

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

NO. 8 THE MONSTER LIBRARY OF COMPLETE STORIES

ST. FRANK'S IN LONDON!

A Jolly yarn of Schoolboy Life
and Adventure in the City

By *Ernie Saville* *Illustrated*



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COLLECTORS' ☆☆ DIGEST ☆☆☆

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

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NOVEMBER, 1964

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IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

THE SPICE OF LIFE:

A reader, in a letter received this month, appeals for articles on such papers as Modern Boy, Champion, Pilot and the like, as a change from the Big Three, by which he means Blakiana, Nelson Lee, the Magnet and so on. There is nothing unusual in a letter of this type, of course. We get such appeals off and on in the course of a year, and more than once I have referred to them in my chat with you.

It is surprising how difficult it is to come by articles on what we will call the less popular papers.

The Champion is reputed to have enjoyed a far larger circulation than the Magnet, yet it seems to be a real task to lay one's finger on a Champion enthusiast in our clan today. And even the few who have a love for the Champion seem to have no urge to write articles.

It is obvious that the papers that featured the same characters, with the qualities of Peter Pan, year after year, were the ones which entrenched themselves for all time in the affections of their readers. In addition, it would be difficult indeed to write a comprehensive history of a paper which offered nothing but serials or adventure stories from different writers every week. That is the main reason, but not entirely a convincing one. The Marvel, for instance, ran a series on Tom Sayers, the boxer, for many years, and another long series on Jack, Sam, and Pete. Modern Boy presented a great number of varying series, most of which would be worthy of consideration. Yet our contributors seldom seem to consider them. Why? Clearly, I think, because they had no great following among our own writers.

A good many years back I wrote a long article on the Modern Boy in general and Ken King in particular. It appeared in Collectors' Digest Annual at a time when readers were asked to vote for the articles they

liked the best. (The practice of voting in connection with articles has long been abandoned as unfair to contributors on less popular papers. So far as I remember, my Modern Boy article did not even figure in the first eight when the result of the vote was announced. I don't suppose it was much of an article, but it failed chiefly on account of its theme.

That does not mean, of course, that because the demand is a minority one, we should not try to meet it. Articles on some of the "other paper" are always welcome. If you have plenty to say, then aim at the Annual. Space is more of a consideration in the monthly Digest.

In passing, the 1964 Annual will contain plenty of variety. John Upton takes a view of a paper published for young ladies long ago. Bill Hubbard gives a fascinating review of the Tarzan stories, and in an appendix to the article Frank Lay lists those Tarzan tales which appeared in the more popular papers. Harry Broster, whose title is "Was Your Journey Really Necessary?" intrigues with an article which branches out in all directions to collect items on popular and not-so-popular themes.

HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR ANNUAL?

Exciting news for our Lee fans is that Robert Blythe, who writes from the depths of his heart, contributes a long article on the work of Edwy Searles Brooks - Writer Supreme.

Mr. Buddle will be back again in a new story entitled "Christmas With Meredith" in Collectors' Digest Annual for 1964. THE EDITOR

MAGNET duplicates, good condition, wanted. Will pay good price. Please write issue Nos. available: W. D. NEILL, 258, HORNCHURCH ROAD, HORNCHURCH, ESSEX.

URGENTLY WANTED: Gems 413, 414, 415, 493 and Magnets 205, 257, 238, 239, 277. Good copies, or volumes containing same.

ERIC PAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON

LONDON O.B.B.C. NELSON LEE LIBRARY: As the Club's "Nelson Lee" Library is now sufficiently large (over 650 titles) it has been decided to offer its facilities to a wider audience. Members of the various clubs and readers of the C.D. (in the British Isles only) are invited to take advantage of this offer. Charges are 2d per Nelson Lee. Monsters 1/-, S.O.L.s. 4d.

Write to: The Librarian, Bob Blythe, 40 Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10.

WANTED URGENTLY: Boys' Realms (small series) and Funny Cuts. Will exchange Magnets and Gems pro rata. A. WATKIN, 114 BRIGHT ST., COBDEN, GREYMOUTH, NEW ZEALAND.

WANTED: Schoolboys Owns, St. Frank's, 279, 282, 285, 288, 300, 303, 306, 336, 345, Rookwood, 206, 198, 174, 170. Can offer for exchange for these, 1 for 1, Magnets 748, 807, 960, 962, 970, 1111, 1120. Wide World Vol. 1920.

THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST 14.

ONE MAN'S POISON !By Gerry Allison

It was my privilege recently, to visit "Rose Lawn," the house at Broadstairs, where Charles Hamilton lived and worked for so many years. Besides the rows of classics on his shelves, he had many other books, and I was especially interested to see various novels by P. G. Wodehouse.

Frank Richards and Pelham Grenville Wodehouse have between them given me more happy and carefree reading than all other authors put together. My own library - in addition to Old Boys' Books - contains all the great poets, historians and novelists, whose works I read with the greatest enjoyment. But I return again and again to Greyfriars and Blandings Castle, to St. Jim's and the Drones Club, to Rookwood and to Wrykyn.

During my fourteen years as librarian of the Northern Section O.B.B.C., I have sent out thousands of parcels of Hamiltoniana to men and women in all walks of life. Chiropodists and Company Directors, Schoolmasters and Solicitors, Blacksmiths and Book Makers, have all derived joy and solace from Magnets and Gems. Last week I was told by the Leeds City Librarian that in the Central Lending Library alone they have to keep at least three copies of every Wodehouse book in circulation - and even then it is rarely one finds more than half a dozen on the "W" shelves.

I think that I have proved my point. Hamilton and Wodehouse began writing at about the same time, and for sixty years their books and stories have brought happiness and delight to millions of people all over the world. And they will certainly continue to do so for a long time to come. They were both great humorists, and the world is richer for their genius which they poured out unstintingly.

But there is an exception to every rule. My enthusiasm for Frank Richards and P. G. Wodehouse is not shared by Mr. Daniel George, a literary critic. Apparently all the myriads of readers who enjoy these books are mentally under the age of ten. So, as an antidote to our simple satisfaction, let me quote to you from the essay "Arrested Development." It is contained in the book "Lonely Pleasures" by Daniel George, published by Jonathan Cape. Mr. George now speaks: let no dog bark.

'I used to know a song called 'Rock Me To Sleep, Mother.' The melody has not lingered in my mind - perhaps it was a recitation, not a song. The only words I can recall are:- 'Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight. Make me a boy again, just for tonight.'

"Murmuring them as a kind of incantation, I settled down to enjoy - (I hoped) 'Jack of all Trades' by Frank Richards, creator of Billy Bunter, and 'Nothing Serious' by P. G. Wodehouse, creator of Bertie Wooster.

"Both authors received the attention of George Orwell in his Critical Essays, 1946. Both, I think he found, write specifically for the young, and/or for readers whose mental development has been arrested. Some readers never grow out of their attachment - found in the 'Gen' and 'Magnet' to the fantasies of Frank Richards, and many are able continuously to identify themselves with the clubland heroes of P. G. Wodehouse, who (Orwell suggests) is - or acted during the war as though he were - his own irresponsible Bertie Wooster. It is obvious however, that if the mental development of these two writers seems arrested, the arrest was made with their knowledge and consent.

"Time did not hear my prayer. It did not turn backward far enough to enable me to receive the words of Richards with childlike faith and fervour. 'Jack of all Trades' I did indeed - with a little skipping - manage to read from beginning to end, but the amusement it provided was such as only a grown-up (say over ten) could discover. On the first page I was irked by noticing that the author confuses Brer Fox with the Tar Baby. For his benefit, let us have the immortal line again. All together now: 'Tar Baby ain't sayin' nuthin, an Brer Fox, he lay low.' Thank you.

"When Jack, knowing no better, gives his name as 'Nobody,' Lord Cortolvin said, 'Nonsense! You do not look as if you had read the Iliad, so I suppose you have not borrowed the trick from Ulysses, what?'

"If only Jack - remarks Daniel George - had been studying Dr. William Smith's 'Classical Dictionary' in the barn, instead of his 'Latin-English Dictionary,' he could have told his lordship that the Polyphemus adventure is related in the Odyssey, not the Iliad.

"Later, the curly headed Jack fraternizes with some obvious Public School boys. They say 'Oh pipi,' and 'Oh crumbs!,' and 'By Gum!' and 'Oh scissors!'

"The story has a tantalizing end. Unsuspectingly, Jack is getting into Lord Cortolvin's toils, to be handed over again - it is to be feared - to Bill Hatchet. Why, remains a mystery. Shall we ever learn what happens to him? The under-tens may wonder. Over-tens, like me, may be content to say, 'Goodbye, Jack. Thanks no end. I must cut now. By gum!'

"Backward, turn backward - the run was no more effective with the collection of short stories 'Nothing Serious.' As Wordsworth says, 'There was a time when meadow, grove and stream' and P.G. Wodehouse 'to me did seem appalled in celestial light.'

"Come to think of it, that simply isn't true. I never, even in my young, carefree uncritical days, thought Wodehouse either very good or very funny. In the list of forty-four books printed on the jacket of this one are many I failed to read - they are probably his best. Pity!"

To be fair to Daniel George, one must admit that the two books he criticizes are not the best works of their authors. Frank Richards told me he had sent three further stories about 'Jack Nobody' - in addition to the three which were published. After his death, I wrote to "Spring Books" about them, and was told that they did not intend to issue them. (I wonder who has the MSS now?) Also "Nothing Serious" is a slight volume of short stories, now out of print, and it is one I have not read.

But I prefer to regard this sarcastic essay as the exception which proves the rule. Shylock talked of 'a Daniel come to judgement.' Well the judgement of this particular Daniel leaves me cold. It could be, you know, that he is wrong, and the millions of people who find delight

in the books by Charles Hamilton and Pelham Wodehouse are right. I would like to bet that no one can tell me the title of any book by Mr. Daniel George without looking them up. He never wrote a Sexton Blake story I feel certain.

Blakiana

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (1)

By Walter Webb

(A short series of items, some serious, some amusing, but all, it is hoped, of general interest, gleaned from the Blake papers and other sources.)

- Plagiarism - or was it?

Some time ago some criticism was levelled against certain articles in Blakiana because, it was said, they tended to go too far back into the past. But the plain truth of course is that the further one re-traces his steps into the more distant past, the more interesting the data he unearths. To prove the point, and to get the series off to a good start, how about this little item - a letter from a reader to the editor of the UNION JACK after the paper had enjoyed a successful run of just over four years:

"Dear Sir, - I write to tell you that your No. 217, " 'Twixt Yankee and Don," is a bare-faced copy - more than half of it word for word. You, I know, are above printing copied matter in your popular paper, and have evidently been gulled by some unscrupulous person....."

This was the startling extract which appeared in UJ issue, No. 220, of the halfpenny series, and the writer went on to give the stories which were copied, and, in fact, lent them to the editor for comparison.

"He is quite right," the latter confessed, in his reply; "the story is a bare-faced copy of two stories published by a contemporary, and I am infinitely obliged to him (the reader) for pointing out the facts. Needless to say, it was sent to me and printed by me as an

original story - I never having read the tales it was copied from. The person who sent it to me will, of course, never work for me again. Two stories of his, which were in the editorial drawer, were sent back immediately, and I am very undecided as to whether I shall prosecute him or not. To prevent such a thing happening again, I hereby offer a prize of half a guinea to anyone who finds out such a case in any subsequent number of the paper."

One little point which must have puzzled the reader of that era: Why was the name of the author withheld from him? Although the UJ was not exactly unconnected with the policy of anonymity, this was at a time when the writer's name was generally given, and it was on rare occasions only that a story was published anonymously.

It would be very interesting to name this enterprising individual, but, unfortunately, there is no record of it in the archives at Fleetway House, though, according to the editor, in an announcement he made three weeks previously, this contributor had travelled extensively in Spain, America, and Cuba. But, do we detect a clue in the following paragraphs?

A Travelled Writer:

Observation by the editor, Mr. Ernest Goddard.

"The story I give this week is something quite new for the UJ, and it is none the worse for having been written by a man who knows almost every inch of the country he describes. Mr. Melton Whyte lived for many years in Cuba, and once during his sojourn there, he had the privilege of gazing (at a safe distance, fortunately) upon the redoubtable brigand chief, - Manuel Garcia himself. Ah, yes; there is (or rather, was) a Manuel Garcia, and he actually died facing the rifle-barrels of the Spanish soldiery, as described by Mr. Whyte.

It is interesting - and significant - to have to record that Melton Whyte, one of the earliest of the Sexton Blake authors, set several of his stories in Spain and Cuba. He died many years ago, and was in actual fact Mr. Gordon J. B. Anderson, an art photographer.

Abuse:

You had to admit that Ernest Goddard was a very fair man, in that he would not only print a letter praising his paper, but had the courage to insert one couched in the most uncomplimentary terms, as in the case of this direct and painfully blunt missive:

"Sir, - Your books - namely, the UNION JACK, PLUCK, and the MARVEL - are the worst books for men, women, and children to read. I would not let any child of mine read them. You ought to be locked up for publishing such trash. "Justice." "

Clearly, Mr. Goddard was annoyed at receiving such a postcard which he described as "stupid and illogical."

"The writer appears to forget that abuse is no argument, and that an opinion of the sort he expresses should be based on some reasonable ground," he retorted; "but there; I have wasted too much time and space already over this paltry postcard, which, as I have said, is absolutely the first of its kind ever delivered at the offices of the UNION JACK."

And now to Baker Street and Sexton Blake for a spot of homely fun, at that period following world war II, when ration-books were still in force and food was far less plentiful than it is now.

Humour:

Mrs. Bardell (announcing a client) "He's a butcher, 'e says. Got a big shop, an' lots of meat - I asked 'im. An' it'll be all right, 'e says."

Tinker guffawed from his seat in the window.

"What a woman, eh?" he asked. "Do you think for one moment that I - or the gov'nor - would dream of eating kidneys and bacon that were come by illegally, Mrs. Bardell?"

"You!" snorted the good lady. "Why, you'd eat a norse off the street when it wasn't lookin', given 'arf a chanst! I ain't never yet heard you cross-examinin' a nice juicy kidney as to who its mother was....."

(Extract from Anthony Parsons's "The Mystery of Avenue Road" published in SBL No. 180, in 1948.)

What one might aptly describe as being a slice of good meaty humour.

(Continued)

* * * * *

Sexton Blake Authors who were Editors

By W. O. G. Lofts

Part One

One of the biggest advantages in being an editor of a paper, is that if you contribute material to your own magazine it is hardly likely to be rejected. But joking apart, it must be freely admitted that the majority of editor/writers were first class authors in their own right, and the stories they wrote helped the success of the papers under their control.

Commencing with W. Howard Baker, the last editor of the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY 1956/1963 (shortly to be re-issued by another firm) a popularity poll conducted some years ago, proved that one of his non-

de-plumes 'Peter Saxon' came out well on top as the best author! It must be remembered that the majority of S.B.L. readers had not the slightest idea that it hid the identity of the editor. Apart from his own name, and 'WILLIAM ARTHUR' - a fact not known is that he was also 'WILLIAM BALLINGER' - the latter part of this name being the original spelling hundreds of years back of BAKER. 'WILLIAM ARTHUR' are his first two christian names.

Mr. L. E. PRATT editor for so many years of the S.B.L. prior to Mr. Baker, was also a writer of boys' stories, writing in THE BOYS REALM and BOYS JOURNAL under the pen-name of 'FENTON SMITH' - but most surprisingly never penned a Blake yarn, when one considers that he had control of the library for no less than 35 years!

Mr. Harold W. Twyman penned a few Sexton Blake yarns for the U.J. during his period of office, and also wrote stories under the name of 'A. Cartwright.' A correction to one of the many unfortunate errors that cropped up in Brian Doyle's Author's Who's Who - is that he was only editor of THE DETECTIVE WEEKLY up to No. 43 (1934) and then went on to preparing new papers which never saw the light of day. He also wrote other boys' stories in the BOYS' REALM (2nd series) under the pen-name of 'John Forge' - and whilst editor of THE DETECTIVE LIBRARY in 1919 - wrote a few of the NELSON LEE stories, which have for some reason in the past been assumed quite wrongly to have been reprints of MAXWELL SCOTT tales. Plus two Greyfriars stories for THE MAGNET, and material for MODERN BOY, Mr. Twyman is also a clever inventor, and has several patents to his name.

You won't find the name of JACKIE HUNT on any SEXTON BLAKE material - yet he worked as a sub-editor on the U.J. and DETECTIVE WEEKLY for many years becoming full editor of the latter in 1937. He contributed many of the short pieces that went into the back page of the S.B.L. 'Magazine Section' and also wrote the script for practically all the strip-Blake stories that appeared in KNOCKOUT comic. Mr. Hunt also had the distinction of being the first person to leave the Amalgamated Press in 1939 to go into the armed forces, when Donald Bobin carried the DETECTIVE WEEKLY until the end through paper shortage.

James Stagg, one of the modern Sexton Blake authors, was also an editor of several picture strip papers at FLEETWAY PUBLICATIONS - and originally was a sub-editor on the S.B.L. A Major in the last war, he was at one time on the DAILY MIRROR live-letters section. I could tell a very amusing story of when I first met him with the late Herbert Leckenaby some years ago, but that must be told elsewhere. Now a free-lance writer, since establishing himself by winning the £500

E. Nesbit prize, another new fact to close this piece on JAMES STAGG is that he was also 'GILBERT JOHNS' who wrote in the Modern S.B.L.

Noel Wood-Smith, who wrote Blake stories in the U.J. under the name of 'NORMAN TAYLOR' was of course a sub-editor on the MAGNET and GEM for many years, apart from holding editorial posts in sporting papers. It is worth recording that he has now been proved to have written that substitute story in the MAGNET featuring SEXTON BLAKE, 818. 'Disgraced by his Father' in 1923. To explain the reason why in the C.D. Annual 1962 Substitute list it was given 'believed Hedley O'Mant' it was originally told me 'that the chief sub-editor on the Companion papers had written it' - which was O'Mant by my records. But fresh information since 1962 shows that the writer had left to go on the stage around that period and Noel Wood-Smith was then editor. Official records also show that Noel Wood-Smith had penned the story. Noel who was something of an inventor, also wrote stories in the early days in the BOYS REALM under the name of WOOD SMITH, also penned girls fiction under 'NORMA TAYLOR' in the girls' papers.

Probably the most famous editor of all those mentioned so far, is our old friend JOHN NIX PENTELOW, who penned several Blake tales in the U.J. and S.B.L. So much has been written about this editor and writer in the past, that I would only be in the main repeating old data - but fresh information gives the news that at one time he was an officer in Customs and Excise, and married a close relative of a well known boys' artist at Amalgamated Press, of whom fresh facts will be known at a later date.

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Nelson Lee Column

.....

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

By the Author of -

By R. J. Godsave

The anonymity of the authors in the Old Series of the Nelson Lee Library was preserved by stating that a current story was by the author of the three previous ones, the titles of same appearing in small print. This, together with the forthcoming publication gave the reader the knowledge of five consecutive titles even though he possessed only one issue.

The title given to any story is of the utmost importance. A good one can gain a reader even though the story does not come up to expectation; a bad one can leave an excellent story unread. Any book or story is advertised by its title, tempting one to sample its contents.

A few examples from the Nelson Lee Library shew that the atmosphere of the series can be conveyed to the reader through the title of any one of its episodes.

One of the best rebellion series was that dealing with the trials of the Remove under the tyrannical headmastership of Mr. Howard Martin. Owing to a fire which destroyed the College House, the School Governors held Dr. Stafford responsible, forcing him to resign and appointing Mr. Martin in his place. Such a title as "The Siege of the West Wing" o.s. 234 must capture the reader's imagination and enable him to join in the thrills of the rebellion.

Another fine series was that relating to Handforth's brother-in-law Mr. Clement Heath, who for a short time was the Remove form-master during the illness of Mr. Crowell. The finding of a stolen diamond by Mr. Heath in Bellton Wood led to Mr. Heath finding himself in the clutches of the Comte de Plessigny - a wealthy man with criminal tendencies. "The Diamond of Fate" o.s. 260 is one of the fascinating titles of this series.

The Dr. Karnak series was a masterpiece in the sphere of mysticism with "The Evil Eye of Baal" o.s. 449 and "The Curse of the Moon God" o.s. 450. Who can fail to be thrilled by such titles, let alone the story?

.....

A similar mystical series was that of Ezra Quirke. Here one delved into the realms of Spiritualism and sorcery. "The 13 Club" o.s. 544 and "The Cellar of Secrets" o.s. 547 must have caused many an irregular reader to become a regular, at least for this series.

With "The Island Camp" o.s. 351 visions of the castle-like building on Willard's Island in the River Stowe must have immediately come to the regular reader's mind. This was an extremely good series which, incidentally, introduced Archie Glenthorne.

Of the Christmas stories "A Yuletide of Mystery" o.s. 238 brings to the mind pictures of blazing logs, holly and mistletoe by the use of the old name for the Christmas festivities.

Although these titles are taken from the Old Series, it must not be supposed that the New Series did not possess its quota of striking titles. With Handforth to the fore, the titles, generally, were in a lighter vein.

* * * * *

E. S. Brooks' Own Detective

By W. O. G. Lofts

"E. S. Brooks could never write, as well as Maxwell Scott, about Nelson Lee." So wrote a collector to me recently. Not having read many stories of the latter writer, I am hardly in a position to make any opinion. My own assumption is that no writer could ever hope to better the work of the creator of such a character; and although I have greatly enjoyed reading many of the St. Frank's stories in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, I say that its proper title should have been THE ST. FRANK'S LIBRARY. Lee, in my opinion became an extremely minor character as the years went by, greatly overshadowed by the wonderful characters of Mr. Brooks's own creations Handforth & Co.

Nelson Lee however, when he was featured, seemed a more youthful, more human at times, figure than Sexton Blake. Maybe his close connection with schoolboys injected this spirit in him, but I must say that I could not fault E. S. Brooks' interpretation of Nelson Lee - the creation belonging to that ace of writers in days gone by, Maxwell Scott.

I know that my good friend Bob Blythe will not mind me pointing out that, further to my revelations last month in the BLAKIANA section, I can now write about a long series of detective stories written by Brooks which for some reason were omitted from the E. S. Brooks Bibliography. A clue was given me first by a story under the 'Robert W. Comrade' pen-name in the DREADNOUGHT featuring this detective.

Readers who are fortunate enough to have the GEM for 1912 may have

read many of those short detective stories. All were anonymous, and they featured Frank Kingston, Detective, and Dolores his pretty lady assistant. Later, perhaps it was decided that a boy assistant was needed (like Tinker and Nipper) and so Tim made his bow! Frank Kingston, who had his offices at 100, Charing Cross Road, W.C. - was a sort of minor sleuth, with no great characterisation that one could write about, but the stories were fairly interesting in themselves, with action, mystery, and suspense as the main theme.

Mr. E. S. Brooks was quite young at the time, and today no doubt would shudder at some of the things written in those far off days. But in the words of an editor who knew him in the early years, he showed exceptional promise in his detective stories - and who can think otherwise after reading such masterpieces of suspense and mystery as the Ezra Quirke series in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, surely the weirdest stories ever penned!

Starting in GEM 206, (for the benefit of many readers who may wish to keep a record of E. S. Brooks' stories) the titles are as follows:

<u>Gem:</u>		<u>Gem:</u>	
206	No. 1. The Chained Death	217	No.11. The Crimson Thread
207	No. 2. The Green Envelope	218	No.12. The Masked Three
208	No. 3. Skill against Cunning	219	No.13. Kidnapped
209	No. 4. At turn of tide	220	No.14. The Band of Steel
210	No story	221	No.15. The Red Grange Mystery
211	No. 5. The Maimed Hand	222	No.16. At the Mercy of the River
212	No. 6. Frank Kingston's Grim Race	223	No.17. The Broken Message
213	No. 7. Cheating the Flames	224	No.18. The Fateful Ball
214	No. 8. The Stolen Biplane	225	No.19. The 11-12 Express
215	No. 9. The Black Chasm	226	No.20. The Shadwell Opium Den
216	No.10. The Submarine Spy	227	No.21. "100 Degrees"

Twenty-one detective stories, and all featuring Frank Kingston - E. S. Brooks' own detective creation.

Note: The serial mentioned in last month's Blakiana has been proved not to have been written by E. S. Brooks. This featured Professor Steel and his phantom submarine, so I will not dwell on it further. However the following stories which were all anonymous have been proved to be by E. S. Brooks.

CHEER BOYS CHEER: Nos. 60 until the last issue No. 69.
Serial THE YELLOW TERROR a thrilling series of stories featuring Jimmy Harding, and dealing with the Chinese Invasion of our home-land.

Single story in BOYS REALM 19/11/1910 - No. 442 'RIVALS OF THE AIR'
Single stories in RANGER 1930s.

There is also a strong suspicion that E. S. Brooks used the name of Philip Hardy in the Holiday Annuals, but more proof is needed at the moment, and views of readers are welcome on the subject.

* * * * *

POINTS OF VIEW

JIM SWAN: Getting a bit hot under the collar, aren't they? The boys in C.D., I mean - St. Frank's v. Greyfriars? James W. Cook v. Reg Sanderson? Larry Morley calls it a healthy argument. It's a good job they live far apart. One or the other wouldn't stay healthy for long! Don't know why they bother. It's O.K. having a friendly argument, but when they start crossing swords and insinuating that the other is a rotter - well, it's time to cool down. To put it in the words of George Robey: "Terminate your excitability with a modicum of reserve." I wouldn't like your job as editor, old pal!

ROSS STORY: I must say again how much C.D. is welcomed these days; it seems to get better every time - especially now that we are having so much more Lee! I don't think anyone can complain. But I agree with you that now and then tempers are inclined to be acrimonious; I think one should not take this rivalry too seriously. I suppose, like politicians, we all like to shout at each other occasionally.

CHARLES CHURCHILL: The Lee Column has certainly been on fire lately, but I do feel that one or two people have been rather rude in their remarks. After all, everyone is entitled to their opinions. I think Roger Jenkins picked a very poor example of a St. Frank's story to read and criticise. If he wanted to read a story for critical purposes, I could have suggested many others for preference. Brooks' stories were nearly all of N.L. Library length, and it would have been fairer to take one of this type and not go for an "advert" blurb and pick an original S.B.L.

ARTHUR CARBIN: I have been more than interested in the letters and articles comparing Frank Richards with E. S. Brooks. Nothing will shake my love of all F.R. works, but I will state in all sincerity that if the old Nelson Lee appeared once more on the bookstalls, I should be the first to buy a copy, knowing that I should enjoy the stories of St. Frank's. F.R. and E.S.B. were as different as chalk and cheese, but both have their place in the world of boys' papers - and weren't we who were boys in their heyday lucky it was so.

Laurie Sutton: I wonder if readers noticed the conflicting views expressed by the two Lee Column contributors in October:- W. H. Broster: "Brooks did not repeat his themes like Hamilton." H. Chapman: "During the long run of 15 years the St. Frank's stories achieved in the Nelson Lee it was, of course, necessary to repeat various themes."

One can't help thinking, what about the long run of 32 years of the Magnet, not to mention all the years of the Gem and all the Rookwood stories.

DANNY'S DIARY

November 1914:

I spent my half-term holiday at Aldershot with my cousin Robin, and we had a very nice time. On the Saturday my uncle had booked for us to go to the Aldershot Hippodrome where we saw Chung Ling Soo who is a marvellous Chinese magician. At least he looks Chinese, though I heard someone say he was really an Englishman or an American. In the same programme was Harry Tate and his company in "Motoring." This was quite funny. Harry Tate dresses in breeches and wiggles his big moustache about.

Robin's school fees have gone up to £3-1s per term, including books. His father says it is war profiteering.

When I got home again I found that Doug has got a new girl friend. Her name is Lavinia Wills. She is very fair and very insipid and has her hair in long curls. I asked Doug whether the curls were real or whether she does them up in curlers when she goes to bed. Doug says they are real of course, and that she is often called the "Mary Pickford of Kent."

I made a joke and told Doug it would sound funny if he said he was going to Lavvy, and Mum was angry with me so I had to leave the table.

The Gem has been good this month. The first story was "Working His Way" in which Hooper, the New House bootboy, got the sack, and Talbot became bootboy in his place. There is a new cad at St. Jim's called Clampe, and he sneers a lot about Talbot. In the end of the story Lord Eastwood arranged for Talbot to have a scholarship so that he could be at St. Jim's as a pupil.

The second tale was "Saving Talbot" in which Levison played a big part. Talbot was accused of theft, but Levison found out that the thief was Tresham of the Fifth, a friend of Cutts. So Tresham was expelled.

In "Tom Merry's War Fund," the chums got up a fund to help the soldiers at the front. They challenged the First Eleven to a football match to help the fund, and Kildare was cross about it, and guyed Tom Merry & Co by turning out for the game in top hats and evening suits. Even so, the First Eleven won.

"Captured by Cipher" was another Talbot tale. Mysterious messages in cipher are found chalked on the doors of St. Jim's. Levison worked out the cipher, and found that Talbot was being threatened by his old associate Hockey Walker. There have been rather a lot of Talbot tales lately. They are very good but I hope we don't keep on having them. A new serial "Officers and Trooper" by Beverley Kent has started in the Gem.

Robin sent me a new Boys' Friend 3d Library called "Nelson Lee in the Navy" by Maxwell Scott. It was a good story, and I gave it to Doug to make up for my rather rude joke

about Lavvy.

Talking of war funds, at school we have been invited to take 6d. For every 6d, the newspaper the Daily Dispatch sends cigarettes and chocolate worth 1/8 to a soldier at the front.

Mum and I usually go to the pictures once a week. We saw "A Queen's Love" in Pathé-colour. I didn't like it, but Mum said it was lovely. They advertise it as the last picture which will be made in colour till after the war. Another time we saw Charles Hawtry in "A Message from Mars" which I liked much better. This was a very long film, being in 4 reels. Dad won't often come with us as he doesn't like pictures much. It is very nice indeed when Dad comes, because we like his company, and he pays for the seats. I go in half-price, except on Saturdays, so we don't go on Saturdays.

Lavinia gave Mum an Answers Library, the story in which was "When the War is Over" by Henry St. John Cooper. Mum was pleased and liked the story, and Doug was touched and said that Lavinia's kind heart would be her downfall, and I said I didn't think Lavinia would fall far for a penny, which was what the book cost.

Doug still has the Marvel every week, but I don't like it a lot. Jack, Sam, and Pete have been joined by a new pal called Algy, but he doesn't seem to improve the stories. Authors do funny things. Tom Sayers is still in the Marvel. One story this month about him was "A German's Gratitude" by A. S. Hardy.

I often have the boys' Friend when I am in funds, though I think that the huge front page picture is rather a waste of space. There is a new war serial called "Under the Allies' Flag" by John Tregellis. The series of school stories about the Burnside Boys by Horace Phillips is still going on. They are fairly good, but not a patch on St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

There is always a separate complete story in the B.F., and one week this month there was quite a good western called "Crub of the Pack Trail" by Ernest Treeton.

A Fun Fair has opened in my town in a disused shop. In some ways it is quite exciting. In some of the machines you put a halfpenny in the slot, and if you win, which isn't often, your halfpenny comes back to you. There is one machine where you steer a ship between rocks, and if you don't let the ship touch the rocks, your halfpenny comes back. One machine is called "What the Butler Saw," and I put a halfpenny in because I thought it would be educational but it turned out to be only a lot of snips from silly old films. I asked for my money back, and the attendant said "Be off with you!"

The Magnet is still below its old standard. The first story had "Harry Wharton & Co in France" as the title on the cover, but the story was actually called "Looking for Alonzo." Alonzo Todd and Uncle Benjamin were on holiday in Switzerland when war broke out. Colonel Wharton and Harry & Co went out to try to help them home, and they all found themselves facing the Germans in France.

In "The Reign of Terror" a new school dentist called Theodore Lugg started pulling out teeth right and left, and putting in fillings when they weren't wanted. He turned out to be Gadsby of Highcliffe who had been helped by Loder. Ugh! I found all that rather painful about teeth.

In "The Black Footballers" Mr. Quelch went off his onion from over-work, and forbade football. So the Remove football team disguised themselves as black boys in order to play St. Jim's.

"Fagging for Coker" was good of its type. Coker was made a prefect, but it didn't work out well, and at the end he was just Coker of the Fifth again.

We are going to my grandmother's house in Essex for our Christmas holiday. I don't mind, but I think I would rather have Christmas at home.

WANTED: Magnets No. 829, 873, 875, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L. No. 60.

DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

NELSON LEE CATALOGUE: A reprint of this popular book is now available. Price: 5/- inc. postage. Copies available from **Bob Blythe, 40 Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10.**

HAMILTONIANA

THOSE OFFICIAL RECORDS

By Laurie Sutton

From time to time in the C.D. there has been some controversy regarding the authorship of certain stories.

Now I do not doubt or dispute that Bill Lofts has more information and knowledge on this subject than any other living person, yet nevertheless I have challenged his statements as to the authorship of certain stories for reasons that I have previously stated in C.D.

Of course Bill has great advantages in having personal contact with many Fleet Street personalities, authors and editors, but I consider that there are bound to be errors made when men are searching their memories for titles and names of, in many cases, insignificant stories and authors of up to fifty years ago.

In recent months Bill Lofts has supported his statements with references to "official records," but I am curious to know just what form these records take. As I see it, "official records" would be tabulated data filed in the publisher's office, but we have never previously heard of the current existence of any such records. Had they existed, all the research, new discoveries, contradictions, etc. would have been superfluous. After all, Bill's revelations have come at varying intervals, and not in one disclosure such as an official list would provide.

In view of all this, I was very interested in Bill Lofts' comments on Gem No. 77, "The Terrible Three's Air-Cruise." As Bill reminds us, Charles Hamilton wrote of this in his Autobiography as though it had been the first of the sub stories, yet, in fact, about a dozen had been published between Gems 43 and 74. Bill concludes from this that C.H. was unaware that sub stories had been published previous to "The T.T. Air-Cruise" but I regard this as utterly impossible. In six months between Gems 43 and 68 no less than one-third of the stories had been subs. A young author in the early days of the Gem could hardly have failed to watch the development of the paper, and financial considerations would have made him well aware that his stories had been published only two weeks in three. Furthermore, before Gem 66, sub writers had already introduced, obviously on an editorial circulation idea, two

Colonial juniors, Clifton Dane and Harry Noble, both of whom had already been insinuated into genuine Hamilton stories - this, of course, before the characters were adopted (and adapted) by Charles Hamilton.

It would seem that either Charles Hamilton's memory was confused when he recorded the incident in his Autobiography, or - more likely - that the incident occurred several months before the publication of Gem 77 (actually before No. 43) and the story was held over; possibly the original author of "The T.T. Air-Cruise," as an established professional writer, also had his pride hurt at having his story re-written, and his pocket hurt by the splitting of his cheque!

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 13. (New Series)

"Have you anything to tell me?" snapped the inspector over the telephone.

"Convict No. 19 is at Greyfriars School."

"What!" gasped Mr. Grimes. "Are you speaking from Greyfriars?"

"Oh, no, not at all! I'm speaking from -- from Harrow."

"Good gad!"

"Don't get the idea into your head that I'm a Greyfriars man," said Bunter hurriedly. "I'm at Eton. See?"

"Who are you?"

"My name's Smith. I say, that man Waring - Convict No. 19 - is here now. I mean, he's at Greyfriars. He calls himself Eric Gilmore, and is master of the Second Form. He's stuffed the Head and all the fellows. When you've got him I shall claim the reward. See?"

"Give me your name at once!"

"Robinson."

"You young rascal!"

"Eh?"

"How dare you play such tricks on a police-inspector. I shall come and see your headmaster at once!"

"It ain't the headmaster, it's the master of the Second Form."

"It is your headmaster whom I shall see, you young rascal, and I shall see that you are caned for this foolish trick."

"Oh, lor'!"

"Tell me your name immediately!"

"Jackson."

"I shall see whether your name is Jackson when I call," said Mr. Grimes grimly.

"I - I say, don't forget I'm speaking from Harrow - I mean, Eton - that is to say, Winchester!" gasped Bunter. "No good coming to Greyfriars, you know, if you're going to see the Head. You'll waste your time coming here."

There was no reply to that last masterly example of Bunter's astuteness. Inspector Grimes had rung off.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 81: IT'S JUST MY POINT OF VIEW!

Most readers of the Digest have been entertained by the liveliness which has been apparent this year between the Lee fans and those of Hamiltonia. Just a few have been saddened by it.

In an article in last month's Digest, Mr. Harry Broster appealed for tolerancé. Such an appeal should find a sympathetic echo in our hearts, if we see intolerance in the various items which we have printed this year. Now and then a contributor writes with unnecessary tartness, undoubtedly, but, generally speaking, it has all been good clean argument and fun.

Harry, of course, wrote with the best intentions - to reason with both sides - to act as a peacemaker. I feel, though, that he approached the matter rather like a man who tries to extinguish a bonfire with a bucket of paraffin. The ayes and nays for his comments on Mr. Brooks and the St. Frank's yarns are outside the scope of this column, but I fancy that Harry's article will do but little to soothe the savage Hamiltonian breasts.

Harry is entitled to express his own opinions, and his opinions, as we all know, are worthy of respect. That does not mean that his opinions are, of necessity, indisputable facts.

Harry may well be right in the points he makes to show where St. Frank's is superior. I certainly disagree heartily with most of his remarks about Hamiltonia.

Most Greyfriars fans are fond of Bunter, for it is impossible to like the Magnet without enjoying Bunter. Most St. Jim's fans love Gussy, for it would be difficult to enjoy St. Jim's without doing so. Yet Harry regards Gussy as a case for a psychologist and Bunter he rejects because the Owl could never have passed the entrance examination. Surely such arguments are perilously near sophistry.

Harry adds that Pitt, De Valerie, and Fullwood were "more acceptable" than Vernon-Smith. To whom? Well, obviously - and quite

rightly so - to our Lee fans. But not to Hamiltonians, surely. Most Hamiltonians regard Vernon-Smith as being a splendid character study, especially in the golden age of the Magnet.

Harry regards Levison as Hamilton's finest characterisation. But one could argue that Levison was one of the most inconsistently handled of characters.

Harry liked a big cast in his school stories. He liked the minor players kept in the limelight. He thinks the Hamilton travel series suffered because only a small number of boys went on those trips abroad. But we don't all feel like that. I don't for one. I would not for a moment agree that stories with large casts were superior to stories with small ones. Quite the reverse.

Harry says that "St. Jim's was more entertaining" presumably because it had a larger cast and more Houses. But that is only a matter of taste. Harry really should not assert that St. Jim's was more entertaining than Greyfriars, or that St. Frank's was more entertaining than either, simply for that reason alone.

I would agree wholeheartedly that certain very interesting characters were jettisoned without much reason. Boys like Lumley-Lumley, Monteith, and Koumi Rao were put into the background, to be replaced in the limelight by Cardew, Racke, Trimble, Wildrake, and others. But I would not agree for one moment that a large cast improves any story. I have always contended that the Gem failed in its middle years because its cast was far too large. The glut of minor characters on the stage, taking the limelight from the tried favourites, put one in the position of not being able to see the wood for the trees.

The mammoth Christmas parties at Eastwood House left me cold, but I was always charmed by the smaller, more intimate parties at Wharton Lodge.

Personally I should have detested the travel series if Harry Wharton had been accompanied by "the little army" which Mr. Broster seems to find so advantageous. I should have lost interest very quickly had the Cliff House girls gone willy-nilly into the travel series.

I would go further, and suggest that huge casts and very long series were bad policy in that they discouraged growing circulations. A casual reader, finding himself in the middle of a story and being faced with a glut of characters, might well find himself bewildered and disinclined to become a regular reader.

Our friend asserts that "the subject of substitute writers has

become a distinct bore to the more sensible of our hobby." Such is not really the case. The substitute writers played such a large part in the story of the Magnet and the Gem that it is almost impossible to write of certain sections of their history without referring to the subs. I have little time for people who condemn the subs simply because they were subs, but our letter-bag proves that the subject is still one of keen interest to the average Hamiltonian. Or is Harry suggesting that average Hamiltonians are not sensible people?

Harry is in error when he accuses us of being wise after the event. I spent a considerable portion of my own boyhood fuming over the substitute stories. And as I was not, and never have been, above average intelligence, I am sure that large numbers of readers experienced the same reactions as I did.

To speak of folk who abandon their membership because the clubs dwell too much on Bunter and Greyfriars is surely a simplification. If club programmes are allowed to become monotonous, then the club officials are at fault. My own experience is that the clubs provide as much variety as they can. If a member wants to give a talk or arrange a novelty item on Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake, or any other character, he or she is given every encouragement to do so. My impression is that if a man leaves the club because he considers Bunter is too much in the limelight, he would have left in any case for some excuse or other.

Providing readers keep their tempers, the arguments on the respective merits of Brooksiana and Hamiltonia are not to be deplored. They add to the interest and to the fun of living. It is just a pity if anyone takes them too seriously.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 79. THE POST-WAR GREYFRIARS

BERNARD PRIME: I have five Bunter books and I don't want to dispose of them at a fete or anywhere else. Perhaps I have the pick of them, but I thought "Backing Up Bunter" and "Bunter's Brain Wave" excellent and almost like our dear Magnet of long ago. But I did find in the latter story an irritating reference to Mr. Banks as Joey, by Loder of the Sixth. A small point, but annoying to the veteran reader. I don't think I should ever want a complete collection of Bunter books, but they are, I think, beautifully got up, and far better type than our Magnets. They were, as you rightly pointed out aimed at youngsters of to-day, and not at us fusty old "has-beens." Anyone disagree?

NICHOLAS BENNETT: I would like to say that but for the post-war Bunter books my friend and I would never have heard of the Gem, Magnet, and Holiday Annual, of which we possess four. We are only aged fifteen.

RON CROLLIE: Mr. Hamilton thought he was writing solely for youngsters of a new

generation but it is my opinion that sales of the "Bunter" books would have been very disappointing if it had not been for the support of old readers of the "Magnet." To take my own case, most of my friends know of my hobby though they have no interest in it themselves. I happen to know that at least three of them bought several copies of Bunter Books as Christmas and birthday presents for young people, simply because the jackets caught their eye through their knowledge of my own interest in Greyfriars. I am afraid, however, that I know of no instance in which any of the young people, after reading their present, asked for more Bunter.

Personally, although I always preferred the "Magnet" to the "Gem," I enjoyed the Mandeville publication - "Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's" far more than any Bunter Book.

PETER HANGER: I believe the general opinion is "too much Bunter." I would add "too much Famous Five." I am sure that Greyfriars has suffered from a restricted cast. Post-war St. Jim's has not suffered in this way. Although D'Arcy was made the star, he did not dominate the rest of the cast as Bunter and the Famous Five did. The only criticism I can make of post-war St. Jim's is "too much Talbot." As for post-war Rockwood, it's all Lovell.

(Did Talbot star in more than two post-war Tom Merry Tales? -ED.)

KENNETH KIRBY: I am not sure I agree with you about the Bunter hardbacks. To a new reader they are very entertaining, which is shown by their sales and by comments which I have heard from adults as well as youngsters. But to me they are so much a travesty of Hamilton at his best and full of very palpable faults. The characters have become stereotypes and foils for Bunter. And when people criticise the faults I feel that Charles Hamilton becomes completely under-rated as a writer. I have been quite unable to read any of them right through - each one is a shadow of a Magnet series which I infinitely prefer in the original - much worse in this respect than the S.O.Ls. That is why I wish a selection of his best work could appear in omnibus edition. But I suppose there is no hope of that.

GEORGE BELLARS: I am surprised that you find "Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals" unreadable. I have it in my collection and think it as good as any of the other Bunter books.

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WIBLEY - WHAT AN ACTOR !

By John Upton

I note from items in C.D. that some collectors do not appear to like the stories in which boys masquerade as masters and other adults with complete success. I myself never questioned the assumption that was made, and the stories of Frank Richards in which basically impossible situations of this kind were presented gave me a tremendous amount of amusement as a boy, and continue to do so.

One of the finest examples of the 'masquerade' story that I know of is "Ace of Jokers," in which Wibley, expelled, returns to Greyfriars as a Mr. Spofford, "a short, middle-aged gentleman" with gold-rimmed glasses, and takes charge of the Remove. Some of the richest of Frank Richards' humour is herein to be found. In the following extract, for example, the new master makes a somewhat surprising start with his class, with some members of which he has scores to settle....

"What is your name?"
"Cherry, sir."

"Sherry! Your name is Sherry?"

"No, sir; Cherry."

"Absurd! Do not attempt to play practical jokes on me. Do you suppose I am likely to believe that your name is Cherry, or Apple, or Raspberry, or anything of the sort?" snapped Mr. Spofford.

Bob's face was as red as the ripest cherry that ever ripened.

"But - but that is my name, sir," he stammered. "My name really is Cherry - Robert Cherry, sir."

"Nonsense! Take fifty lines!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"And your name?" demanded Mr. Spofford, fixing his eyes on Johnny Bull.

"Bull, sir."

"What - what? Are you venturing to imitate the absurd jesting of this boy who pretends that his name is Cherry? I do not believe that your name is Bull, or Cow, or Sheep, or anything of the kind!"

Johnny's face was as red as Bob's. Some of the Removites grinned. Johnny did not grin.

"My name's Bull!" he roared. "And a jolly good name, too!"

"Silence! Take fifty lines! Now, your name?" asked Mr. Spofford, pointing with Quelch's pointer to Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. "I was not aware that there was a negro in this Form. Your name - Snowball, or Remus, or what?"

"I have not the esteemed honour of being a negro, my estimable sir," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, "and my name is Hurree Janset Ram Singh."

"I will not allow this frivolous jesting!" snorted Mr. Spofford. "How dare you pretend that your name is Holy Jampot Rum Bang! Did you say Holy Jampot Rum Bang?"

"I did not!" hooted the Nabob. "I rejoice in the absurd and execrable name of Hurree Janset Ram Singh."

"I can see that this is a jest," said Mr. Spofford. "No doubt you have planned a rag on your new master by pretending to have these ridiculous and impossible names. Take fifty lines."

"Oh, my esteemed hat!"

"Now you, the boy with the spectacles - what is your name?"

"Bunter, sir."

"Grunter? I do not believe that your name is Grunter!"

"I said Bunter!" hooted the Owl of the Remove indignantly.

"That is equally absurd. Bunter is not a name. It is a ridiculous ejaculation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take fifty lines ----"

It never occurred to me as I read such stories to consider that such things simply could not happen in real life, and I am glad that it did not, for half the joy of that wonderful world would surely have evaporated with the cold, hard fact in one's mind.

You will remember the story, "They Wanted An Actor," in the 1937 Holiday Annual. Wingate, down to play Hamlet in the Sixth Form Production, falls ill with flu. Wibley's services are offered to fill the breach, but are declined - "it wouldn't be fair to the other players," says North, "to ask them to act in the piece with a raw hand taking the leading part." Wibley's retaliation is to play the part nevertheless, in a dual role: Hamlet and Mr. "Jay Paul," "a friend of Rake's father." The play ends to a tremendous ovation for Wingate's substitute, who

then removes wig and moustache to reveal his true identity. Even Dr. Locke has to laugh at the extraordinary expression on North's face. Revenge is sweet!

One of my favourite "Magnet" series is the delightful Eastcliff Lodge set, which rests entirely upon the assumption mentioned above. Wibley playing the role of the spy, Sir William Bird, during his absence from home on a secret mission, is an inspired idea, tailor-made for Frank Richards' delicious humour. Constantly, throughout this series, one is grateful for the superb acting ability that is Wibley's, for without it he would undoubtedly have given the game away at the start. As it is, his frequent involuntary returns to his true age cause some embarrassing moments, as for example when Sir William and the Famous Five witness an encounter between a Spifire and German Messerschmitts, and when the planes have disappeared behind cloud Sir William exclaims: "By gum! If only a fellow was a bit older--"

"If - if what--" ejaculated Bob.

"I - I - Oh, I - I mean, if a man were a bit younger!" stammered Sir William. "Who wouldn't be an airman."

And on another occasion....

"It will be lunch soon!" remarked Sir William. "Race you fellows up to the house, what?"

"Wha - o-?"

The Famous Five blinked. They were prepared to race anybody, but they were surprised to hear that challenge from a venerable baronet with silvery hair.

They trot after him, to humour the "venerable old bean" - "but only Bob Cherry was level when they arrived at the portico of the Lodge." "Some sprinter," gasps Nugent. As they discuss the incident Billy Bunter overhears and retorts: "What about it? Wibley can run! He did the school hundred yards once." In spite of this give-away - amongst countless others - the Famous Five still do not realise the truth about their energetic host, such is the complete conviction with which that remarkable schoolboy adopts the physical appearance and, by and large, the attributes of a sixty-five year old. And it is the quality of Frank Richards' writing that adds complete conviction and naturalness to the amusing situation, and brings out all its entertaining potential.

A further challenge to Wibley's acting genius comes when his "nephew," Loder, and Price turn up at Eastcliff Lodge in the story: "Billy Bunter's Hair Raid." Already Loder's reception on the telephone has been rather less than cordial:

"We're at Eastcliff Station now. We can't get a taxi for love or money," said Loder. "Will you send the car?"

"Oh, no!"

"What?"

"I-mean-- The fact is, Loder-- I mean, Gerald - why the dickens didn't you let me know before you started?"

"Eh? You did know!" came back Loder's voice. "Didn't you tell me, when you saw me at the school, to come along for the hols, any time I liked, whether you were at home or not?"

"Oh," gasped Wibley, "did I?" He realised that the genuine Sir William Bird must have done so."

The conversation proceeds...

"Is that young cad Wharton there, after all, with his gang?" asked Loder, in a very pleasant tone.

"My young friend Wharton is here! Certainly! His friends Bull, Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, and - and Bunter are here also! I fear, Loder - I mean, Gerald - that you would not pull with them! What?"

"I say, this is pretty thick!" Loder's voice was angry now. "Here I am as far as Eastcliff Station, and a pal with me--"

"Lots of trains back!"

"What?"

"Good-bye, Gerald!"

"Look here--" howled Loder from the other end.

But Sir William did not look there. He jammed back the receiver, and if Gerald

Loder went on talking, he had to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Wibley rose from the telephone.

"That's that!" he remarked.

That, however, is not that; Loder and Price elbow their way in at Eastcliff Lodge, and during Sir William's unavoidable absence through the loss of his wig, they cause Harry Wharton and Co. plenty of unpleasantry. Sir William - the secret of whose identity is revealed to the Co. during the course of this story - rallies round handsomely in speeding the parting guests:

Loder glared at Sir William.

"Look here," he roared, "those young scoundrels -"

"Silence, Loder - that is, Gerald!" barked Sir William sternly. "How dare you apply such epithets to my guests - my honoured guests! I am perfectly aware Gerald, that these chaps - I mean, these boys - would have been very glad to keep the peace. I am shocked at you, Gerald! I am disgusted at you! You have taken advantage of my - my temporary indisposition to act like a hooligan - indeed, like a Hun!"

"Look here -" roared Loder.

"I will not allow my guests to be bullyragged - I - I mean, I will not permit them to be subjected to hooliganism under my roof! Nothing of the kind! Go!"

"I - I -" Loder choked with rage, "I -"

Sir William waved his hand to the stairs.

"Go!" he thundered.

"You old fool!" bawled Loder.

"Blump!" thundered Sir William.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped the butler, from below.

"Remove these - these persons from the house! Remove them at once! Send their baggage after them, Blump! Take them away! Blump - John - Charles - Robert - remove these two young ruffians! If they are permitted to enter this mansion again, Blump, it will cost you your place! Remove them!"

A masterly performance indeed for a boy of 15 years 3 months! But these characters had no fixed ages, surely, in our imaginations.

Wibley, in my estimation, was a most essential character to the Greyfriars scene, whose starring roles in these and other stories gave us some of the wittiest stories of all. I always feel that Frank

Richards especially enjoyed contriving situations of the Eastcliff Lodge type, and it is an enjoyment which, just as it brings the stories so strongly to life, also brings the author himself, and his personality, vividly back to us.

News from the Clubs

AUSTRALIA

The usual enthusiastic core of collectors was present for the September club meeting on Thursday, 17th, held as always at that most congenial rendezvous, The Book Bargain Bazaar, Crane Place, Sydney.

Don Harkness entertained members by passing around the prints of photos taken at the August meeting. Amidst the general babel, one fact emerged - the members may not be very photogenic but Don is a first class photographer! And this unanimous opinion was confirmed by the secretary when she thanked Don for his pleasing efforts on behalf of his fellow members.

Syd Smyth came staggering in under his load of magazines and whilst the contents were being eagerly consumed by those present a pleasing half hour was spent discussing the most varied selection. Blake fans were particularly well catered for as there is an absorbing article by Mr. H. W. Twyman covering entirely new territory, "The U.J. Cover-Book" a rarity, the only one in existence being in his possession so it is literally unique. For Hamilton enthusiasts there was an unforgettable feature by G. R. Samways telling of his personal encounter with the incomparable Chas. Hamilton - entitled "A Half Hour With C.H." this is a must for all those devotees of his artistry. Informative and amusing S.B.L. reviews by Victor Colby were, as always a stimulating feature of the club magazine with Ernie Carter's Column providing a wide coverage of interesting snippets of news. Overseas subscribers will be pleased to know that their copies have been posted late in August so should reach England mid October at the latest. Anyone who would like to obtain a copy may secure one from Syd Smyth, 1 Brandon St., Clovelly, N.S.W. at the cost of 4/-.

"The Who's Who of Boys Writers" was produced by Ernie Carter and this labour of love was perused amidst the unanimous comments of

approval.

Letters from Arthur Holland, Wellington (N.S.W.), Mr. Matthews (South Australia) and Ron Hodgson (Northern Club) provided a pleasant interlude of news and views and this was followed by a rather colourful discussion on Handforth, arising out of Reg. Sanderson's thought provoking feature in the current C.D.

Meeting finished as usual in the local coffee shop where sundry topics were discussed under the mellowing influence of first rate coffee. Next meeting to be held on October 15th.

B. PATE Hon. Sec.

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MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th September, 1964.

What was generally accepted as one of the fullest programmes for some months was enjoyed by twelve members. Before the start of the scheduled agenda Ivan Webster displayed 2 fine examples of bound Gems. Bound locally these were to use the pun real 'gems' of workmanship. There was also a very fine copy of a pre-1900 Girls Own Annual, already bound of course. Ivan also gave us the details of his lucky 'find' of 70 S.O.Ls. whilst on holiday on the South Coast. Starting with a quiz by Jack Bellfield, winner Tom Porter and runner-up myself, we went on to the next item - major one of the evening. This was a talk by me on the subject of 'Talbot and Levison.' I gave my opinion that Talbot was spoiled by over playing his capabilities of cracksmanship at the start. It was a lot to ask a young reading public to swallow the fact that a lad of 16 years could dominate a desperate gang of criminals even if the feat of being able to crack any kind of safe was within his bounds. All stories were far-fetched but this I thought was asking too much of a gullible reading public. I also contended that Levison helped to make the earlier Toff yarns readable. Talbot had qualities enough to make him one of Martin Clifford's best characters without over reaching his more than unique gifts as a safe breaker. Various opinions were given but generally, as is usual, what was accepted by the reading public of the early Gems era was good enough for everyone now. Nuff said. The Raffle was won by Norman Gregory and Ivab Webster. There was a short game set by Tom Porter and then a discussion introduced by Norman. This was "Would Greyfriars have been improved by the addition of another House?" One or two thought two Houses could have enhanced interest but as expected - the majority would not countenance any interference with the beloved Greyfriars. Finishing off a very complete evening's programme, Ted Davey obliged in his usual

entertaining manner, with a reading from Magnet No. 1483 - 'From School to Circus.' During the night we all had to congratulate our treasurer Norman on completing the whole set of "Captains," his premier interest.

HARRY BROSTER Secretary.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 10th October, 1964:

Most of the missing 'regulars' were back in their places for the October meeting, and chairman Geoffrey Wilde welcomed the larger gathering for the start of what promises to be a very interesting winter season.

Formal business was soon got out of the way, and then Gerry Allison gave us the month's correspondence, which included a letter from Ian Menzies, one of our Canadian members, who is at present visiting this country. He was unable to attend the meeting, as he had hoped to do, owing to illness in the family.

Jack Wood's news of the month followed, the chief item of which was the exciting prospect of seeing Sexton Blake on the bookstalls once again, and the chance of re-reading some of the old masterpieces which gave us so much pleasure in days gone by. It is said that the old Baker Street set-up is coming back; Mrs. Bardell, Pedro and all.

A moment of nostalgia followed when Jack Wood read the minutes of the meeting held ten years previously, on 11th September, 1954, including, as they did, the names of some stalwarts who have now passed on.

Then Gerry gave us an account of the London meeting, held at Margate, which he and Myra attended. They were right royally entertained, and the souvenir menu cards were passed round. We were pleased to hear that Gerry worthily upheld the honour of the North by winning the letter quiz conducted by Roger Jenkins. Gerry also described the visit to 'Roselawn,' at Kingsgate, where, thanks to Miss Hood, they saw Frank Richards' study, and the typewriter on which so many of his stories were written.

The Allisons provided this month's programme, and the first item was a team game based on questions about the hobby, and also general knowledge. Gerry and Jack were the captains, and this proved so popular we had a second session after refreshments. Jack's team won by 62 to 56 after a very exciting contest.

Then Jack Allison read us one of his own school stories which he contributed to 'The Scout,' and this brought a most enjoyable meeting to a close. Next meeting Saturday, November 14th. F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

MERSEYSIDEMeeting held Sunday, 11th October:

This was our A.G.M. and I am pleased to report an improved attendance. John Farrell was back after his illness, and we were particularly pleased to see Frank Unwin again. We elected the officers for the coming year, the verdict being 'no change.' The first discussion concerned the re-appearance of the Sexton Blake Library. Norman Pragnell read an extract from the October 'Blakiana' and he expressed an opinion that the re-introduction of Pedro was not a good thing as the idea of a bloodhound tracking down criminals was rather out of date. Most of us agreed that Pedro in a world of fast cars, jet planes, radar, and all the scientific paraphernalia of the police today, would be superfluous. We did not consider that the stories would necessarily be modern, however. Period stories (i.e. stories of say 1920, and 1930 or even earlier) complete with Pedro and Tinker, and kept to those periods might well succeed as they would provide a change from the modern detective books of which there are many on the market. We all agreed however that the new venture must be given the utmost publicity. Some of us had been unable to obtain copies of the new Edgar Wallace books as many of the bookstalls in Liverpool not only did not have them but did not know they ever existed. From there we went on to the Jim Cook saga, on "Hamilton v E.S.B."

Norman read to us an article by Roger Jenkins which appeared in number 6 of the C.D. in 1947. This article was extremely critical of E.S.B. and one phrase which he used was:- "A Plethora of plagiarism." This we felt was going a bit too far. No author can ever claim that any plot he may conceive is absolutely original, and some writers may, to a certain degree, be influenced by earlier writers. Hamilton, for example, may have been influenced by T. B. Reed. The atmosphere of say 'The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's' and the "Master of the Shell" is similar to the atmosphere of the Greyfriars or St. Jim's stories. This does not suggest, however, that Hamilton pinched his ideas from T.B.R.

Frank Unwin read to us a letter he had received from Jim Cook in which he suggested that E.S.B. may have been anticipating the demise of the school story during the period of about 1929-1933, when the Nelson Lee as a school story paper was at its lowest ebb. He certainly concentrated more on the adult detective story. This looking into the future coupled with the Editor's instructions is probably the real explanation for the demoting of St. Frank's at that time.

Nevertheless we all deplore the rather silly, antagonistic attitude

of some of the Hamiltonians against the E.S.B. enthusiasts.

This month's quiz was introduced by Bill Galley and was won by John Farrell with Jack Morgan and Frank Unwin as runners up. Frank Unwin won the 'raffle' for next month's quiz. Next meeting, Sunday 8th.

BILL WINDSOR

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LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the Leytonstone meeting on Sunday, October 18th.

The Hamiltonia library was busy with the members and the librarian.

Due to indisposition of the librarian, Bob Blythe, there was no Nelson Lee Library report. But, no doubt, this will be remedied next month when the meeting of the club takes place at Bob's home, 40 Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10. on Sunday, November 15th. Tom Wright gave a reading about St. Sam's entitled 'A Tooth for a Tooth,' which Dicky Nugent is supposed to have written. This reading caused roars of laughter and it was a great pity that Mr. Samways was unable to attend. He would have enjoyed this item.

Ray Hopkins won Roger Jenkins' little competition and Josie Packman won Don Webster's 'Olympic' quiz. A debate took place, the subject 'What Constitutes Old Boys' Books?' All present had their say and divers opinions were expressed. A very enjoyable item.

Excellent progress was the report about the Sexton Blake catalogue, Bill Lofts, Charlie Wright and Len Packman giving details of work done in connection with same.

A hearty vote of thanks was given to the hosts, Reuben and Mrs. Godsave.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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RESULT OF GEMS OF HAMILTONIA CONTEST

As usual, there was a very large entry for this contest. The final placings of the six extracts, according to the voting, is as follows:
1st 11. 2nd 7. 3rd. 12. 4th 9. 5th 10. 6th 8.

Three competitors tied for 1st place. We have therefore increased the cash award to 30/-, and a remittance for 10/- will be sent to each of the following:

JOHN TROWELL, Colchester; D. M. HILLIARD, Nottingham; W. H. BROSTER, Kinver.

The runner up is DONALD WEBSTER to whom one of our book awards has been sent. We offer our grateful thanks to the large number of readers who entered for the contest.

WANTED: FAMOUS FIGHTS.

THOMAS LANGLEY, 57, SANDGATE ROAD, BIRMINGHAM, 28.

(Interesting Items from The Editor's Letter-bag)

NEVILLE S. BROWN (Sale): I hope you will get one of your writers to do an article on the new comic "The Big One." All the strips in this paper seem to be familiar, and I know that the cover strip

"Smiler" appeared on the cover of the grand old Knockout under the name of "Mike."

SYD SMYTH (Australia): The standard of C.D. is remarkably high, and stays that way. One thing strikes me as ironical in the recent controversy. Nobody can criticise the sub writers without some readers leaping to their defence - not to praise their work. Yet I know of no set of collectors who specialise in spurious yarns. There are a few who collect anything with a Hamilton name on it, even though it is not genuine, which has, to put it mildly, always flabbergasted me.

H. CHAPMAN (Barton-on-Humber): Although I am not a great reader of Sexton Blake, as most of the stories seem to contain more adventure than detection, I am pleased he is coming back, and in something like his old style. I, for one, am "tired of the sexy, hard-drinking, wisecracking, American-inspired private eye." The public libraries are full of them. I much prefer Holmes, Lee, Blake, and Poirot in their original settings. The demand for this kind of reading is not dead, but the new paper must be better advertised and displayed more in the shops to be successful.

W. J. RAYNER (Clare): Collectors' Digest is my passport for happy trips to the land of Nostalgia. Thank you for the good things of the past year.

JIM COOK (New Zealand): It is a pity that some readers deplore the controversy that rages over the old books, but without that spark of dogma to set our thoughts and pens racing to find words I think we would fall into that taken-for-granted attitude that resulted in the demise of most of the old papers.

DONALD STURGEDON (Burnley): I find I am lost with all the articles condemning sub authors and also those arguments whether the Magnet, Gem, or Nelson Lee were the better mags. I can't see how the arguments can ever reconcile themselves, as each of us has our own favourite. Couldn't we have more articles dealing with other weeklies like Modern Boy (Ken King, Captain Justice, etc.), Boys' Cinema, Bullseye, Pilot, Champion, Triumph, and Boys' Big Broadcast? Can you remember that last one?

ROY PARSONS (Southampton): Splendid news about the return of Sexton Blake. I'll have my subscription all ready. Incidentally, do articles for C.D. have to be typewritten? (No, sir! Scripts need not be typewritten, but all names of people and places should be inserted in block capitals to avoid copying errors. - ED.)

W.O.C. LOFTS (London): Gunby Hadath also wrote under the name Shepherd Pearson in his early days - stories located are in Boys' Journal, Cheer Boys Cheer group. This has only just been discovered.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): Blake back again - and at Baker Street, too. Splendid news! It's going to be just like old times again. I shall be there in February, half-crown in hand at the ready for the first issue.

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere): Must say how delighted I am to hear the splendid news that Sexton Blake is on his way back. And the real Blake, Tinker and Pedro, this time. I'm afraid I didn't care much for the last series although lots of the stories were very good. I'm a conservative in my choice of the old characters - one of the hard core - and loved the original Blake and Co. I thought him rather a flashy type in the last series, and just a shadow of the austere and dignified One we used to know. Thank goodness for the return of the real Blake in the old familiar surroundings.

LES TODD (London): What good news about reprinting "Magnets" in paperbacks! I only hope it comes true. That would be the real memorial to Frank Richards, instead of the empty

lightness of the Bunter books.

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): In answer to O.D. Wadham's letter, No. 15 of the Wonder Library was entitled 'The Lives Between' and No. 16 'A Middy Among the Japs.' No authors given. One thing about the pre 1915 books was the really good value. 120 pages for 3d, and in some of the old B.F.Ls. there were as many as 144 pages.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): I have never read the 'Gem' series about Mr. Railton's nephew, which seems to be a favourite of yours. Roger Jenkins said once it featured almost entirely the chief seven old characters (Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy). This alone would be an inducement to read it, in my case.

WANTED: - Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following: MAGNETS - 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 936, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. GEMS - 413, 414, 415, 493. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also Nos. 925, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 58.

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Hamilton S.O.Ls. for sale. S.A.E. for list: L. TODD, 23, MANATON ROAD, S.E.15.

WANTED URGENTLY: Magnet No. 435. Good loose copy, or volume containing same.

ERIC FAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

R E V I E W

EDGAR WALLACE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, No. 4

Star turn in this issue, which is well up to the standard of the previous three, is a longish story by Martin Thomas, entitled "Killed With a Loving Kiss." This is an exciting tale in a hospital setting, a whodunit which keeps the reader puzzled with a number of suspects until it reaches its surprising climax. Short stories by Edgar Wallace and William Shand, plus a true crime tale, complete an acceptable bill of fare.

The December issue of this popular magazine will contain a Wallace Christmas ghost story "The Haunted Room." Other contributors will include William Fear (an ex-Thomson boys' paper author) and Nigel Morland with a new Mrs. Pym story. Interior illustrations will be by Eric Parker, and the cover will be from the brush of Cortiella, who was responsible for many first-class Sexton Blake covers.

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- (1) To complete series, £1 each offered for:- Magnet 751; Gem 755; S.O.L. 169
- (2) 15/- each offered for Magnets 820, 821, 822, 858, 859.
- (3) If you have not yet had a copy of our printed and illustrated catalogue, there are still a few copies left. Send 6d in stamps.

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A. FENNER, 111 THE AVENUE, LONDON, E.4.

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