

Collector's Digest

2/-

Vol. 15, No. 178
OCTOBER 1961

"I'm Expecting"

"It hasn't
Arrived!"



COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 15

Number 178

OCTOBER, 1961

Price 2s. Od.

EDITORIAL



FRANK NUGENT



VERNON SMITH



JACK WHARTON



ROBERT CHERRY



JOHN BLAKE

THE WHIPPING BOY. In a letter printed in this month's Yours Sincerely, Mr. James Cook of Wembley, a popular contributor to our Nelson Lee Column, has your editor on the carpet. As is well-known, the Column is conducted by Jack Wood, who has served us all loyally and nobly for a good many years, but Mr. Wood, being human (and a busy man,) is no more infallible than your editor. Last month, when it was time to go to press, the Lee Column had not arrived. Inevitably, it was OUT. I rushed a full-sized reproduction of Nelson Lee No. 1 into part of the space which the column would have occupied. I hoped that readers would like it.

Mr. Cook enquires whether my complacency in stating that I had never been short of material included the Lee Column. I must confess that it did not. Articles intended for the various columns are passed on to our columnists. Mr. Cook, of course, means that, as editor, I should be prepared for any emergency, and I daresay he is right.

I am asked to state definitely whether this omission of material in the Lee Column is going to be a monthly hazard. I certainly hope not, but it is rash to make promises. After all, one month I may be worried to death.

With regard to the apology I made for the non-appearance of the reviews of the Sexton Blake novels, I did not make a similar apology to our Lee fans, for the Lee Column actually appeared - albeit, with only

the picture of the Nelson Lee Library No. 1. In fact, I thought it made a nice attractive page, didn't you?

THE ANNUAL, 1961. Last month I promised to give you a peep into some of the intriguing ingredients which will make up this year's ANNUAL. So here we go, but remember, it's only a preliminary peep.

One of our finest writers - ROGER JENKINS - is back this year with a bang. His article "VARIATIONS ON A THEME" is a superb piece of work in which every reader will revel.

An expert on the early Magnet, and writer of many fascinating articles in the past, is J. BREEZE BENTLEY, whose article on FRANK NUGENT is surely the best thing he has ever done for the Annual.

BRIAN DOYLE strikes a new note with "THROUGH THE YEARS WITH 'CHUMS'" and GERALD ALLISON turns the spotlight on Richmal Crompton's lovable character in his delightful article "FOREVER WILLIAM."

TOM HOPPINGTON brings us "BY ANY OTHER NAME", a study of Hamiltonian nomenclature which is completely fascinating, and R. J. GODSAVE takes a look at a remarkable Nelson Lee character "THE BLACK WOLF."

OTTO MAURER is back again this year with a lovely piece of whimsy entitled "WHAT IS GOSSAMER?"

A popular item last year was "No End in Sight" and plenty of readers have asked for further adventures of Mr. Buddle and Meredith. These two characters will be back again in a brand new adventure in this year's Annual.

No room for more this month. Next month we shall lift the curtain still further. In the meantime, don't miss your Annual for 1961. Send in your order form before mid-November.

THE EDITOR.

* * * * *

WANTED: "Collectors' Miscellanies". Volumes or odd copies, "Sons of Britannia" and "Boys' Standard."

TOM HOPPINGTON, COURTLANDS, FULFORD PARK, SCARBOROUGH.

FOR SALE: 17 Rovers between 697/939. 12 Adventures between 801/925. 8 Champions between 814/916. 5 Pilots between 14/20. 32 Wizards between 664/876. 15 Hotspurs between 61/314. 58 Skippers between 316/493. All dates between 1934/1940. 1/- each plus post. S.A.E. please stating wants. C. CHURCHILL, 53 UNION ROAD, EXETER.

MODERN BOYS for sale. All in mint condition. About 140 copies. C. LETTEY, 27 HEATHER CLOSE, KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL.

A Splendid Troupe of Entertainers Specially Engaged to Amuse our Readers.



P U C K

—

KING OF THE COMICS

By W. O. G. Lofts

A writer stated some years ago that 'PUCK' was the king of comics; and although this point may be questioned by some collectors, I can well remember having this impression when a child. In my days of comic reading I always regarded 'PUCK' with some sort of awe. It seemed too adult in material for my childish tastes, and yet, when I had grown out of the comic stage, and passed on to boys' papers, 'Puck' still remained in my memory as a type of comic to cater for the much older group of comic readers.

But whether 'PUCK' was adult in material or not, it may come as a great surprise to many readers to learn that when the first issue of 'Puck' appeared on July 30th, 1904, it was not intended to cater for the juvenile market at all.

Priced One Penny - The New Humorous Paper for Home - was how the first number was described. Its editorial on page 2, boasted that it was the first number of the very first coloured comic paper, which was not true at all! In fact the very first coloured comic had appeared some seven years earlier in 1897, when the title of this publication was, aptly enough, 'THE COLOURED COMIC'. I am most fortunate enough to have

the first issue in my collection of comic papers.

Number One of 'PUCK' had on its front page a coloured comic strip entitled 'The Comic Adventures of Oliver Twist and the Artful Dodger' whilst the already mentioned editorial was entitled 'My Busy Day'. Also on this page was a painting competition in which children were invited to compete as well as grownups.

Page 3 had a story with the title of 'The Man with the Weird Eyes', (a mystery of Paris), whilst this page also contained a column written by the office boy called 'Bones to Pick' by John Jones (chief Office Boy). The centre pages which were coloured were full of cartoons, and on Pages 6 and 7 there was another anonymous story in serial form with the title of 'Crusoe and Co.' Pages 8 and 9 were full of black and white cartoons, whilst page 10 had a most amusing story entitled "Miss Meakin's Boarders" or Sidelights of the life of some of Bloomsbury's Paying Guests. This page also included 'Pickwick's Club' - or a philosophy at the cabmen's rest - written by one of the Victorian Sexton Blake writers 'Paul Herring.' The editor of 'PUCK' must have favoured Charles Dickens' work. Page 11 had a complete story 'The Cross Channel Boat' - by W. Pett Ridge, whilst to complete a bumper pennyworth of 'PUCK', page 12, the last in colour, featured a comic strip of 'Professor Radium' the Scientificman.

No. 2 of 'PUCK' featured Professor Radium on the front page, but shortly after this number, the cover was devoted for a time, to a full size picture-type cartoon in colour. Authors' names were given to the stories, and they contained such well-known Sexton Blake authors as 'Robert Murray', 'Cecil Hayter', 'Norman M. Goddard' and 'David Goodwin.' Apart from these, one finds the name of the creator of 'Raffles' - E. W. Hornung - and E. Burrows, Foster Bowen, Tristram K. Monk, Max Donerall, Frank Howell Evans, E. Newton Bungley, Herbert Compton, Ellis Ellson and many others.

The issue of 'PUCK' No. 11 clearly proved that it was an adult publication as they included a supplement entitled 'PUCK JUNIOR', several pages devoted specially to young people. This was however dropped in No. 16, and it is in my opinion that from this issue 'PUCK' gradually changed from an adult comic paper to the juvenile one we know so well.

No. 21 introduced 'Johnny Jones and the Casey Court Boys' when the latter characters which had become so famous in 'Chips' were probably brought in to give the paper a boost. These were still in 'PUCK' in 1908, when the famous serial 'Britain in Peril', a story of the Invasion of England by Germany and Russia, was running.

Issues of wartime 1915 'PUCK' showed it to be definitely of a juvenile format. Its front page had 'The Merry Pranks of Angel, Bertie and their friends the little Clowns' drawn by Bert Brown, the doyen of comic artists. Stories included the very famous 'Val Fox, the boy Ventriloquist Detective' - and a title of a story well-known to us 'Boys will be Boys' but written by Albert E. Bull - and not E. S. Turner. A school serial was running at this time 'The Boys who came out Top' by a mysterious author of the name of 'Mark Winchester', whilst another school yarn of St. Cuthberts School, written by a 'Jack Devon', I suspect hid the identity of Jack Lewis, the Sexton Blake writer. This school story incidentally, was illustrated by Leonard Shields, the 'Magnet' artist, and another artist to the fore was J. Louis Smythe of 'Fun and Fiction', 'Firefly' and 'Bullseye' fame. Also of interest to Sexton Blake fans was the name of Coutts Brisbane (R. Coutts Armour) attached to a delightful series of Nature stories. 'Puck's' Toy Model Series completes roughly the contents for 1915 when the models at that period were of a war-like nature. War trains going to Fight was just one of these.

The year 1925 still featured Angel and her playmates, whilst Val Fox was now joined by his pets. Angel, I should say, was also featured by the addition of four comic animals that seemed to have been 'lifted' out of 'THE RAINBOW' - Bert Bruin-Eddy Elephant - Olly Ostrich - Peter Pelican - with the addition of two penguins - Popsy and Pansy.

'Rob the Rover' a picture strip was also appearing at this time - (so recently mentioned by George Burgess in 'Yours Sincerely'), though at this period 'Rob, Dick and Old Dan' were going on a flight round the world. Comic strips included such well-known favourites as 'Mike and Milly' - the two Merry Mischiefs' 'Dan, the Merry Menagerie Man' 'Fun at Dr. Jolliboy's School' 'Jolly Jinks in Jungle-land' with 'Charlie Croc' and 'Handy Boy Joe.'

'Puck' 1343 dated April 26th, 1930, still had Val Fox and Rob the Rover going strong when they were joined by 'Rin-Tin-Tin' the wonder dog, and stories of Robin Hood, Angel and her merry playmates were still appearing, though now in the centre pages.

The war-time 'Puck' in 1940 still featured 'Rob the Rover' 'Rin-Tin-Tin' and the ever popular Val Fox, though 'Edwin and Edgar' - the Terrible Twins - were now on the front page. May 11th brought the most thrilling news to readers that 'Puck' next week joins 'Sunbeam and that "a fine free Glider will be given away to every reader boy and girl who buys it!" It was also suggested that when the readers had tired of playing with the glider, they might like to read the 'SUNBEAM.'

So 'PUCK', after appearing for over 35 years - passed into the graveyard of many other comics in wartime - mainly due to the shortage of paper. I do not know the circulation figures of any given year - though I doubt if they were as high as 'THE RAINBOW' and 'TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY'. The former was so rightly called by Len Packman, some years ago, 'the junior king of Comics.'

I don't class 'PUCK' as one of my favourite childhood comics, though many will remember it with great nostalgia and I do hope that this condensed article will arouse happy memories- of a day when comics were comics and 'PUCK', to many, was King.

- - - - -

WANTED: "Magnets" Nos. 1299-1319, 1321-23, 1327, 1329-31, 1334, 1337, 1343 and 1350 (1933); 1252, 1255-61, 1263-66, 1268-69 and 1275-98 (1932). OR any bound volumes of pre-1934 "Magnets". (Bound volume of 1919 "Magnets" Nos. 601-650 incl. offered in exchange; also bound volumes of Greyfriars Herald (Nos. 51-100 incl.) and "Young Britain" (Nos. 1-128 incl.) To complete set and replace worn copies: "Chums" volumes for following years - 1893-1901 incl., 1909, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1927, 1929, 1932 and 1934. To complete set "Captain" volumes 40, 47, 49 and 50.
 " " " " "Holiday Annual" 1920.
 " " " " "Collectors' Digest Annual" No. 1.

Also wanted long runs or bound volumes of pre-war "Hotspur" "Wizard" "Skipper" "Film Fun"; Wodehouse's "A Prefect's Uncle"; Hadath's "Grim Work at Bodland's" and "The Secret of the Code"; and pre-war editions only of school stories by Cleaver, Havelton, Hadath, Bird or authors of similar vintage (not T. B. Reed or very early authors.) Please write, with details and prices to:
 BRIAN DOYLE, GARDEN FLAT, 13 NORTHBOURNE ROAD, LONDON, S.W.4.

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, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 788, 790, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.
 MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: GEMS 407, most issues between 412 and 500; most issues between 772 and 842, 935, 953, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129, 1150. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 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 821 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.

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

WANTED: S.O.L'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: C.D. Annuals 1947, 1948, 1949, 1952, 1953, 1954. JOHN WERNHAM, 5 MUSEUM STREET, HAIDSTONE.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

SPECIAL COMPLETE STORY of the St. Frank's Boys.

ST. FRANK'S RETURNS TO THE CONGO

By JACK WOOD

"Ripping!" Nipper, the junior captain of St. Frank's was not, as might be imagined, commenting on the familiar view of St. Frank's on a fine summer afternoon.

He was, in fact, standing with other juniors of the famous Sussex school on the verandah of the Residency in Zenobu, the capital of the Central African State of Kutana.

Like many other states in the vast hinterland of the Congo, Kutana was feeling the draught of the winds of change which were blowing over Central and Southern Africa, and Nipper and his companions from St. Frank's, with some of their girl chums from Moor View, had come out to Zenobu with their old friend Umlosi, King of the Kutanas, to see at first hand what was happening in the country's bid for independence.

"Ripping!" repeated Nipper as he stood watching the changing scene in the streets beyond the Residency. The colourful crowds, and the steaming, mysterious jungle which was not so very far away from the town centre, never ceased to thrill the visitors.

"Wau, thou speakest well, O Manzie," said Umlosi, who was with his young friends with whom he had had many adventures in various parts of the world. "But my snake warns me that all is far from well with my people, and that much blood will be shed before peace comes."

"Quiet, you lump of black coal," put in Lord Dorrimore, who was with Nelson Lee and the British Resident, Mr. John Minter, at the other end of the cool verandah.

"There's no sign of trouble out there."

"Thou speakest jestingly, N'Kose, my father," rumbled Umlosi, "But my snake is not mistaken. The Oturi tribe, with whom my people have had much trouble in the past, are on the move again, and my snake tells me of mysterious happenings in the jungle beyond the Kalala river."

"Well, that lot can't be causing trouble again," said Edward Oswald Handforth. "We put paid to them years ago on another visit to the Congo. Lorenzo and his slave-trading gang were all rounded up or killed before the great flood which covered the area where they had been working the rubber plantations."

"Wau, thou speakest truly, O loud-voiced one, but one, Popodos, Lorenzo's assistant, was never found," replied Umlosi, "and my people tell me of a man working great mysteries in the heart of the jungle beyond the Kalala who may well be him."

"Well, we shall see," said Nelson Lee, and as if to echo his words there was a sudden commotion in the crowds in the street beyond the Residency compound, and a man staggered past the sentry and made his way to the foot of the verandah, as he saw the group of figures watching him.

"M'zuma," rumbled Umlosi, rising to his feet.

It was, indeed, the king of the Kutana's chief minister who had staggered exhausted to the foot of the verandah where a crowd of excited Africans gathered round to hear what he had to say. But M'zuma was not his usual cheery self. He was covered in dust and his clothes were torn as if he had covered many miles of rough country to find

Umlosi.

And so, it appeared from his story, he had. He told of mysterious happenings in the interior of the jungle, and of three white men who were using the Oturi tribesmen on some strange underground workings in the old caves where Nipper and Handforth had once chased Lorenzo and his lieutenant Popodos before the great flood.

Anyone who managed to penetrate the jungle disappeared or died mysteriously on approaching the waters guarding the caves. But a Kutana tribesman had managed to escape and had been found, exhausted and dying, on the Kutana side of the river Kalala, by M'zuma. Before he died he had managed to gasp out his story to M'zuma. One of the white men, he said, was the slim Greek, Popodos; the others he did not know, but they appeared to be in charge of the workings in the caves.

"Well, Professor, it looks as if we shall have to do a bit of investigating," observed Lord Dorrimore, as he and Nelson Lee listened to M'zuma's story.

"Yes," replied Nelson Lee thoughtfully. "I have heard strange rumours of someone agitating the Oturi to cause trouble in the political struggles which are now affecting this whole continent. I have a strange feeling in my bones"

A week later, a party of Europeans and Africans could be seen marching through the tangled jungle, hacking their way through the encroaching tendrils of the thick undergrowth as they forced their way onward. The Europeans were Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and the boys of St. Frank's and their girl chums who had flatly refused to be left behind.

The Africans were Kutana tribesmen, and with them was the giant Umlosi, who seemed to be thriving on the prospect of the bloodshed foretold by his 'snake.' The party was armed in view of the dangers ahead.

It had been Nelson Lee's idea to give the party at least an outward appearance of an ordinary safari, in the hope that, if the mysterious people on the other side of the Kalala heard of them they would merely think of them as a hunting expedition looking for elephants.

"After all," Lee said to Lord Dorrimore, "we don't want trouble if we can avoid it, and we certainly don't want the youngsters to run into great danger." Dorrimore's reply was to the effect that the youngsters had been in plenty of danger on other occasions and had come through without harm.

"Water!" Handforth's shout broke the tension as the party neared their objective. It was the Kalala river, black as ever, and several of the boys and girls shuddered as they looked across the dismal-looking river to the dank, evil-smelling jungle beyond.

As the party halted on the banks of the river in a small clearing, they did not realise that their progress was being watched by Oturi tribesmen hidden in the trees beyond the river. Cold, hateful eyes, baleful with the thought of revenge over their Kutana enemies. The party's future looked ominous, indeed.

After testing the water to make sure that it was not electrified, as it had been on a previous occasion, Nelson Lee and his party crossed the river by means of a rope bridge which they slung across the lifeless waters. Though murmurings of disquiet came from their African companions, Umlosi rallied his compatriots, and the progress continued.

As they penetrated farther into the jungle, they began to feel more and more shut in. Apart from the sound of their own slow progress there was an unusual silence, a brooding silence indicative of hidden trouble to come. Only Umlosi's eyes glistened with the thoughts of battle and the devastation which he would wreak with his beloved spear.

The trouble came suddenly and unexpectedly. Hordes of yelling Oturis surrounded the party, and before the Kutanas knew what had happened they had been disarmed. The British party was thrown into temporary confusion, unable to use weapons in the general melee, and they were quickly overpowered by weight of numbers, and captured.

The yelling, triumphant Oturi forced them to walk along the rough track through the jungle and almost before they knew it they entered a thriving little township.

As they were brought to a halt outside the largest dwelling, a sprawling bungalow with well-cultivated gardens outside it, Nelson Lee and his companions marvelled at this unexpected sight in the middle of an impenetrable jungle.

The Oturi suddenly became silent. A door on to the verandah of the bungalow opened and three men stepped out.

"Popodos!" breathed Nipper, as he noticed the slim Greek who had once been Otto Lorenzo's chief lieutenant in the rubber plantations.

"Zingrave, and Jim the Penman," said Nelson Lee as he recognised Popodos's companions.

"Yes, my dear Lee," observed the smaller of the Greek's companions. "It is indeed me. You thought I was dead to the world in the confines of some petty little prison in England, but you will never get me to stay in such surroundings."

"I recall hearing that you and Jim had escaped once again from Portmoor," said Nelson Lee. "But - you can't keep on doing so. Some time it will be the finish you know."

"But not yet," retorted the Professor. "You are in my country now, and you will never escape to tell the world where I am."

"Never is a long time," said Lord Dorrmore. "We've had a lot of threats from you in the past and still lived to tell the tale."

"True," put in Jim the Penman, "but this time you are in our country. That makes all the difference. We have done a lot here to make out future secure, and we don't intend to let anyone, least of all you, spoil our plans now."

"We don't even know what your plans are, though much of the mystery of what had been heppening on this side of the Kalala becomes clear as we find you here," said Nelson Lee.

"We shall have plenty of time to tell you all about them," said the Professor smoothly. "In fact, I will tell you now, because you won't have the chance to tell anyone else and we shall soon be ready to put them into operation."

Nelson Lee and his white companions were taken into the bungalow, whilst Unlosi and his Kutanas were hurried off to

captivity in one of the native kraals.

It was a long tale which Zingrave had to tell. After escaping from Portmoor with Jim the Penman, he had made his way to Africa and had fallen in with Popodos, who was in dire straits after escaping from the flooded Kalala valley. Together they had made their way back to the region which retained much of its mystery and fear for the local tribes.

The caves had been found inhabitable, and after a time the floods had subsided leaving soil, good for cultivation, and several clearings where new towns had been built. The Oturi, anxious to regain their lost prestige had joined Popodos, and had been used by Zingrave and Sutcliffe to mine uranium and other materials which the Professor, as an eminent scientist, had quickly recognised as the ingredients of some future super-explosive substance.

He had preyed on the fears and superstitions of the natives, and the current political situation had given him scope for fomenting trouble, and for promising the Oturi self-government over the neighbouring countryside, which included the rich, fertile lands of the British Protectorate of Kutana.

"Our plans are nearly ready for implementation," said the Professor at last, "and there is no time for interference. I am sorry our old enmity should end like this, Lee, but I have no choice. You and your companions will be handed over to Oturi to do with as they please. That will, no doubt, be a human sacrifice at the full moon by the Circle of Fire!"

As the Professor stopped talking, there was a sudden yelling from outside. Drums were being beaten, there was a clash of spears and the crackle of rifle fire. Darting to the window, the Penman saw a struggling mass of humanity. Unlosi was in the centre wielding his giant spear like a man possessed.

But what dismayed the Penman, as he gaped out the news to the Professor and Popodos, was that with the giant Kutana were British troops who were quickly getting the upper hand and forcing their way to the bungalow.

"Not this time," laughed Nelson Lee as he grappled with a fuming Professor, while Dorrie collared the Penman, and the St. Frank's juniors made sure of the Creek. "No doubt, we shall meet again in, I hope, a very distant future. M'zuma and the rearguard troops arrived just in time."

"Thrilling while it lasted, but I'll be glad to get back to St. Frank's and footer next term," said Edward Oswald Handforth. Little did he know what excitement the new term held for the Con o Adventurers!

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

My request for information about the late Cecil Hayter has not been very fruitful to date. I have however, had one interesting letter. This I will put in Blakiana next month, by which time I am hoping to hear from someone else on the subject.

I would like to thank those of you who have sent me little pieces for publication in this section of the C.D. during the past few months. I hope more will follow.

JOSIE PACKMAN

THE GRANT AND JULIE FAN

It was early in the summer morning - barely six o'clock. The small Fayne boy was going afloat with his father. Near the Custom House was a small newsagent's shop. The boy asked his father for a few coppers with which to buy something to read. But the newsagent had nothing but newspapers, and a few Sexton Blake Libraries. The boy didn't care for the look of any of them, but he selected "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement." Later that day, seated on the bridge of his father's ship, the Fayne boy first met Granite Grant and Julie. He was to worship at their shrine for the rest of his life.

I have been intensely interested in Bill Lofts' article on Pierre Quiroule. As Bill mentioned, long ago when the C.D. was very young, I wrote an article on this Blake writer whom I have always considered the best of the lot. It can do no harm to look back

on a few points now.

Bill states that Mr. Sayer regards his first two Grant-Julie stories of poor quality, and I am in full agreement. Luckily for me, "The Turkish Agreement" was the third. It was, in fact, only in recent years that I acquired, through the kindness of friends, those first two stories - "The King's Spy" and "The Strange Wireless Message." Neither is good, and if either had been my first experience of the work of P.Q., I should probably never have become a Quiroule fan.

But "The Turkish Agreement" is in another class entirely. It is a magnificent detective-cum-cloak-and-dagger story, well up to the standard of any stiff-covered modern thriller, and, from a literary viewpoint, superior to most. Oddly enough, it was never reprinted.

I followed the Grant-Julie stories in the S.B.L. for years - and then they stopped suddenly; I waited a very long time, and then I started a correspondence with the editor - a most interesting one, at that. For some time he told me, patiently, in reply to each of my persistent letters, that the author of the stories was no longer writing. That should have been the end of it - but I refused to take "No" for an answer, and plodded doggedly on.

Then came a letter from the editor. "You will be pleased to know that a new Granite Grant story will be appearing shortly. It will be entitled "The Man from Tokio."

"The Man from Tokio" was published under the name of Warwick Jardine, which meant nothing to me, for all the previous Grant-Julie tales had been anonymous. Before I had read the first page I knew it had not been written by the original author. Deeply disappointed, I wrote to the editor, and he replied, most courteously, that I was right - "Tokio" was not by the original writer - but they had done the best they could. The fact was that the original writer was just not writing any more.

So I started my bombardment - "If you can't get new stories, then reprint the old ones." Before long, the editor wrote me that they were going to do just that. "The first one will be entitled "Dead Man's Diary", and you will remember it as "The Secret of the Frozen North". Then I was happy. I may be wrong, but it has always seemed to me that this was really the beginning of re-prints in the S.B.L. to any large extent, and I imagine that Pierre Quiroule was the most re-printed of all Blake writers.

Bill's reference to the pre-war Sexton Blake films is interesting. I showed all of them in my own school cinema, but they were poor stuff. They were, in fact, all low budget films, bought up by Metro Goldwyn

Mayer to fulfil their "Renters' Quota", and, with the possible exception of "Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror," they were in the "quickie" class which did so much harm to British film prestige in that era. M.G.M. met the requirements of the law by having them in their lists; they didn't bother whether they were booked or not by any cinemas.

It is only in recent times that I have discovered that Warwick Jardine actually wrote two Grant-Julie stories for the S.B.L. I wonder why the editor did not notify me of the first one.

According to Bill, P.Q. ceased writing "juvenile literature" in the early thirties. But the Grant-Julie tales were never really in this class. They were far above the heads of most juveniles, and I have known many men and women, fine scholars, who have read them and enjoyed them.

* * * * *

W. E. STANTON-HOPE - A TRIBUTE

By W. O. G. Lofts

It was with deep regret that I learned, from Syd Smyth of Australia, of the death of W. H. Stanton-Hope.

I met Bill Hope in Fleet Street several times before his last departure for Sydney - for he always regarded Australia as his real home. A most friendly type of man, he always gave me what assistance he could about his work for the Amalgamated Press. Unfortunately, however, in recent years he was not only dogged by ill health, but a very bad memory as well. His first Sexton Blake story, "Dead Man's Sands" was published in 1929 and his last, "The Mystery of the Engraved Skull" in April, 1954. Two characters he created that were very popular with readers were Petty Officer Harman and Mike O'Flynn. In all, he wrote 14 stories for the Sexton Blake Library. This may not seem to be a large output for 25 years, but the reason for this is simple - he was a globe-trotter, so to speak, and the number of times he travelled the world would, I feel sure, equal that of a Russian space-ship.

Tall, and always speaking with a kind of Australian drawl, Bill Hope was actually born in England. I have been told that his father had some very strong financial connections with the A.P., and this may have something to do with his starting to work there some years before the first World War. Hamiltonians will be interested to know that he was on the staff of the Companion Papers - which included the Magnet,

Gem, Chuckles, Boys' Friend, etc. After the death of Lewis Higgins, the first editor of Chuckles, Stanton-Hope became editor of this paper. He also wrote some of the Herlock Sholmes stories (after Charles Hamilton) in the 1/2d "Greyfriars Herald." A most prolific writer, he also penned a number of Greyfriars stories for the Magnet, details of which will appear in this year's C.D. Annual.

Serving in the first World War with C. M. Down - later to be editor of the Magnet and Gem - at Gallipoli - he later wrote a book, published by himself, entitled "Gallipoli Revisited." After the 1914-18 war he wrote (when he was not travelling round the world) for such well-known boys' papers as "Football and Sports Library", "Modern Boy", "Boy's Realm", "Boys' Friend Library", "Detective Weekly", "Ranger" and "Football Weekly." In addition to boys' fiction, he wrote for girls under the name of "Rhoda Dean." Other pen-names for boys' stories were "William Stanton" and "Donald Dean."

His first stiff-covered book, "Rolling Round the World for Fun" published, I believe, in 1925, was based on his own experiences. I can also remember him telling me with pride that the late King George VI read all his novels, and that one book he wrote was publicly recommended by Sir Winston Churchill.

After the last war he started the "Stanton-Hope College of Journalism" in Sydney. Probably his greatest success in bound books was the one he wrote in recent years for the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co., called "Tanker Fleet," a war story of the Shell tankers and the men who manned them.

What is even more tragic in hearing of the death of William Edward Stanton-Hope, to give him his full name, is knowing that he had only recently remarried, and had hoped to settle down for good in his new flat in Sydney - the Australian sunshine being more beneficial to his health than the unsettled English climate.

"One only Lives Twice" was the strange title of a book he had published by Robert Hale in 1955, and I can do no better than close this tribute to Bill Hope by saying that with my own copy of this book I shall always have something by which to remember him.

* * * * *

(Len and myself had some correspondence with Stanton-Hope in 1955. He also sent me an autographed copy of the Australian edition of "The Mystery of the Engraved Skull," this being one of my most treasured possessions. J. P.)

* * * * *

AN INTERESTING LETTER FROM MR. S. GORDON SWAN

In the first issue of a magazine called "Master Detective", September 1953, there appeared an article entitled "I knew Jack the Ripper" by Griffith S. Salway. I do not propose to quote the article in full, interesting though it is, but only quote the Editor's note at the commencement and some personal details supplied by the author.

Editor's Note:

"Jack the Ripper was one of the most notorious criminals of all time. Who he was, has been a mystery for sixty years. Now Griffith S. Salway, a refined, quiet-spoken gentleman of obvious culture, has come forward at the age of eighty-seven to disclose that he knew Jack the Ripper and in fact was a friend of his, but, of course, did not suspect his true character.

Mr. Salway lives in the borough of Brooklyn, New York City, is a retired businessman, formerly department head in a large accounting firm. He was a volunteer worker for the English Speaking Union of the United States for four years and a member for six years."

Mr. Salway then goes on to give his reasons for believing that a South American named Alonzo Maduro, with whom he was briefly associated in London, was actually Jack the Ripper. Then, at the end of the article, he appends this statement:

"I was born and brought up on a great estate near Plymouth, England, where my father occupied a position of responsibility for over forty years and where he was highly respected.

After receiving a good education and having acquired a satisfactory knowledge of Pitman's Shorthand, which I considered to be a stepping-stone to advancement in the business world, I went to London in 1888 and obtained my first job with a financial agent in Gresham House, Old Broad Street, as indicated on the first page of my story.

Upon making my shocking discovery, and before leaving my employer, as previously mentioned, I went to the Isaac Pitman school at 27 Chancery Lane and asked Mr. Burroughs, the manager, if he had a secretarial job for me. I received a test, which was satisfactory, and a few days later I got word from Mr. Burroughs that Viscount Mountmorres, a journalist, who had rooms in the same building, had applied to the school for a secretary. I was given a card to his lordship, who immediately engaged me.

Later in the day I looked up Burke's Peerage and found that

William Geoffrey Bouchard de Monmorency, Sixth Viscount Mountmorres, was an Irishman from County Galway. I also discovered that he was associated with Alfred and Harold Harmsworth as a contributor to their weekly publication, "Answers." In fact, the first job I had was to type Mountmorres' interview with Alfred, Lord Tennyson, upon this great poet's embarrassing induction into the House of Lords, when he became, on account of nervousness, so entangled in his long ermine robe as to trip and fall as he was about to enter that august chamber.

By the way, it was the first time I had ever typed or even seen a typewriter, but after practising for an hour and getting a few pointers from my employer, I finally made a fairly good job of it. That interview was published in "Answers."

We were very young in those far-off days, with all the visions of youth, Alfred and Harold Harmsworth and myself being only in the early twenties, while Mountmorres, a lovable chap whose friends all called him Pat, was under twenty, though he looked older."

I have sent these excerpts because of the reference to Viscount Mountmorres, which had no significance to me at the first time of reading. Having read the article again, after studying the list of Sexton Blake Authors in the 1959 C.D. Annual, the name of Mountmorres immediately struck a chord of memory, and I thought perhaps Blake fans would find this mention of an old author to be of some interest.

S. GORDON SWAN,
Western Australia.

* * * * *

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

No. 587	The Masked Man of the Desert	(G. Dass)	R. C. Armour
No. 588	The Body on the Beach		R. Hardinge
No. 589	The Mystery of the Missing Aviator	(G. Grant)	W. W. Sayer
No. 590	The Great Canal Plot (Reprint of 2nd series No. 19)		(Plummer, Wu Ling) G. H. Teed
No. 591	The Diamonds of Ti Ling	(R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 592	The Mystery of the Marchers		W. Shute
No. 593	The Borough Council Ramp		L. Black
No. 594	The Stolen Submarine		W. E. Stanton-Hope
No. 595	The Melbourne Mystery	(R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 596	The Secret of the Ten Bales		A. Parsons
No. 597	The Mystery of the African Expedition		R. Hardinge
No. 598	The Crime Reporter's Secret		G. Dilnot
No. 599	The Case of the Blackmailed Banker		W. J. Bayfield
No. 600	The Pavement Artist's Mystery		F. Warwick

No. 601	Raffles' Crime in Gibraltar	(Raffles)	P. Atkey
No. 602	The House on the Cliffs		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 603	The Victim of the Secret Service	(R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 604	The Crook of Fleet Street (Reprint of 2nd series No. 76)	(S. Page)	G. A. Evans
No. 605	The Time of the Crime		G. Vermer
No. 606	The Spy from Spain	(R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 607	The Three Leper's Heads	(G. Grant, Julie)	W. W. Sayer
No. 608	The Bailiff's Secret	(Rymer)	G. H. Teed
No. 609	The Lift Shaft Crime		F. Warwick
No. 610	The Mystery of the Missing Doctor	(Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 611	The Secret of the Sunken Ships		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 612	The Three Who Paid		G. Vermer
No. 613	The Black Ace		G. Dilnot
No. 614	The Secret of the Hold	(Capt. Dack)	A. J. Hunter
No. 615	The Terror of Tangier (Reprint of 2nd series No. 77)	(Plummer)	G. H. Teed
No. 616	The False Alibi	(R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 617	The Riddle of Big Ben		A. Parsons
No. 618	The Case of the Murdered Postman	R. Hardinge	
No. 619	The Mystery of the Street Musician	(Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 620	The Excavator's Secret (Reprint 2nd series No. 65)		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 621	The Mystery of No. 7 Bitton Court	(G. Grant, Julie)	W. W. Sayer
No. 622	The Pigeon Loft Crime	(R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 623	The Prisoners of Peru (Reprint of 2nd series No. 115)	(S. Page)	G. A. Evans
No. 624	Crook's Convoy		W. J. Bayfield

AGATHA AND FRANK

BY TED DAVEY

I was very pleased with the Agatha Christie story sent to me as my "Gem of Hamiltonian" award. I have not read many of her stories, and this one "Cat Among the Pigeons" was new to me. Centred in a girls' school was an additional interest.

Clearly a story introducing a school invites comparison with another author whose output of school stories must be a literary record. I very much doubt if any author in the English tongue has exceeded Charles Hamilton's output.

The interesting point is that he is not just a hack writer, although, of necessity, he had to adopt a repetitive style in turning out a long story every week.

Inevitably, I compared Agatha Christie's writing with that of Charles Hamilton. Obviously the objectives are quite different, as well as the styles. The lady is the Queen of Whodunits, and her story races forward yet keeps one guessing till the end - when I found the culprit was someone I had never suspected.

Far different is the Slim Jim series in the Magnet. Sixteen weeks to bring the rogue to justice and to release Quelch. We knew all the while who the villain was, and I felt I would like to shake Ferrers Locke for not tumbling to the Bounder's hints sooner. But there is not a dull page in it, and I can read and re-read the account of the Bounder deliberately leading the paper chase round the dug-out.

Quite an interesting type of detective tale, too, when you know the villain from the start, and watch how the net closes.

HAMILTONIANA

FAMOUS SERIES
No. 12

One of the really great series of Magnet stories - the BUNTER COURT series of mid-summer, 1925.

A triumph of the author's contrivance, by which Billy Bunter obtained possession of a luxurious mansion, Combermere Lodge, which he re-named Bunter Court.

Perhaps the first of the really great series, ushering in the Golden Age of the Magnet.

Our picture is taken from "Billy Bunter's Master Stroke."

The artist -
C. H. Chapman.



James' large hand grasped Bunter's collar, and the Owl of the Remove spun round like a toetotum. Then James' large foot was planted on Bunter's tight trousers. Bunter flew! Crash! He landed on the tea-table, sending the cups and saucers flying in all directions. "Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter. (See Chapter 2.)

*

APPOINTMENT WITH PERPETUAL YOUTH

I had gone for a dip in the sea, dressed hurriedly, and was now walking along the smooth, soft sands of Kingsgate in Kent.

It was easy to recognize the scene of so many Greyfriars stories. The high overhanging chalk cliffs where a Greyfriars boy once slipped, clinging to the slippery edge for dear life, till hauled to safety by another; the notice "Beware of the Incoming Tide" brought to mind the time when Mr. Quelch forgot that incoming tide, and was saved by the initiative of Harry Wharton; the lonely inlet where Compton, the schoolboy smuggler, kept a midnight assignment. Memories came crowding back as they were bound to do on that lonely beach.

Later, in Frank Richards' pleasant study, it seemed something of a dream to be meeting him in person - a dream of long ago, now fulfilled in reality. To watch those slender fingers which, down the years, have tapped out the thousands of brilliant stories - stories which entertained and inspired countless generations of boys and girls, stories which live on to inspire countless men and women of today who have never forgotten and will never forget.

Frank Richards and I talked for an hour and more. We talked of cats, of Billy Bunter, of Tom Merry, of the Rio Kid.

"I loved writing those Rio Kid stories," said Mr. Richards, a little wistfully.

And I loved reading them. Frank Richards seemed quite surprised to learn that I have every Rio Kid story ever published - and still read them.

"They only want Billy Bunter nowadays - they don't seem to want Tom Merry any more," commented Mr. Richards, once more a trifle sadly, I think. He added seriously, "We mustn't let old Tom be polished off and forgotten."

We certainly mustn't. I have a feeling that old Tom will be back - one of these days. You'll see.

"Do you read Horace?" enquired Mr. Richards.

I confessed that my Horace is somewhat rusty. In his clear steady handwriting, Mr. Richards wrote for me a little sonnet he has composed - after Horace - with a neat little joke about Bunter and "nocte carent quia Campiono."

What is the secret of this gentle, kindly, soft-spoken, quite amazing man? There is some definite magic in that pleasant room - the contact with perpetual youth, perhaps. The air, impregnated with the tang of the nearby sea and the fragrance of the flowers of late

summer, also seems filled with gay whispers of those characters of his which will never die.

"I limit myself to one chapter a day now," confided Mr. Richards. He looks wonderfully fit and well.

"Of course," he said ruefully, "I did have a bout of influenza in 1899 - and I caught a bit of a cold in 1935."

The next Bunter story is "Bunter the Ventriloquist" and this will be followed by "Bunter and the Caravanners."

"Remember", I said, as I prepared to leave, "we expect to have new Greyfriars stories regularly for at least another thirty years!"

"Make it forty!" admonished Mr. Richards.

As I hurried up the road, passing the gardens of the neat villas in that peaceful avenue, with the sea behind me, I carried away a memory which will ever be with me as long as I live. To meet Frank Richards is the experience of a lifetime - a contact with perpetual youth.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 53. THE TAIL AND THE DOG

In the September issue of the Digest, Roger Jenkins refers to the disappearance of Alonzo Todd from the stories, and makes the following comment: "Charles Hamilton has stated that he let Alonzo gently fade out of the stories because he had an idea that readers were getting tired of him."

How did the author come to receive that impression? Obviously from letters sent in to the editor by readers of the Magnet.

But just how representative of general opinion were those letters? What percentage of the readers who made up the circulation of our favourite papers ever put pen to paper to write to the editor or the author? I would put that percentage as very low indeed. Less than one-per-cent, probably.

Even in the case of Collectors' Digest, where the link between editor and readers is far warmer and more specialised than it could possibly have been between the editor of the Companion Papers and his readers, the percentage who write is small. Well over two thousand letters a year come to the Digest office, but they come from not more than about 30% of the Digest's total readership.

I think it likely that many of the readers who wrote up to the Gem or Magnet were sentimentalists. They would enjoy a sentimental

story, and they wrote up to the editor and said so.

To risk touching on a very controversial theme, I would refer to "A Very Gallant Gentleman." Mr. Samways has told us that hundreds of readers wrote to the editor in praise of this story. I do not doubt it - but hundreds of readers were a very small percentage of the Magnet's circulation. Candidly, I should be astonished if those letters were representative of general opinion of this tale among Magnet readers of that day.

Some time ago, in "Let's Be Controversial", I drew attention to the comments of Mr. Edwy S. Brooks. He said that he had been writing stories in response to the requests and suggestions that readers made in letters. Those stories, apparently, were not meeting with general approval, which was no doubt shown by a fall in circulation. "My most successful stories," said Mr. Brooks, "were those I wrote without any suggestion from readers - and I am going back to that policy."

In the Magnet, and even more so in the Gem, there is evidence of the over-playing by the author of certain characters. In the Magnet for a while, Alonzo was overplayed - and then he was dropped as a main character. In the early Gem, Skimpole, who was not nearly so attractive a character as Alonzo, was featured far too much. Lumley-Lumley had too much of the limelight for a while. Did readers protest? And did the Gem, as a result of this protest, lose Lumley-Lumley permanently?

The most obvious example of overplaying of a character is seen in the case of Talbot. Every reader much have loved the first two series about this most attractive character. But did sentimental readers write to the editor, with the result that the Talbot tales all fairly similar, went on and on and on? I feel sure they did.

The tail in fact, wagged the dog - and this strange phenomenon is not always a good thing.

Until fairly recently, the Sexton Blake Library ran a popular feature entitled "Mail-Bag", comprising extracts from letters received by the editor. But, from the fact that the same names kept cropping up in the feature, it seemed evident that a comparatively small number of readers were writing in fairly frequently.

I think the same thing happened, years ago, in the case of the Gem and the Magnet. I, myself, discovered in the early thirties that a persistent reader could affect editorial policy. I made full use of that discovery.

A minority may be representative of the majority, but usually

it isn't. Often, a minority is noisy, and it can be surprisingly effective.

I feel certain that, during the thirty odd years of the Magnet and Gem, and during the shorter run of the Nelson Lee, the tail often wagged the dog. I think the picture of popular characters being dropped and others overplayed might have been very different if the editors of those days had paid a little less attention to the waggars.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

W. O. C. LOFTS writes: I have heard from my correspondent about the expelling of Bob Cherry, and his reply is as follows, should you care to print it:

"With reference to Bob Cherry's expulsion, there seems some confusion regarding the series. What I actually meant was the short series featuring a boy named Heath who wore a flaxen wig in the post office to make himself like Bob Cherry to the post-mistress. There is not the slightest doubt that Charles Hamilton based this story on the famous Winslow Boy case, which was still a case in the Courts. Major Cherry, Bob's father, defended his son most valiantly, just as Winslow's father did. It was almost an exact parallel in fact. Bob was expelled, but, if I remember rightly, his name was not cleared until the next story. That the lesson was learned seems to be proved by the fact that in the other story, Bob was expelled and cleared in the same story."

ERIC FAYNE comments: The Bob Cherry - Heath story and its sequel were based on the Archer-Shee case. Terence Rattigan's play "The Winslow Boy" also based on the Archer-Shee case, was not written till nearly forty years later. With all respect to Mr. Loft's correspondent, it is difficult to accept that the Magnet lost any readers because Bob Cherry was expelled at the end of one story and cleared the next week.

NO. 52. THE MAN WITH THE BRUSH

E. THOMSON. For me, a story always required illustrations. As you say, one could almost follow the plot from the drawings, but I still liked to turn over a page and find another illustration. My favourite artist was Wakefield; his drawings in the Boys' Friend always fascinated me. The sunny quadrangle of Rookwood, the spats the masters wore, the cloisters, the Priory, the ghostly abbot, the holiday caravans - all were a delight.

However, the important things were the stories, after all, for when one looks at some of the present day weeklies for boys, with their stories in picture form, we should really be grateful for the old days.

W. J. A. HUBBARD. I could not agree with you more over the carelessness of Mr. Macdonald over his illustrations in the Gem. There were indeed a great many mistakes, and these appeared not only in the Gem and Magnet, but in many other papers as well. I recall a particular lack of common-sense in a Lee cover illustration in the "Mr. and Mrs. Stokes" series. The young Headmaster is shown struggling with his half-demented wife in the quad about midnight, hours after school had finished - but still depicted wearing cap and gown.

(Editor's Note: "The Man with the Brush" has proved one of the most popular controversials of the entire series. A further selection of readers' views on this subject will appear next month. Mr. Thomson will be pleased to know that a selection of Wakefield's work, early and late, is a feature of the 1961 Annual.)

- - - - -

A WELL-LOVED AUTHOR PASSES ON

Readers will be saddened by the passing of veteran school story writer Hylton Cleaver, who died on Saturday, 9th September, 1961, in St. John's Hospital, Battersea, London, aged 70.

Mr. Cleaver's death will be felt more keenly perhaps by those members of the London O.B.B.C. who had the pleasure of meeting him at the March meeting, held at my own home in Clapham. He talked at length on that happy occasion of the papers and editors he had worked for and answered many questions.

He will be remembered best for his many stories about Greyminster and Harley schools, which appeared as serials in such papers as "Chums" and "The Captain", as well as in hard-cover editions. His most memorable character was Mr. Dennett, that delightfully eccentric housemaster at Greyminster, whose adventures are perhaps among the funniest school tales ever.

Mr. Cleaver wrote several adult novels and plays too, and, for over 20 years, was a sports correspondent to the London "Evening Standard."

He leaves a wife and 18 year-old son, who is at present in the Sixth Form at St. Paul's School.

Unfortunately, I didn't come to know Hylton Cleaver personally until fairly recently. When we did meet we enjoyed several long talks about his work.

"I was up at court the other month for a driving offence," he once told me, "and when my name was read out the magistrate said: 'Hylton Cleaver? Aren't you the chap who used to write all those school stories?' I admitted that I was and the magistrate said: 'Well, Well, I thought you had died years ago! I'll always remember your books ...'"

Now that Hylton Cleaver has died, everyone will echo that magistrate's sentiments. And we'll all remember his books - for a very long time

BRIAN DOYLE.

- - - - -

"THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS"

by W. J. A. Hubbard

No. 3. "THE HILL" (H. A. Vachell)

To include a "best seller" by one of the best known novelists of his time among this series is perhaps a risky experiment, as there is a very strong possibility that the story was not written for boys at all but for grownups. Whether or not, "The Hill" was written entirely for grownups, however, is really beside the point for all who have read this fine story of school life cannot fail to be impressed by its power and intensity.

There seems to almost be a mutual understanding among authors

that all the finest stories about school life should be both dramatic and serious and "The Hill" is no exception to this rule, although it is certainly not without touches of humour that are conveyed to the reader mainly through the medium of conversation between some of the characters. Certain factors - mainly conditions of time and place for it was first published in 1905 - date the story but as to its sincerity there can be no question while its popularity can be attested by the fact that it has gone through forty impressions since first published. It has quite obviously stood the test of time and proves once again that a good story will always be readable.

Like "The Fending of a Twig" the school featured in "The Hill" is a real one - Harrow. An almost fanatical pride in the school runs through the story which is perhaps not surprising when one remembers that Mr. Vachell himself went there. Such fanaticism, however, is often the hall-mark of a fine book and most of the famous works of literature have not been produced without it.

Mr. Vachell calls his story a "Romance of Friendship" and is careful to point out in a dedication to a friend who assisted with information and who revised the manuscript that in creating his leading characters he has selected a rather uncommon type of boy who generally appears at a school perhaps only once or twice in a decade, if that. This remark makes me feel that Mr. Vachell was distinctly aware of the possibility that a youthful element would be numbered among his readers. Yet so well does he weave his plot and explain and develop his characters, that one feels that such boys as John Verney and Reginald Scaife actually existed.

The theme of "The Hill" is a duel between two boys, one good and the other bad, for the friendship of another. It is a variation of the age old struggle between good and evil with a soul as the prize. Realism is strongly to the fore, and we study their careers through the world of school until the time comes for them to leave.

There are three main characters, John Verney, sincerely religious a scholar and a competent sportsman, yet no prig; Reginald Scaife, the villain of the yarn, fully conscious that he is an outsider, despite his wonderful prowess at sport, yet turning even his bad traits to advantage, and Henry Julius Desmond, gentleman and sportsman, loved and admired by all, for whose friendship Verney and Scaife contend. Then there is the supporting cast - Egerton, the dandy, lazy, witty and sarcastic but with a shrewd head on his shoulders, Lord Esme Kinloch, who worships Verney with almost as much intensity as Verney worships Desmond and Duff - the Duffer - an average boy with a great love of

cricket. There are two masters featured - Richard Rutherford, "Dirty Dick" to the boys under whose guidance The Manor, the house to which the leading characters belong, has gone to pieces and Basil Warde, the young man under whose leadership the house regains its supremacy both in work and sport. The contrasting characterisation of these two masters is brilliant. Nor are the minor characters neglected for the brief appearances of some of them in the story make one wish that the author had allowed them to play a larger part in the yarn.

The description of school life at Harrow in the 90's is skilfully told. Sport is not neglected - there is a fine account of Harrow football while the chapter entitled "Lords" is a masterpiece. All through the book runs the continual duel between Verney and Scaife for the friendship of Desmond, a duel that ends in a draw; for death, in the Boer War claims Desmond, Verney, however, is consoled in his loss by a moving farewell letter from his friend, written on the night before he is killed, which breathes a spirit of hope that perhaps good has triumphed over evil after all.

While on holiday in Ireland a short time ago, I was informed by a fellow guest at the hotel, who was acquainted with Mr. Vadhell's sister, that the author of "The Hill" was alive up to two or three years ago, and still writing occasionally, mainly for his own amusement although well over 80 years of age. The dust jacket on my copy of the book would appear to indicate otherwise. Whatever the position, however, one could only wish that Mr. Vachell had given us further school stories of such a high standard.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Hubbard writes us as follows: "I find I made an error when I gave the publishing date of "Bending of a Twig" as 1900. It was actually published by Chapman and Hall in 1906. Also, for "Martin Blaize" read "David Blaize". A typing error - sorry!")

* * * * *

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

A reckless driver is one who passes you on the highway in spite of all you can do.

YOURS SINGERELY

No. 1 The MODERN BOY

Fine Coloured
**METAL
MODEL**

of the new T. W. R. Express

Locomotive

"KING GEORGE V"

**FREE
WITHIN**



THE MOST UP-TO-DATE BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

HOW THEY BEGAN, NO. 12. The very first issue of MODERN BOY, dated February, 1928. Saw 608 issues in all, and, towards the end had several changes of format, before being amalgamated with Boys' Cinema in October, 1939.

JOHN STOKES (Dublin): In the September Digest Mr. Stan Knight refers to "The Wolf Patrol" by J. Finnemore. I have a copy of this book in mint condition. I bought it for sixpence in a second-hand bookshop on the Dublin Quays shortly before I became ill. It has always been one of my favourite scout stories, and I particularly like the coloured illustrations in the book. It was first published (by Adam and Charles Black) on October 15th, 1908, and reprinted in 1909. The eight full-page coloured illustrations are by H. M. Paget. The original price of the book was 3/6d. Please do not give me a hundred lines for my terrible handwriting. I am writing under difficulties - but difficulties are made to be overcome.

(On the contrary - we are giving you the Book Souvenir which goes each month to the writer of the Star Letter of the month. - ED.)

JAMES W. COOK (Wembley): A sentence in your editorial in the September Digest puzzles me. It states "I am thankful to say I have never been short of material." Then can you tell me how that reconciles with the fact that you were apparently short of Nelson Lee copy, since none appeared? Or doesn't the Lee material cover your complacency? Surely you must run to a deadline for copy and in the event of Jack

Wood forgetting all about you, falling back on rainy day fill-ups?

A hurried postcard to me would ensure for you something that appeals to St. Frank's fans. I cannot tell how empty the barrel is unless somebody tells. And up to the present time no warning of copy shortage has appeared in the C.D. nor has Jack Wood written to me to say so. Will you please state definitely if this omission of material in the Lee Column is going to be a monthly hazard? And will you please reply to this question through Collectors' Digest? After all, you expressed your apologies for not publishing the reviews of the latest Sexton Blake novels. Now I must apologise for this trenchant attitude.

BERNARD PRIME (Sanderstead): Thank you for "The Man Who Came Back". I enjoyed it immensely. Mention this, please, in the next C.D.

(We are very happy to mention it, Bernard. - ED.)

JULIUS LENNARD (Manchester): Of all the C.D.'s that have gone, and all those to come, I am sure that the issue for July, 1961 will always stand out as the very finest of the lot.

"ROBBY" (Hove) I must at once write and express my sincere and warm appreciation for the paragraph "Welcome to Elaine from Hove." In fact, the sentiments enclosed in that little insertion have really cheered me.

LES ROWLEY (Warsaw): I have read with interest Ben Whiter's letter in Yours Sincerely. I have often wondered whether broadening the scope of the Digest to cover other periodicals is a good thing - even if the necessary articles and features were forthcoming from the people who are so ready to criticise. It seems to me that with Hamiltoniana, Blakiana, Lee, et. alia, our needs are adequately covered. But, in the words of a favourite columnist, "It's just my point of view! What's yours?"

(Harry Broster has written the Digest to point out that the question of extending the scope of the C.D. was merely a matter of discussion at the Chesterfield meeting, and was not intended as a criticism. We have conned over Harry's notes for his speech which opened the discussion, and they strike us as fair and sensible. Harry, of course, has contributed many fine articles and stories to the Digest and the Annual, and is one of our most loyal supporters. - ED.)

JOHN WERNHAM (Maidstone): I think that, as a boy I must have closely resembled a sort of hybrid mixture of Skinner and Grundy. It might be amusing to invite "confessions" on this theme from readers and contributors to C.D.

(My sister assures me that I was a most horrible boy, so I think I must have been a Racke. - ED.)

RON CROLLIE (Hornchurch): I enjoyed the article "Dixon Hawke and the Thomson Papers." As a boy I never bought Adventure, Rover or Wizard and I utterly failed to see how anybody could prefer them to the Gem, Magnet and Nelson Lee. Nevertheless, Derek's and Bill's effort was full of interest.

RAYMOND TAYLOR (Wolverhampton): Could you give us an article on the very early days of the Jester, and the early serials at the time of such stories as "The Cruise of the Octopus", "Girl in the Scarlet Mask", and the early works of Sidney Drew.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): What burbling jabberwock has conceived the idea of

allowing my favourite Rookwood character, Teddy Grace, to enter the school in Knockout under the name of "Simon Simple"? Of course, I can see the reason, intensely annoying as it is. The stories are not in order, and Putty Grace was already at Rookwood. Blow and dash these editors and sub-editors. (Oh, sorry, nothing at all personal, of course).

(Please don't mind us! We agree with you all along the line. - ED.)

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): Delighted to see Puck on the cover of the September C.D. Somehow, the very thought of the paper conjured up holiday memories. After almost straining my eyes to read the captions under the pictures, I noticed that the policeman in the Casey Court sequence was none other than P.C. Cuddlecock, who seems to crop up continually in the A.P. comics.

PETER HANGER (Northampton): I was very interested in the article on the Thomson papers. If another Who's Who comes about, may I suggest that Section 7 be divided into two parts - 7a for A.P. papers and 7b for Thomson papers.

(An excellent suggestion. A new Who's Who will be published early in 1962. - ED.)

Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

Meeting August 29th, 1961

There were quite a few members away on holiday, Norman Gregory was still in hospital. It is nice to know he is showing improvement.

For all the small attendance of eight, we managed to get in a full night's programme. Tom Porter was in the chair and thanked all club members for floral tributes and letters of condolence on the death of his wife, Beryl.

The two quizzes were dealt with first. The one set by Tom Porter was Head Beaks of the more famous Schools* and was won by the writer of these notes. My own quiz was combined Hamiltonian and Nelson Lee and Joe Marston emerged as most successful. Then followed a talk by myself on the advent of Hurree Janset Ram Singh at Netherby School - in Marvel No. 161, dated 23rd February, 1907. He entered the Third Form which was captained by Owen Redfern whose chief pal was Reggie Lawrence. Those names ring a bell as does Mr. Lumsden, master of the Third and Knowles, cad of the Third. Jobling, porter, Lantham - prefect, "Inky" spoke a different kind of English in those early days and strange to say, he played a good game of RUGGER. They apparently preferred Rugger at Netherby. One of the earliest of Charles Hamilton's School yarns and not one of the worst either, but as I tried to point out, the style was far different in those early days. Tom Porter contributed a talk on Boys' Friend Libraries - most by Charles Hamilton and a few by substitutes. These were valuable collectors' pieces and those

Tom produced for our inspection were "Through Thick and Thin" "Rivals and Chums" - "Boy Without a Name" - "Tom Merry and Co." - "Tom Merry's Conquest" - "The Silent Three" - "School and Sport" - "Football Champions" and "Schoolboy Castaways."

After the refreshments Ted Davey resumed his talk on Coker of the Fifth which was well received.

A good night's programme for all it had been improvised at short notice.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 9th September, 1961

Eighteen members turned up at 239 Hyde Park Road for our September meeting, and in his opening remarks, chairman Geoffrey Wilde expressed pleasure that the level of attendances had kept up so well all through the holiday months. We were especially pleased to welcome our old colleague Tony Potts, who now spends most of his time in the London area, and Mrs. Potts.

Among this month's correspondence was a letter from Harry Broster, of the Midland Club informing us that although Norman Gregory is still 'in dock' he is making slow but steady progress towards recovery. Harry also tells us that the idea of the proposed Convention next year was favourably received at a meeting, and will probably be supported by several Midland members. Eric Fayne wrote saying that he hopes to attend our November meeting, and an advertisement was also received from the Victoria Palace London, regarding the forthcoming "Bunter" play.

The reading of "Rivals and Chums" by Frank Richards was given this month by another of our lady members, Elsie Palmer. The story is now moving towards an exciting climax, and Elsie did it full justice.

After an interval for refreshments we had a game by Gerry Allison, based on the word "Trimble". We each had to name a scholar, master, school, character, book or comic, author and O.B.B.C. member beginning with 'T', 'R' and so on, the winner being the one who had the most names which no one else had. It was most interesting, trying to pick out the lesser-known characters and Jack Wood was the winner with 14 points. Geoffrey Wilde was next with 13 and Bill Williamson and Gerry himself each had 12. This took us on towards 9.30, when the meeting terminated.

Next meeting - Saturday, 7th October.

FRANK HANCOCK - Secretary.

LONDON

Another happy and jolly meeting at the home of 'Nelson Lee' Bob Blythe on Sunday, Sept. 17th. Amongst the 31 enthusiasts attending was Mrs. Trevor Storey who is keen on Nelson Lee. An excellent programme had been arranged and two very good items from Bill Hubbard, a "C.D." quiz and a talk on School and sport in fiction were greatly enjoyed. Bob Blythe rendered a very good Nelson Lee reading on how some of the characters arrived at St. Franks. Incidentally Horace Roberts has these stories in his section of club library for loan. In the Hamiltonian section, Roger Jenkins stated that he has over 1,150 books and papers for loan. Altogether a very good meeting with the time passing all too quickly.

October meeting at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich on Sunday, 15th Nov. Kindly let Len Packman know if intending to be present.

Thus with votes of thanks to hosts, the Blythes, it was homeward bound once more with pleasant memories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

See Page 31 for Merseyside Report...

Sexton Blake Today

August and September Novels in Sexton Blake Library, reviewed
by Bill Lofts

VENDETTA: (481)

Richard Williams

I looked forward to the first Sexton Blake novel by 'Hank Janson' with eager anticipation. But somehow, this story falls well below his best; maybe that is why it was rewritten editorially, and published under the pen-name of 'Richard Williams'. The story is narrated throughout by Marion Lang.

When I read of the girl victim's body being washed ashore on the Kent coast, not far from the small fishing village of Pegg, I couldn't help wondering how Harry Wharton & Co would have solved this mystery from nearby Greyfriars!

Rating: Moderate.

MURDER BY MOONLIGHT: (482)

Desmond Reid

Wilfred McNeilly in his second Blake yarn, has obviously based his story on topical news items; (a) Training of the highly intelligent Dolphins; (b) The highjacking of the Portuguese liner by Captain Galvac, and (c) The activities of a well known egg-head leader of a ban-the-bomb movement.

After a most highly interesting first chapter, where Be the Dolphin is sole witness to a murder, I found the story slipping from my interest in parts.

With a little more experience, author McNeilly promises to become a valuable member of the Blake team of writers.

Rating: Good.

DEATH HER DESTINATION: (483)

Warwick Jardine

After an absence of over six years, this popular author returns to the fold, with a first class story which will please many older readers.

'Jardine' has combined his pet theme of the medical profession, plus the atmosphere of mysterious happenings on the marshes in Essex, in a story which grips the reader's interest all the way through.

I hope that Warwick Jardine will come again sometime with another yarn, which has a real vintage flavour, like this.

Rating: Excellent.

TROUBLE IS MY NAME: (484)

Rex Dolphin

I rate this as Dolphin's best to date. Readers who like Arthur (Splash) Kirby will revel in this yarn, which keeps the reader guessing right up to the very last chapter.

I thought the introduction of two small time crooks, who were brothers, really unnecessary in chapter 10 - the plot had enough characters as it was - without the padding of the only too familiar small ferret-faced man and his big mute companion - strong as an ox type - mute and called 'The Dummy'.

'Merrie England' the girl companion to 'Splash' I liked a lot, and I hope to hear more of her in future stories from Dolphin's pen.

A marked improvement by this author on his previous stories, and it deserves a high rating.

Rating: Very Good.

* * * * *
* * * * *

MERSEYSIDE

The meeting for August, at Bill Windsor's home, was held later in the month than usual, in order to receive a visit from our late chairman, Don Webster. There was a good attendance, and a full programme included the usual team contest, and a general knowledge quiz submitted by Don. We were delighted to have him with us again, if only for a few hours; it was quite like old times, and we sincerely hope he will be able to repeat the visit as soon as possible.

The September meeting, at Frank Unwin's, was also a week later than the usual date, the reason in this case being the arrival of the long-awaited tape recording from Australia, and we wished to have as many present as possible to hear it. The meeting opened with the chairman's remarks, followed by the secretary's report, and Frank Unwin then obliged with a reading from Edgar Allen Poe, quite an unusual choice, but one that went down very well indeed. After discussions on general topics, and refreshments, came the recording, and what a treat this was - our Aussie friends have made a splendid job of this, and we are left in no doubt about what a grand lot of folk they must be. We had a few words from each member of their club, even from those who were unable to be present at their meeting, and I do not think I am guilty of indulging in extravagant language when I say that it was a unique and unforgettable experience to hear the voices of those far-off friends whom inevitably and unavoidably we are unlikely to have the pleasure of meeting personally. Thank you, Bette Pate and Co., - you will be hearing from us all again ere long!

The meeting ended late, but all too soon, and we look forward to the next get-together, this time on fresh ground, at the home of Jack Morgan, on Oct. 8th at 6 p.m.

FRANK CASE

REVIEWS:

"BILLY BUNTER'S OWN" 1961:

Oxenhoath Press

It is difficult to be very enthusiastic over the latest edition of the Billy Bunter Annual. It is a lightweight volume, obviously produced for the less exacting of Christmas shoppers.

It contains six short stories by Frank Richards and one by Owen Conquest; the book is profusely illustrated throughout by C. H. Chapman. It is probable that Digest readers will prefer the two stories which feature, respectively, Rookwood and Jack of All Trades, for it is pleasant to meet old friends. All are light-hearted, with Frank Richards in bright and happy mood.

The short stories give an airing to very familiar stock situations, and, so far as "Home for the Hols" is concerned, it is hardly credible that Lord Mauleverer would be sentenced, by his uncle, to spend Christmas at school being coached by Mr. Quelch.

Still, as in previous years, it is certain that this latest B.B.O. will give pleasure this Christmas to many youngsters, and adults will find it all very readable.

We would suggest to the publishers that it is a mistake to make each B.B.O. look so much like the edition that went before. An uncle, seeing this year's edition in a shop, may well think that he bought it last year or the year before that. Even the mere addition of the year of publication, displayed on the cover, would show it to be a newly-published volume. A story each from Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Ralph Redway, and Owen Conquest would also strike a note of variety on the contents' page.

* * * * *

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGES:

15 S.O.L.; Bound Vol. Nelson Lee; Bound Vol. S.O.L.; ½d Marvels; 1d. Boys Friends; 4d. Boys Friend; 4d. Sexton Blakes; 2d. Union Jacks; 1d. Boys Heralds; 13 (complete "Nirvana" series Union Jack); 1½d. Prairie Lib. Also:- Masterpiece of Thrills Daily Express over 700 p.; Evening Standard Book of Strange Stories over 1000 p.; World War II, in pictures, Odhams Press, 6 lovely volumes.

J. LENNARD, 22, LARCH STREET, HIGHTOWN, MANCHESTER, 8.