskers since long before Blake was ever thought of.

It is not so much the story as the way the author has told it. His characters are unique - some seem to have jumped right from the pages of a book of fairy tales. None more so, than Pepe, who saw everything from his crack in the floorboard.

A fantastic and amusing novel - certainly one of the most extraordinary ever published in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

Rating _____ Very Good.

MURDERER'S ROCK (No. 478)

DESMOND REID

The long-promised Irish story, written by - I suspect - one who is both thoroughly English and a Blake fan of long standing.

Like its companion it has smuggling as its theme, but here the similarity ends - in every other way, except that whereas lobsters play quite an important part here as against a particular brand of sardine in the previous story - the two novels are as the poles apart.

When Blake is asked to investigate the death of a Customs Officer in County Down, Northern Ireland, he is naturally mystified on taking up his commission in the vicinity to discover that his presence is resented none more strongly than by those who were so anxious to obtain his services in the first place.

A first-class novel of murder and terrorism on a nation-wide scale, with Blake and Tinker in the old happy partnership, and one surprising Graydonian expression to further remind the faithful of halcyon days.

Rating _____ Very Good.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

SUPPORTING ITEM: Should articles such as those which used to appear in the old Magazine Section be recalled to the pages of the S.B.L.? If followed closely on the lines of that which appeared under the title of "The Odyssey of Sexton Blake," in No. 477, I would answer with a definite, "yes."

This little article will be of great interest to the Blake fan, for it contains many interesting facts about his favourite character.

Reproductions of the front covers of certain foreign editions of the S.B.L., published with the article, will be of great interest, and I feel that if this should become a regular feature it would find a favourable response amongst the majority. Not only would it introduce some much desired variety into the pages of the Library, but we could then compare the merits of the foreign editions with those of our own - leaving the question of colour out of the reckoning, of course, and concentrating on the design.

Yours Sincerely

(Interesting items from the Editor's post-bag)

C. D. reader Mrs. M. Jarrett of Brislington. She is a keen Sexton Blake fan, and our picture shows her with her own tinker, Paul.



ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby) The reproduction of the BULLSEYE cover was a gem. It was one of my favourite magazines, and I have not seen a copy since the early 30's. The description in "How They Began" was very accurate. I was caught with that irresistible attraction of the Bullseye, with its tendency towards the horrific, but, as you state, it was never sadistic. You also mention two of my favourite stories, "House of Thrills" and "Phantom of Cursitor Field.s" Collectors' Digest gets better and better. Dear Herbert would be very proud of it.

MISS E. B. FLINDERS (Hitchin) "Selby's Lucky Strike" was very entertaining, and the article about Warwick Reynolds and his family was interesting indeed to me, as he was my favourite artist.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley) I was very pleased to see the illustrations by E. R. Parker of the Jaxon Lee story which has just ended in Film Fun. I think Mr. Parker did so much to build up the images of Sexton Blake, Tinker, Mrs. Bardell, to say nothing of the host of characters in pre-war days - Zenith, Waldo, the Bat, etc.

BILL LOFTS (London) Mr. N. Linford is quite correct. The stories of Cliff House by John W. Whewy started in April 1932, though they were actually written some time beforehand. The last story of Cliff House by L. E. Ransome was in School Friend dated 27th July 1929.

On the merits of Dodshon and Laidler, I am told that Dodshon was a staff artist. He had a room at Fleetway House, where he used to draw his pictures. A dependable man, he was easily accessible in the event of editors wanting something in a hurry.

In reply to Jack Murtagh, a complete list of Charles Hamilton's work, from the 1890's till the present day, has been compiled. When this will be published I cannot say, as there is so much other material in hand.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton) Thanks for the reproduction of the Firefly, drawn, I think, by Louis Smythe. What a fine black and white artist he was, and how immaculate in his distribution of light and shade! The A.P. artists were like the girl in the nursery rhyme; either very good or horrid. Reynolds and Smythe were far too good for juvenile publications, which is lucky for us.

REUBEN GODSAVE (Leytonstone) I should like to express my appreciation of the subtle wit that is found in Ye Olde Cynique Inn.

PATRICK CREIGHAN (Monaghan) I think the Digest is a wonderful production, and my only regret is that I didn't find out about it sooner. I would like to see some articles on the old comics, particularly the 1920/30 period. I admired the reproductions of Lot-o-Fun, Butterfly, etc, in the Digest last year.

PETER HANGER (Northampton) The Hotspur was my favourite. In pre-war days it specialised in school stories, and I always like to think of it as my prep school before going to Greyfriars. The Digest gets better and better - it really does. I particularly liked the St. Jim's story in the May issue. Could you not publish more of these stories in the Digest or the Annual? I greatly enjoy them, and oh, how I envy the people who can write them.

HAYDN SALMON (Ipswich) Anent John Tomlinson's letter (Yours Sincerely May C.D.) I feel that I must associate myself with his comments on Ralph Leslie Fullwood of St. Frank's, who is also a particular favourite of mine, and would have had a high rating by me had he been among the 25 listed in the present most interesting popularity contest. A word or so on E. O. Handforth. This character, with his superficial aggressiveness, is a most interesting one, for, if my memory serves me well, there were many instances when in moments of crisis unsuspected qualities of leadership, resource, understanding and sympathy of a sensitive kind came to the surface.

TOM DOBSON (Australia) Could a special appeal be made to Frank Richards to finish off "Jack of All Trades"? The last book, about 3 years ago, left our hero a prisoner on a Dutch boat, destination unknown. This is a very good series, it covers fresh ground, and I am sure the fans would like to see it completed.

POT - POURRI

ODDS AND ENDS

By GERRY ALLISON

AFTER ELEVEN YEARS: Since June 1950, approximately 2500 packets of books have been sent off to postal members of the Northern Section, O.B.B.C., and not one has gone astray.

Last Saturday, however, instead of receiving Magnets Nos. 879-888 - the first Wharton Rebel series from a borrower, the books enclosed with his letter were the following: "Lecture Notes on Midwifery," "Textbook for Health Visitors," "General Arithmetic for Schools," "Elementary Geometry," and "School Certificate Algebra."

Frantic telephone calls have at present recovered nine of the ten Magnets, but No. 884 is still missing. Can anyone suggest how much should be claimed for the missing number, taking into account the scarcity of the period, and the odds against finding that odd copy? It has been a blow!

THE PRINCE OF GIANTLAND: Will Greyfriars stories still be reprinting in 1980? If so they will have had a run of 73 years, which is the span of time achieved by the Tim Pippin saga, which first appeared in 1872, and had their last issue in 1945.

This reflection has occurred to me, as at long last I have obtained a complete run of "The Prince of Giantland," the first story of Tim Pippin the Younger. Admirers of Tim Pippin are very few. Herbert Leckenby and John Medcraft have passed on, and apart from "Otto Maurer" who is now the supreme expert on Pippiniana, I know only of Bill Hall in Australia and myself. How I love to see Bill's adverts, offering Magnets, Gems, Comics, etc., anything in fact, for copies of Young Folks Tales. Good hunting, Bill.

What a wonderfully diverse hobby ours is, with all its many pleasures and interests. The little tract of land ruled by R. H. M. Quittenton, the author of "Giantland" and its sequels, is a country discovered by very few explorers. But what a Magic Land it is.

"THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS"

By W. J. A. Hubbard

Introduction:

It has always struck me as rather puzzling considering the fact that most followers of our hobby have a marked preference for school stories why the hard cover story is so completely neglected especially when one remembers that such yarns were written by authors of a high literary standard and published by eminent firms. Indeed, as a reader of the C.D. Monthly and Annual for close on ten years I can only remember one reference to these stories and an attempt to assess their real place in schoolboy literature, and this was in one of Mr. Eric Fayne's "Controversial" articles.

This series of articles is therefore an attempt to view some of these stories in their proper perspective. In a recent "Desert Island Books" talk given to the London O.B.B.C. I suggested that more attention might be given to the reading and discussion of hard cover school stories, some of which were, of course, reprints from serials written for such fine papers as the "E.O.P." and "The Captain". These articles will, I hope, do something towards stimulating that interest. My thanks are due to a well known member of the London O.B.B.C. who has kindly allowed me to borrow a number of hard cover school stories from his collection. Without his help this series would have been quite impossible and I am deeply grateful for his kindness.

No. 1. "The Bending of a Twig" by Desmond Coke:

Desmond Coke is not particularly well known among authors of boys' stories mainly because his style of writing was often of adult appeal. He does not appear to have contributed very much to boys' papers, most of his stories appearing originally in hard cover form.

In his "Controversial" article Mr. Fayne states that Coke's stories were about boys but mainly written for adults. This is particularly true of "The Bending of a Twig" which is also rather original in that the school featured - Shrewsbury - is a real one. This adult style, however, means that such a story can be read with considerable interest today by any of our circle, for very obvious reasons.

(concluded next month)