

# NEWSAGEN



**COLLECTORS' MARCH 1963**  
No. 17 No 195 2/- **DIGEST**

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EXECUTRIX -

Mrs. I. Carpenter,  
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Midax.

# Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 17

Number 195

MARCH, 1963

Price 2s. Od.



## My Readers' Page

### THE EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS

#### BY ANY OTHER NAME

It is something of a paradox that COLLECTORS' DIGEST wastes its own time. And before loyal readers send up a storm of protest which echoes from Wick to Sydney Harbour let me explain that I am merely referring to the much loved title of our magazine.

This title suggests that we cater for collectors, but in no way does it show in which direction our interests lie. And the number of things which are

collected by members of the general public are varied, amusing, amazing - and large in quantity.

On an average I receive four letters every week of the year from people who have come across our name, but who have no idea of what our movement is. Usually they have something to sell; sometimes they merely write for advice. They have found the name COLLECTORS' DIGEST in one of the yearly lists of British publications. So they write - while others telephone. I can't blame them. Our title has misled them.

This week, for instance, I have had letters from (a) a man in Sandwich who wishes to dispose of a collection of model soldiers; (b) a lady of Norwich who collects dolls of all countries; (c) a man in Wales who collects the title headings of newspapers and who possesses two thousand different ones; (d) a lady of Chelmsford who has a florin which left the Mint with a bubble in the middle so it split down the centre. Plus a telephone call from a lady with a vast collection of beer mats.

Sometimes the letter-writers enclose a stamped addressed envelope; sometimes they don't; but courtesy demands that they be sent a reply to explain to them what the interests of C.D. readers are. An average of four letters a week. That is, two hundred letters a year on subjects nothing at all to do with our hobby. And, to my dismay, the number shows signs of increasing.

Plenty of Digest readers, of course, have other hobbies beside that of collecting or taking an interest in old papers. They often refer to these other hobbies in their letters to me, and I am glad that they do. I find the information they give me of very great interest.

Readers Robert Rawstone of Preston and Vera Nicholls of Leeds have the fascinating and charming hobby of collecting Valentines. Mr. Rawstone, in fact, has the largest and most valuable collection of Valentines in the country, some of them over one hundred years old. Plenty of our readers are interested in tramway lore, and collect pictures of trams of all shapes and sizes. I do myself.

But chatty, interesting details of other hobbies which are sent me by my own readers are quite different from the hundreds of letters which come from folk who have come across our name and are merely seeking free advice or free advertisement.

The only escape from the time-wasting of the uninitiated would be to change our name, and I must make it clear that I am not considering doing this. The good old Digest is loved by loyal readers all over the world, and to abandon our name would almost break many hearts. So there is no solution. I just go on being courteous and as kind as possible to those who write and offer me a Louis Quinze snuffbox at the sacrificial price of £250.

However, purely as a matter of interest, I invite readers to don their thinking-caps and invent a name which they think would be suitable for our magazine, making our activities clear yet avoiding ambiguity. Jot your suggested name on a postcard or a sheet of paper, with your name and address, and send it to me. You won't find your suggestion adopted, but you may win, for your own library, one of the two or three book prizes to be awarded for the most apt, witty, amusing or captivating suggestions. Closing date - March 17th.

SLADE BACK NEXT MONTH

The demand for more Slade remains unabated. Therefore I am pleased to announce that a story of Slade will be one of the features in our next packed issue. The story is entitled "MR. CRAYFORD PASSES BY", and it relates another adventure of Mr. Buddle and Meredith in peaceful, scholarly surroundings.

THE EDITOR.

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TOWN AND AROUND

T.V. personality, Derek Cooper, had a watching brief at our London Club Meeting at Putney on February 17th. The following day he made a brief appearance in the B.B.C. T.V. programme Town and Around, and spoke of his first visit to the O.B.B.C. His comments were pleasantly made, even though he seemed to have that inevitable astonishment at the way some folks pass their spare time. He spoke with genial warmth of some of the old stories, though his reference to the old story papers as "comics" made the viewer wonder whether he knew very much about them.

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FOR SALE - 75 Modern Boys (1928-39); 50 The Thriller (1929-39); 30 Young Britains (1919-20); 28 Boys Realms (1906-28); 19 Dreadnoughts (1913-14); 17 Boys Friend Libraries (1912-17); 15 Union Jacks (1920-25); 9 Sexton Blake Libraries (1924-39); 60 Union Jacks without Detective Supplements (1922-27); 4 Chums Annuals (1923, 1925, 1927, 1930) S.A.E. Offers to J. KING, 5 WHITE HART LANE, LONDON, N.22.

WANTED: Boys Friends (Rockwood series). Good condition.  
BROWN, 18 DALE STREET, HASLINGDEN, LANCs.

WANTED - King of the Islands and Rio Kid Boys Friend Libraries.  
HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, NORTHAMPTON.

WILL EXCHANGE - 1923 - 1925 Gems for Magnet 461.  
A. PARSONS, 45 FAIRFIELD ROAD, TRANMERE, BIRKENHEAD.

# DANNY'S DIARY



General View of the Famous School—GREYFRIARS.

MARCH, 1913

Boom!

Once more the gun boomed out over the stern-swept sea, as the juniors of Greyfriars came out upon the open shore. The fishing village of Pegg was upon their right, Cliff House School on their left, and away to the end of the bay loomed up the gigantic cliff known as the Shoulder. The sand was crumpling under the heavy billows that rolled in and broke on the rocks. Lanterns gleamed by the shore, where a group of fisherfolk and coastguards had gathered. The juniors joined the crowd of them, unnoticed in the excitement. There was no lifeboat at Pegg, and in such a sea no boat could have lived. Far out on the black waters lights were dancing and dodging, showing the position of the hapless vessel.

"She's doomed!" said Bob Cherry, in a hushed voice.

That's a wonderful bit from a wonderful story - "A Son of the Sea", the first story in the Magnet this month.

I was in luck. At school we had to do an essay on a shipwreck for homework, and I cribbed all of it out of "A Son of the Sea" though I adapted it to suit my own

convenience.

For instance, I made it "She's doomed!" said a boy who was watching. My form-master, Mr. Scatterby (we call him Scatterbags or just "Scatty") gave me 9 out of 10 for it, and says he will expect big things from me in the future. But he's quite silly, I lost the one mark because, he said, "No boys would use the word 'doomed'. You only hear that on the stage." I forgot myself and said: "Well, Bob Cherry said it!" Scatty asked who Bob Cherry was, and I said "A friend of mine," which is quite true.

Jessie buys Old Moore's Almanack, and Old Moore is often right. For this month he said "There will be great excitement in certain spots." He was right. Early in March I went down with chickenpox. I didn't feel very bad except before the spots came out, and I had to stay in bed for a few days with a log fire in my bedroom. I was able to read and read.

Excitement! Tons of it in the Magnet and the Gem which have had some lovely stories.

"A Son of the Sea" was delicious. Harry Wharton saved a boy from the wreck, and he turned out to be Con Fitzpatrick, on his way to school at Greyfriars. He didn't want to go to Greyfriars; he wanted to be a sailor; and in the end of the story he ran away to sea.

Next week the Magnet gave "The Captain's Minor" in which Jack Wingate came to Greyfriars. In the Greyfriars Gallery in this issue there were pictures of three Greyfriars boys, Treluce, Ionides and Carberry. I had never heard of any of them, and I mentioned this to Doug as he sat by my bed and ate all my bananas one after the other. Doug said: "They belong to the class of the gone but not forgotten." I said: "Yes, like my bananas!"

The next Magnet was "Bob Cherry's Secret" in which a new football-coach named Yorke came to Greyfriars. He was really a rascal named Paul Tyrrell, and he was Bob's cousin.

In this issue there was a picture of Greyfriars. It reminded me a bit of the Crystal Palace, but it was a nice picture.

Next, another sea story: "Chums Afloat". The Bounder dared Harry Wharton and Bob to row out to the Shoulder one dark night. They tried it, and got carried away and picked up by a ship called the Spindrift. It was a story of murder, and mutiny and mayhem. I don't really know what mayhem is, but Doug says it always goes with murder and mutiny.

Lastly "The Schoolboy Conjuror" in which a very jolly new chap called Oliver Kipps came to Greyfriars.

What a grand month in the Magnet! Fancy any man being able to write all those marvellous long tales in one month.

The suffragettes have been making things hum this month. One evening, early in March, they went round the West End of London smashing shop windows. They did nearly \$5000-worth of damage. Harrod's had their window pulverised. Dad says it's shocking, but Mum keeps casting sly glances at the bricks on the rockery in the garden.

While I was ill I wasn't allowed to see my friends, but Lindsay, whose father is a Sexton Blake expert, brought me the Union Jack every week. There have been a lot of stories lately about Yvonne, a very shapely lady. Doug liked them a lot. The Easter Double Number of the Union Jack had an 80,000-word story about a new crook, Dr. Huxton Rymer. I got a bit bogged down with it, which Doug says was due to my immature mind. Very insulting!

One evening Dad brought me "Fun and Fiction". The stories were fearfully far-fetched, and one of them called "Judith Hate" was about a wicked adventuress rather like Yvonne. I must say that I liked this paper.

One Saturday, the P & O liner "Oceana" was in collision off Newhaven. A tug managed to get it in tow for a while, but eventually the liner heeled over and sank.

Towards the end of the month, while I was still spotty but able to go out, Mum took me to Kensington Palace where we saw the King open the new London Museum. Its

purpose is to provide a home for relics of old London and London life.

Doug and a pal of his, Wobbly Defrayne, went to the Vaudeville Theatre to see H.G. Well's "Kipps". It was a scream to hear them talk about it afterwards. Doug said that the story had been vulgarised and reduced to the level of farce, and Wobbly, very pompous, said "Vanished is the simple soul of Kipps!" When I asked them if they had swallowed dictionaries, Doug said "That little horror wants booting!" - meaning me.

A lovely month in the Gem. The boy who was "Ashamed of his Name" was Guy Vavasour. His real name was Peter Smith and his father kept the Vavasour Arms. But it was a very good story, and Vavasour turned out to be a good chap in the end.

"The Last Hope" was grand. Tom Merry lent Cutts the sports funds, and Cutts refused to pay it back. Tom managed to get the money by wrestling in a circus.

"Shoulder to Shoulder" was another lovely story about Mr. Selby and Wally. Tom Merry and Gussy told some white lies and felt very black. Lastly, "Hidden Treasure at St. Jim's" which was not quite so good as the other three, but amusing and exciting in parts.

A new serial called "Sir Billy of Greyhouse" by Warren Bell has just started in the Gem.

In Doug's "Cheer, Boys Cheer" there is a competition in which the prize is a free passage to Canada, with £5 to spend when you get there. Doug says the editor doesn't intend you to paint the town red.

The Boat Race took place - nearly - on March 30th. The water was rough and the Cambridge boat sank. The race will be rowed early in April.

My spots haven't quite all gone even yet, and I'm very much afraid that my Headmaster won't let me go back to school yet, I hope.

## THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY PORTRAIT GALLERY.



EDITORIAL NOTE: When the above characters appeared in the Magnet in the Greyfriars

Gallery in March 1913, many readers must have been puzzled. All were from the hazy backwoods of Greyfriars. Carberry was a prefect who had been expelled long before. Ionides had been an effeminate Greek prefect and had long disappeared from the stories. He was an interesting character in the early Magnet and one wonders why he was dropped. Treluce was still at Greyfriars, but never more than dead wood.

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VALENTINE FOR MEREDITH

At the Digest office, on St. Valentine's Day, arrived a Valentine addressed to Master Cedric Meredith, Slade College. Before re-addressing it to Meredith at Slade, we could not resist taking a peep at it. The card was contemporary, and it contained the following verse:

The Famous Five are pure and fine,  
With them, we could not mix or dine.  
Far more to us you do appeal,  
We love it when you act the heel.  
Tom Merry's mob are good and straight,  
With them we know we'd never rate;  
Their uprightness has brought them fame -  
We'd sooner have your type of game.  
So keep on ragging Mr. B.,  
Right through this year of 63;  
We love it when you act the swine,  
So won't you be our Valentine?

The card was signed as from "The Belles of St. Lillian's". We are not certain whether Mr. Buddle supervises the letters received by his pupils. Certainly Mr. Quelch would have a few questions to ask Master Cedric Meredith concerning the Belles of St. Lillian's.

At any rate, the Belles may be pleased to know that Meredith will be back in Collectors' Digest next month in a brand new story of Slade entitled "MR. CRAYFORD PASSES BY."

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MR. PHILIP SWINNERTON

Mr. Philip Swinnerton, former editor of the children's paper Chick's Own and brother of Mr. Frank Swinnerton, the author, died in a London hospital. He was 83.

He began his working life as an apprentice lithographer with Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., and then began to draw for Harnsworth periodicals, like Comic Cuts and Chips. He did the front pages for both these papers and also drew the Weary Willie and Tired Tim series.

After the First World War Swinnerton was concerned in the creation of Rupert the Chick, the chief character in Chick's Own and was for a long time its editor.

Later he worked both as a commercial artist and as a journalist for other Amalgamated Press papers, including Rover and Boys' Own. He also did serious illustrations for magazine articles.

He was with the Amalgamated Press for 45 years and continued his association after his retirement until he was 71.

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# BLAKIANA

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

## NEWS OF OLD AUTHORS

By Bill Lofts

Whilst on the South Coast recently, I met a former editor of THE DETECTIVE WEEKLY. During a discussion about the 'thirties he gave me the following information on old Blake authors, which will be of interest to all.

### LEWIS JACKSON

Readers will be sorry to learn that this popular author died a few years ago in the Brighton area.

Real name JACK LEWIS, he wrote 44 stories for the S.B.L. and 40 for the Union Jack, his most famous creation being Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer.

I saw him once many years ago in Fleet Street, but was not able to speak to him as he was with a group of editors. He was a big man, with features similar to the late Sydney Greenstreet.

I have been told that he was more than a useful cricketer in his younger days, and that he had a younger brother who, until recently, was an editor on one of the women's papers.

"Lewis Jackson" started writing before the first World War - on a woman's paper. Later he wrote for nearly all the Harmsworth papers of that period.

In 1914 he started free-lancing, and after serving with the Royal Navy in the 1914-18 war he returned to turn out stories by the hundred including school stories for the RAINBOW. He also wrote under the pen-name of "Stephen Hood."

### GEORGE E. ROCHESTER

As many readers will remember, it was my pleasure to meet Mr. Rochester a few years ago. (A full report of this meeting appeared in

C.D.) Although not primarily a Blake writer, George E. Rochester did pen a few stories for the S.B.L. and Detective Weekly.

Writing women's fiction in recent years, he unfortunately suffered a stroke early in 1962 which left him partly paralysed and unable to carry on with his writing. A short while ago he left for the U.S.A. to live with his daughter.

A fine writer of flying stories, G. E. Rochester wrote about many of his personal experiences whilst serving as an officer in World War One, when he was shot down over enemy lines.

All readers will join me in wishing Mr. Rochester a full recovery.

HARRY BLYTH, Jnr.

One of my most memorable events was meeting the son of the creator of Sexton Blake at Broadstairs. At that time over 80 years of age, Mr. Blyth gave me a lot of information about his father - the famous "Hal Meredith" who died long ago.

Calling at his house again recently, I was most sorry to learn that he had died.

I shall always remember him with gratitude for his kindness in supplying me with some of the most important information in the history of Sexton Blake.

"DAVIES"

Second series S.B.L. No. 231 "The Warehouse Murder" in which an Inspector Craig was featured, has been credited in official records as being by an individual named Davies.

As reported in C.D. Annual, 1959, nothing was known about this writer. It was therefore with some excitement that, thanks to the editor of the S.B.L., Mr. W. Howard Baker, I learned the identity of this author. He seems a most interesting person, his knowledge and interest in old Blake affairs being almost on a par with our own experts.

A full report will appear in Blakiana shortly.

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ARGUMENT

By E. C. Carter

I fail to see Walter Webb's reasoning on the list of Sexton Blake authors. I agree entirely with Josie Packman. Credit must be given to the author whose name is on the lists and who has been paid

for the work. The A.P. would only pay for work submitted once, not twice.

As I said before if Brooks wanted to write under another name he surely would take one entirely different. Does Walter doubt the existence of L.H. Brooks at all? Bill Lofts mentions in one of his articles that he died in tragic circumstances many years ago.

If we are going to doubt records then all our composers, authors and poets are in doubt as to what they wrote. Shades of De Vere and Shakespeare!

It is always not possible to judge an author by his style; even the experts on Hamiltonia have been out at times. The article that John Shaw wrote years ago, on the spurious writers has been found wrong in places.

Take No. 5 of the Sexton Blake Library "Midst Balkan Perils" featuring Laban Creed. Now we know the style is Murray Graydon's and Creed was one of his creators. Brooks is given the credit for the story. Perhaps some of these were a joint effort, one author submitting a plot to another and being assisted in the writing. The cash then may be divided. But then Brooks must be accepted as the author although the style is not his. We had instances of one author re-writing stories. Would he get a fee for this?

Stanton Hope once told me he was the only author on the A.P. staff who got paid for the same work twice.

One can distinguish between the style of the two Graydon's at once, but can the style of E. J. Murray (Sydney Drew) and Andrew Murray be picked every time? They wrote in the same period which makes it all the harder.

I shall rely on the official lists for my information and disregard all the "so called experts" on this topic.

\* \* \* \* \*

FLASHBACK TO SEXTON BLAKE  
by Victor Colby

On Saturday, February 17th, 1945, on the book page of the "Daily Telegraph", Sydney Australia, in the "Mystery of the Week" section, appeared the review of Collins' Crime Club Novel "Greenmask" by J. Jefferson Farjeon. Written by "Dr. Watson, Junior" the review article was entitled "Flashback to Sexton Blake."

I remembered this review article with considerable interest and years having passed, thought I would like to read it again. Alas! I did not have a copy of the paper nor could I buy one. However, I visited the Public Library near the Botanical Gardens in Sydney and having requested the Librarian to give me access to the file copy, I laboriously copied out the review article. Here it is for your interest and enjoyment. You won't necessarily agree with the views expressed. Right. Send your comments to

Blakiana. They will provide good copy for future issues.

"Greenmask" is a strange return to the old type of detective mystery - a highwayman ghost in a castle, sinister vaudeville villains at a haunted inn, buried treasure and bodies bobbing in a mountain stream.

Like old-time melodrama, there is always something disarming about these detective stories, which recall boyhood adventures of Sexton Blake (rightly described by Dorothy Sayers in her classic "Monograph on Murder and Detection" 1928, as "the nearest modern approach to a national folk lore, conceived as the centre for a cycle of loosely-connected romances in the Arthurian manner"). (The scholar will recall, however, Mistress Sayers' error in describing the Blake-Tinker bloodhound, Pedro, as a bulldog.)

In the Farjeon and Blake detection tradition, energy is more important than deduction, courage than intelligence, bullet-shots than clues.

Accordingly, the identity of the ghost in "Greenmask" is so obvious, that the most innocent High Church curate could name him with easy assurance before chapter 10.

All the Farjeon villains, also, are of the same pattern if more anaemic than those celebrated Sexton Blake rogues - horrible Mr. Reece, acrobatic Waldo the Wonderman, imperturbable Mr. John Smith.

Blake's assistant, Tinker, would have shown in the "Union Jack" the same blending of boldness and stupidity as does Farjeon's amateur investigator in "Greenmask."

However, it is well to remember that Tinker must be now in his sixties. Blake is at least 80, or 11 years younger than Holmes - sufficient answer to the blasphemers who have hinted that Blake was a natural son of Holmes and Irene Adler (see "Some reflections on the sex life of Sherlock Holmes" by Aldous Huxley, Cambridge Press 1923).

According to the Sexton Blake Annual (1941), Blake and Tinker were in Sydney for the 150th celebrations, when Blake solved the curious mystery of the "Sandowner's Secret" involving a murder at a strange goldfield in the heart of the Mallee.

The old fellow had remained very fit; although in his seventies he was able to use his fists, halt two maddened bolting horses, vault a five-barred gate, swim the Harbour from Pinchgut to Kirribilli in a rainstorm, and run two miles in record time.

Holmes, 11 years older, and suffering from rheumatism and the inevitable effects of his early drug taking habits, is in vastly inferior physical condition.

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FROM THE NEWSAGENT'S CORNER  
By D. Newman

In the article "Let's Be Controversial About Sexton Blake" (February C.D.) the newsagent gets the blame for the fact that you do not see the S.B.L. on display in many shops, so I think this is a good time to put forward a few facts.

The main fact is that there is little or no demand for S.B.L. from the casual reader, most of them go to regular readers. I speak from fourteen years experience as a retail newsagent, and of course as a keen reader of the Library. I have always kept a good display of the Library, but despite displaying them among the general paperbacks, with the other Libraries and, with the weekly and monthly magazines, I am afraid it did not help the sales.

The second fact is that there is no help from the publishers in the way of advertising in the general press or even in the trade guide.

The third fact is that most casual readers prefer to pay 2/6 or 3/6 for a book, as they seem to think the more you pay the better the story, a fact borne out by the fact that when Corgi published Jack Trevor Story's "Mix Me A Person" we sold all our initial order out in three days, and yet we couldn't sell one extra copy of it when it appeared as "Nine O'Clock Shadow" (S.B.L. No. 407).

The newsagent like everyone else is only trying to make a living and any magazine

he has left are a complete loss. If he had one copy of each popular weekly and monthly magazine left on his hands he would lose over eleven pounds a month, which means he has to sell over forty-four poundsworth of mags a month before he can even start to make enough to pay rent, wages, etc., and of course there are also the daily papers he has left as well.

If the Fleetway Press were to do some advertising to help the newsagent, they would find him only too pleased to give the Libraries a good display.

EDITORIAL NOTE - We did not blame the newsagents, except those who gave out the absurd information that the S.B.L. had ceased publication. Clearly the distributors are at fault. We repeat our contention that circulation can never build up unless the S.B.L. is on show to attract the casual purchaser who may well become a regular reader. The solution is an arrangement for a month or two during which time newsagents can take the S.B.L. on sale or return. Surely such a plan could be operative.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT SEXTON BLAKE

One after the other they have gone. The latest to disappear is KNOCKOUT. Slowly, but with deadly persistence, the pre-war papers have been killed off. Count up how many of the much loved, grand old titles have vanished in the past few years. Are we to believe that the support for the old papers was not so great as for the new? Or is it the policy of the publishers to sweep away every link with the old A.P. days?

So KNOCKOUT has gone. One, at present, is left - SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. In trying to save it, are we, metaphorically, trying to batter down a solid brick wall by butting with our heads?

In my view, the only thing which has kept the famous Library alive till now is the hope that Sexton Blake might appear in a television series. That would have given Blake a gigantic new lease of life. But it has never materialised.

Martin Thomas, the famous writer of Blake stories, has some extremely apt comments to make on this matter. He writes:

"One must assume that the project was dropped because of a lack of interest by the American market, which prefers an American hero to a British. "The Saint" had, of course already been Americanised. It is possible that the Americans preferred to copy the Blake saga with "77 Sunset Strip" rather than to import the original. So we have the B.B.C. boosting a French detective, and I.T.V. boosting American detectives and Americanised "British" characters, such as the Americanised Scotland Yard of "The Pursuers" and the Americanised "Ghost Squad". Lockhart and Steed of "The Avengers" are about the only T.V. detectives who make no concession to the American taste and market."

In my own views, Mr. Thomas has squarely hit the nail on the head. He might have added the Americanised Mark Sabre stories, such as they were. I have long regarded "The Avengers" as the most delightful thriller programme on television today. Clean as a new pin, full of knockout thrills and intriguing mystery, they are as British as Nelson's column. "Steed" is the perfect British detective, and when "Cathie Gale" appears in the stories, played by the incomparable Honor Blackman, we have a wonderful combination. Every week, without fail, as "The Avengers" ends, accompanied by Dankworth's fascinating theme music, I say to those around me: "Real good old Sexton Blake." And when does this fine British thriller appear on television? For a long time it was televised on Saturdays, starting at twenty minutes to eleven at night. At present it comes on Sundays starting at twenty minutes to eleven at night. The perfect show for youngsters, or for the young in heart of all ages - and it comes on when most people are toddling off to bed. Could a nything be more utterly absurd.

Once again Collectors' Digest appeals to all its readers everywhere to back up the Sexton Blake Library. Order it from your newsagent, for, the distribution system being

what it is, you are unlikely to see it in the shops. For overseas readers, send your orders along to us, and we will book a subscription for you.

It is surely worth while to make big efforts to save this grand old British periodical. It will cost you 2/- per month - the equivalent of 9 cigarettes. We may be hitting our heads against a brick wall, but if the end comes we shall know how the lands lies - and, what is more important, we shall know that we have done our best.

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FOR EXCHANGE - I will give near mint Schoolboys Own Libs. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 40, 43, 45, 46, 47, 50, 51, 55, 59, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 107, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 152, 153, 154, 155, 158, 159, 164, 166, 171, 173, 175, 189, 198, 193, 266, 293, 295, 298, 325, 335, 341, 347, 350, 368, 374, 383, 407 at a generous rate of exchange for any of the following wanted items -

NELSON LEE LIBRARY (Original Series) Nos. 11, 16, 19, 23, 27, 31, 33, 32, 38, 30, 47, 53, 54, 64, 74, 133, 141.

UNION JACKS (published after 1905) Nos. 80, 100, 113, 124, 126, 310, 358, 486, 493, 496, 504, 512, 532, 533, 536, 551, 560, 564, 565, 617, 618, 652, 666, 672, 687, 690, 704, 723, 763, 856.

OLD UNION JACKS (published before 1905) Nos. 194, 250, 261, 283, 285, 299, 336, 344, 356, 360, 361, 365, 366, 367, 370, 371, 373, 375, 400, 411, 420.

THRILLERS Nos. 278, 279, 343, 359, 360, 361, 365, 369, 371, 372, 376, 377, 379, 381, 382, 386, 442, 443, 485.

B.F.L. 1st series Nos. 105, 229, 429, 433, 749. B.F.L. 2nd series No. 515.

I will pay high cash price for wanted items if you prefer.

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# HAMILTONIANA

## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

### No. 65. THE FOUR HORSEMEN

We all had our likes and dislikes among the various types of stories. A student of character might get a comprehensive knowledge of us - of our intelligence and our personalities - if he could glean from us particulars of our tastes in the old stories.

Tom Hopperton disliked stories of missing heirs, of ventriloquism and of impersonators. He should then, like St. Jim's better than Greyfriars or Rookwood, for the Gem presented much less of that sort of thing. Offhand, I cannot remember any missing heir story in the Gem. There were plenty at Greyfriars and Rookwood. It is difficult to decide which was the best of them. The Mornington-'Erbert series was maybe the most charming and touching, though it often fringed on melodrama and today there is a scent of old lavender about it. The Flip series is memorable for the affection which the little waif had for Billy Bunter. It contained so many first-class tales.

I never cared for the Skip series. It was typical of the latter-day Magnet and had its moments. It was written with great competence even though, for me, it lacked something which some of the earlier series had possessed.

I think that, possibly, Tom Hopperton was a trifle hard on the missing heir theme, though I agreed with much of what he wrote. With missing heirs, ventriloquists, and impersonators, one had to suspend credulity - but one had to do that when reading most of the stories which we enjoyed in our youth. With the missing heir theme one had to swallow so much coincidence and contrivance.

Most of us enjoyed Bunter as a ventriloquist. But once again, if we didn't like ventriloquists we could turn to St. Jim's which has no resident voice-thrower. Rookwood had Van Ryn, though we heard nothing of his powers after the first few years of Rookwood.

All three schools had their impersonation stories. Kerr was supposed to have a gift as an impersonator in many tales. But it was, of course, Wibley of Greyfriars who made that type of story entirely



— GEORGE WINGATE —

his own.

I think it is fairly certain that the average reader liked the stories on any of these themes. In fact, down the years in the Magnet there were so many tales of missing heirs, ventriloquism and impersonation that one would hardly have become a regular reader at all of the Magnet if one did not take such stories in one's stride.

The secret of it all was in the way the stories were told. Charles Hamilton wrote so well that he could make even the ridiculous seem feasible. But, in the hands of a writer without his gifts, even a good plot would have amounted to nothing.

The Strong Alonzo series was sheer fantasy. Yet so well was it told, so brilliant were some of the character etchings it contained, that it became an immensely readable series. I have read it many times, and never cease to enjoy it. However, Strong Alonzo stood alone. It was never rehashed as was the missing heir theme.

Any series had an advantage if it was not predictable by the reader. The missing heir theme was usually obvious from the start, even though, as in the Skip series, it covered eight stories in the telling.

The last of Mr. Hopperton's pet aversions was the school cowboy, and here I am with him all the way. In this instance, the Gem was the main culprit. In the early twenties, Wildrake was introduced to an already overcrowded stage. He was the last new permanent character to be introduced at St. Jim's, and, along with Mr. Hopperton, I should have been happier without him. Why he was ever introduced is a mystery, even though Charles Hamilton may have foreseen that travel series in the Wild West in the Gem a few years later.

In any case, St. Jim's already had Buck Finn, though we saw little of him down the years.

Of Mr. Hopperton's Four Horsemen, I think I liked the school cowboy the least of all. I think we should have lost nothing if he had never been invented. But though I think the missing heir was plugged to death and he often gave me a pain in the neck, I still think we should have lost some worthwhile stories without him, or the ventriloquist, or the impersonator.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

WE REMEMBER CLIFF HOUSE

seize upon one particular item of the Let's Be Controversial article, and ignore the main theme under discussion. That has happened this month. Readers have spotlighted the section about Cliff House.

Readers have different memories of Cliff House, according to whether they only know the Hamilton version, or whether they recall the earlier, the middle, or the later School Friend - or perhaps only The Schoolgirl. It is fairly clear why the pictures recalled to different minds are so various concerning Cliff House.

GORDON KIRBY - While Charles Hamilton was alive there was no point in stating that his Cliff House stories were pretty terrible - I'm sure he knew it - and, in view of the shabby treatment he received from time to time, one had no inclination to re-open the old wounds.

It is accepted that Charles Hamilton wrote not more than the first six of the School Friend stories. Whether Horace Phillips Senior then took over, I do not know, but his own school, Morcove, appeared not long after, with a remarkable life of 18 years.

When the School Friend finished in 1929, Cliff House appeared in The Schoolgirl in two serials. Later on, John Wheway gave us the new and infinitely superior Cliff House, which ran in the Schoolgirl until the fall of Norway in 1940. This superb writer took a plastic surgeon's knife and removed much dead wood (Dolly Jobling, Annabel Hitchens, Vivienne Leigh, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, Helen Stone - characters of whom I was very fond) and created a whole new audience for Cliff House. He said in one letter to me that he was anxious to work with his own characters, so gradually he dropped minor names (Phillippa Derwent, Marcia Loftus, Nancy Bell) and brought in others (Lydia Crossendale, Diana Royston-Clarke, Rosa Rodworth).

Wheway had a remarkable understanding of feminine psychology. C.H. knew nothing whatever about it, and his female characters are totally unreal, and in the main, Marjorie Hazeldene perhaps excepted, unlovely. "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School" is a vulgar moron compared with the Wheway creation.

VERA NICHOLLS - I started to read the School Friend in about 1925. I liked Annabel Hitchens, a very old-fashioned girl who loved housework. In the Fifth Form there was Angelica Jelly, a fervent hobbyist who got all the new crazes. The main characters in the Fourth were Babs Redfern, Mabs Lynn, Clara Trevlyn, Phyllis Howell, Phillipa Derwent, Marcia Loftus and Bessie Bunter. Also Augusta Anstruther-Browne and a newcomer, Jemina Carstairs. Miss Steele was the fourth-form mistress. Bessie Bunter, in those days, was a far nicer character than depicted by Roger Jenkins in his "Bunters at Home." She had a dearly-loved parrot called "Polly" which was almost bald but was the loveliest bird in the world to Bessie.

All the girls were very fond of Bessie, who was kind-hearted, though they often laughed at her. One series of Cliff House I would love to read again. It concerned a very old-fashioned school called "Lilac House" and the uniform was after the style of Quaker dress. The girls from Lilac House all went to Cliff House to stay.

JILL LYNE - In what way was Bessie Bunter changed by Mr. Wheway? We read of her in the 30's, and she was fat, lazy, greedy, foolish, a braggart and a borrower. She talked of the splendours of Bunter Court, and snored at night. I remember one story about Bessie meeting her double on the train, and changing places with her. Bessie went as Companion to a wealthy old dame in the country and the former companion went to Cliff House as Bessie Bunter and astonished the natives, especially by her proficiency in maths.

Marjorie Hazeldene was kind, but was "mousy" on the whole. She was friendly with the masculine Clara, but never played so large a part as Janet Jordan who was a fine swimmer and a great friend of Clara. Yet Marjorie and Clara were shown as great friends in the Magnet.

Of course, another boys' school was introduced into the Cliff House stories, and this used to puzzle readers when they found it a different school from Greyfriars.

Characters lost their realism when they were presented in a certain way in one magazine, and quite a different way in another paper.

**BOB WHITER** - I appreciate that publishers are cut to make money, and cannot allow sentiment to interfere with it, but I would not like to see the Bunter books continued with subs writing the stories. If there were only a way for them to reprint the old masterpieces I know that here we come up against the old trouble, as in the past - turning Magnet series into S.O.L.s. Drastic cutting would have to occur. But at least they'd be the genuine article.

**RAY HOPKINS** - "The Iconoclast" poses an interesting question and one we shall encounter - if Cassell's do indeed continue the Greyfriars series with another manipulator of our favourite characters at the helm. Past records show that a "take-over" writer tends to relegate the former main characters to the background and to introduce creations of his own. This is a failing of the subs, and is done, I suppose, to make them feel they are writing an original story. I have had tastes of the subs myself and recall some old Gems (around World War 1) which were obviously not Martin Clifford at all and which I later discovered were written by an author I knew as Jack North. In his own stories of his own schools I liked his style, but to me he completely lost the light-hearted atmosphere that I always associate with dear old St. Jim's. We must only hope that the new Greyfriars chronicler (if Cassell's do decide to keep the series running) will be a great lover of the old school and its original creator and will not tamper with the scene of things as they have always been at the school in Kent.

**FETER HANGER** - My own views on the matter are one of resentment that substitute writers were allowed to write under the name of Frank Richards, but, at the same time, I do regret that they were unsuccessful in capturing the Greyfriars spirit. Had they done so, we might still be having our weekly Greyfriars story, like the Sexton Blake fans who get their stories of their favourite every month.

**ERIC FAYNE** adds - The great puzzle of Cliff House as a separate entity was the fact that Greyfriars was never mentioned. It has been suggested that Charles Hamilton, angry that the series has been taken out of his hands, always refused to allow Greyfriars to be introduced. It is, perhaps, the most feasible solution of the puzzle, but it introduces another poser. If he could prevent Greyfriars from being mentioned in the Cliff House stories, why was he unable to prevent substitute Greyfriars stories being written? Or was he given some emolument for allowing sub tales to be written? Certainly he never gave the impression of any such arrangement in his letters.

Mr. Wheway, in his letter to Mr. Kirby, bears out the contention we made in "The Iconoclast". He was anxious to work with his own characters. Why should Mr. Wheway use a surgeon's knife on another man's creations? Why did not Mr. Wheway concentrate his talents on a school of his own invention? Surely nobody who remembers the first few years of the School Friend could reasonably regard such characters as Dolly Jobling, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, Vivienne Leigh, and Helen Stone (school captain) as dead wood.

It is certainly true that Bessie Bunter, in the School Friend, was a much more lovable girl than she was ever presented in the Magnet.

#### REVIEW

**"BIG CHIEF BUNTER"** (Frank Richards)

Cassell's, 10/6d.

When, fifty years ago, Mr. Brown of Taranaki, New Zealand, sent his son Tom to Greyfriars School, Mr. Brown did not own an Air Line. Mr. Brown was a good business man

and his son Tom was a shrewd and sensible lad, but it is unlikely that, in those far-off days, either envisaged the possibility of Air Lines existing in the dim and distant future.

But, in 1963, Mr. Brown does, in fact, own an Air Line which operates a service between Sydney and Auckland. Under these circumstances it is quite natural that in the latest Billy Bunter book, Mr. Brown should be having his son home for a holiday, and gives him permission to take six friends with him. It is rather surprising that this never happened before, for the Greyfriars chums were great globe-trotters. Maybe, if the Magnet had lasted a little longer, we should have enjoyed "the New Zealand Series".

Regrettably enough, even in this new story, the chums do not reach New Zealand till the last page of the book. The reader's anticipation quickens during the early chapters, for there is the promise of something really new in Greyfriars travel. But the plane on which the party is travelling has to land on a small south seas island, and, to pass away the time, the Famous Five and Bunter go for a sea trip in a small boat with a south-sea islander. From this rather reckless proceeding we find that our own visit to New Zealand is "off" and we are landed in yet another South Seas adventure.

Tom Brown never featured very largely in Greyfriars history, though he had quite a famous radio set before the war. He does not make his mark in this new story, for he is off the scene during most of the tale. This is probably as it should be. Frank Richards was never again to make the error of long ago in allowing his minor characters to take the limelight from the leading players.

This is an extremely well-written adventure story. Action is, of necessity, very swift, and dialogue is never excessive.

There are some delightfully picturesque descriptive passages. It is, in the opinion of this critic, Frank Richards' best travel story since the war. He always loved writing of the South Seas, and in this story there is little doubt but that he enjoyed himself.

Of course, the early promise of something new is not maintained, and for his basic plot the author went a long way back - to the Magnet's Congo series of 1922. That was the first big travel series in the Magnet, and while it was running, the paper introduced its famous yellow and black cover. Today, one seldom sees any reference to the Congo series, but that is possibly more due to the length of time that has elapsed since it was published than to lack of popularity of the series at the time it appeared.

The real novelty of BIG CHIEF BUNTER is that we see Bunter as his familiar post-war self, but get also many glimpses of the Bunter of the early twenties, when he was far less lovable.

Bunter's ventriloquism has, in recent months, received a back-hander in Collectors' Digest, but I think it likely that most readers enjoyed the stories introducing his strange gift. Frank Richards had the knack of making the improbable or even the impossible into convincing and enjoyable reading material.

Because the Congo series is not particularly well known, "Big Chief Bunter" will come to many readers with a charming and disarming freshness.

When I read of Bunter terrifying the cannibals by making the idol speak, I got that strange, rather delicious, nostalgic feeling which I experience when I see on television some of those old movies which are condemned by the highbrow critics, but enjoyed by everybody else.

"Big Chief Bunter" will ring the bell - particularly with the youngsters.

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YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Always try to drive so that your licence will expire before you do.  
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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

## RAMELING JOTTINGS

By Jack Wood

Last month's query by Mr. J. A. Wark, of Dunoon is easily answerable, although his actual recording of the opening of the story is not quite accurate.

With No. 62 of the first edition of the Boys' Friend 3d Library before me, the actual quotation is: "Pass! Pass! Tackle him, Patsy! Oh, well played Tim! Hurroo! Goodwin's got it again! Shoot! Shoot! Goal! GOAL!"

The words are the opening lines of Maxwell Scott's The Football Detective, a tale of Nelson Lee, and the Boys' Realm is a reprint of the serial which ran in the Boys' Herald from October 21st, 1905 to March 10th, 1906. Illustrated by Val Reading, the serial ran from No. 118 to No. 138 of the Herald, and was the third of a popular run of Nelson Lee serials which ran in the Herald, and were afterwards republished in the Boy's Friend Library.

The three serials, of course, were Nelson Lee's Pupil, which ran from No. 2 to No. 23 (1903 to 1904) and illustrated by Harry Lane, told the story of Nipper's adoption by Lee. Nipper's schooldays, with A. H. Clarke as the artist, ran from Nos. 73 to 97 or from December 1904 to June 1905, and recounted Nipper's early days at St. Ninian's.

Nipper did not appear in The Football Detective until the closing chapters when he, and Lee's other ward, Dick Starling (or Syme) are given leave from St. Ninian's to see Lee play for Newport Rovers against Blackburn Rovers at Crystal Palace.

In The Football Detective we are introduced to Frank Goodwin, a young orphan of 28 years of age, who is a machine hand at Brincliffe Ironstone Mines and inside right for Newport Rovers, formerly "Cock o' the North" but now struggling to regain lost fortunes with a good run in the cup after losing interest in the league.

Frank is engaged to Maggie Nemo, a local board school teacher, who turns out to be a typical Maxwell Scott missing heiress. Frank

becomes involved in a kidnapping and an attempt to smear his character with a murder charge, and Lee is brought into the case to find the heiress and clear Frank's name. Naturally, everything turns out well, and Lee and Goodwin score the vital goals in the final after Blackburn had taken the lead to give Newport a 2-1 cup win.

Lee, it appeared, was an old Corinthian, and one of the finest amateur outside rights in the game.

This was not the story in which he appeared under the name of Leeson. That was one of his favourite aliases, for he used it in two serials. In Detective Warder Nelson Lee, serialised in the Boys' Friend Nos. 237-257 (1905-6), Lee came to St. Ninian's as games master Leeson to solve the riddle of another missing heir, but Mr. Wark's story in which Lee acted as trainer Leeson was actually Out to Win, another early Maxwell Scott yarn which ran in Boys' Realm 431-445 (1910).

All these stories, by the way, were reprinted in the Boys' Friend Library later on, though not quite as "later on" as Mr. Wark suggests when he talks of "about 1925".

In Out to Win, Lee became associated with another Scott hero, Jack Hartley, who appeared in a number of detective and sports stories by the Yorkshire author. With illustrations by E. E. Briscoe, who at that time was the Realm's leading artist in this type of story, Out to Win had Lee figuring as the new trainer Leeson for The Swifts, whose crack forward, Fred Forest, is accused of murdering his uncle.

Lee kept the team at concert pitch, and this time had a "double" the Swifts beating Newcastle United at Crystal Palace in the Cup Final, and also winning league promotion on goal average!

Incidentally, in reality, the Crystal Palace Cup winners in 1905 were Aston Villa and in 1906 Everton, both beat Newcastle United.

\* \* \* \* \*

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL NELSON LEE COLLECTORS

From Robert Blythe

Dear Fellow Readers,

In 1933, after nearly 5 years of vicissitudes, the Nelson Lee finally gave up the ghost. Today, nearly thirty years later (thirty years!) these few pages are allotted to Nelson Lee collectors for the purpose of recording comments and results of researches for the benefits of others with similar interests. What then can the interested find in these pages? To put it bluntly, precious little! Jack Wood does his level best, but with so few contributors (and we owe a lot to these few) it is a thankless task. What then is the reason for this apparent lack of support?

Out of curiosity I've collected some figures compiled from last year's "Who's Who". One might suppose from the scarcity of writers that interest in the Nelson Lee is either dead or dying. Not so! The surprising fact is that there are no less than 93 people

who profess an interest in the N.L., and this out of a total of 199 whose names appeared. When one considers its enormous popularity it is gratifying to find that the total number of those who are interested in the Magnet is 153, not double that of the N.L. Now I find this extremely interesting for the following reasons:-

- (a) The Magnet survived the N.L. by seven years therefore nearly an entire generation grew up with the Magnet and knowing nothing about the N.L.
- (b) Stories of Greyfriars have appeared regularly over the past ten to fifteen years, thus keeping the characters in the public eye.
- (c) Frank Richards had always taken a friendly interest in our activities which is more than can be said for E.S.B., I regret to say.
- (d) Over the years since the clubs were first formed, there has been an enormous amount of publicity with the spotlight continually on Greyfriars, or should I say Bunter.

The Nelson Lee has had none of these advantages, yet the stories obviously still hold their magic, even after 30 years, at least to 93 people of our circle.

The next question is how many of these 93 give the Nelson Lee as their first choice? The hard core, as it were, of those whom one might expect to keep Jack Wood happy in his old age, is 28 and this compared with the overwhelming number of 101 for those who chose the Magnet, might seem at first glance somewhat depressing. However, I do not see it like that at all. The Magnet's popularity I accept cheerfully (it wouldn't do any good if I didn't anyway), for the reasons I've already mentioned, but how does the N.L.'s popularity compare with other papers? Is the Gem more popular? Not on your .....! Only 9 collectors give the Gem as first choice. The Popular. Not one single solitary customer! The S.O.L? Just one. Other papers outside the Magnet group don't fare much better either. The Union Jack does better with 14. Those papers before 1914 get 13 and all the rest of the groups put together can only muster 18.

All this does not mean that one paper is better or worse than any other. I have stated many times, and it is a tenet of the London Club that all interests should be catered for and that one paper should not be allowed to swamp minority interests. No! My whole point is to show that, far from being a dead letter the Nelson Lee, after the Magnet, has more followers than any other paper. This being so, why is it so few of you rally round with the occasional article. Are you shy? Are you inarticulate or is it just plain, down to earth, procrastination? Do you realise that if all you 28 were to write an article each it would keep the Nelson Lee Column on the boil for 2 1/2 years! And if all 93 got down to it, even if it were only once it would have to be done once every 8 years. The imagination boggles at the thought.

Now then what about it? You have all stated that the N.L. interests you to a greater or lesser degree, well then - why not share your interest with the rest of us. Why should the Magnetites have it all their own way? Why should the Nelson Lee be confined to a mere couple of pages? If the Nelson Lee is to survive in the C.D. at any rate, you must all pull your weight - otherwise - finito!

At this point I seem to detect certain rumblings in the distance and one or two of you may even be popping off with apoplexy! Who is this chap? I can almost hear you say, 'dare to sit in judgment? What on earth's he done to help keep the N.L. Column going? Has he written anything lately? etc., etc. Well for those of you who know me perhaps an answer is not necessary, but for those who don't perhaps a few words of explanation would not be amiss. First, then, I edited the N.L. Column for 6 years from its inception, and during that period wrote many articles which appeared both in the C.D. and the Annual. So much

so that at the end of that period I had run out of ideas (which never came very easily and usually meant much burning of the midnight oil!) Its because I know the difficulty Jack Wood faces every month that I decided to write this screed, in the hope that some of you will rally round in ever increasing numbers with articles or even suggestions for articles and thus make the N.L. Column a vital part of the C.D.

Incidentally, I haven't answered the question "What have I written lately?" Well, for the past year I have been doing a lot of research for a Nelson Lee Catalogue and bibliography of the writings of E.S. Brookes, which with my usual modesty, I can claim to be the biggest thing of its kind that has ever been attempted. So I hope I am forgiven on that score.

Well there it is. I've had my say. Now its entirely up to you.

Cheerio!

Yours sincerely,

BOB BLYTHE.

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INVISIBLE TIES  
BY R. J. Godsave

"I had a very, very warm spot in my heart for the Nelson Lee." So said Mr. George Inns, the producer of the Black and White Minstrel Show, to our Editor.

What is it that causes some people to form such an attachment to the Nelson Lee, whilst others are left stone cold? The old adage of "One man's meat is another man's poison" does not answer the question as quite a few collectors are keen on both the Nelson Lee and other books.

An ardent collector or reader of the Magnet and Gem is rarely interested in the Nelson Lee. The prodigious output of Charles Hamilton could be the explanation in that the Hamiltonian enthusiast has quite enough to cope with, without collecting, or reading other author's works.

On the other hand, the Nelson Lee enthusiast is invariably interested, to a lesser degree, in the Magnet and Gem, and possesses a fairly good knowledge of Hamilton lore.

Although the average schoolboy and schoolgirl was not unduly critical in the matter of literature, I would suggest that they were influenced, perhaps, subconsciously, by the author's choice of words and their arrangement.

In the case of the Nelson Lee, with the descriptive powers of E.S. Brooks, this could have made the impression on many of us as it did on Mr. Inns.

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WANTED: All Collectors' Digest Annuals up till and including 1960.  
 S. A. PACHON, 520 E. 5th St., Bethlehem, P.A., U.S.A.

WANTED: S.O.L. 42, Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid or S.O.L.'s, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. Would like to correspond with a reader who is interested in Xmas numbers of S.O.L., N.L., Gem and Magnet.  
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WANTED: S.O.L.'s Nos. 60 and 68. Magnets Nos. 829, 862-865, 867, 868, 874, 869, 879, 884, 886, 897, 900. DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOKFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.I.

WANTED: Union Jacks, year 1917. Nos. 691, 693, 695, 792-4, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 733, 736, 740. Year 1919 - 800, 820. Year 1920 - 851-856, 858, 861-863, 865, 870, 872, 874, 877, 885. MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

# Old Boys' Book Club

## MIDLAND

Meeting held Tuesday, 29th January, 1963

Last meeting we missed the presence of Tom Porter. This one, the first of the New Year, was conspicuous for the absence of Madge and Jack Corbett. A rare occurrence except for the holiday periods. There were other apologies for non-appearance from Joe Marston and John Tomlinson of Burton and also from Gerald Price. Another familiar face which we would have liked very much to see was that of George Chatham detained on business matters. Nevertheless nine of us enjoyed a full programme which was in the hands of Tom Porter. He started with a quiz of 10 items - 5 Hamiltonian and 5 St. Frank's. As we had some of these "teasers" some time ago, the quiz was an easy one and for the records - the Secretary was winner. Prize - a "Modern Boy". Again there were quite a few of these Modern Boys floating around. Tom presented all of us with one each and Ted won one for "Guessing the Number." In the game of filling in the letters the numbers are given to form a well-known title. Norman, being the winner, had two or three "Modern Boys" again for his reward. Norman must have quite a pile of these particular papers which he has won in the last few meetings. There were also "Modern Boys" included in the bundle of books which Ted Davey won in the raffle, accompanying a Magnet, Gem and a Bunter Book. Lucky Ted!

The "Collectors Item" was this month the first (1920) Holiday Annual. In good condition (Tom's books are always in the best of condition) it was a pleasure to see it once again.

Tom gave us a talk on the Greyfriars Herald. How it originated "at Greyfriars School, edited by Harry Wharton & Co." in 1916. Eighteen numbers turned out by the heroes of the Remove; then the 1st series commencing with stories of the "Benbow." Later it became the Boys Herald and ran till 1923 when it was merged with the "Marvel".

Following this talk there was the usual discussion and the Boys Herald or the Greyfriars Herald (just as you like) was a good subject, for it contained Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, St. Frank's and Cedar Creek, The Benbow, not to forget dear old Herlock Sholmes.

A good programme much to the taste of those present - Jack Bellfield (Chairman), Tom Porter, Norman Gregory, Ted Davey, Ray Bennett, Win Brown, Win Partridge, Len Lidsey and of course - the Secretary

HARRY BROSTER.

## NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 9th February, 1963

There was another good attendance when Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened our February meeting. Geoff expressed pleasure that the Secretary was back again, after being absent since November, owing to illness, and also extended a warm welcome to another new member, Keith Balmforth of Bradford.

After the usual formal business had been dealt with Gerry Allison read us a selection of correspondence received during the month, including a suggestion from our

Merseyside colleagues that we meet them again in Manchester in spring or early summer, which, needless to say, was favourably received by our members. We shall look forward to seeing them again in, we hope, better weather conditions than those prevailing at present. A "Get Well" greetings card, signed by all the members, was sent to our friend Margaret Jackson, who is still in hospital.

Jack Wood followed with a few interesting items of news. He spoke with appreciation of the London Club's latest production dealing with the Nelson Lee Library and the works of Edwy Searles Brooks, which will be of great interest to all Nelson Lee enthusiasts. The "Daily Express" had that morning printed a cartoon about a Robot Bowler which the Australian cricketers were going to use. As Jack pointed out, Bernard Glyn of St. Jim's invented one of these a good many years ago!

Gerry Allison devised the game which followed, "Who said —" some of the sayings being well-known ("Keep Smiling" for instance), and some not so well known. We divided into two teams, Greyfriars and Rookwood, Greyfriars winning by 36 points to 21. Highest individual scorers were for Greyfriars, Tom Brown (Geoffrey Wilde) 13 points and Micky Desmond (Jack Allison) 9 points, and for Rookwood Kit Errol (Norman Smith) and Jones minor (Tom Roach) 4 points each.

An interval for refreshments followed, especially welcome because of the cold weather conditions most of us had experienced on our travels.

Then Jack Wood took over again and gave us a reading from "Right-Ho, Jeeves" by P. G. Wodehouse which brought the meeting to a hilarious conclusion.

Next meeting, Saturday, 9th March.

F. HANCOCK - Hon. Secretary.

#### MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held, 10th February.

Despite the inclemency of the weather, the success of the meeting was assured by the very good attendance present, the only absentees being John Farrell and Bill Windsor, both of whom are on the sick list. We sincerely hope they will be back on parade at our next meeting; their company is greatly missed at our get-togethers, and we know it is also a matter of regret to them.

Norman opened the meeting by bringing up for discussion a number of important matters, including correspondence from the Northern section on the proposed trip to Manchester in June, and we are hopeful that this venture will materialise as planned. We have many memories of the last meeting of the two sections when it was held in Manchester, and we anticipate the next being equally enjoyable. After the financial report by the Secretary, there came the library business; this was brisk, due mainly to the acquisition of a number of books purchased on behalf of the section by Norman.

Following refreshments came a reading by Walter Pritchard which was enjoyed by all, particularly as it was a nice change from the usual boys' book material. Then came the "Names-Doubles" quiz introduced by Frank Urwin, and the entries submitted were both ingenious and amusing, especially those of the winner, Pat Laffey, who won hands down, and deservedly so. A team quiz was the next item; this was yet another effort of Frank Urwin's, providing keen competition between the three sides, all of whom did very well in a not-too-difficult contest. In view of the indisposition of our host, Bill Windsor, the meeting ended a little earlier than usual, and we should like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our thanks to Bill and Mrs. Windsor for so kindly providing facilities for the meeting in the circumstances. Next meeting, Sunday, 10th March; members will be notified by post if the necessity arises for a temporary change of venue.

FRANK CASE

#### LONDON

"I s ay You Fellows" the London Club celebrated its fifteenth Annual General

Meeting at the Putney home of Brian Doyle on Sunday, February 17th. Highlight of the gathering was the playing of the recording of the B.B.C. radio feature "I say you fellows" Our President, John Wernham, was in attendance and he outlined the plans of the Frank Richards museum collection. Also in attendance was Derek Cooper of the B.B.C. Impressed by what he saw and heard, Mr. Cooper said that there would be a feature about the club and hobby in "Town and Around" on B.B.C. T.V. the following evening.

After his success with the Nelson Lee catalogue, Bob Blythe was elected Chairman for 1963, the rest of the officials being re-elected. Bob's first job in the chair was to conduct a Nelson Lee quiz. Len Packman and Charlie Wright tied for first place with Don Webster third.

Roger Jenkins gave a reading from Magnet 1086, "Hacker Asks for it" which was enjoyed. Len Packman, now recovered from his recent illness, was pleased to state that he had secured the run of "Chips" year 1916, with serial story "The School Bell" in it, which he had been seeking for years. Len and Josie will be the hosts on Sunday, March 17th at their East Dulwich home, when one of the features will be the second part of the L.P. record about Sherlock Holmes.

Lawrence Morely conducted a quiz and once again the familiar names crop up as winners - Don Webster first, Charlie Wright second, Len Packman third. The quiz master provided book prizes for these three successful competitors.

With numerous votes of thanks to all who had worked for the good of the club in 1962 we took our leave after one of the happiest of A.G.M.'s.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

#### AUSTRALIA

Members gathered at the Book Bargain Bazaar for their monthly meeting on Friday, February 15th. Only one factor detracted from the pleasure of those present and that was the absence of one of the club's staunchest members, Victor Colby, who we hope will be able to join us next month.

Chairman, Syd Smyth, opened the proceedings at 6.30 p.m. with a report on the club magazine. Quite a few letters had been received by him and he passed on these enthusiastic comments to the writers of the articles mentioned.

Treasurer, Ernie Carter, dealt with club finances after which members settled down to hear the news from overseas and other collectors.

A letter of thanks from Roger Jenkins was read out by the Secretary and once again the members were fierceome in their praise of the work he and John Wernham had done to further the cause of Hamiltonia.

A pleasant buzz of conversation filled the next half hour as the current copies of "The Newsletter" from our Midland friends and "The Foghorn" from Frank Unwin were passed around. Harry Broster's interesting letter brought first-hand news of their arctic weather and we are now busy organising the mass migration of all O.B.B.C. members to Australia .... what a club we'd have out here then!

Local news from the well-informed pen of Wellington enthusiast Arthur Holland, and Queensland, Harry Curtis concluded the letter reading.

A spirited discussion took place concerning the future of the S.B.L. which at the moment seems to be plunging deeper into difficulties. There was unanimous agreement that the new format has done little to aid the sales programme and may even prove to be a retrogressive step as the print is even more difficult for adult eyes than usual. A bold stroke on a broader scale will be necessary to put the S.B.L. into the adult market was the general opinion and there was unanimous support expressed even if this change necessitated an increase in price. Blake supporters here are quite willing to meet the new format half-way, but feel that as yet there has not been any thing offered which is worthy of that support.

After the usual continuation of pleasant discussion in the local coffee shop the meeting concluded. Next meeting March 14th.

B. PATE - Secretary.

"BOYS' WORLD" - A NEW WEEKLYReport by Gerry Allison

The appearance of a new magazine for boys is so rare an event these days, that it calls for special mention. In the palmy days of 1919-1920 there seemed to be a fresh paper every month, but not today.

So when, on Monday, January 21st, the bright coloured cover of "BOYS' WORLD" greeted my weary old eyes, as I passed my station bookstall, I thought the occasion worthy of celebration.

The price of the new magazine is a modest 6d, and the publishers are Longacre Press (i.e. Odhams Ltd.) The size is 9½" by 12½" which is that of the Detective Weekly, about half-way between the Magnet and the Boys' Friend. I have the first four copies before me now, and I think them good. The contents are varied, imaginative and colourful. They combine amusement with a modicum of instruction. Here are some of them.

Four strip-serials - one in colour - deal with Sea Adventure; Science-Fiction Mystery; Classical Mythology; and (alas) lastly, a School Story. Castleford School - but not the Castleford in Yorkshire. Prose items include a serial "The Ship That Vanished" a short Nature Story and such weekly articles as "So You Want To Be A —" detective, reporter, pilot, T.V. announcer, to date.

Other features are "Ticket to Adventure", "Let's Go To The Pictures", "It Makes You Think", "Meet Your Hero", "The Hand of Fate," etc., etc. The first three issues had SUPER FREE GIFTS, but of these, the less said the better!

Newsagents say the paper is selling well, and personally I find "BOYS' WORLD" an attempt to give boys an interesting and entertaining magazine. Opinions from O.B.B.C. members are varied. Most of them judge it from an adult standard - e.g. "Too many pictures and comic strips for me; more or less a 1963 Modern Boy. Still, any new boy's paper is a step in the right direction." - Laddy Morley.

But it is what the 1963 schoolboy thinks which will decide whether "BOYS' WORLD" will succeed or not. So, once again, I have called in the aid of my personal 'Baker Street Irregulars' the two schoolboys, Kevin and Robert Holmes, who gave us the low-down of how the Magnet would fare today. (See C.D. June 1962). Incidentally, Robert is now Captain of his School, and is a coming footballer.

I provided the boys with a copy of the paper for the first three weeks. Then, when they had had a chance of studying it - between school-exams, I set them another 11-plus test paper, with twelve questions to answer about the new magazine. These are printed below. I think the publishers will approve of the 6/-000 dollar question!

Finally. I often wish I had made my fortune saving all my Magnets and Gems. So now, I am going to buy the first year's issues of BOYS' WORLD. I shall leave these to my grandson, with the instruction to advertize them in Collectors' Digest and Exchange and Mart in 1999. I wonder what profit there will be on the 26/- the papers will cost me?

TWELVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOYS' WORLD

- |   | <u>Kevin</u>   | <u>Robert</u>    |
|---|--|------------------|
| 1. Was your first impression favourable?  | Yes, but I didn't think much of the free gifts.                                  | Very favourable. |
| 2. Do you find it easy to read?   | Yes.   | Yes.             |
| 3. A paper has to compete for a boy's time rather than for his pocket money today. What do you think? | True; but there is a limit to the number of papers a boy can afford, even today. | I agree.         |

	<u>Kevin</u>	<u>Robert</u>
4. Is the Boys' World good value at sixpence?	Yes, I think it is very good value.	Yes, compared to some comics.
5. What improvement can you suggest?	More colour photographs - such as in "Look and Learn."	More photographs.
6. Issue No. 2 was given free, if an order was placed for the paper. Do you know a boy who got No. 2 free?	No.	No.
7. Do you prefer the pages in pictures to those you have read?	I like them equally well.	I like them both.
8. In what order do you like the four strip serials? "The Sea Ape" "What is Exhibit X?" "Wrath of the Gods" "The Secret of the Tower"	(2) (3) (1) (4)	(2) (3) (1) (4)
9. Are you reading the serial "The Ship That Vanished?" Are the episodes too short?	I am reading the serial and think the length of each episode quite adequate.	Yes. About the right length.
10. Which feature do you like best?	I like the "Wrath of the Gods" story best.	"Wrath of the Gods"
11. What is your general opinion?	Very entertaining and yet educational.	Very good. Plenty of interesting articles.
12. Are you going to buy it every week from now on?	I am going to buy it, I do not think it is very well-known yet.	I don't know any boy who is getting it, but I would buy it myself.

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**YOURS SINCERELY**

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

JIM SHEPHERD (Sheffield) In the midst of all the hash the various governments keep making of everything, it is very refreshing to drift back to peaceful old St. Jim's or the quiet cloisters of Greyfriars. Carry on! May your shadow never grow less.

FRANK KNOTT (New Zealand) I am in charge of an every-changing group of boy scouts, and, for the past ten years, almost every boy who has come to the camps has borrowed and read some of my Magnets - and then consistently begged me for the loan of more. Among modern papers here in New Zealand there is just nothing to entertain boys. This latest Annual is the very best ever.

ALAN STEWART (Bermuda) The Christmas number was a "Gem", but it was the Annual which proved most "Popular" and drew me like a "Magnet." You and your contributors surpassed yourselves from the wonderful cover (snow on the letters!) to the last page of all. I got a great kick out of the story "Face Value."

J. A. JEVES (Northampton) I look forward to the arrival of the Digest. It forms a link with the old days. I have never been a true Hamilton fan, but my memory goes back to the first stories of St. Jim's in "Pluck" and to No. 1 both of the Gem and the Magnet.

A. J. SOUTHWAY (South Africa) In my newsagent's shop today I bought the S.B.L. "The Big Sneer". It was priced in our currency at 12½ (1/3). I was surprised to find that the whole effort was printed in Kimberley. Apart from the fact that it does not advertise the companion book of the month it seems the same as those which were printed in England.

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere) What a fine cover by Warwick Reynolds (January C.D.) This illustration has solved what has been a mystery to me for years. I have always had a vague memory of drawings in early Gems which were the work of an artist other than the usual one. This was somewhere about the time of Levison's reformation and the coming to St. Jim's of brother Frank. I have a recollection of one of the series being illustrated by the same strong lines as in this C.D. cover.

(Reynolds illustrated the Gem between, roughly 1916 and 1919, while Macdonald was in the navy. ED)

PATRICK MURRAY (Edinburgh) Some time ago there was a suggestion made that the writer F. St. Mars was a woman; he was often referred

No. 1. NEW COMPLETE ADVENTURE STORY PAPER. No. 1.



to as the "mysterious F. St. Mars" and quite correctly - he has proved the most difficult man to trace. There are, however, two distinct references to him being a man and that his name was Frank. It is possible, of course, that the curious reference to him "Florrie" may have been his real name, Florence still being popular as a man's name in parts of Ireland. Readers of Somerville and Ross will have no difficulty in recalling the immortal "Flurry" Knox. St. Mars died some years ago in the South of England, but he seems to have dropped out of public life completely and he left no trail after the publication of his last book in the early 20's.

F. HANGER (Northampton) It is nice to see that Denny has maintained the high standard he set up at the outset. Let us hope that, like Harry Wharton, he will not grow up.

L. F. ASHLEY (Vancouver) Greatly enjoyed the latest Mr. Buddle as usual. Prefer it to Danny's Diary, probably because D.D. antedates me.

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh) I blundered badly when I stated that Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake could never have formed the O.B.B.C, when it was just these two self-same books, or rather the devotees of same, who did exactly that. No wonder Mr. Blythe found my assertion amusing. My apologies to all Lee and Blake fans.

JIM SUTCLIFFE (Wickford) I went to the Bunter play at the Queens Theatre with my daughter, and we thoroughly enjoyed it. My daughter was delighted when Bunter ran round the audience in the Friardale station scene, and dropped the contents of his suitcase right beside her. Incidentally, the feminine touch in the person of the ringmaster's step-daughter made just that difference this year in my opinion, and Mr. Quelch was excellent. I was puzzled by the gorilla being shown on the programme as just "a gorilla". Does this mean that it really was a tame gorilla?

(Large numbers of people have commented on the remarkable performance given by the young man who played the gorilla. To have named him on the programme would have destroyed the illusion. But this clever artist was very real - and, out of his skin, an extremely intelligent and likeable young man. - ED.)

A. WYETH (Purley) The whole family enjoyed a glorious afternoon at Greyfriars and Wharton Lodge - at the Queens Theatre, of course. The best yet, in my opinion. Only Greyfriars would have brought us out in that weather - but it was worth every skid on the journey. Can you congratulate the company for us?

(We can - and do! ED.)

J. A. WARK (Dunoon) The article on the Dundee firm's Comic Papers set my mind back to the comic papers on tap in my young days - Rainbow (the Bruin Boys - have we ever had a better strip on animals?) Tiger Tim's Weekly, Comic Cuts - how I enjoyed the Ticket of Leave man! - Butterfly, Firefly, Funny Wonder, Chips, Chuckles, Merry & Bright, Puck and Jester. And Lot-o-Fun with its coloured cover but printed on poor quality paper. Puck was beautifully produced and Jester carried many a serial of excellent quality. My pocket-money did not run to them all, but I had cousins who used to pass plenty on. I was rather like Danny in this respect.

FRANK CASE (Liverpool) C.D., like wine, seems to improve with age. I look forward to it each month with the same pleasant anticipation as the meetings and neither ever lets me down.

The latest  
novels in the  
Sexton Blake  
Library reviewed  
By Margaret  
Cooke.

# Sexton Blake Today

## THE IMPOSTOR (S.B.L. No. 517)

Written by top-ranking S.B.L. authors Philip Chambers and Howard Baker, the novel deals with the Hungarian rising in 1956, the unsettled state of the world generally and the kidnapping of Eustace Craille, head of British National Security by the dreaded Russian M.V.D.

Would they break the old man's will by their torture? The National Security machine was in jeopardy. Craille must be rescued or killed by our own people to silence him, and preserve the secrets locked away in his brain.

Sexton Blake and Edward Carter risked life and limb to attempt to rescue Craille but from then onwards events took an unexpected turn.

A good exciting novel packed with action and suspense but with a tendency to over-dramatise some of the dangers facing Eustace Craille.

The novel shows Blake and Tinker at their best and should give all S.B.L. readers great pleasure.

THE SLAYING OF JULIAN SUMMERS (S.B.L. No. 518)  
by Richard Williams.

An excellent "whodunit" and one of the best S.B.L.'s to

appear for some years.

Who did kill Julian Summers? The partner who had wronged him; the girl whom he had wronged; the foreman who hated him or A.N. Other? From its first sentence this detailed and informative novel gives an impression of expert authorship, first-class characterization and a good carefully controlled plot. It holds the reader's attention and grips his imagination right through to its surprising climax at the end.

I recommend this book to all Blake lovers, young or old.

