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Collectors' Digest

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Number 183

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EDITORIAL



FRANK RICHARDS
1891-1961



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1891-1961



JOHN HAMILTON
1891-1961



ROBERT COOPER
1891-1961



FRANK RICHARDS
1891-1961

IF WE FAIL ...

A Mr. Cooper, seeking particulars about an old paper called "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday" wrote to the Illustrated London News. That famous periodical put Mr. Cooper in touch with Collectors' Digest, and we were able to send him a few facts though we could not supply him with a copy of the paper he desired.

I wonder whether, in fifty years time, when most of us have passed on, it will be equally difficult for anyone interested in the old Magnet in the year 2012, to obtain information or a copy of the paper. Probably not, if we have done our jobs properly, but we can't bank on it.

In our Memorial Number last month we ended with these words: If we fail, then who will remember with the passing of time? Those words were not carelessly or thoughtlessly written. It is well that we should recall them now and then.

IN MEMORY OF FRANK RICHARDS:

Our 40 page issue last month In Memory of Frank Richards was a giant undertaking, both for our Editorial department and for our printers who rose magnificently to the occasion. We feel that you feel that it was worth every moment and every effort put into it. Letters of touching appreciation have poured into this office from all over the country and all over the world.

We are not printing extracts from these letters, for they all speak in similar terms. Here, however, is just one, which is

representative of them all. Ray Hopkins wrote:

"A few words to tell you of the appreciation of my father and myself for the wonderful In Memory of Frank Richards issue of Collectors' Digest. Frankly I was so moved, I was unable to finish it the first time at one sitting. The tributes were wonderful, in words that one would like to think one could have written oneself. Truly, this was an issue one will go back to again and again, to admire Mr. Chapman's centre pages and to look again at the happy faces of Harry Wharton and Tom Merry (a brilliant idea to reproduce these two portraits) and to read the beautifully written tributes. Thank you, Mr. Editor, for an issue to cherish."

AN ISSUE TO CHERISH:

So many readers used those self-same words. I found a sad joy in the words. For that was the aim of that special number - an issue for readers to cherish - and I am happy and gratified that readers found it just that.

Charles Day wrote: "You tell of readers unburdening their grief in letters to you, at the passing of Charles Hamilton. Surely this in itself, is a fine tribute to Collectors' Digest."

Perhaps it was, in a way, but it was the death of that grand old gentleman, down in the Garden of England, which touched the hearts of so many readers who were stunned and stricken by the news which they had known must come one day soon. It was a glowing and remarkable tribute to his work, his influence, his life.

A MEMORIAL TO FRANK RICHARDS?

Many readers have written in support of our suggestion of a fund to raise a subscription for the Playing Fields Association, with the aim of a playing field to be known as the Frank Richards Field. It would, of course, be an immense undertaking to launch such a fund, and it might well be beyond possibility for our clubs.

Various other suggestions have come in. Here are some of them: The foundation of a scholarship to a public school. The purchase of a piece of ground to be used as a cemetery for animals. The formation of a unit for making films from Charles Hamilton's stories, and the equipping of a small theatre or cinema for the display of such films. The endowment of a Frank Richards Ward in a children's hospital.

THE NEW WHO'S WHO: Owing to our special issue last month, we were

unable to issue our usual reminder. Therefore we are extending the closing date for the receipt of Who's Who entries till March 10th. If you have not yet returned your Who's Who entry, will you please do it at once to help us to make the new 1962 edition as comprehensive as possible.

LAST MONTH'S COVER:

Many compliments have been sent us concerning the cover of our last issue. It was the work of our brilliant artist, Mr. Henry Webb of Bury St. Edmunds, who sat up nearly all night in order to respond to my request to him for a cover for an issue to treasure.

THE EDITOR.

* * * * *

RESULT OF OUR DECEMBER COMPETITION

Once again our monthly contest proved very popular. Every entry was carefully considered, and the following receives the first Book Prize:

Christopher Lowder of Cradley, Malvern.

The following was Mr. Lowder's entry:

"Strange, don't you think," said Sexton Blake today in Ye Olde Cynique Inn, "that the mysterious man in black, who is almost a resident rascal now, only got away with a few odds and ends instead of the real Gems of Hamiltoniana? It's £10,000 to a shilling that the press paint him as a very gallant gentleman, when, in actual fact - ha! ha! ha! - he's really no larger than life. Now I'm off to drink a toast to the career of Nelson Lee at D'Arcy's Christmas Party. Before I go I must make a special request to you to see the Victoria Palace Show. It's later than you think. Cheerio!"

The second Book Award goes to E. N. Lambert of Chessington. The following was Mr. Lambert's entry:

A very gallant gentleman gave a grand welcome to Elaine from Hove at the Annual Dinner. So many friends were gathered together and a toast was proposed to the old and the new. "Does anyone remember the mysterious man in black?" asked the resident rascal, anxious to keep Australia in the picture. The general commentary indicated that there were no acknowledgements. The main topics were odds and ends concerning artists and how they began. Those were the days when everyone had a chance to vote, and a survey of the voting

showed that more progress concerning criticism was made. There was no change for the sake of change, and no state of fear existed.

.....

RESULT OF OUR JANUARY COMPETITION

The correct solution in this contest was: Craille; Wingate; Browne; Smythe; Temple; Redfern; Kildare; Mornington; Waldo; Snoop; Hamilton.

Large numbers of readers sent in correct solutions (we have many very clever folk in the clan), and so we award the two prizes to the senders of the first correct solutions received. The two book prizes are awarded to:

J. K. MORGAN (Liverpool) and ERIC LAWRENCE (Wokingham).

.....

OUR MARCH COMPETITION

What did the Magnet say to the Gem? One sentence only, please, on a sheet of paper or a postcard. Your sentence may be witty, or scathing, or topical. Anything you like. You may if you wish use the names of any papers. For instance, the question can be "What did the Union Jack say to the Detective Weekly" or "What did the Nelson Lee say to the Monster Library?"

Example: In January 1938 the Magnet said to the Gem:
"I see they've cut you down to size, Pal."

A Book Award will be made to each of the new readers whose entries tickle the Editor's fancy the most.

Closing date: March 16th, 1962.

.....

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

The opinions expressed by the husband of this house are not necessarily those of the Management.

.....

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HUGHES, 33, FOUNDRY ROAD, WALL HEATH, BRIERLY HILL, STAFFS.

.....

"THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS"
by W. J. A. Hubbard

No. 5. "JEREMY AT CRALE" (Hugh Walpole)

I always think it an interesting experiment when an author as internationally famous as Sir Hugh Walpole tackles a school story, especially when he produces such a splendid effort as in this particular case.

"Jeremy at Crale" was first published in 1927 and has been reprinted many times since. It is the third of a trilogy of stories written by the author about a boy named Jeremy Cole. The first - "Jeremy" - shows the hero at the age of eight. In the second - "Jeremy and Hamlet" - he is now aged ten. It tells of further adventures at his home, at school and on holidays. The third story, reviewed in this series, with Jeremy at the age of 15, is a yarn of public school life. My opinion is that it is the best of the three.

Sir Hugh Walpole makes it quite clear that it is a yarn of school life in the late 90's or early 1900's. I think that most of my readers will agree that boys required a certain amount of "toughness" to go to any school in late Victorian and Edwardian times. Such experiences as they went through have nowadays been happily consigned to the limbo of the past. It is interesting to note, however, that even today boys make their entry into a senior school, whether Public, Grammar or Secondary, with a certain amount of trepidation which is not surprising for it is their first essay in life.

Apart from a few odd references, mostly of time and place, however, "Jeremy at Crale" might well be a story of life at any modern boarding school. As one of the most famous and prolific school story writers of all time has remarked in the pages of this magazine "no well written story can ever be out of date."

It would be interesting to know whether "Crale" the school featured, was a real one, under a disguised name. It is supposed to be situated near the coast. The only well known Public School I know near the sea is Rossall. I am not aware whether Sir Hugh Walpole was ever at that school but perhaps somebody will be able to enlighten me.

The story of "Jeremy at Crale" is simply the story of Jeremy Cole - "Stocky" to his friends and admirers - during the course of a winter's term. When the story opens Jeremy has just won his remove from the lower to the middle school and from then on we follow him through all the gamut of emotions which mark a boy's progress towards manhood. For this is a psychological story and a highly effective one. Only the "Loom of Youth" perhaps, can approach it in this respect.

The author does not forget characterisation, and he gives us splendid portraits of both the masters and boys. The Revd. Charles Dalme, Headmaster of Crale, Mr. Leeson, the Housemaster, Mr. Parlow, Jeremy's Form-master, are believable people. Another splendid adult character is Jeremy's uncle Samuel, a rather eccentric figure who makes a brief visit to the school during the course of the book. Then the boys - Jeremy Cole himself, lover of poetry and brilliant half-back at Rucker; marked out as a potential leader of the School, "Red" Staire, Jeremy's enemy, supercilious and sure of himself but with the makings of a great cricketer, Charles Morgan, the small new boy who goes through something like hell for Jeremy's sake and "Jumbo" Payne, quiet and retiring, Jeremy's friend - each a distinct separate personality.

As with the stars, so with the supporting cast. What a pity that such splendid minor characters as Steevens, Jeremy's fellow half-back, Llewellyn, Corner and Ridley, three senior boys, Gauntlet and Marlowe, Jeremy's studymates, Baldock and Crump, the two juniors who make young Charles Morgan's life such a misery and Mr. Bunt, the Games Master, were not able to play a larger part in the yarn. It might have spoilt the completed picture, of course, so we must be content with what the author has given us.

Sir Hugh Walpole did not forget the sporting angle. The Rucker sequences are superb while the fight between Jeremy and "Red" Staire is brilliantly described.

I have always understood that Sir Hugh Walpole was an intellectual type of man. He

was also very short sighted and on his own confession had a particularly trying time at school. It is greatly to his credit, therefore, that in "Jeremy at Crale" he produced a book that is so readable and has stood the test of time so well that it is much better known than many of the author's famous novels on which his reputation so largely rests.

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THE ROUND TABLE



BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich,
London, S. E. 22.

The penultimate paragraph of Derek Adley's little article, to be found in this issue, poses a very interesting and controversial question - "Supposing his (Blake's) name had been Jackson Drake, would we still have felt the same about him?" For myself, I would say YES. ANY surname, given many years of prominence, tends to become an integral part of the character it represents. What is YOUR view?

Thanks to Derek Adley, Julius Lonnard, W. T. Thurbon, Victor Colby (all the way from Australia), Tom Hopperton and Stanley Smith (the latter through the courtesy of Eric Fayne), the immediate problem of material for Blakiana is eased. Nevertheless, the general situation is still acute!

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

THE MAGIC OF BLAKEBy Derek Adley

In correspondence with Blake author George Woodman a year or two ago, he showed great willingness to help in research that I was working on at the time. He told me that he had not had a great deal of success in the Blake field, mainly due to the fact that he had tried his luck a few years too late; scope had become very limited, and it was, in fact, in the Detective Weekly that his only two Blake yarns appeared.

George Woodman wrote mainly for D. C. Thomson before going over to adult stories. He said that his brother, Thomas Woodman, had written far more yarns for boys' papers than himself.

He went on to say that Blake was a great favourite of his, and asked whether I thought that there was a great similarity between all the well-known detectives in boys' fiction, say, Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee and others like Vernon Read. He suggested that Sherlock Holmes was like an elder brother to them.

There is probably a lot of truth in the similarity he mentions, and it has given me a lot to think about. Is there really a great difference between the detectives featured in boys' papers, and is it really the name of Sexton Blake that endears itself in our minds rather than the actual characterisation?

The early detectives such as those previously mentioned were, in the main, stereotyped, and the authors of Blake quite often wrote of other detectives, always in a similar vein and each with his own boyish assistant. It was also a fact that stories written for the Sexton Blake Library and the Union Jack by such authors as H.H. Clifford Gibbons, Richard Goyne, G. H. Teed, etc., were at times rejected, whereupon the main character names were changed and the stories in many cases accepted for the Dixon Hawke Library, I might add that this also happened vice versa.

Stories with the same basic ingredients were published as Jack Keen detective yarns in the Kinema Comic and Film Fun, and as Colwyn Dane stories in the Champion.

A Blake writer nearly always figured in the authorship of the yarns which, in many cases, had been altered from one detective to another according to where the demand was at the time.

I well remember how I loved to see Basil Rathbone playing Sherlock Holmes on the screen, for he was my idea of how Sexton Blake should look. Paget's Sherlock Holmes also portrayed Blake as I saw him. Don't ask me how I got these impressions, for I cannot explain it. I admit that it is Eric Parker who has painted the most familiar

Blake in our minds in his interpretation of the detective; probably the main reason for his success with Blake is due to the fact that he has drawn so many pictures of him in up-to-date garb, and in a more modern setting - so much so, that it has impressed itself on us. But if Parker's Blake had not existed to confuse me, I would always have thought of Blake in the way that Paget drew Holmes.

What is it, then, that makes us plump for Blake every time? Is it because there is magic in his name? Certainly, more stories have been written about Blake than any other detective in fiction; but supposing his name had been Jackson Drake, would we still have felt the same about him?

For the record, when George Woodman was younger he was selected as a model for an artist doing a sketch of Sherlock Holmes' head for the omnibus volume of the Holmes stories. This I believe appeared in the 1953 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition in Baker Street, London.

* * * * *

"REMOTE CONTROL"

By Stanley Smith

(concluded)

Sexton Blake put down his empty cup.

"Now, Coutts, what's the trouble?"

The man from the Yard finished lighting his pipe.

"It's the Sir Robert Mason case," he said. "We seem to be up against a brick wall!"

"Sir Robert Mason?" Blake leaned forward. "The car manufacturer? I've read about it.- accident or suicide? It'll certainly make a big stir on the Stock Exchange!"

"Well, Blake" Coutts puffed a cloud of strong smoke as he answered. "I think it's worse - I don't see how it can be either accident or suicide. I think it's murder!"

"Murder?" Tinker broke in. "But all the papers"

"The papers!" retorted Coutts. "They say - what do they say? - let them say! Surely you know that by now, Tinker."

"All right, both of you!" rapped Blake. "Come on, Coutts, let's have the whole story."

"Right! Forget all you've read - here's the outline. Sir Robert Mason, the car man, is a widower. He lives mostly at a London Club and spends his holidays and weekends at his Yorkshire house. It's quite small but with large grounds that include part of the sea coast. Only a few servants - been with him for years. He has two cars - keeps one in London and the other at the house."

"Travels up by train, I suppose?" broke in Paula.

"Yes, always," replied Coutts. "Reckoned to do his reading on the journey - said it was the only chance he got. Anyway, the night before last he went for a run round the estate in the car - and he never came back!"

"Was it usual for him to go riding round the estate?" asked Blake.

"Yes, quite normal. He said that he liked to blow the cobwebs away now and then, and he had good roads everywhere. But yesterday morning his car was found empty and locked on one side of the road which runs along the top of the cliff at the nearest point where the sea comes to the house. This road is about fifty yards from the actual cliff

edge, and roughly a mile from the house."

Coutts put away his pipe, which had gone out.

"The fact that Sir Robert had not come back," he went on, "was discovered just before eight in the morning. The servant took in his tea and found that the bed had not been slept in. She went down at once and told the others."

"The others?" Blake cut in. "What others?"

"Sir Robert's two nephews often stay there. Both are keen on fishing - there's good sport there. When the maid told them about their uncle, they collected the only other man about the place - a daily gardener - and set off to investigate. The garage being empty, they started to look around. An hour later they found the car. The gardener was the first to see the body. He looked over the cliff edge and saw a spread-eagled form on the rocks below. His shout brought the others. It looked as if Sir Robert had fallen over the cliff while taking a look at the sea. The gardener appears very sensible. He suggested that the police be called and nothing touched. One look, even from a distance, revealed that the body was dead."

Coutts took a keen glance at Miss Pringle.

"It wasn't pretty," he continued, "as the dead man had landed on his head. There's no need to go into details. But it happened that I was in York that day - that horse doping business, you know - and, being the nearest Yard man and an old friend of the local Chief Constable, I was asked to go over. It looked, on the face of it, to be a clear case of accident or suicide. I say it looked like it - except for one thing!"

He paused. Blake concealed a smile. It was obvious that the Inspector had stopped for effect.

"Well?" he asked, "what"?

"I noticed," Coutts looked important and brought his words out slowly, "that the dead man's shoes were clean!"

"But, Mr. Coutts," Marion broke the silence. "How...?"

"Well, listen carefully. The car was about fifty yards from the cliff edge and the ground between was muddy. Thick brown mud, too! It would be impossible to walk from the car to the edge without getting one's boots very dirty - yet Sir Robert's light shoes were perfectly clean and highly polished!"

"But couldn't it have rained?" asked Tinker.

"No, it didn't rain; and, besides that, one of the feet was doubled under the body. The shoe on this was just as clean as the other. And the car key was in the dead man's pocket!"

"So you think it's murder?" queried Blake. "I think you're right, too. HOW, is simple when you think of it - but WHO is not so easy. Any other cars on the estate?"

"No. No other cars, and none of the staff can drive."

"That means," Blake went on, "that one of the nephews must be responsible. Can they both drive? Know anything about 'em?"

"Yes, both are drivers. They're the sons of Sir Robert's younger brother. John Mason is a manager in one of the car factories, and Peter Mason is a senior draughtsman in another."

"Right." Blake glanced at some notes he had made. "Tell us more about the nephews. How are they financially? And what do they look like?"

"I checked the first point this morning," Coutts looked puzzled. "Both are a bit wild and live beyond their means. Both of 'em - so that doesn't help much! As for the other point - John is a big chap, Rugged man, used to play for the Wasps, well over six feet and broad as well! Peter is shorter, slim and a bit weedy-looking. But does this help at all?"

"I think it does. What you want to know is who drove the car with a dead or unconscious man as passenger, and then carried him to the cliff edge and dropped him over."

"John?" Marion broke in.

"No, it doesn't follow," went on Blake. "Sir Robert was not a big man - I've seen him once or twice - so Peter cannot be ruled out on that count. What you really want to

know, Couatts, is who was the last driver of the car. You say it's not been moved, don't you? Well, here's what I suggest you do

.....

"You were right all along the line Blake," Chief Detective-Inspector Couatts took another cup of coffee from Miss Pringle. "It all turned out as you said it would."

It was the following day. The same group were gathered in the same comfortable office. Blake's foot was much better and he hoped to be without those infernal crutches in a day or so.

"Yes," the man from the Yard continued. "I had both of the nephews down at the house. We all walked down to the car and I produced the key with a remark that it was just as well to get it back to the garage. I asked Peter to drive it up to the house and gave him the key. He got into the car, adjusted the mirror, and then drove us back. We went into the house and, after some cursory questioning, I made an excuse to go out to the car again. I had previously noted the exact position of the mirror before Peter had altered it and I put it back to the old angle."

Blake glanced round. Comprehension was dawning on the faces of Tinker and Paula, but Marion and Miss Pringle were looking very puzzled.

"It was so simple, really," continued the inspector, "from then on. I knew that only John, out of the two brothers, could have left the car mirror in the exact position in which it had been when I opened the car. To cut a long story short, I taxed him with it and he confessed. But it was all Blake's idea!"

Miss Pringle had the last words.

"Wonderful! And he did it all by remote control!"

The End

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No. 78	The Man they Couldn't Buy	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 79	The Mystery of the Bombed Monastery	A. Parsons
No. 80	The Tragic Case of the Station Master's Legacy	J. N. Chance
No. 81	The Case of the Conscript Miner	W. Tyrer

No. 82	The Riddle of the Leather Bottle	J. N. Chance
No. 83	The Mystery of the Italian Relic	A. Parsons
No. 84	The Strange Case of the Footman's Crime	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 85	The Case of Sgt. Bill Morden	R. Goyne
No. 86	The Painted Dagger	J. N. Chance
No. 87	The Loot of France	A. Parsons
No. 88	The Sword of Vengeance	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 89	The Case of the Deserted War Bride	A. J. Hunter
No. 90	The Riddle of the Gambling Den	A. Parsons
No. 91	The House on the Hill	J. N. Chance
No. 92	Under Police Observation	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 93	The Great Airport Racket Mystery	A. J. Hunter
No. 94	At 60 m.p.h.	J. N. Chance
No. 95	The Tally Man's Fate	J. Lewis
No. 96	The Case of the Stolen Evidence	A. Parsons
No. 97	The Man from Arrheim	J. Lewis
No. 98	The Blackmailed Refugee	A. Parsons
No. 99	The House in the Wood	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 100	The Riddle of the Mummy Case	J. N. Chance
No. 101	The Trail of Five Red Herrings	J. Lewis

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

(Conducted by JACK WOOD)

Resuming the Nelson Lee Column this month, we have an important contribution from that indefatigable seacher-out of obscure information, Bill Lofts.

Bill has at last thrown light on the vexed question of who wrote the first Nelson Lee Library story - and, incidentally, the fourth too, for the Library lists the authors as the same.

To say that Bill has made a startling discovery is no exaggeration for he has hit on an author who, though well-known to A.P. readers at the time, has so far not been closely identified with the Sexton Blake saga.

The author was by 1915, when the N.L.L. came out, one of the best known boys' story writers, notably for somewhat melodramatic racing and school stories. Why the choice fell on him with Maxwell Scott still available is a mystery, for the Mystery of Limehouse Reach was no masterpiece to introduce a new Library - even in wartime.

However, Bill writes as follows:-

THE MYSTERY OF LIMEHOUSE REACH SOLVED!

Eric Fayne, our worthy editor, not only used his initiative when reproducing the front cover of the very first issue of the 'Nelson Lee Library' in the September C.D. when copy was not available. But probably he was indirectly instrumental in getting my curiosity aroused in finding out from official sources of who did actually write 'The Mystery of Limehouse Reach.'

In my recent article entitled 'Ramblings on the Nelson Lee Library' I queried the actual authorship of many of these early detective stories- before the St. Frank's tales began, and my findings certainly seem to prove that many collectors have been proved wrong by their assumptions in the past - I refer especially to statements given in C.D.'s appearing in 1949 in particular.

The No. 1 'Nelson Lee Library' was actually written by a Mr. A.C. Murray - a name which to the best of my knowledge has not been mentioned before in connection with Nelson Lee stories. Older readers will recognise his nom-de-plume of 'Andrew Gray' which appeared in such papers as 'Cheer Boys Cheer' 'Empire Library' 'Boys' Realm' 'Boys' Herald' 'Boys' Friend Library' 'Greyfriars Herald', etc. It seems as if at that period (1915) editors of boys' papers were cluttered up with the author's name of Murray - we had Andrew Murray (Captain Malcolm Arnold) William and Robert Murray Graydon (father and son) and Edgar Joyce Murray (Sidney Drew). The first mentioned name I might add is most certainly a different individual from the A.C. Murray of the first Nelson Lee Library story.

At the time of writing I have no information whatsoever on Mr. A.C. Murray, and as yet I have to meet an editor or author who knew him.

I have always rated the late Herbert Leckenby an expert on the writings and style of William Murray Graydon, but I must admit that I have been astonished to learn that he had given the information that he (W.M. Graydon) had written the story, and that many collectors had assumed this as fact on this basis. This only goes to prove that style can be very deceiving at times, and authorship of anonymous stories should always be accepted with caution until concrete evidence had been forthcoming.

Unlike the No. 1 Sexton Blake Library entitled 'The Yellow Tiger' which has been praised by many collectors to be the best yarn ever written in the old format. 'The Mystery of Limehouse Reach' in my opinion is a very poor story, although it deals with my home town of

London. This occupied the first 44 pages - whilst the remainder was filled with a school serial of 'The Boys of Ravenswood College' to make a total of 50 pages of reading - which was not bad for a penny in those days!

Apart from a free gift of a photo button of General French (one of the famous commanders in the first World War) there was a grand free competition (in conjunction with other boys papers) in which the first lucky winner was to receive a Rudge Mutli Brand New $3\frac{1}{2}$ Horse Power Motor Bike - whilst 4,999 runners up were to receive consolation prizes. The idea of the competition was to see who could get the most new readers for the 'Nelson Lee Library' and it will be interesting at some later date to see how many reader the Motor Bike winner actually obtained.

Apart from the personal satisfaction of solving the mystery of the writer of 'The Mystery of Limehouse Reach' I found it most interesting to see that if one accepts stories credited to Mr. A. C. Murray as fact - he must have also penned many Sexton Blake stories, and he is yet another name to add to the list of authors who have written about this great detective. To elucidate further, four stories which the first author of the Nelson Lee Library wrote are to be found in the 'Union Jack' and to the best of my knowledge they all featured Sexton Blake.

Now it is perfectly true that quite a few authors penned the stories of Detective Spearing in the old 'Union Jack'; only recently I was able to reveal that W. W. Sayer had written some, a fact not known before. But I would agree with Walter Webb that No. 2 was probably written by Norman Goddard (Mark Darren).

No. 3 raises a very interesting point reverting to the question of styles again. The author is credited as having written such U.J. yarns as "The Case of the Turkish Bonds" "The Mystery of Five Towns" "The Affair of the Billiard Champion" and "The Nottingham Mystery" - when I say that Arthur S. Hardy lived at Nottingham at one time, and was a billiard Champion, probably readers would accept this authorship without question, but I must still be cautious without concrete evidence.

Walter Webb has stated that the first named U.J. yarn is undoubtedly by W. Murray Graydon - whilst the others are by A. S. Hardy, but before accepting this as fact, I would like more evidence, but all the more credit to Walter for correctly assuming that 'The Mystery of Limehouse Reach' was written by A. C. Murray, which has now been proved beyond all doubt.

(Note: At one period a serial was jointly attributed to Andrew Gray and Ambrose Earle. If this was on the same basis as A.S. Hardy and Clement Hale, who have been stated to be the same writer, then Gray and Earle are

the same - but Ambrose Earle has previously been listed as a pen-name for J. G. Jones, an author to whom Sexton Blake stories ARE attributed. Fascinating, isn't it? - J.W.)

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HAMILTONIANA

PLENDID TALE OF SCHOOL LIFE.

THE RIVALS OF ST KITS



BY CHARLES HAMILTON

FAMOUS SERIES No. 17

One of Charles Hamilton's earliest school stories, very popular in its day.

Serialised in PLUCK about 1906, it was reprinted as a serial in EMPIRE LIBRARY in 1910. Was later issued in book form in the Boys' Friend Library.

Featured boys named Pat Nugent and Arthur Talbot, both surnames to become immortalised in later years.

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CHARLES HAMILTON, 1875-1961By Geoffrey Wilde

It was at about seven years of age that I made my first acquaintance with the writing of Charles Hamilton; earlier than most, I suppose, though I came to feel it had been far from soon enough. The time was the beginning of 1934, in the middle of the finest extended sequence of stories he ever wrote for the Magnet - though actually it was the Gem, by a short head, that introduced us. Already an avid reader, I was reduced to bored inactivity by a bout of some childish complaint. I had devoured every book in sight and when my father - God bless him - had an inspiration, and returned with that enchanting blue-and-red periodical. It kept me quiet for hours, and a day or two later the Magnet followed it into the house with similar success.

There must have been things in those first numbers that I didn't fully understand, but there is no doubt that I surrendered completely to their compelling power. Soon I took both papers regularly, and in no other way would I have dreamed of spending my pocket money. Very quickly, too, I felt the conviction that in these stories there was more than diversion for an idle hour, that they were living things, to be savoured and re-read; and as passing publications were thrown aside Magnet and Gem accumulated in the attic, to be guarded jealously down the years. Those years took me to Grammar School and later to University and the study of European literature; but a taste cultivated by Shakespeare, Montaigne, Keats and Hugo could still turn to Greyfriars in relaxation and delight, its standards unoffended. The re-readability of the Magnet was triumphantly established, and the original twopence had paid a rich dividend in happy hours.

To survive such comparisons testifies eloquently to Hamilton's artistry and to the universality of his appeal; yet in its essentials I am sure my story is typical of thousands. It is indeed an irony that his death should have brought him a measure of celebrity and public acclaim oddly lacking in his lifetime, but it has revealed in remarkable manner how sure is his hold on the affections of untold numbers of people who have not so much as seen a companion paper for 25 years. I have lost count in the last week or two of those who have come to me and confessed themselves old boys of Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

In the world of men all we in that great host of readers are exiles from a land that never was; and we can be nothing but better for it in the world that is. The evocation of that delightful land of legend, which is fully-realised, consistent and dimensional, was his greatest triumph, just as it has invited the most misconceived

criticism. Acute as it is, Orwell's now-famous analysis eventually misses the point. To judge Hamilton's work in terms of social realism is to misjudge it. Like any art it is doubtless, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, a criticism of life, but it does not portray 'real' life, nor was it ever seriously meant to. Greyfriars is a true literary creation, and stands in the line of a long literary tradition, with Malory's Arthurian romances, the Arcadian novels of Elizabethans like Lodge and Lyly, and the whole convention of pastoral poetry from Virgil onwards. It is the creation of a stylist - and this is why I think its translation into the physical drama is foredoomed to failure - whose individual employment of language evolves new regions of the imagination. Those regions are timeless and idealised: they transcend reality, and if life isn't really like that, then so much the worse for life.

The real wonder is that Hamilton accomplished this with transient materials. He surmounted and survived the limitations of writings for the ephemeral medium of a weekly magazine, and achieved something of immortality. Even now, however, his fate remains ambiguous. He created a living legend, yet only for a handful of established collectors has it a tangible substance. Now that the last word is written it is the task of those who owe him so much to keep the legend alive. I have never wavered in my view that one of the aims of the Old Boys' Book Clubs should be to re-endow it with the substance; and surely of all memorials a collected edition of his best work would be the most fitting and the most lasting.

It seems sad that he should have died at Christmas, a season that he had so memorably enriched. Yet there is a time to die, and perhaps he knew it, and left us when there was singing in the skies and a moment of harmony on earth. He took with him the love of untold thousands. He was myth-maker to generations, a figure unique in our literature.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 56. A STAR HAS SET.

Recently I suggested that the gesture would not have been amiss had Charles Hamilton been honoured by the nation. Large numbers of readers have subscribed to that view.

Cricketers, footballers, jockeys, music hall artists and the like have had their services to Britain recognized. Few men have done more for generations of their country's youth than Charles Hamilton - yet he was passed by. It is too late to do anything about it now.

One wonders why, for instance, a stage comedian is honoured while the greatest boys' writer of the century is not considered worthy of such honour. Is it that jokes from the stage can remain topical while a writer's moral code becomes old-fashioned?

Charles Hamilton's style never dated. Many of his stories of fifty years ago remain as fresh and attractive as though they were written yesterday. But the high moral code which he always taught so unobsequiously and skilfully has gone with the wind. Its passing is the one factor which could make his stories old-fashioned.

He condemned young people smoking. That he was right the whole medical world, and anybody else with any sense, would agree. Today, smoking among children is a common occurrence. Some school-masters lack either the inclination or the guts to forbid smoking among their boys. On the contrary, some encourage it.

Charles Hamilton, in his stories, condemned gambling. Today Britain is the biggest gambling nation in the world. What can be the reaction of boys to stories which condemn gambling, when they see their parents gambling every week of their lives? Last summer I watched children pouring their money into "fruit machines" along Blackpool's golden mile. Made illegal for many years, these machines are now almost fashionable.

Swearing was deplored in the Hamilton stories.

Charles Hamilton taught that good manners are the hall-mark of the gentleman. Some time ago I entertained a school inspector to lunch. In rather bad taste he improved the shining hour by relating to me little facts about schools which he had inspected in the neighbourhood. Speaking of one school he said: "The only thing they teach in that place is good manners. The children learn nothing of value."

The passing of censorship has been hailed as progress, and maybe it is. It can also be licence to make money out of evil and vice. A few years back some American films had to be cut before they were shown in this country. I have just read that a British film, which has played to large audiences in British cinemas, has been banned in America. A report like that makes one sit up and take notice.

The high moral code of the Hamilton stories is old-fashioned. We can hardly deny it. We can only regret it.

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

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

LURIE SUTTON: I never had the same affection for Greyfriars that I had for St. Jim's. I enjoyed the Magnet stories, but at St. Jim's I felt I really belonged, and the atmosphere seemed always warmer and more intimate. Who was - and is - my star? Lumley-Lumley, Talbot, Tom Merry, Cardew, Vernon-Smith have all had their great moment and featured in memorable stories. In the case of Lumley-Lumley it was the characterisation that inspired my imagination; with the "Toff", it was the appeal of the stories. But I always admired Tom Merry. Through the years though, always inspiring, always lovable, is dear old Gussy. God bless him - and God bless Charles Hamilton for giving him to us.

GEORGE SELLARS: It is obvious that Mr. Kirby has not read many blue Gems for him to say that Tom Merry is a colourless character. He is one of Charles Hamilton's greatest creations, and it is a pity there are not a few more like him in real life today. In my eyes Tom Merry is the finest schoolboy in the world of fiction.

BASIL ADAM: Like Mr. Kirby, I find Tom Merry colourless in comparison with Harry Wharton. Unlike your three examples, I did not read the Magnet first. When I was nine, I read Rookwood in the Boy's Friend, but I was never impressed with Jimmy Silver as a character. Two years later the Magnet came into my hands, and I was at once impressed by Wharton's strong character. Wharton would never have fled from the haunted room as Tom Merry did in "Nobody's Study." He would have died first. Harry is the son of a soldier and the inheritor of a great tradition. My star must be cast in heroic mould and I guess Harry Wharton fits this role more than any other schoolboy in fiction.

DON WEBSTER: I really must take up the cudgels on behalf of Tom Merry. I must be one of the few who dislike Harry Wharton - too temperamental for me. I have read hundreds of Magnets and Gems, and prefer Tom Merry who rarely loses his temper. I think that if the Gem had not suffered from sub stories and reprints, our Tom would have been every bit as popular as Wharton. In any case, the recent Popularity Contest proved little, as not many voters read the Gem in its hey-day. It's not the same reading those yarns at a later age.

RON CROLLIE: I cannot agree with Kenneth Kirby that Tom Merry is conventional and colourless. Harry Wharton is depicted as a boy of unusual ability and talent, but so is Tom Merry. Perhaps Tom would never reach the heights that Wharton at his best would achieve. On the other hand, Tom Merry would hardly sink as low as Wharton at his worst. I think that Tom Merry's character is summed up very well by Monty Lowther in the series dealing with Manners' feud with Roylance.

"You're a fool in some things," growled Manners.

Tom Merry seemed to gulp something down with difficulty.

"Let it go at that," he said, "I'll get on with my prep."

Monty Lowther rose to his feet with a gleam in his eyes.

"There's been enough of this," he said. "If Tom's a fool, it's because he's letting you talk to him like that instead of rubbing your cheeky nose in the carpet."

Conventional? No! Colourless? Never!

ARTHUR HOLLAND: Whilst I accept Kenneth Kirby's contention that Harry Wharton was a great piece of character work, I disagree with him that in comparison Tom Merry is a colourless schoolboy. Tom Merry was always a favourite of mine. In my youth, he was my ideal. I admired his cheerfulness, courage, and straightforwardness. He always strove to act square and play the game which, on occasion, required plenty of grit and backbone. Tom Merry has been my best loved character in school fiction for 50 years. I see no fault in him.

TRIBUTE FROM BRAZIL

Ronnie Hunter of Santos, Brazil, writes as follows:

I learned with deep regret of the death of Frank Richards. Like many others I had always hoped, and somehow taken it for granted, that he would be spared for a few more years yet, and might even have made that "century" of which he sometimes spoke.

But it was not to be, and our beloved author, one of the last links with the old books of yester year, has gone to his well-deserved reward.

As one who loved the old Companion papers I shall always be very grateful to Frank Richards for the delight which his stories gave me in my boyhood, and for the lessons which those stories taught me. Those stories gave me something which is for ever a part of me and which time and circumstances can never erase. God bless Frank Richards. May his Soul rest in peace.

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Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

January 30th, 1962

For the first meeting of 1962 it was rather a small attendance. There were a few apologies due to illness and the eight members present were glad to hear that our Treasurer Norman was much better though still in bed. A welcome was given to Mrs. Winifred Brown's daughter who we feel sure enjoyed the very interesting programme. There were two guess the Number competitions won by Jack Bellfield and Jack Corbett. The Nelson Lee won by Jack Bellfield was No. 26 New Series (July 19th, 1930) and was notable for the fact that it contained the name of Joe Marston. The first quiz (Name the Headmaster) was won by the Secretary, the prize another Nelson Lee. The word game set by the Chairman, was jointly won by Madge Corbett and myself. Two more Nelson Lees were the prizes, all very welcome.

Most of the rest of the evening was taken in reading tributes to Frank Richards from the various national newspapers. One in particular from the Times was very appropriate. Of special interest was a letter to Tom from J.R. Murtagh of New Zealand, giving his personal appreciation of a great author. It was gratifying to hear from Madge Corbett that the club's wreath to Frank Richards had arrived in time and the members can feel indebted once again to our acting Treasurer for her good work in this direction.

The time went so quickly that for once refreshments were forgotten and the evening ended by Jack Bellfield reading excerpts from one of the Hunter books.

NORTHERNMeeting held on 10th February, 1962

We had a cold but clear night for our February meeting and 18 of us turned up. Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the proceedings at 7.30 p.m. and welcomed the return to normality after our somewhat chaotic January meeting!

We were especially pleased to welcome Tom Roach, a former member who left us some years ago, and who has now rejoined.

Gerry Allison reported that he had received many letters of inquiry after our television appearances last month, and three new members had already been enrolled, with prospect of more to come.

The question of raising some sort of memorial to Frank Richards' memory was then discussed, and it was generally agreed that the idea of making some contribution to the Playing Fields Association was a good one. A number of ways and means were suggested and members considered that this was a fruitful subject for further talks at future meetings and especially at the forthcoming O.B.B.C. Conference at Easter.

Then followed a most entertaining talk by Molly Allison entitled 'The Tomboy Trio' these being three girls who attended Miss Spinks' Seminary for Young Ladies, whose adventures were first recorded in 'Puck' in the year 1909. We found this very interesting as it was on a subject new to most of us.

Geoffrey Wilde who had been to Manchester with Gerry Allison to appear in the television programme 'People and Places' then gave us an account of their experience in Granada's huge headquarters. This was fascinating - a peep behind the scenes, as it were.

Bill Thurbon's choice of ten 'Desert Island Books' was next, and as he was unable to be present it was read by Jack Allison. His list - a varied and well-balanced choice - was 1. The Bible. 2. A Midsummer Night's Dream. 3. The Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien. 4. Collected Verse of Rudyard Kipling. 5. Collected Sherlock Holmes Short Stories. 6. Scouting for Boys (1st Edn. 1908). 7. Union Jack No. 504, 'The Long Trail' by Cecil Hayter. 8. 'The Eagle of Death' P.P. No. 31 (1st series) by S. Clarke Hooke. 9. Adventure Island (serialised in Chukles, 1917-1919, author's name forgotten). 10. King Solomon's Mines, by H. Rider Haggard.

After an interval for refreshments we had a game by Gerry Allison, 'A Knight's Tour of Wharton Lodge', based on the game of chess, and the opening 64 words of No. 1 of the Magnet. We were divided into four teams and those of us who did not understand the great game of chess had to take a back seat and leave it to the experts, of which, fortunately, there are a number among our members. Geoffrey Wilde's team won an exciting contest.

Another enjoyable and well-attended meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m. Next meeting Saturday, 10th March.

F. HANCOCK, Secretary.

MERSEYSIDEMeeting held 11th February.

The attendance at this meeting was rather low, due partly to the inclemency of the weather, and to the indisposition of a couple of our regulars. We were sorry to learn that Norman Pragnell has been obliged to enter hospital; he is not seriously ill, however, and it won't be long before he will be back with us again. We all wish him a speedy recovery.

As there were so few present, the programme had to be re-arranged, but this did not mar the pleasure of the evening, which, apart from the usual section business, was spent in informal discussions on a variety of topics, and it afforded us an opportunity to give our library an overhaul, with a view to the disposal of some of our surplus books.

As always, nine o'clock arrived all too soon, and we departed looking forward to our next get-together on Sunday 11th March, at Bill Windsor's, when the roll should be back to normal.

FRANK CASE.

LONDON

Outside Hume House on Sunday, February 18th, there appeared the notice Jumble Sale, but to the members attending it was anything but a jumble sale. A good selection of Hamiltonia was being sold and to those who were unable to be present, the residue will be on sale at the March meeting. Regretfully no postal orders can be dealt with. After the sale, we had the Sherlock Holmes film, "Sherlock Holmes Faces Death" based on the story "The Musgrave Ritual." This was ably projected by David Harrison, and the company greatly enjoyed the showing of this film. Bill Lofts read a chapter from number one of "The Empire Library" featuring Gordon Gay and Co. of Rylcombe Grammar School and this with a quiz by Brian Doyle greatly pleased the gathering.

Next meeting on Saturday, March 17th. The venue will be given in the March Newsletter.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, January 21st, when Don Webster was elected chairman for 1962. Thus the Don had the great distinction of being the first 'old boy' to have been chairman of both the Liverpool and London Clubs. All other officers were re-elected en bloc.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

Sexton Blake Today

MARGARET COOKE reviews the latest novels in the world-famous Sexton Blake Library.

TEPROR LOCK (No. 491)

By Wilfred McNeilly

A Blake-Tinker story by the latest graduate of the Reid Academy which justifies the controversial S.B.L. policy of "Desmond Reiding" the works of news authors of promise until they can take their places unaided amongst the top-ranking Blake authors. In addition to considerable technical and historical knowledge Mr. McNeilly brings a freshness and imagination to his novel which should make him a popular author in this field of literature in a very short period of time.

"Terror Lock" is a good, easy to read novel packed with punch, danger, suspense and mystery spiced with a touch of the incredible - a story of ships, sailors, and aqua-lung divers; of a centuries old crime and a 'Beast' born in the beginning of time. It is a story of Ireland, the Irish, and the Baker Street detective by a writer who has a deep liking and respect for them all. Fine characterisation and excellent descriptive passages make this a pleasing book, one to suit all readers, old and new.

DEATH ON A HIGH NOTE (No. 492)

By Desmond Reid

A serious attempt to mirror the times by making the chief character a trumpet-player in a Jazz Club, proud of his trumpet playing and his ability to hold his audience spellbound by his 'hot' high notes, but prouder still of his second and secret 'skill' - his ability to kill quickly, silently and successfully. A man with all the vices and none of the virtues of mankind, of whom it was said 'he always got what he wanted - money a life or a woman.'

The book is full of odd characters - beatniks, serious lovers of jazz music, and rich men bored, with their great wealth, seeking 'power to make heads roll and

governments fall - to reshape the world."

A good book of its kind, carefully constructed and well written with excellent dialogue, good characterization and plenty of action. Rudy Benares and Sexton Blake are particularly well drawn. A book which should be read by all serious students of the Blake Saga.

COUNT DOWN FOR MURDER (No. 493)

By George Sydney

A very good first story for the S.B.L. by a promising new-comer to the team, showing the Baker Street trio in great form with Paula Dane making a welcome return to prominence and turning personal defeat into victory for the whole firm.

A suspense thriller set in lovely Dartmoor, an 'impossible' murder; an ingenious method of spying on a closely guarded secret and Blake on his toes. A story of greed; big business; treachery; a man's stupidity when swayed by a clever, scheming woman. The story has a good plot, fast pace and some thrilling incidents.

I hope to read many more S.B.L.'s from the same pen.

BARGAIN IN BLOOD (No. 494)

By Arthur Maclean

A duet by Sexton Blake, hunter, and John Frederick Traillie, arms trafficker - thief and murderer.

This book will delight all readers who like good characterisation and an action-packed story. It is a common-sense, down to earth story which could happen anywhere at any time. The story of an unbearable bully; of his chief victim's hatred of him and desire to humiliate him in return; of the victim's great and clever plan to deceive, rob and discredit him which worked well until Sexton Blake and Tinker were retained to hunt down arms-traffickers.

Arthur Maclean makes full use of his sharply contrasting characters and their emotions. His Blake and Tinker are particularly good, implacable, untiring, working behind the scenes to prove Traillie's guilt, watching and waiting for the criminals one fatal mistake - all of it described with the clarity and economy of words familiar to all readers of Arthur Maclean's books.

This novel introduces a new design in title-pages -- just the 'title' itself, the author's name and his portrait. In this case the portrait bears a remarkable likeness to that of 'Kirby' on the back page.

OUR TELEVISION SHOW!

BY GERRY ALLISON

"My name is Fontaine, of Granada I.T.V., Mr. Allison" the voice said. "Can you come to our Manchester studio on Monday? We want to feature your club in our programme "People and Places."

That was how it all began. And as it wasn't one of La Fontaine's Fables, that was why Geoffrey Wilde and I caught the 1.45 p.m. train to Manchester on Monday, January 15th. I had got leave without much difficulty, and when Geoffrey's Headmaster turned out to be an old Magnetite - well, a substitute was found to take the Lower Fourth in English that afternoon at Leeds Central High School!

Before reaching the Granada studio, our taxi stopped at Broadcasting House, Piccadilly, Manchester. You see, we had had the B.B.C.

Television team at our meeting two days before, and their producer had forgotten a brief-case full of papers. He was very glad to get it back and said: "Would you like to see your club's show? It will be in negative, I'm afraid." A quick dash to the projection room, and there we were - the first All Black Section of the O.B.B.C., holding a 'Twenty Questions' session.

Then on to Quay Street, where the V.I.P. treatment really began. The glass reception hall was the size of Grand Central Station. But soon Miss Universe arrived and cooed: "Mr. Allison? Mr. Wilde? Walk this way please!" As neither Geoff nor myself were Marilyn Monroe, we really couldn't do that. However, we tootled along after the swaying figure, and were each shown into our private dressing room. Very palatial indeed, except for a slave to polish our muddy shoes, but we didn't stick fast, as they say in Todmorden, and soon emerged, looking very spick and span.

And now to meet Mr. Fontaine in the flesh. We were conducted into a 'board-room' large enough for I.C.I./Courtaulds, where we met Mr. F. - an assistant producer - also Bill Grundy and Gay Byrne, the top men of the "People and Places" programme. There we discussed how to stage our turn.

After further talk we went along to THE STUDIO - with its gigantic cameras, mikes, close-circuit 'monitor' screens, and floor deep in cables - for rehearsal.

Geoffrey had brought along his mortar-board and Gay Byrne, who was introducing us, wore this for the first run through. But it was decided to 'play it straight' so the mortar-board was also 'out', together with Geoff's "Greyfriars Theme and Variations," and the school-caps - and ash-plant! which I had thoughtfully brought with me.

Two more rehearsals, and things seemed to be taking shape. So along to the Make-up Room. I wonder if you have been made up by a couple of the most attractive girls this side of Hollywood? Oh, boy! If I had been some thirty years younger.

And now to the 'Canteen'. What a word to designate the sumptuous dining room we were now escorted to - still under the cape of our hostess, Miss Universe. And the meal!!! Well, when Johnny Bull's Aunt Tabitha sent him £500 to spend - see Magnet No. 154, "Rolling in Money" - that was the sort of feed he put on!

But zero hour was now approaching! So, once more unto the breach-sorry - studio - dear friends. The scene reminded me of the take-off of a Space Ship. A solemn voice intoned; "Three Minutes, Studio!" "Two Minutes, Studio!" "One Minute, Studio!" "THIRTY SECONDS, STUDIO!"

The silence was deafening! And then a picture of our beloved Master - Frank Richards - appeared on the monitor screen, and Gabriel Byrne was saying, in his delightful Irish voice -

"Three weeks ago this man died. Six weeks ago this man sent his last book to the publisher. His name was Charles Hamilton. He was known to the world as Martin Clifford; as Owen Conquest; as Ralph Redway; as Hilda Richards - or more familiarly as Frank Richards"

The screen shewed various pictures of our late President, and of his books, etc. Then the voice was saying"here in the Studio we have Mr. Gerald Allison, Librarian of the Northern Section, of the Old Boys Book Club and Mr. Geoffrey Wilde, the Chairman of the same Club. Mr. Allison - tell us something about the Old Boy's Book Club".

And then I heard my own voice! Somehow it was speaking calmly, confidently, easily and saying:- "Well, the members of the Old Boy's Book Clubs, are a group of people devoted to the collecting of Juvenile Literature." (Thank you, Wheeler Dryden!) "There are four branches of the Club in this country - the parent club in London; the Midland Section; the Merseyside Section; and in Leeds, our own Northern Section. There is also a very active section in Australia, and we have a world-wide associated membership."

"One thing we have not got, however," I continued, "and that is a name for our hobby - in that we envy the Philatelists, the Cartophilists and the Philuminists. However, what we say is:

Let others keep their foreign stamps,
 Their coins and matchbox lids;
 But we'll collect the dear old books,
 We read when we were kids."

My interlocutor gave me a sympathetic smile - bless him! - then looking at Geoffrey, he asked: "Tell me Mr. Wilde, why do you read the books written by Charles Hamilton, and which is your favourite school?"

Well! Then it was that our prestige went up to the sky. Geoffrey - a Master of English - might have been Mr. Quelch addressing the Greyfriars Sixth! I wish I could tell you exactly what he said - if only someone had recorded it! There was no doubt of the position of Frank Richards as a master of our Literature, when Geoffrey stopped speaking.

Turning to me again, Mr. Byrne asked me some personal questions about Frank Richards himself. I finished with the following anecdote:

"Why" - I once asked Frank Richards - "Why have you given so many of your bad characters my Christian name - Gerald? Gerald Cutts, Knox, Loder, Crooke, Lumley-Lumley - (Jerrold), etc. Why pick on me?" I asked.

His reply was typically delightful - "Yes," he agreed, Frank and

Martin seem equally guilty of vilifying the name Gerald. But authors get it, as well as readers. If you remember "Gone with the Wind" you will recall a perfect idiot of a character, with the name of - CHARLES HAMILTON!"

And then - then - it was all over! Our taxi whipped us to Exchange Station. I reached home at 10.10. Myra was on the telephone. And it went on ringing until midnight. We had been good - "very good". Since then I have needed a secretary to handle my mail. Dare I quote one letter? "Let London, and the other Regions, look to their laurels. Let them know that the North Section is Cock House!" - from a St. Jim's fan, of course.

But honestly, it was fun, and every club and all the hobby were with us, and shared in our success.

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YOURS SINCERELY

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

PATRICK CREIGHAN (Eire): The January issue was superb. My particular love is the old comics so you can judge my delight when I read Mr. Loft's article on Film Fun and Kinema Comic. The illustrations of the front pages, which you reproduced, are masterpieces. I must thank you for the wonderful reproduction of Puck and Merry and Bright, which you gave us in recent issues. Let's have Funny Wonder, Comic Cuts and Sunbeam. My knowledge of the old comics dates from around 1923, so if you could manage to give a reproduction from one around that time I would be thrilled. It was a delight to read Mr. F. A. Symond's recent article about the old papers. I am always interested in his articles. I first came under the spell of his pen when he was editor of the Gregg Magazine. Not much scope you might think for interesting articles in a shorthand magazine. But he has the magic touch.

(The Book Souvenir which is awarded every month for the Star Letter of the month goes to the sender of the above. Our reader will be pleased to know that another article from Mr. Symond's pen will appear in Collectors' Digest shortly. - ED.)

H. CHAPMAN (Barton on Humber): I should like to say how much I think C.D. has improved during the past year. I look forward to it tremendously. I still have a complaint, however. I was able to read a few old C.D.'s recently, and was surprised to find what a lot of interest there was in Nelson Lee at that time. E.S. Brooks photo was on the cover one week and he also attended a meeting of the O.B.B.C. There must be some reason for the falling interest in St. Frank's and for Mr. Brooks' present lack of interest. The reason I think is this. The Editor and other regular writers never miss an opportunity of comparing Brooks and St. Frank's unfavourably with Hamiltonians.

NEW EDITION.—What do you think of the new size?

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NAME AS THE OTHERS



Apart from the Lee and Blake sections, this pro-Hamilton anti-Brooks bias runs through the whole paper. Compared with Handforth, Bunter shows up badly. Whatever their faults, the St. Frank's stories do have variety and action.

CHARLES CHURCHILL (Exeter): In the January issue Mr. Walker of Nottingham passed some disparaging remarks about E.S. Brooks after reading two S.O.L's. What he apparently did not realise was that they were re-prints of a series of eight Nelson Lees, and the stories were heavily abridged. Since reading Mr. Walker's comments, I have read these eight Lees again and cannot find any discrepancies as to months or weather, so obviously the fault lies with those who prepared the stories for the S.O.L's and not the actual author.

FRANK CASE (Liverpool): What a C.D. (January) when I drew it from the envelope I thought I was going goggle-eyed. A long, long time since I last - and first - saw a Pictures and Picturegoer, and what memories it conjured up for one who, in the dim past, was a confirmed film fan. This was a really superb issue, if only from the novelty angle, and I heartily enjoyed it.

HOW THEY BEGAN. NO. 16

Funny Wonder began in Victorian Days, and saw 1760 issues. Closed in 1953. In its heyday featured on the cover the exploits of Charlie Chaplin.

ARTHUR HARRIS (Llandudno) I must thank you for the splendid tribute you have paid to Frank Richards with this special issue of the Digest. It made me feel I really missed something by not being a follower of his creations. "The Jester" thrilled me; so did "Comic Cuts", "Comic Home Journal" and "Big Budget". I'm pleased to see you are now featuring them in C.D. I enjoyed the article on "Puck", though I think the "Jester" more deserves the title of King of Comics. "The Coloured Comic" to which Mr. Loft's refers, did not stay coloured for long.

THE CHANGE IN TEMPO

By R. J. Godsave

The detective story has evolved a highly perfected technique, and at its best a model of construction with good presentation.

Although Edgar Allan Poe and Wilkie Collins were the forerunners of the modern detective story, it was the introduction of Sherlock Holmes in "A Study in Scarlet" that popularised the detective story which it has never since lost.

That the Sherlock Holmes stories which followed "A Study in Scarlet" in the Strand Magazine overshadowed it is possible, as it is perhaps less well known than the rest of the Holmes stories. Conan Doyle's chief merit laid in his crispness and polish.

The detective story has come in for some criticism because it deals in crime and panders to vicious taste for sensation. But the real interest in stories of crime and mystery is in the actual solution.

The leisurely air of the Sherlock Holmes period gradually increased in tempo with the arrival of the twentieth century and the scientific and materialistic age. Thus, the early Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee Library authors had to find a new perspective on which to work.

There is no such thing as a new plot; only new ways of handling an old one. For, although human nature does not change, its complexes do. Although the man of today is like his predecessors, he is unlike them in his mental outlook caused by the ever-changing social conditions. It is for this reason that the writings of authors must change with the years.

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HAMILTONIAN LIBRARY (London O.B.B.C. Section)

We now have 1178 different items of pre-war Hamiltoniana available for loan, covering all periods from 1907 to 1940. As a result of increased stocks, we are again prepared to admit a few more postal subscribers whose bona fides can be vouched for by Club Members or friends. If you are interested, send a 3d stamp to Roger Jenkins, "The Firs," Eastern Road, Havant, Hants.

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GREEN MEMORYBy John Jukes

In his autobiography, Green Memory, the late L.A.G. Strong is not above taking a kindly backward glance at the old papers of his youth and I quote -

"I owe my father a debt of gratitude on many counts, but none more than the complete freedom he gave me to read what I liked, Penny dreadfuls, bloods and comics he let me read to my heart's content, despite remonstrances from friends and relations, saying that, if I had any taste at all I should grow out of them, and that, if he interfered, he would add to the attractions of the charm of the illegal. He was right. I did grow out of them; but I enjoyed them, and I learned from them at least one lesson of the writer's craft, the need to keep a story moving, and to hold the readers attention all the time. I well remember how, after reading one Dick Turpin for the second time, I put it down with a deep sigh of satisfaction and exclaimed aloud, 'That's a jolly good story'. It was an embryo craftsman's verdict. I approved the more because I saw how it had been done.

It was good to be a boy in the first decade of the century, when the Augustan age of the Penny dreadful was foundering in a blaze of glory. There was the Dick Turpin library, four penny numbers a month, twenty four pages each, with a coloured frontispiece. The favourite author was Stephen H. Agnew, the favourite artist Richard Prowse. He signed himself R.P. and he drew really well. I say this the more boldly because I found, many years later, that David Low is of the same opinion. Nearly all the coloured covers of the various Aldine House libraries, Claude Duval, Robin Hood, Jack Sheppard, Buffalo Bill were Prowse's work. His chief understudy F. W. Boyington, was less skilful.

Among the weeklies were the Gem, Magnet and the Marvel, with Jack, Sam and Pete, which introduced professional boxing and elementary economics, such as the price Sam paid for a suit. Of the comic papers, my favourite was Comic Cuts, featuring Gertie the regimental mule, a versatile beast of phenomenal kicking powers, engaged in perpetual warfare with one Private Raw, whom she always defeated. She was a brilliant creation, and I mourn her demise.

At the other end, aristocrat of boy's papers, there was the Captain, in which P.G. Wodehouse was writing the best and most natural series of school stories that ever appeared. The Captain was my favourite, but I sometimes condescended to the Boys Own Paper, and

even to Chums. I sent to Chums the first short story I ever wrote. It was imitative and the paper very properly returned it."

After reading this, one might add - "Wise father, lucky boy."

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