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SPECIAL, ENLARGED, SPRING ISSUE

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Vol. 19

No. 219

MARCH, 1965

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A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER.

SEXTON BLAKE

An outstanding event has been the return of Sexton Blake to the shops. The new series has received a most remarkable and valuable publicity, spread over many months. The national press has covered it, almost without exception, and at well-spaced intervals. Mr. Howard Baker, the editor, made a striking appearance on television, saying the very things we wanted him to say. Blake author, Wilfred McNeilly, made similar appearances on two channels of Northern Ireland television.

We congratulate Mr. Baker and Mayflower Publications on the publicity which cannot be faulted in any detail.

Publicity, of course, is not enough in the long run. Much will depend on distribution and the quality of the stories. No matter how excellent the publicity, it will be useless unless the books are on show and readily available in the shops. The distribution so far has been utterly erratic.

The new format is fine, but it is on the stories that success or failure will depend. The first two, good as they are of their type, will have puzzled some of our readers. Publicity throughout has stressed a return to an earlier sort of Blake-Tinker story. There is not really much sign of this in the two stories so far published.

Mr. Baker tells us that it is necessary to make the changes slowly. To us it seems a pity that the new series has not been able to

start as it intends to go on. Nevertheless, we appreciate that the launching of the series is a giant task, and Mr. Baker certainly knows his own business best. It is a most worthwhile and courageous undertaking, and Mr. Baker is deserving of all the support we can give him.

The republishing of some of the older Blake "classics" is something keenly awaited by our readers. We understand that it may be about six months before the first of these appears, but they will definitely come. If they are not tinkered with too much - no pun intended - we believe they will be a great success.

PLOUGHING THE SANDS:

Last month our Merseyside club condemned those who ask high prices for old periodicals - and those who pay them. This month our Midland club has discussed the same matter. Ever since Collectors Digest started its career eighteen years ago, the rising prices of the old papers have been worrying plenty of people, and certain groups have tried, unsuccessfully, to control prices. In our view, it is ploughing the sands. When there is a demand for items in short supply, it is impossible to peg prices. There is, not unnaturally, a vast difference in outlook between those who want to acquire and those who have something to sell.

These days, ever-rising prices are an enormous problem in all phases of life. With the passing of time the prices of the old papers, at least, will fall away, when we who love those old papers are gone. Can we be excused for hoping that time to be far distant?

THE EDITOR

WANTED: Magnets (1930-1935), Gems, Modern Boys, Bullseyes, Champions, Thrillers (all 1930-1940). Write with particulars of price etc. to:-
R. T. RUDD, 431 HILLCREST STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA,
CANADA.

 DAN O'HERLIHY only wants 2 MAGNETS to complete his set. Nos. 39 and 768. Very high price offered for same, or I am prepared to exchange my issues 2 and 3 for good copies.
 Write: LOFTS, 56, SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LONDON, N.W.1.

 Large quantity of MAGNETS, GEMS, S.O.Ls. for even exchange or sale (later issues). 1932 Wharton Rebel Series offered for certain earlier series. S.A.E.

LAURIE SUTTON, 112, REPTON ROAD, ORPINGTON, KENT.

"HOOLIGAN" AGAINBy FRANK PETTINGELL

With reference to Mr. Minty's letter "Hooligan" quoted in February's C.D. The Hooligan Family made their first appearance on the front page of Number one "Nuggets" of May 7, 1892: a single cartoon, not comic strips: and shared the front page with several smaller picture. In this position the family remained until December 8, 1894, which saw a half-page cartoon (The Christening). On February 2, 1895, another half-page appearance, also February 16th, sharing positions until October, 1895. They then disappeared until February 22, 1896, returning as half-page cartoons. The return was captioned "Hooligan takes the Flure again." December 19, 1896 saw Hooligan on the front cover alone, announcing the Christmas Number. He returned to his half-page position a week later and remained there until February 27, 1897. Full page March 6th only, then again half-page until April 3rd, which saw a full-page. April 10th, half-page; April 17 a full page; on the 17th and 24th, too. May 1st, half-page, then he and his family and neighbours occupied the whole of the first page up to January 1899. Artist Julius S. Baker.

He returned March 17, 1900 and ran as full-page attraction until his final appearance May 5th. The following week saw a replacement: P.C. Copham and his family, also by J. S. Baker.

Hooligan had a genius for manufacturing bicycles, suites, washing machines, carriages, pianos etc., out of very rough wood, bits of iron, etc. Also of continually dressing up in uniform or costumes "faked-up" by himself and his wife. Needless to add, he had a large family and, as neighbours, Mrs. Geoghagen, Mrs. Finucane, Widow McGinty and a German neighbour, Schwizzlehazz. He is depicted on March 6, 1897 (full-page) meeting that "shmoke-dried shnake, Schneider that's got his picture every wake in the 'Garland'" (another weekly paper of Henderson's). A self portrait by Baker depicts him holding Hooligan and Schneider as babies with bottles, in a December issue.

Strange that Mr. Minty should, when writing of the music-hall "Hooligans," mention "Casey's Court," because when "Casey's Court" appeared in "Chips" the youngsters made their own skating rink, theatre, merry-go-round, stage-coach, motor-cars, amusement parks, etc., in the courtyard of slum dwellings, using old boxes, planks, bed springs, etc., exactly as Hooligan had done in "Nuggets;" and, comparing the line work of the "Chips" artist with the "Nuggets" cartoons, it is evident that "Casey's Court," which ran for years, was drawn by J. S. Baker, too.

Henderson, as well as Edwin J. Brett, another old publisher, kept

his comic pages supplied from the American comic journals "Judge" and "Puck." In "Scraps" and "Snap-shots" most of the "strips" and comic pictures were supplied by these American blocks. Yet, strangely enough, "Nuggets" used English artists in the majority, especially after 1900, when Charles Harrison was one of their chief cartoonists.

It is interesting to compare the fine, if somewhat scratchy, line-work of Baker's Hooligan in the first 143 number of "Nuggets" until in February, 1895, he developed a broader, firmer line which obtained for the remainder of the pictures. Or maybe, the fine lines were attributable to the delicate work of the etcher or block maker?

Hooligan, as I said, disappeared after the issue of May 5, 1900, but it is likely that Schneider, whom Mr. Minty remembers, was running until much later.

By American authorities it is stated that the Hooligans were a family of emigrants who settled in the East Side of New York, and formed a family gang, who, by the time of the American Civil War, had had their name adapted as a description of all that was tough and rowdy.

I hope this will be of some help to Mr. Minty in his recollections and enquiries.

THE BURROUGHS FANTASY SAGA

By L. S. Elliott

I have just completed reading Mr. Hubbard's splendid article in this year's "Annual," and being an old-time collector, I have many U.S. editions. I enjoyed it very much indeed.

There are a few additions however which might help collectors. "Savage Pellucidar" includes four yarns not three, the fourth being "Savage Pellucidar" (1963) itself. I have this book, and most of the others, in U.S. editions.

The latest new "Tarzan" book, not mentioned, is now being published by Canaveral Press of New York, the authorised hard-cover publishers. It is "Tarzan and The Castaways," and includes the "Champion" and the "Jungle Murders," (mentioned by Mr. Hubbard in his article) at \$ 3.50.

Another new book due from Canaveral Press is Richard A. Lupoff's illustrated "Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure" \$ 7.50. and the most complete survey of Burroughs' works ever published.

Burroughs' sons have also written several S.F. stories in the magazines apart from illustrating.

Incidentally, "Tarzan and the Lion Man" was serialised in the old green-covered "Tit-Bits" before the War. I have the complete set, if anyone is interested.

Many paper-backed editions of mainly "Tarzan" books were published in this country by "Pinnacle" books before "4-Square" and "Ace."

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Captains, Vols. II, III 19; Chatterbox Annual (1910); Lot O' Fun (Xmas 1910); Post War Adventures; Modern Boy Annual (1936); Magnets Nos. 426, 1542, 1577, 1613, 1657, 1679. WANTED TO BUY OR SWAP: Dixon Hawke Libs; Adventures, Rovers (1935-1936).

J. McMAHON,

54, HOZIER CRESCENT,

TANNOCHSIDE,

UDDINGSTON.

DANNY'S DIARY

MARCH 1915:

The Boys' Friend is absolutely a tip-top paper these days. Doug has ordered it for me every week from Mr. Bragg, our newsagent, and in return I sometimes meet him when he comes home from the Technical School and I carry his books for him.

The first Rookwood story this month was "Healing the Breach." Jimmy Silver and Lovell were always quarrelling, and at last Lovell goes out to find Jimmy on the moors. Lovell jumps across a quarry, and falls in, so Jimmy climbed down the steep quarry side, and carried Lovell home. After that they were bosom pals. It was quite a long story of five big pages, and Mr. Macdonald, the Gem artist, does all the illustrations.

The next Rookwood tale was "The Fistical Four." Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd fought, while Fowler of the Fifth was referee. Jimmy won the fight. Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were always known as the Fistical Three, and now they have taken in Jimmy so they become the Fistical Four.

Then came a huge enlarged issue - four extra large pages plus a marvellous coloured cover on glossy paper, and an art plate given free loose. The art plate showed a scene in the Great War. The Rookwood tale was "The Rebels of Rookwood." The Head and the masters on the Classical side are all down with flu, so the Modern masters and prefects take charge of the classical forms. Jimmy Silver & Co decide to have a barring-out, which sound very exciting.

The editor has got his picture at the head of his big chat page, and there is a picture competition which will last 8 weeks. A new serial by Beverley Kent is named "With Bugle and Bayonet," and another new serial by Reginald Wray is "The Hidden World." There is a boxing series of complete stories by Arthur S. Hardy about Tom Belcher, a lightweight boxer. There is also a new serial called "The Circle of 13" about Harvey Keene, detective, but the author's name is not given. Lastly there is a long complete story of football called "The Slacker's Triumph" by George Richmond.

The next issue was another giant number with another coloured cover and free art plate. The cover picture was of Tom Belcher, and the art plate was another war scene. The Rookwood story was "Barred Out" in which Jimmy Silver and Co bar themselves up in the tuck shop, and they intend to carry on till they get justice. The huge issues will carry on in April, which is wonderful.

These lovely big issues of the Boys' Friend make me think that the editor must have advance information that the war will be over soon. Also, the Gem and the Magnet have both gone back to 32 pages. It certainly looks as though the editor is in the know.

The Grand National has been won by a horse called "Ally Sloper." Dad says there used to be a paper by this name, but it was rather a rude paper, so nice people only bought it when nobody else was looking.

The liner "Falaba" has been sunk off Ireland, and more than 100 people are killed or drowned. It was done by a German submarine. The Americans are rather cross about it.

Mr. Macdonald must be very busy with all the pictures he is drawing for St. Jim's and Rookwood. He is a lovely artist. The first Gem story this month was "Looking After Mossoc." Monsieur Morny is in trouble because his family in France has been turned out of their home by the Huns. So Mossoc goes to a pawnshop, and Levison and Sefton try to make trouble at school for him.

The next story "A Split in the School" was grand. It told of trouble between Kildare and Monteith and Sefton, but the artist was very careless and drew Monteith in Etons. Talbot and Marie Rivers played big parts in this tale, and in the end Talbot played football for the First Eleven. The editor is a crank. He said this month that

the Gem started in 1908. Even I know better than that. He also said that there are 31 boys in the First Form at St. Jim's. I've never heard of a First Form at St. Jim's.

In the next story, Mr. Selby was indisposed, so Marie River took charge of the Third Form. Rummy what happens in war-time. The artist showed her as a nurse, giving Hooley the cane. Whooshi! Surely she wouldn't wear her nurse's clothes to teach the Third. The story was called "Master Marie."

The last yarn of the month was "Levison's Double." Levison remembered that Tom Merry once had a double, and he thought he could use the same idea himself to cover up his shady ways. All the Gem tales have been marvellous this month.

A famous halfpenny paper "The Girls' Home" has ended, and has reappeared as a penny paper "Our Girls." I bought Mum the first copy, and she smiled. Of course, Mum isn't a girl, but I think she was pleased. There is a story called "Daisy Peach" by Mabel St. John. Daisy is the great pal of Pollie Green who is a famous character of Mabel St. John.

There was a railway accident this month at Smithy Bridge near Rochdale. Three people were killed and a lot injured.

In the middle of the month I had the Dreadnought, and the old Greyfriars tale "Friends at Last" was very good. Colonel Wharton visited Greyfriars and it turned out that he knew Hurree Singh's father when Inky was a baby. The Colonel rescued Wharton from drowning, and Harry repented for having been such a bad nephew. Doug says this tale was called "A Jolly Half-Holiday" when it was in the Magnet. I

really think the Greyfriars tales used to be better than they are now.

In the Magnet, Johnny Bull has left Greyfriars, and Squiff has taken his place in the Famous Five. I don't like it much.

The first tale of the month was "Tom Dutton's Triumph." An ice carnival is held on the Sark, and there is a prize of £10 for the best skater. Dutton wins it, and gives it to his cousin, Jack Dutton, who is short of money.

"Through Fire and Flame" told of an outbreak caused by Bunter and his friends smoking cigarettes, so the Remove forms a fire-brigade. Later occurs a fire in the school sanatorium, where Bunter is laid up with a cold, and Mark Linley rescues him. They have two war pictures in the Magnet which take up a lot of space, and also a new series of four-picture cartoons which are quite funny.

"Bunter's Banknotes" was a good story. Some counterfeiters are operating in the crypt under the old priory in Friardale Wood, and Wharton & Co succeed in getting them arrested. There is a new serial in the Magnet called "The Star of the Circus."

The last tale of the month was "The Hun Hunters" in which a German prisoner escapes from a concentration camp near the school. There is plenty of fun before the Famous Five capture him.

The usual length of a programme in our cinemas is 2½ hours. We are getting more and more longer pictures, running to from 4 to 6 reels. Sometimes the programme has one of these long pictures with a serial, a comedy, and the Pathe Gazette or the Gaumont Graphic. But there are still just as many programmes made up of about ten short pictures of one or two reels each. One long film we saw early in the month was "The Escape," which was directed by D. W. Griffiths, who is supposed to be the best of all producers. This film starred Donald Crisp, Mae Marsh, Owen Moore, and Ralph Lewis. It was an



exciting picture. In real life, Owen Moore is Mary Pickford's husband. When I grow up, I wouldn't mind marrying Mary Pickford. Also in this programme was a Keystone comedy called "Rounders," featuring Charlie Chaplin.

Another time we saw a 3-reel picture called "Tragedy in the Life of General Villa," which was about a Mexican called Pancho Villa, a man who once really lived. A new serial started called "The Million Dollar Mystery," which will be in 23 episodes, so it will be on a long time. There was a two-reel picture of the wild west called "Broncho Billy's Dad" and two Keystone comedies called "Mabel's Latest Prank" with Mabel Normand, and "The Property Man" with Charlie Chaplin. This was a very good programme indeed.

A few days ago we went to see Annette Kellerman in "Neptune's Daughter." Annette Kellerman is a good swimmer, and is supposed to have the most beautiful body in the world, but I think my Mum's is just as good.

A BOOKSHOP TRAGEDY

By Gerry Allison

For many years now, whenever I have been in Bradford, I have visited Hardaker's second-hand bookshop in James Street, at the back of Kirkgate Market.

Mr. Hardaker was one of us. He had been a personal friend of Barry Ono; had corresponded for years with John Medcraft and Herbert Leckenby, and was a subscriber to the Collector's Digest. Many a rare book bargain have I had from him.

His shop was practically solid with books, and an adjoining room, a staircase, and two upper rooms were completely solid with books.

I remember visiting his shop on the day of the Exhibition of Old Boys Books in Bradford Central Library, some 14 years ago. With me were Herbert Leckenby, Don Webster - then a member of the Northern Section, and Norman Smith. I shall never forget the expression upon the faces of my companions, when they saw that shop for the first time.

Piles and piles of books, magazines, comics, paperbacks, etc. covered the walls from floor to ceiling. Huge cases, with every shelf two deep in books of every sort, fiction and non-fiction. There was a massive centre table covered with piles of magazines - Rovers, Wizards, Sexton Blakes, Oracle, Science Fiction, women's papers, etc., etc. The space beneath the table was completely filled with more books. Piles of Zane Grey, E. S. Burroughs, Richmal Crompton, P. G. Wodehouse, Ethel M. Dell, Clarence E. Mulford, and every other popular writer you can think of.

Don Webster asked the inevitable question, and got the answer I expected. "Have I any Gems or Magnets? Oh, yes, but I can't get at them. As soon as I have any spare time, I shall be sorting things out, and will let you know." We could hardly tear ourselves away from the veritable treasure-trove of old books in time to attend the meeting of the Northern Section in Leeds.

Harry Stables once told me he had been a customer at Hardaker's for thirty years. His complete sets of Chums, Boy's Own Annuals, Captain, Henty, Manville Fenn, and hundreds of Blakes, B.F.Ls., etc., had nearly all come from that shop.

I have been into Hardaker's scores of times, but it has always been the same story - 'when I have time.' On one visit, towards the end of 1963, he actually had a complete set of Holiday Annuals - in full view. I reserved them, and they went to Alan Dacre at Barrow-in-Furness. Which shows what potentialities the shop had.

But Mrs. Hardaker - a sad-faced woman, who helped her husband, often said that he simply hated to sell any of his books. Some, which he bought at sales were never sorted out. Oh, it was quite maddening! Often, I have offered to spend a weekend in the shop to help him to sort out his stock, and hoping to unearth some of the old boys' books which were certainly there. But no - he would be going through them himself soon, and would let me know what there was in my line. That adjoining room, with a curtain hanging over the wide-open doorway drew me like a MAGNET. One could only peer into the mountains of books and magazines, like a peri, at the gate of Paradise, as Frank Richards used to say.

Last week-end I was in James Street, Bradford, again. Hardaker's was gone. Oh, the shop was there all right. Brilliantly lit and full of household and kitchen ware; crockery, frying pans, kettles, etc. etc. Ugh! it was a hideous sight. I could get no news in Bradford of what had happened.

But yesterday, I called on Miles' famous second-hand bookshop in Leeds (and picked up fine copies of Maryatt's "Pasha of Many Tales" and "Week-end Wodehouse"). "Did you know that Hardaker's of Bradford has gone?" I asked. Then came a distressing story.

Apparently the rumour had gone around the few remaining book-dealers in this area, that the shop was likely to close. Permission was asked to inspect and look over the stock. But there was a veto - no book-sellers were allowed in. The doors were locked. Practically all that stock of books - containing heaven only knows what hidden treasures - was eventually sold as salvage.

"The man was never a bookseller, at all. He was a book-hoarder." That is the heartbreaking story I was told. I have a book, which I often read called - "The Diary of a Bankrupt Bookseller." In this case, the man starved to death, surrounded by books worth hundreds of pounds. But he could not bear to sell any of them.

The main reason I began the Old Boys Book Library in 1950 was

because I saw so many old books being amassed by collectors with just such a collecting mania. One of them once said to me, "Oh, I have no time to read them, I spend so much time collecting."

TILLIE'S PUNCTURED ROMANCE

Danny, from whose 50-year old diary we are privileged to present extracts every month, recently recorded the fact that he had seen the film "Tillie's Punctured Romance." Large numbers of readers, with their memory buds tickled by that entry, have written to us in the past week or two. Bill Gander, a great Danny fan, writes from Canada: "Danny would be a contemporary of mine. He tells of seeing 'Tillie's Punctured Romance.' I saw this film about the same time. Maybe it is because I did not see many movies those days, but it is one that I remember when so many others are forgotten."

For those who have no recollection of "Tillie," it may not be out of place to reflect upon it for a few moments. Readers may have wondered that Danny, in his diary for early 1915, made such casual reference to Charlie Chaplin. The fact is that Chaplin's name meant but little at that time, though he was on the brink of world fame. A few months later he was to be acclaimed as the world's greatest comedian, he was to be the biggest draw the cinemas have ever known, and his antics were to spill over in Britain's publications for youngsters.

Ford Sterling, the mainstay of the Keystone Comedies, was famous for the sprout of beard on the end of his chin, his steel-rimmed glasses, and his frantic runs which were preceded by a leap in the air. Towards the end of 1913, Sterling wanted more money than Mack Sennett of the Keystone Co., was able to pay him. Sterling left Keystone, the firm which had made him, though he never seems to have made much of himself afterwards. To replace him, Mack Sennett tried out a youngster named Harold Lloyd - and thought him hopeless.

Then, on the advice of Mabel Normand, he engaged, at 125 dollars a week, a little Englishman named Charles Chaplin, who had been touring the American music-halls.

Chaplin joined Keystone at the end of 1913. His very first picture, released February 2nd, 1914, was given various names: "A Busted Johnny," or "Making a Living" or "Troubles" or "Doing His Best." Whatever name they gave it, the film was a flop. Five days later another of his films "Kid Auto Races at Venice" was released.

Chaplin made several dozen comedies during 1914 for Keystone but it was not till he evolved his tramp creation that the public began

to take notice and the Chaplin films began to show a profit. It was quite a time before he abandoned cruelty, venality, larceny, treachery, and lechery as the main characteristics of his tramp. Then at last the tramp emerged pathetic - and lovable.

It was in the autumn of 1914 that Keystone made "Tillie's Punctured Romance." Marie Dressler was the star, engaged at the then huge salary of 2500 dollars a week. It took 40 days to make the film. To support the star, Keystone threw into the cast every player they had. Marie was the village maid; Chaplin was the city villain; Mabel Normand was Charlie's shady confederate; Mack Swain was Marie's father; plus Chester Conklin, Edgar Kennedy, Charlie Murray, Charlie Chase, and the whole battalion of Keystone Cops.

"Tillie" launched Marie Dressler as a film actress, but it possibly benefited Chaplin more than anyone else in it. It was the first full-length comedy ever made. In 6-reels, it ran for about 70 minutes.

"Tillie's Punctured Romance" never caught on very well in England. Dressler was unknown over here, and Chaplin was only starting. It got by in the cinemas from the novelty of being a full-length Keystone.

"Tillie" has been the rounds many times since, widely advertised later as a Chaplin vehicle, and probably disappointing many who expected to see him playing a larger part. Even as I write, it is playing at the Prince Charles Theatre in London, which is presenting a Sunday season of silent Chaplin films with "Tillie's Punctured Romance" as the main attraction, supported by "Easy Street" and "The Cure."

But "Tillie" did well in the States, and soon other companies, larger than Keystone, were after Chaplin. He made only two more Keystone comedies, and then went to Essanay, where his first picture was "His New Job." His leading lady, for this time only, was one, Gloria Swanson. Apart from "Tillie's Puncture Romance," none of Chaplin's Keystone comedies is remembered much to-day.

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, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. GEMS: 493. Some issues between 801 and 832. Also Nos. 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.

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

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

LESLIE CHARTERIS

On behalf of Leslie Charteris - and in the interests of accuracy - I feel I should answer some of the anecdotes given by John Grierson Dickson in his letter in the January C.D. Blakiana.

First and foremost it is not correct to suggest that Mr. Charteris had his character THE SAINT rejected by Len Pratt at any time - either in THE THRILLER or as a supporting character to Sexton Blake in his adventures in the S.B.L. Indeed, when I was privileged to meet Leslie Charteris last Summer one of the first questions I asked him was "why he never wrote a tale of Sexton Blake - like the majority of other THRILLER authors." His reply was "that he wished to write about his own character, and to build him up to the general public" which everyone must agree he did do so successfully. For the record, Mr. Charteris dealt directly with the Director of Juvenile Publications, Mr. Montague Haydon in connection with his stories, and had little to do with Len Pratt at all.

It has also been suggested by a former writer of THE THRILLER that Len Pratt actually gave Leslie Charteris the idea for his character THE SAINT. To also kill this rumour once and for all; I should like to point out that THE SAINT first appeared in book form in September 1928 the title being "MEET THE TIGER" - and was written at least three or four months prior to its published date. The THRILLER did not appear until February 1929, when the first SAINT tale did not appear until issue 13. The dates alone prove that the SAINT was Leslie Charteris' own sole creative character - first thought up long before the THRILLER was ever thought of - and indeed long before he had ever heard of Len Pratt existing on this earth.

W. O. G. Lofts

* * * * *

IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (4)

By Walter Webb

On Authorship, Methods of Writing, Payment, etc.

"Authors are invited to send MS to The Editor, "Union Jack," 123, Temple Chambers, London. Stories should

be 18,000 words in length. Liberal payment offered for first rate work."

Thus ran an early advertisement in the UNION JACK. Just how many of those old-time aspirants to fame in the world of literature qualified for top rate is a matter of interesting speculation, for, it is no secret that many of the stories handed into the editorial sanctum in the long ago were deplorably written, couched often in very bad English, and littered with all sorts of errors. As with other Harmsworth stories, those early Sexton Blake offerings were a very mixed bag, some calling for total rejection by the editor, and others accepted only by reason of certain redeeming features which enabled the story to be elevated to the required standard by the more expert hand of a staff member. The question then was - who should be named as author? Mr. W. Howard Baker overcame this problem by publishing the new look Blake novels under the nom-de-plume of "Desmond Reid," thereby playing fair with both the original author and his "ghost." Earlier, W. H. Back, who, by a coincidence, had the same initials, decided that the best way was to give no name at all, which may explain the reason for the policy of anonymity.

Many years ago, a well-known London journalist decided to write a book on the various newspapers and illustrated periodicals which were being published in his time. In order to get his facts as strictly accurate as possible, he visited the Amalgamated Press, and was given some insight into the way in which some of the stories were written. What he learned was certainly illuminating, and sheds considerable light today on a problem which has been confounding some collectors in recent months - the Carr-Bayfield dispute. Instead of commissioning an author to write a story and when the manuscript arrived having it printed, the author would find himself working with someone on the staff known as a fiction editor. The task of this staff writer was to see that the story was altered if necessary to suite the tastes of the readers for whom it was intended.

Obviously, collaboration on quite a big scale was going on behind the scenes in those days, and it ~~has~~ been taken rather too much for granted that those stories were plain straightforwardly written mss checked and paid for at a standard rate to one particular author. Instead, it is clear that a much lower rate of payment was made for inferior work, and that the balance was paid to the staff member who brought the story up to the necessary standard. This team work in writing, and the various nom-de-plumes which flood the boys' story market, have to be approached with extreme caution, for, although an

author could choose his own pen-name, as Bayfield may have done in the case of "Allan Blair," if the powers that be willed that a story by another writer should be billed as having come from the pen of "Allan Blair" that was that. Bayfield, in fact, possessed no more right to the exclusive use of his own pen-name than Charles Hamilton had of "Frank Richards."

You have to imagine the Amalgamated Press in those days as a huge factory in which every editor had to stick to his individual job of getting the yarns written, the pictures done, the paper made up, proofs edited and read. Although many editors saw en passant all the authors who wrote for them, many remain in his memory as mere shadows. With others there were more intimate dealings - such as discussing a plot, and arguing over payments, but, on the whole, the editorial office - which consisted of many people - was just a seething hive of industry, where some of its workers put in twelve to fourteen hours a day, and got precious little money, except what they made by extra writing.

In an atmosphere of rush and toil, of big ambitions and small dividends, there was little room for sentiment. Unlike the workers of today, who, by comparison, are treated with generous understanding during indisposition, the author who failed to carry out his commitments in those days was ruthlessly dealt with. No output - no payment; and his place as the writer of the story he had been working on taken over by an understudy. Readers of the UNION JACK in its twilight years may recall a similar instance during the Proud Tram Series, when Robert Murray was replaced by Edwy Searles Brooks at the last moment. This was no isolated instance, by any means; it happened often in the earlier years, when some authors, not endowed with boisterously good health, were prone to fall down on their commissions, and had to be replaced with feverish haste in order to keep copy to schedule. Some writers had understudies of their own - a pal whom they shared "digs" with, probably, and their united efforts generally saw the author through. Those of the more popular order, who contributed to Cassell's, or Pearson's, or Newnes, and most probably, all three, were very apt to fall behind with their work, and then an harrassed editor would need to fall back on substitutes - probably some of those fiction editors already mentioned. It was a situation closely resembling that of the MAGNET and the substitute Hamilton writers, with a variety of staff and other writers using the same pen-name coined by one particular author.

* * * * *

THREE YEARS with the BLACKFLEET INDIANS

"The Last of the Mohicans," by Fenimore Cooper, an abridged version of which appeared in an early UNION JACK, is probably the most widely read book about Red Indians in existence. In the early days such yarns were very popular, and the description of a cloud of mounted braves sweeping down on the white man's camp is an old and familiar scene. These stories were written by men who had probably never seen an Indian in their lives; but Mr. Ernest Goddard did give us to understand that there was, at least, an exception, and this travelled writer spent 3 years with the Blackfleet Indians, on one of their "reservations," where he no doubt witnessed the famous Sun Dance, which, among the Blackfleet, was the greatest ceremonial of the year, and always held in the spring as soon as the sun reached its zenith.

U.J. authors were, of course, always noted for the way they got around, though I'll wager no other writer saw springtime in the Rockies whilst a guest at a Red Indian reservation as this particular contributor did. It would be interesting to be able to name the author, but, unfortunately, Mr. Goddard did not give it.

+ + + + +

" IM ! "

Readers who remember their Parsons will not need to be told to whom this brief announcement refers, nor the one who made it. Baker Street, with its peaceful, homely atmosphere, was often the scene of deep gravity, where clients were wont to pour out their sorrows and tribulations; but there were diversions, particularly when Superintendent Claudius Venner and Mrs. Bardell met head on, so to speak. Their fierce exchanges were often the only passages of humour in the story, and although some were funnier than others, they all made for a little light-hearted variety. There was an occasion one morning when Blake and Tinker were breakfasting in an appetising aroma thrown back by one of Mrs. Bardell's famous early morning dishes, when in flounced the good lady, head high and bristling fore and aft, and leaving the door wide open behind her.

"There's a common pleeceman in the 'all, askin' to see you!" she broke out so loudly that it could have been heard all over the house. "A low, common pleeceman, what no self-respectin' lady would let cross 'er doorstep - not if she was dead, she wouldn't! An' another thing....."

"Didn't he give a name?" Blake stopped her gently.

Mrs. Bardell drew herself to her full height as the grinning face of her bete noir appeared in the open doorway.

"Im!" she announced with all the dignity at her command - and all the name she ever allowed herself to give Superintendent Claudius Venner. And like a barge in full sail, she swept past the sooper and out into the hall.

Venner blew her a kiss.

"The trouble is," he said, so loudly that she could not help but hear him, "that the old battle-axe is really in love with me - but won't own it." And raising his voice still louder: "We shall want another breakfast, sweetheart!" he bawled after her.

A rare fictory for Venner this - few were allowed to get in the last word with Mrs. Bardell!

(Extract from "The Case of the Banned Film." S.B.L. No. 267, published July, 1952.)

(continued)

* * * * *

A RETURN TO SANITY

By W. H. Broster

The return of Sexton Blake is the best news we have had for many years. What makes it more than good is the assurance that with the Sexton Blake we knew in the days of Yvonne, Zenith, Kestrel, Plummer, Kew and Carnac, we shall have once more the 'lad' Tinker at his best, Mrs. Bardell and Pedro - the old domicile at Baker St., - well, everything that made the old "Union Jack" so popular and so well loved. That one in every four of the issues will be a reprint of a famous story of 1915 - 1963 era is nice to know though we hope that most of them are nearer to 1915 than 1963. There were, in that wonderful age of 1915 to the finish of Union Jack, many series of yarns which we cannot expect, maybe we do not really want. I refer to such as the Confederation series, the sagas of Yvonne and Roxane and their respective vendettas. There were a great many single stories when Yvonne pitted her wits, against Sexton Blake. Some when she worked hand in hand with him which was more to her liking (and maybe ours too). The Zenith stories were all more or less complete yarns as they appeared. So were the Purvale stories by John Brandon. Never ending is the list of 'single' stories which were so popular and all worthy of re-printing. Myself I had a fancy for John Hunter's Captain Dack yarns. They had action, humour and romance in just the right quantity. Lobangu and Losely, 'Splash' Page, Granite Grant and Julie, Marie Galante, Dirk Dolland, Lawless - the list is never finished.

With these we should re-capture the old homely atmosphere of Baker St., - Blake with his pipe and in the old dressing gown - Tinker messing around in the 'den' with the famous 'Index' - Pedro seemingly asleep on the rug but so much alert - Martha Bardell with her quaint out of place English, having a cup of tea and a cosy chat with her crony Mary Ann Cluppins down in the basement. There were a lot of good yarns of Sexton Blake in that era which were based on current news of that day. Feasible stories and very readable for old and young alike.

When the old "Union Jack" folded up I turned to other detectives and have continued to do so. I may have bought two - no more - of the Modern Blake (just for curiosity), I may have read perhaps two more (no fault of mine, I acquired them, somehow), but that was as much as I wanted of that periodical. I turned to Patricia Wentworth, John Rhode, Clifford Witting, H. V. Fletcher and Agatha Christie - to name just a few. All these had much in common with the authors of the old Sexton Blake. Authors like Gwyn Evans, John Hunter, etc. Their yarns of detection brought in the countryside, English family life, local customs, everyday personalities - yes, these stories had all that and more. What did the other authors offer - what the Modern Blake overflowed with. Sordid crime, brutality, not one feasible murder but several of them, sex (plenty of this) and sadism. I suppose the public, most of it at any rate, wanted this type of literature. These authors gave it to them, in plenty. I tried a few more authors who leaned towards this sort of thing, Charles Franklin, Roger Simons and Peter Cheyney. Not so bad in some ways but still too much the exact opposite of our old well loved Sexton Blake. Mild however compared with the influx of literature from over the water, that which overflows at every bookshop - sex and sadism - fantasy and war. Making matters worse we have to accept it on T.V.

It will be somewhat refreshing to look forward to the old magic of Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro. Maybe this step forward by one courageous publisher will spark off other improvements in our life - by bringing back some of the better parts of literature of earlier days. Who knows? Two yarns a month will not be much but ignoring the book-stalls, the lending libraries will up the balance. There's Miss Silver, Father Brown, Inspector French, St. Abercrombie Lewkins, Jimmy Waghorn, John Piper - oh so many - feasible detectives - amateur and professional, all to supplement our old favourite "The Man from Baker St." And not to forget our old friends "Victor Gunn" and "Berkely Gray." They would not disgrace the company. _ _ _ _ _

Reprinted from The Evening News 5.2.65.

BWARE, 007, for SEXTON BLAKE is back

By Leslie Thomas

Funny thing, I often wondered what happened to that hooked-nosed chap who used to eat hot buttered crumpets on Waikiki Beach.

The one with the blonde with the legs. The chap examining grains of sand through a magnifying glass.

To-day I knew he was back. I went to see him at Baker-street. There was no name-plate on the door, but I knew it was the place because of the bullet-holes in the wall up the stairs.

He stood up solemnly. Exactly six feet in height, spare, athletic, with level grey eyes set deep in his lean, ascetic face. It was difficult to believe he was over 100 years old.

"I don't feel any different now from when I first began investigating in my thirties, and that was in 1893," said Sexton Blake. He patted his 80-year-old bloodhound Pedro. "And neither does Pedro, here. "I have not changed my attitude about being interviewed either," he said looking out from his piercing eyes.

SPURNED HER: "It was only because we met at Waikiki, when I was wondering whether I should marry my blonde, leggy secretary Paula Dane, that I have allowed you to come.

"Those hot buttered crumpets you brought from England were delicious."

"Did you marry her?" I asked.

He smiled a grim smile and shook his head. "No, I couldn't. You may remember how I spurned the glamorous Roxane and her luxurious yacht in one of my adventures. Well, it was the same with Paula. I could never have emerged from retirement, which is what I am doing now."

"You are definitely returning to solving crime then?" I said eagerly.

"Yes, I will be back next week. There is much work to do."

Mrs. Martha Bardell, his 120-year-old housekeeper, entered with a tray of hot buttered crumpets. "Land is sometimes watered through irritation," she announced.

"A fount of malapropisms, our Mrs. Bardell," smiled Blake. "You may remember her."

"Of course," I replied. "How is Tinker? Is he going to work with you?"

A MARVEL: "Tinker!" Blake called. In he came quickly, the same impish smile, the bright intelligent eyes, now with a Beatle haircut and drainpipe trousers. For 88, he looked a marvel.

"But Paula is not going to be your blonde, leggy secretary, nor that brunette Marion your receptionist?" I inquired.

"No more women," he said firmly. "Well, not anything that deters from my work anyway. Marion had to go, she called me 'Sex' one day."

He glanced lovingly across the old, bullet-scarred room, to his laboratory across the corridor. "There is no substitute for minute scientific research coupled with action," he said. "Holmes was always too theoretical, you know. And this lad Bond wouldn't know a piece of litmus paper if he saw one.

BACKGROUND: "You have to combine both the brains and the brawn. I do."

His adventures, he told me, will be recorded in a new series of paperbacks being issued by Mayflower Books. He expressed the considered hope that in the new adventures some of the misconceptions about his background would be cleared up, especially that difficulty about having been to both Oxford and Cambridge.

"Too many cooks writing the records," he said. "That will have to stop."

"I'm looking forward to my return," said Blake. "I might also be appearing on this television thing."

I suggested that Pedro, the Baker-street hound, might do a commercial for Marylebone Jelly. But Blake did not laugh. He doesn't.

He touched his yellow-stained fingers together.

"You still love your chemistry," I said. "Is that acid on your fingers?"

"No," he said quietly licking them. "Butter from the crumpets."

Nelson Lee Column

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

The St. Frank's Stories in THE BOYS' REALM

By W. O. G. Lofts

Some time ago, I was most pleased to confirm from official records, what Mr. E. S. Brooks had always stated - namely, that he had written every single story featuring St. Frank's in the NELSON LEE Library. This included of course all those short tales in the 2nd New Series such as No. 37 "Glutton and Goalkeeper" and No. 43 "Saints Versus Friars" which many enthusiasts were convinced he did not write. Even Bob Blythe in his excellent catalogue put a question mark against these stories, and the obvious explanation on the poorness of these, probably confirms yet another statement by E. S. Brooks that he had lost almost complete interest in his writings at this period of the boys of St. Franks.

Now what of the stories featuring St. Franks in the pink BOYS' REALM? Long before I ever knew of their existence, it was known by many collectors that E. S. Brooks certainly never penned all of them. He personally said so, and apart from this, the editor of THE BOYS' REALM at a much later date, made the surprising admission in one of his editorials that some of the previous stories had not been written by the creator. J. N. Pentelow the editor was certainly more honest to his readers than when he controlled THE MAGNET and GEM, where to my knowledge no editor (to be fair to Pentelow) Percy Griffith, H. A. Hinton or C. M. Down ever dreamed of telling readers that 'Frank Richards' or 'Martin Clifford' (the genuine one) had not written all the stories.

Without, I hope, being accused of criticising Bob Blythe's lists of BOYS REALM stories, and authors in his catalogue, I would say that he had done little to clear up the mystery! Though to be very fair to Bob he has never read the stories, and was not in a position to judge the merits and style of the tales. Secondly, he based his assessment of 'Doubtful if by E.S.B.' and 'Not by E.S.B.' on the judgement of other enthusiasts. BOYS' REALM stories of St. Franks it should be

added, are extremely hard to collect, as copies are rare indeed.

It certainly has been no easy task to sort the wheat from the chaff as it were, but I hope my findings listed as follows and explanations of certain points, will clear up the mystery of the exact authorship of the BOYS REALM St. Frank's tales - and maybe readers who are fortunate enough to have copies will be able to judge for themselves. Readers may also like to add this information to the E.S.B. catalogue.

I can still well remember the interest and controversy some years ago, when a substitute writer of the MAGNET and GEM claimed to have written a ST FRANK'S tale in the N.L.L. It was suggested by many that this must have appeared in the BOYS' REALM - but as proved later - his story was held in reserve for the N.L.L. and never saw the light of day. Certainly Mr. Fred Cook never penned any of the substitute stories in the BOYS' REALM as you will see.

Boys Realm (Second Series)

No. 1 (5.4.1919) to No. 44 were all written by E. S. Brooks.

No.45 By R. T. Eves

No.46 By R. T. Eves

No.47 By Noel Wood-Smith

No.48 By R. T. Eves

No.49 By R. T. Eves

No.50 By R. T. Eves

No.51 By Noel Wood-Smith

No.52 By Noel Wood-Smith

No.53 By Noel Wood-Smith

Nos. 54 to No. 96 including many series were all written by R.T. Eves

No.97 By Maurice Nutbrown

No.98 By E. S. Brooks

No.99 to 103 all by R. T. Eves

No.104 By Maurice Nutbrown

No.105 to 116 (Two series by R. T. Eves

No.117/118 by Maurice Nutbrown

Nos.119 to 130 (Two series) by R. T. Eves

No.131 By Maurice Nutbrown

No.132 to 138 (Games Master series) by R. T. Eves

Nos.140 and all the St. Frank's stories which appeared in odd issues up to No. 251 all incidentally single stories were written by Maurice Nutbrown. It is worth mentioning that one story was missing from the Catalogue - No.200 "A Bad Business"

Nos.323-331 By E. S. Brooks (Two stories)

Nos.332-339 By E.S. Brooks

THE NUGGET 3d. Library

No.35 E.S.B.

No.42 E.S.B.

No.43 E.S.B.

No.51 R.T.E.

No.53 R.T.E.

No.55 (E.S.B./R.T.E. Rewritten)

Nos. 57 - 69 All by R.T.E.

I am fully aware that Nos. 45 to 50 which were written by R. T. Eves had the working like all the preceding stories under the title 'By the author of the stories appearing in The Nelson Lee Library' - and can

only say that probably E. S. Brooks objected to this misleading statement as it was dropped in No. 51 - surprisingly, still on Nos. 51 to 53, then dropped afterwards. It is surprising that E.S.B. should trouble to write a single story in No. 98 "The St. Frank's Minstrels" yet he undoubtedly did by official records - plus the return of the sub-heading 'By the author of the stories appearing in the Nelson Lee Library.'

Who were these three sub-writers of St. Frank's yarns the reader may ask and here for interest is a short account of them and their writings starting with

Reginald T. Eves: Commenced his career in the MAGNET and GEM office about 1908 - wrote a few GEM yarns and also ROOKWOOD. Was editor of the BOYS' FRIEND during the war years, and afterwards became editor of SCHOOL FRIEND. Later became also editor of CHAMPION/TRIUMPH group of papers - and retired some years ago, as Director of Juvenile publications after 50 years service.

Noel Wood-Smith: A chief sub-editor on the MAGNET and GEM group of papers, and who wrote a few GEMS and MAGNETS and one ROOKWOOD in the BOYS FRIEND, No. 970 "Backing up Bulkeley." A Sexton Blake writer, his main sporting yarns were written under the name of 'Norman Taylor.'

Maurice Nutbrown: A new name to C.D. readers, was the chief sub-editor on the comic CHUCKLES. He was an organist in the South of London apart from his publishing capacity. He did, indeed, write a short MAGNET story in No. 777 entitled 'Billy Bunter's Barrel Organ' - but apart from this did very little story writing except for some other short tales in the Boys' Realm. The poor chap was stricken with a serious illness (so I am told) in later life, and died quite young before the second world war. His wife was a Director of another publishing firm.

Perhaps some enthusiastic reader, who is fortunate enough to have all the Boys' Realm stories containing those about St. Frank's could now give some assessment of my findings - and we can have some more light on the merits of the stories themselves - now that we know who wrote all the stories about that famous school of St. Frank's in the BOYS' REALM.

WANTED: SEXTON BLAKES, 3rd - 314, 316, 311, 295, 282, 272, 230, 211, 208, 213, 196, 190, 177, 175, 171, 169, 167, 165, 164, 162, 160, 157, 154, 153, 151, 150, 120, 111, 109, 100, 98, 96, 94, 91, 90, 87, 85, 83, 81, 79, 76, 72, 62, 58, 54, 55, 49, 52, 40, 36, 32, 28, 29, 22, 26, 24, 19, 17, 16, 12, 10, 8, 5, 2. SCHOOLBOYS OWNS - 285, 303, 300, 206, 198, 174, 170. LEES, 2ND NEW, 81, 91, 93. FILM FUNS, KINEMA COMICS. FOR EXCHANGE - BLAKES, 3rd - 172, 176, 180. SCHOOLBOYS OWNS - 129, 167 no cover.

THOMPSON. 53 WALLASEY PARK. BELFAST, 14.

HAMILTONIANA ~ ~ ~

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 53 - Gem No. 56 - "The Cad of St. Jim's"

The Gem in the early days was a peculiar mixture of harsh realism and simple charm. Sometimes these two apparently irreconcilable aspects were brought together in one story, perhaps never so strikingly as in Gem No. 56, entitled "The Cad of St. Jim's."

Clyne was a new boy who, it later transpired, had been expelled from Redclyffe (a fate which happened to a number of other boys as time went on). He introduced a particularly cruel form of bullying, and a severe retribution befell him when it chanced to be discovered:-

Then followed a punishment that Clyne was not likely to forget for come time. Mr. Railton took him by the collar and gave him a caning across the back that made him writhe.

The customary cuts on the palm were nothing to it.

Clyne was hurt, and he filled the study with his yells. His face was white and his eyes glittering with rage and pain when the House-Master pushed him away. Though there is nothing special about the quality of the writing here, there is clearly a most unusual atmosphere of hatred being built up deliberately for the purposes of the story.

In order to avenge himself, Clyne and his friends began a cunning campaign to drive the overworked Mr. Railton out of his mind, to make him believe that he was losing his mental faculties. Gore and Sharp presented lines that the House-Master had never set, and Mellish asked him for the return of a fountain-pen that had never been lent. Step by step, the insidious plot took shape.

This part of the story reads more like a psychological novel than a story for boys, but concurrent was the tale of how D'Arcy discovered (or thought he had discovered) his great gift for singing tenor solos, and the technicalities of music are displayed in surprising detail in a number of amusing scenes dealing with this aspect of the story. He even stood the fags a birthday feed which they ate while he sang:-

"Any more tarts?"

"All gone."

"Any more anything?"

"No apparently not."

"Then I'm off."

"Here, wait and hear the rest of the song!" said D'Arcy minor. "Don't be a cad, you know. Gussy's stood the feast, and so it's only fair that we should stand the song."

"Weally, Wally, if you put it like that - -"

Curiously enough, this light humour seemed to blend with the more sombre theme of Clyne's villainy, but the story certainly stands out as one in which the baser human passions seem, at times, to cut right down to the bone. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that this was 1909, and it was early days yet in the career of that illustrious paper.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 85. TURN OF TIDE

I have never had any doubt at all that St. Jim's was more popular than Greyfriars - which meant that the Gem was more popular than the Magnet - up till the end of 1914. The father of a friend of mine worked in the printing departments of the Amalgamated Press for some forty years from early in the century. He used to bring home for his son incomplete copies of the Gem or Magnet - sometimes copies with the spaces left blank for the pictures to be inserted, sometimes copies before the Editor's Chat was included. Many of those copies were passed on to me, and I found them fascinating.

The father often chatted with me about the various papers, and he always stated emphatically that until the outbreak of the first Great War the Gem's sales were far higher than those of the Magnet. He certainly knew what he was talking about.

In passing, the son followed in the footsteps of his father and, in the nineteen-thirties, served a 7-years apprenticeship in the printing departments of the Amalgamated Press. For some reason there was a ruling that, once the apprenticeship was completed, the young men had to leave the A.P. for at least a year and serve with some other firm. After a year with another firm, they could return to the A.P. for the rest of their natural lives if they wished.

My friend joined Odham's, but he never returned to the A.P. He went into the Military Police at the outbreak of war, and in 1940 was killed in Antwerp by one of the first of the German flying bombs. His father, now a very old man, is in a Home for the Blind in the west country at the present time.

There is, of course, other evidence of the superior popularity of the Gem in early days, and we have considered it before in this column. For one thing, the author was putting the best of his writing then into the Gem. The red Magnet contained plenty of first-class stories, but they were not so consistently good as those of the blue Gem. When the Penny Popular started in 1912, St. Jim's was

featured - not Greyfriars. St. Jim's appeared constantly until the paper closed down, temporarily, in March 1918. And there is evidence that St. Jim's had been the back-bone of the Penny Popular during those 6 years. When Greyfriars went into the Popular in 1917, Sexton Blake was dropped. When Rookwood went into the Pop a little later, Jack, Sam and Pete were dropped.

From its start until the end of 1914, there had been a number of long complete tales of St. Jim's in the Boys' Friend 3d Library. There had been none of Greyfriars.

The Gem had gone serenely and sedately on its way, always with the long complete story as the main attraction, with minor support from a short instalment of a serial. There was little else down the years. The Magnet, for a considerable time, even ran a comic supplement.

The Magnet had more double numbers than the Gem, more coloured covers. We need not be misled by that. Gimmicks in the form of double numbers or free art plates were not employed to reward loyal readers; they were simply and solely novelties to boost circulations.

Most of us have assumed that after 1914 the Magnet zoomed ahead and the Gem lost ground. We have speculated as to why it happened.

But, in fact, it was not until several years later - 1919 to be exact - that we find references to the Magnet leaving the Gem behind in the circulation race, and Martin Clifford contributing his famous story "The Amateur Advertiser."

In recent weeks I have given some close study to the two papers in the 1914 - 1915 period. I can find nothing to suggest that Greyfriars was zooming ahead then. Substitute stories of Courtfield Council School (introducing Greyfriars) had featured in Chuckles. They did not last long.

Soon after the outbreak of war, the Magnet started a second serial, and one of those serials took pride of place as the opening item in the paper, for many months.

In January, the old Greyfriars tales were introduced into the Dreadnought. This was the first time that any but the first two Magnet stories had been reprinted. The move was well advertised - but in June, less than 6 months later, the Dreadnought came to an end, amalgamated with the Boys' Friend. It was not a war casualty. There was no paper shortage. On the outbreak of war, most papers were reduced in size. Early in 1915 they went back to their old size of 32 pages. The same month that the Dreadnought foundered, the Nelson Lee Library started. A month or two later the Sexton Blake Library started - and the Greyfriars Herald. The Greyfriars

Herald lasted just 16 weeks.

The editor, in fact, never claimed that the end of the Dreadnought was due to the war. He stated clearly that the Dreadnought had foundered solely on account of lack of support from readers. The inference is clear. St. Jim's kept the Penny Popular going strong from 1912 till 1918. Greyfriars was not able to do as much for the Dreadnought.

An unusually large amount of advertising of the Magnet was done in 1915. In the spring of that year the editor was offering £1 to any reader who could give a suggestion for improving the circulation of the Magnet. There was no such ballyhoo for the Gem. There is not the slightest evidence that Greyfriars was zooming ahead. Quite the reverse.

"The Boy Without a Name," the very first Greyfriars tale in the B.F.L., was published in January 1915. Was that also done to help the Magnet? Was that story very successful at that time?

Some months later the editor was announcing that a large consignment of copies of "Boy Without a Name" had been shipped to America. The ship had been torpedoed. The copies of the story had been rescued from the bed of the ocean by divers, and "these unique souvenirs" could be purchased if the reader sent a postal order to the A.P. Was this true? From what we know of editorial tactics, it seems unlikely. Are we being too suspicious if we wonder whether unsold copies of the "Boy Without a Name" were being returned by news-agents - and this shipwreck story was a merry little gimmick to get rid of some of them?

The quality of the Magnet stories is a pointer. In my opinion it was not until such outstanding series as "Judge Jeffries" and the Redwing-Vernon Smith tales that the Magnet started its zoom.

And what of the Gem? I have always believed that the Gem began to falter by the end of 1914. A few months ago I advanced the view that the eclipse of Tom Merry and the glut of Talbot tales alienated some of the old faithfuls among readers. I still believe that those factors played their part. On the other hand, there is the undeniable fact that most of the Talbot stories were splendid reading, and Talbot was immensely popular with large numbers.

The most obvious reason for a decline of the Gem in 1915 I overlooked altogether. The coming of Rookwood!!

Last month in this column I commented: "Rookwood seemed to owe more to St. Jim's than to Greyfriars. And the fact that Macdonald illustrated the early Rookwood tales strengthened the kinship." And

there, I believe, we have the real secret of the decline of the Gem. Rookwood hit St. Jim's harder than it hit Greyfriars.

With Rookwood receiving star attention, the substitute writers were called in more and more in the Gem and Magnet. But because the school stories of the blue Gem had been so consistently good, the sub writers showed up more in the Gem. Also, the sub writers, for some inexplicable reason, were more successful with Greyfriars than they ever were with St. Jim's. It is easier to write a Greyfriars story than a St. Jim's story.

No double number had been considered necessary for the Gem at Christmas 1914. No coloured cover. Yet by the late spring of 1915, the editor was announcing an extra-long Talbot story in a double number with a coloured cover for the Gem.

By the early twenties, the Rookwood stories in the Boys' Friend had become surprisingly short. Two pages only. Four short chapters. Allowing for headings, illustrations, advertisements, and the like, the story itself occupied but little over one page. And in the early twenties, particularly in 1922 and 1923, Charles Hamilton was once again giving the Gem his main attention and some of the finest stories of its history. Roger Jenkins has aptly termed that period the Indian Summer of the Gem.

A sudden boosting of the Magnet certainly occurred in 1915. It is not a sign of a decline in the Gem. It is more likely a sign that all was not well with the Magnet. Nevertheless, a decline DID occur in the Gem between 1915 and 1919. That decline was due to Rookwood and its backwash, and not to Greyfriars.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

(Contributions to "Echoes" are always welcome from readers. That is, of course, the aim of the Let's Be Controversial column. In view of the space limit readers are requested to keep their comments short, and to keep to the points of the parent article. -ED.)

ROGER JENKINS: You are certainly correct in judging Hinton to be the most striking of the Magnet editors. One of the most extraordinary of his antics was the conducting of a poll to see if the readers were in favour of the Greyfriars Herald being published separately. He solemnly announced that the vote was 105,726 - 4 in favour of the scheme. I can never believe that so many Magnet readers would have bothered to write in, and I wonder why the Greyfriars Herald should have closed down so soon afterwards, if there

was such a tremendous circulation for it!

Another famous episode was the Greyfriars story competition. When I wrote an article on this affair about ten years ago, Charles Hamilton wrote to me: "I have just read, with amazement, your articleI am learning things I never knew before. I never used to look at the editorial chatter in either paper, and never heard of the so-called competition till years later, and then I could hardly believe that Hinton could really have done such a thing. He was a good chap in his own way, and I always liked him: but if I had seen at the time what I have now seen in your article, there would have been an explosion." But Charles Hamilton found it difficult to credit that the editor he had so liked was responsible for the competition initiated to find new substitute writers: "I cannot believe that Hinton did all this personally. He was so casual and careless that it would be like him to leave such things in other hands, and never take the trouble to see what was being done. He never really ceased to be an irresponsible schoolboy, and I suspect that this was taken advantage of by more astute persons."

Although the more astute persons are not named by Charles Hamilton in his letter to me, there seems little doubt that he had in mind J. N. Pentelow, who became editor of the companion papers while Hinton was in the army,

Laurie Sutton: Like you, I am fascinated by those editorials in which ill-spelt and abusive letters from readers (and others!) were published.

However, I don't think it would be quite fair to lay all the blame on H. A. Hinton, even though this policy commenced under his rule. J. N. Pentelow wrote editorials both before and after he took over Hinton's chair, and abusive letters were featured frequently in JNP's chats.

You will agree that it does not follow that a controlling editor, although responsible for editorials and the views expressed therein, actually writes them himself. I have noticed that "the firm confident signature, YOUR EDITOR" was certainly used under JNP editorials (for classic examples see Gem 494-6), and Pentelow also wrote under that picture of the editor in his den (see Gem 612, 616, 638-9).

The blunt (and often cruel) replies to readers; the conceited self-importance; the moralizing; the ponderously serious outlook, and the training of his editorial cannon on the kiddies' pop-guns - all fit in with the image of JNP as given by his stories.

Apart from his unique style, Pentelow has his special vocabulary by which he can be recognised immediately. Chief among the latter is his obsession with the word "notion." Nobody ever had an idea in a

Pentelow story - it is always a notion, and a word that the average author may not have cause to use in months is strewn consistently like a trademark through everything that JNP writes. In studying scores of Pentelow stories I have yet to find one in which the word "notion" fails to appear; it is used not only in full-length stories, but in every short instalment of weekly serials such as "Goggs," "Franklingham," "Luck of the Game," "Twins from Tasmania," and in short stories in the "Popular." It even appears frequently in short editorials, features, and in the "Greyfriars Gallery." As a typical example, in "A Very Gallant Gentleman" there are eight "notions" plus another three in the same issue's "Greyfriars Gallery." Examples from JNP editorials are: "A very jolly little notion.;" "..give you some sort of notion.;" "..this notion;" etc., etc.

This does not, of course, reflect in any way on the accuracy of your information regarding the work and policy of H. A. Hinton. It's just that I think we are not quite certain as to where Pentelow's editorials began and ended.

W. O. G. LOFTS: I cannot add to this interesting "Controversial" as it is all so true. Hinton was a good controlling editor, despite his fall from grace due to his doing a jigsaw Hamilton substitute story. Samways told me that all those abusive letters and white feather taunts were made up, and he had the task of writing all this on the direct orders of Hinton, much though he disliked misleading readers.

W. H. GANDER: I found the Let's Be Controversial featuring H. A. Hinton most interesting. While one can do without the abusive letters and the replies thereto of Hinton's day, I feel that one of the things lacking from boys' papers after his time was the "personal" touch to the editorials - where there still were editorials! Even in the MAGNET and GEM there were long periods when there were no editorials at all; and when they are to be found, all too often they were composed of short newsy items only, with nothing about the paper, the stories (beyond next week's story), the author, or the readers.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 17 (New Series)

"You are aware, Wharton, that Bunter was under detention this afternoon?" said Mr. Quelch. "With unexampled audacity, he left the form-room, leaving his detention task untouched, and ran out of the school. I have no doubt that his intention was to visit the circus."

Wharton looked as shocked as he could.

Obviously, Mr. Quelch regarded Bunter's action as serious - unexampled - not to

say awful and iniquitous.

Wharton - privately - was prepared to make allowances for Bunter. Any fellow in the Remove would have understood readily that the circus at Courtfield had a more powerful attraction than the form-room at Greyfriars. Much water had passed under the bridges since the days when Henry Samuel Quelch had enjoyed circus performances. It was difficult for fifty to see eye to eye with fifteen. Mr. Quelch could see no excuse at all for Billy Bunter's conduct. Harry Wharton could see a lot - which he was careful not to mention, however. It was useless to argue with a Form master. Every fellow in the Remove knew that Quelch had to be given his head.

"I caught Bunter breaking detention," resumed Mr. Quelch. "In fact, he collided with me in the passage as he was running out. I was actually knocked over - reduced to a very breathless state. I - What are you laughing at, Wharton?"

Wharton jumped.

"I wasn't laughing, sir --"

"You were smiling. No doubt you see something of a risable nature in Bunter's unexampled audacity and impudence!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! Oh, no! Not at all, sir!" gasped Wharton. His eyes lingered uneasily on the cane. Mr. Quelch seemed to be in that frame of mind when, as the song says, a victim must be found. The captain of the Remove did not want to be that victim. Very much indeed he did not want to. He composed his features to an expression suitable to the solemn occasion.

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LONDON CLUB ON RADIO

Members of our London Club featured in a programme put out in the Home Service on Tuesday afternoon, February 16th.

The voices were heard of club members Don Webster, Charlie Wright, Ray Hopkins, Millicent Lisle, Laurie Sutton, Eric Lawrence, Bill Lofts, and Brian Doyle. Comments were made on old periodicals in general and on certain aspects of club activities.

The programme was charming and entirely successful, and most of the success was due to the skilful conducting of the discussions by B.B.C. announcer, Marjorie Bilbrow, herself a club member and a C.D. enthusiast. We congratulate Marjorie on a fascinating interlude, and also the other members who acquitted themselves so well.

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FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Twelve Sexton Blakes, for year 1932: between numbers 1493 - 1530. Authors TEED, BROOKS, MURRAY, SKENE, etc. Good condition. "The Boys' Journal" September 1913 to September 1914, 11 numbers missing; good condition but back page of 53 shabby. "Cheer Boys Cheer" numbers 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, no covers; numbers 14 to 69 with covers, but lacks 21 numbers. Young Britain, years 1919 to 1923, number 1 to 61 (12 numbers missing) then numbers 73, 83, 86, 104, 145, 149, 158, 183, 184, 185 (Double Number) 216. What offers?

WANTED: The Jester 1906-7: Comic Home Journal 1896-1903: Funny Wonder; 4d Wonder; 4d Union Jack; 1d. Plucks; Boys Leader; Big Budget; Red Rover. The Lover Fugitives by John Finmore. Also, a ghost novel (title forgotten) with ghost on cover in breeches and half head: circa 1900. Your prices paid for these two novels.

PETTINGELL, HIGHFIELD LODGE, LONDON, N.W.7.

WANTED: S.B. Stories, Granite Grant, Kestrel, Criminals' Confederation, Waldo, Nelson Lee "Nuggets." Prices please:-

E. ALLEN, 731 E. 21st AVENUE, VANCOUVER, B.C. CANADA.

News from the Clubs

AUSTRALIA

The beginning of a new year is always a time when one feels most hopeful and enthusiastic and it was on just such a note that the first meeting for 1965 opened. Attendance was pleasing at the Book Bargain Bazaar on Thursday night, Jan. 21st, when chairman, Syd Smyth opened the meeting at 6.30 p.m.

Members were pleased to learn that host Stan Nicholls had received better news about his premises and it may not be necessary to move because of the redevelopment of the property. As the present location is the ideal spot for the club meetings members were most gratified both on their own as well as Stan's account.....there will never be another "Book Bargain Bazaar" with the same happy memories and associations for all club members.

A well written article featuring Arnold Keena and his outstanding collection of comic papers appeared in "The Woman's Day" on Dec. 28th, and as a very generous mention had been made of the hobby, and our club members welcomed the publicity thus provided, discussed the feature with interest.

Greetings received after the club's Christmas Party were then passed around and these included cards from Jack Murtagh, Tom Dobson, Frank Urwin, David Hobbs (U.S.A.), Merseyside O.B.B.C. and the Northern O.B.B.C. via Frank Hancock. We were pleased to hear that our photo-cards had been enjoyed by the recipients.

Members were pleased to hear from Eric Fayne and have asked me to thank him for the good wishes he sent - we return them threefold to you Eric together with our sincere congratulations for the absolutely outstanding job you made (as usual) of the C.D. Annual....Now don't be modest and cut this out of the report for I speak with many voices which must be heard in praise of your sterling efforts!

Letters from Ron Hodgson bringing welcome details of their grand Christmas Party, from Bill Gander plus the ever welcome S.P.C. and from Bill Hubbard, were then read out by the secretary.

The secretary passed on the welcome news received from Jack Corbett that a tape entitled a "Greyfriars Fantasy" was on the way so this is a treat in store for the February meeting.

After the petty cash situation was settled with treasurer Ernie Carter, members concluded the evening's programme very pleasantly in the local coffee shop.

Next meeting to be held at usual rendezvous (if all is well) on Feb. 18th, 1965, at 6.30 p.m.

B. PATE Secretary.

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MIDLAND

Meeting held January 26th.

Eight members - Win Partridge, Win Brown, Ray Bennett, Norman Gregory, Ivan Webster, Ian Parrish, Jack Corbett and Jack Bellfield were present. Apologies were sent in by Tom Porter and Harry Broster - the former being detained on school business and the latter by the continued illness of his wife. Other stalwarts absent were Madge Corbett and Ted Davy. Norman Gregory took over from Tom and Jack Bellfield acted as secretary.

It had been scheduled as an informal meeting and one of the improvised items was called "Throwing the book." This proved very amusing and the winner was our youngest member Ian Parish who improves by leaps and bounds. His prize was the well known "Chums of Wycliffe" by Jack North. A change from Hamiltonia. Jack Bellfield gave an amusing reading from the "Rivals of Rookwood." This was Lovell at his funniest having his "own back" on Mr. Manders. This produced a discussion on a similar theme introducing a similar character as Manders in Mr. Horace Ratcliffe only the opposite number was slightly different to Arthur Edward Lovell - in short Ernest Levison in his very bad days. Anyway just as funny, this St. Jim's story and like the others - typical Hamilton humour. This last discussion left time for a universal "moan" about the absorbent and absurd prices asked by vendors of old boys books nowadays. Was it any different, ever?

It was a surprise to those present to learn from Norman Gregory that there was a possibility of the resignation as secretary of Harry Broster who found time more restricted since the illness of his wife and other duties. Next meeting Feb. 23rd.

JACK BELLFIELD (acting for Secretary)

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NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 13th February, 1965

Geoffrey Wilde, happily recovered from his recent indisposition, was back in the chair to open our February meeting. The attendance of 14 members was an improvement on last month.

Routine business having been attended to, Gerry Allison gave us this month's correspondence, and also pointed out that on Tuesday at 4.45., in the B.B.C. Home Service, some interviews with members of the London club were to be broadcast, which, unfortunately, is an awkward time for many of us. He also passed round the two new Sexton Blakes, and there was a discussion on these, and the publicity they have received in the Press and on television.

Jack Wood had a few interesting items for us, and reminded us that the 50th Anniversary of the publication of No. 1 of the Nelson Lee Library falls in June. It was agreed that our programme for that month should include some 'Lee' features in commemoration.

The talk this month was given by Geoffrey Wilde, whose subject was the Da Costa series of stories in the Magnet - an early example of the 'disinheritance' theme which has been rather overshadowed by some of the others. Da Costa, a Eurasian, comes to Grayfriars from India, sent by Captain Marker to discredit Harry Wharton, who is his rival for a rich inheritance. Bunter, of course, barges into it, and Ponsonby plays a part too. There are many dramatic incidents, and a very important element in the development of the plot is the change which begins to take place in Da Costa himself as the Grayfriars code and way of life influence him. Geoff. brought all this out to the full, with some very effective extracts from the stories.

After refreshments we had an 'Elimination Quiz' by Frank Hancock, in which forty-one words had to be connected to twenty clues, there being one word extra. Jack Wood was the first to come up with a correct result, closely followed by Geoffrey Wilde, with Ron Hodgson third. Harry Barlow then produced another Quiz of 14 questions on Grayfriars topics, and this was won by Geoff. with 12 correct. This brought our meeting to a close at 9.30 p.m.

Next meeting, Saturday, 13th March.

F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

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MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, February 7th.

The attendance was average and Norman opened the proceedings with the usual financial statement, and followed with the correspondence.

Among the letters received was one from Eric Fayne regarding the advertisement controversy, and also one from John Gunn, who enclosed a copy of the letter he had sent to Eric about this matter.

In view of Eric's remarks I feel that, before going any further, I should make it quite clear that not at any time did any one of us of the Merseyside Club consider that Eric Fayne was guilty of deliberately passing on advance information of books which were to be offered for sale in C.D. I agree that my statement did suggest this, and my choice of words was obviously unfortunate. I would like to say that I, and all the members on Merseyside, are sorry that the suggestion gave him so much offence. It was never intended. There has always been a considerable amount of goodwill between Eric and ourselves and it would be foolish if it was destroyed because of a misunderstanding. Goodwill between all O.B.B.C. members is far more valuable than even a No. 1 Magnet. It does appear, however, that some subscribers are receiving the C.D. before others. Presumably they are all posted at the same time, but after that we are, of course, in the hands of the Post Office. Even some of our own members have received their copies on different days. With that I think this business should now be allowed to pass into history.

Of the remainder of the correspondence we were pleased to receive letters from Frank Shaw, Bob Blythe and Frank Lay, who offered us some Nelson Lees at reasonable prices, some of which we decided to accept. We were also pleased to receive from Mr. Yaffe of Manchester a gift of 2 Marvels and 4 Penny Populars. In these days of outlandish prices this was a very fine gesture, and Norman promised to write to Mr. Yaffe expressing our thanks.

The first quiz of the evening was given by Frank Unwin and we had to try and identify a character, or characters, from certain pictures which he showed to us. We had to think very hard about this, and as Pat Laffey apparently thought harder than anybody else he was declared the winner and I was runner up.

After tea there was some general discussion and Norman wound up the evening by asking us to attach the Christian names to a list of surnames of certain school characters which he gave to us. It is amazing how, on occasions like this, names just elude us, even though we have known them for years. Frank Unwin managed to remember most of them and once again I had to be satisfied with second place.

Next meeting, Sunday, March 8th.

BILL WINDSOR

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LONDON

At the seventeenth Annual General Meeting on Sunday, February 21st, Brian Doyle was elected chairman for the ensuing year. No ballot was necessary as Brian was the only candidate. The rest of the retiring officials were re-elected en bloc. Len Packman as per rule, being Vice-Chairman.

East Dulwich was the venue but no Len Packman owing, once again, to indisposition. However Josie officiated very well with the study feed ably assisted by the other lady members, W. Morss, M. Lyle and M. Norris.

The new Sexton Blake Libraries are the subjects of an interesting discussion, Josie kindly shewing round the first four issues. Opinions differed and time will no doubt tell if the new venture will be successful. Chairman Brian Doyle then played over a tape recording of the recent B.B.C. Home Service feature that our own Majorie Norris conducted. The unanimous decision was that the broadcast was very well done

and Majorie was suitably thanked. Next item was Jack Corbett's tape recording, "The World of Greyfriars - A Greyfriars Fantasy." This was very good and the thanks of all present go out to Jack for his very fine effort. The tape will find a place in the club's archives.

"An Unusual and Unique Reading" was the title of a reading given by Bill Lofts. This was very enjoyable; how does Bill think up all these interesting items of his? The Sexton Blake catalogue now awaits estimates for the printing and duplicating. Thus later on in the year it should be in circulation.

One of the best sales and exchanges we have had for some time took place. Unfortunately there was no Hamiltonian library business owing to Roger Jenkins' absence due to a slight chill. However, Bob Blythe was present with plenty of Nelson Lee material.

Next meeting at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E.22, on Sunday, March 21st. Kindly inform the hosts if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

REVIEWS

LAIRD OF EVIL

Martin Thomas
(Mayflower 2/6)

I, personally, found this one of the most enjoyable Sexton Blake stories published since the war. Martin Thomas has set his sails to the wind of change, and we get something of a return to the promised earlier type of Blake story, not evident in the two previous issues of the new series. The detective is the Sexton Blake we loved. Tinker is much the Tinker we loved, and there are only one or two references to Edward Carter. Pedro is the Pedro we loved. At his best, he features in some fine sequences.

The first chapter, which forms a prologue, is rather heavy going, but once we get with Blake, Tinker, Pedro and Mrs. Bardel in the Baker-Street consulting room, the tale goes like a rocket.

A dour Scottish woman believes that her brother-in-law, a famous surgeon, has murdered his wife. Both surgeon and wife have mysteriously disappeared. After some bright detective work, Blake gets on the trail of the missing couple.

This is a black magic story, of the type which Martin Thomas handles so expertly. Perhaps unavoidably, it is definitely X-certificate entertainment. For the many readers who do not care for the X-certificate, it can be stated that the author skates successfully over the seamier sections, and there is no glorification of the sex element. The atmosphere of the Scottish "hielands" is excellent, and of particular appeal is a sequence in which Pedro convinces a Scottish grocer that Sexton Blake is really Sexton Blake.

I enjoyed this tale. I believe you will, too.

E.F.

THE BREAK OUT

Wilfred McNeilly

To a man languishing in a prison cell with a cool two million pounds salted safely away, there is no comfort at all in repenting his sins. His most urgent need is to escape and enjoy the results of them. When John Charles Fortescue, otherwise known as The Gent, commander in war, bank robber in peace, broke out of Hardcastle Gael he broke something else too; a zealously-cherished record that, hitherto, not one of its inmates had ever been known to escape from within its walls.

Two million pounds! Small wonder The Gent was suddenly the most wanted man in all London, the target not only of every crook in the underworld but of Scotland Yard and Sexton Blake, commissioned by a firm of bankers to recover the hidden borde, as well.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

KENNETH KIRBY (South Africa): An outstanding Annual - very possibly the best yet. Mr. Buddle was well up to standard and I was pleased to see that Roger Jenkins had picked up my idea about the Stacey series, that it was the Bounder, another rogue, who proved a match for Stacey and not the upright Wharton. I have appreciated the Stacey series more every time I have read it. Don Webster made an error in his "Schools' Olympiad." It is almost unthinkable that not one of the first three in the hundred yards was placed in the 220.

TOM HOPPERTON (Scarborough): For a number of years before the birth of "The Gem," Phil Herman the yodeller toured a popular song which depicted him as one Schneider, a heavily accented German enthusing over his baby boy. The Schneider catchphrase arose from the chorus:

"He has bright blue eyes,
As blue as the skies,
Achl leedle Schneider,
Schneider how you vos?"

LES ROWLEY (Paris): If I do have a serious criticism to make it is against the large number of pages taken up by statistics. One does not wish to belittle the hours spent on research and no doubt many of the subscribers to the Annual simply lap up these long columns of facts and figures, but I cannot help feeling that it was a bit overdone this year. I am naturally very greedy when it comes to having a good fill of Greyfriars and St. Jim's.....to say nothing of Slade which I think is the best thing that has happened to both the CD and the Annual.....and I realise that St. Frank's and Blake have to take up a good share of the book. But statistics, ugh!

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I recently picked up a couple of old books by author E. S. Brooks, dated from the early 1900's. The titles: "Historic Boys" and "Stories of Famous Days." I wonder could it be our E. S. Brooks, or some relation. Speaking of Brooks, I do hope that Mr. Howard Baker will persuade him to give us an original Waldo yarn.

W. J. A. HUBBARD (Kenya): An average Annual. Not really one outstanding article, except, possibly, the Buddle story. Some articles are badly written. Far too many fill-ins. Too many illustrations from the comic papers. The cover is well done, but far too many illustrations of comic paper characters. How about some illustrations of the editor and some of his writers for a change? I have a feeling that you have been short of contributions this year. Your editorials, however, have always stressed your determination that the next Annual will be better than the last, and you will be quite unable to carry out this intention if all you get from your subscribers is such fulsome praise as "the best ever," "it gets better and better every year," "outstanding," "a wonderful effort," and so on. I shall never hesitate to give praise where it is due, but you know as well as I do that much of the above remarks have never been justified except in the case of certain outstanding articles, a number of which have been from your own pen.

(WOM) The skipper has now changed his size 7½ hat for one 6½. -ED.)

JOHN STEELE (Ghana): I must say I enjoyed the Annual this year. Plenty of

interesting articles, and the cover itself was a joy to behold.

M. HALL (Penryn): I bought off the bookstand some paperbacks printed in U.S.A. that were reprints of Doc Savage stories in the "Doc Savage Magazine," an American publication that was very popular among we boys along with "G-8 and his Battle Aces" in the early thirties.

JOHN TROVELL (Colchester): Congratulations on a splendid Annual. Danny's account of his visit to Colchester had, of course, a special nostalgic appeal.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): A few lines to voice my appreciation of the Annual, which maintains its excellence over the years with truly remarkable consistency. There were times when we used to view the deterioration of some of our favourite papers with increasing dismay; but not so the C.D.A. Its healthy appearance seems a sure guarantee that it is going to appear for many years yet. What a year for Sexton Blake 1965 promises to be. Not only is he taking the come-back trail in February in a bid to rehabilitate himself, but he is soon to be faced with a rival in the shape of a James Bond-Hank Janson type of character, which Mayflower are unleashing in May.

Miss E. B. FLINDERS (Hitchin): I was interested to read the article on Kent Carr. I have only seen the name mentioned twice during the years C.D. has been running. I have eight of her books, and they are among my most treasured possessions. As Mr. Doyle says, the stories seem to have everything and real feeling runs through them like gold. If you would like to read a first-class school story, I can recommend "The Werewolf of Whispers School." I did not know Kent Carr was a woman. Women have a slightly different outlook on life and it shows in their writing. I wondered for a time if Pentelow and Kent Carr were the same person.

A. F. ACRAMAN (Harrow): Heartiest congratulations on the latest Annual. It is really terrific. Would it not be possible to have a little enamel badge or tie? Think how it would help to be able to identify fellow enthusiasts.

(If any readers like reader Acraman's idea of a badge or tie to link enthusiasts, please let us know. It should be possible to arrange this, if sufficient readers were keen on the idea. -ED.)

Mrs. M. NORRIS (London): May I please thank all those members of the OBBC who took the trouble to get in touch with me or the BBC to say they enjoyed the feature I did for the programme "Home This Afternoon" on February 16.

It was very much a labour of love, but to know that I pleased so many of our friends makes the burning of the midnight electricity all that much more worthwhile.

FOR SALE: Bound volume of 31 Gems between Nos. 393 and 436, including famous Double Number "Housemaster's Homecoming." all bound without blue covers. One page torn. £9.10.0., plus postage. S.a.e. first, please.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON.

REVIEWS (continued) "THE BREAK OUT" continued

It is a race between the law breakers and those who uphold it to get The Gent first. After a somewhat sedate start the novel works up to a tremendous climax which makes the siege of Sidney Street at Stepney read more like an account of a Sunday school party by comparison. Pedro plays a part, and how good it was to see the old campaigner at work again.

In all my experience as a reader, this was one of the bloodiest gun battles Blake has ever been mixed up in. A case which left him saddened in the knowledge that he failed to save a man from a fate he did not deserve, who lived as a crook yet in dying proved his soubriquet to be no misnomer.

A novel which was both a pleasure to read and to review and left me with this thought: what a fine film it would make in the hands of the right producer - and I do mean RIGHT!

WALTER WEBB

WILLIAM - THE ANCIENT BRITON
WILLIAM - THE GLOBETROTTER

Richmal Crompton
(Armada Paperbacks 2/6)

These two paperbacks each contain about half-a-dozen of the famous William stories. They are quite delightful. The stories are indiscriminately selected from the vast William series of the past forty years. Although described as "for boys and girls," the William tales have an immense appeal for adults, and plenty of them are obviously aimed at adults. Some of the stories in these two books have not been seen for a long time, as they were dropped, almost certainly for economic reasons, from re-printed editions of the older titles. The story "William, the Ancient Briton," for instance, appeared in the earlier editions of "William, the Fourth." "White Elephants" was in the first printing of "William the Bold." The new books are illustrated with the original Thomas Henry drawings, but Peter Archer has drawn new pictures for the attractive covers. Some of the best of William, at a comparatively low price.

RETURN OF THE MAGNET STORIES

Readers will be delighted to know that Harry Wharton & Co will be back in the shops in Armada Paperbacks. Four titles will be issued in May at the modest price of 2/6 apiece. If the project is successful - and we believe it will be - Armada hope to issue more Greyfriars stories next year.

The following are the stories to which you can look forward in May: THE TOUGH GUY OF GREYFRIARS (this is the famous Strong Alonzo series); THE PHANTOM OF THE TOWERS (Billy Bunter at Maulverer Towers in one of the finest Christmas series); BUNTER'S HOLIDAY CRUISE (the floating boarding-house series); BUNTER THE RACKETEER. An additional reason for pleasure is that the original interior illustrations from the Magnet are being used. We hope to give further details next month.

URGENTLY WANTED: O.S. Lees Nos. 451 "Sign of the Sacred Scarab,"
452 "Spell of the Mystic." No. 1 Monster Lib.

JACK COOK

178 Maria St., Benwell, Newcastle-on-Tyne 4