

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL 19

2/

NUMBER

222

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY



No. 1 OF A NEW SERIES OF "NIPPER'S NOTE-BOOK" STORIES.
NIPPER AT ST. FRANK'S!
Dealing with the Adventures of NELSON LEE and NIPPER during their sojourn at St. Frank's College. Set down by NIPPER, and Prepared for Publication by the Author of "The Duplicate Door," "The Ivory Seekers," "The House with the Double Moat," "The Yellow Shadow," etc.

JUNE

1905

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Collectors' Digest

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Vol. 19

No. 222

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A Word from the SKIPPER

On the Subject of Facts—and Fiction.

THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

In last month's "The Postman Called" we quoted a reader who gave high praise to a recent Sexton Blake novel and who commented: "All it lacked was the 'guv'nor' touch from Tinker!" This month we quote another reader who enquires: "Since when did Tinker object to being called Tinker and wish to be called Edward Carter?"

For years we have received the same wistful complaints. I must confess that I can't for the life of me see why Tinker should not address Blake as "Guv'nor" in the new series. Long, long ago, no doubt, it was the sign of the cockney waif addressing his master, but that aspect of the case disappeared before any of us was born. Today the term "Guv'nor" is no longer the badge of the cockney. In fact I doubt whether modern cockneys use it at all.

"Guv'nor" is used in many high walks of life, including Scotland Yard, and it would not demean Tinker or date or lower the standard of the tales in the slightest. Quite the reverse.

Some months ago I suggested to Mr. Howard Baker that Blake's car should once again be named "The Grey Panther." Many people have nicknames for their cars whether they be Rolls or Bentleys or Fords.

"Guv'nor" and "The Grey Panther" were associated with the detective's finest years. Why not bring them back? The publicity for the new series was mainly directed at older readers who loved Blake, Tinker, and Pedro in the past. Those readers would welcome warmly a moderate return to "Guv'nor" and the "Grey Panther." It's the little

things that count. Is there any reason for keeping those little things at bay? We mean, of course, any reason beyond sheer cussedness.

HOW THEY SHINE!

The Greyfriars Armada Books seem to be selling well. If they continue to do so, what a concrete reply we have to the myth spread around that the Magnet would never sell in these enlightened days. And now we see the Magnet stories snapped up - at half-a-crown a time.

A second myth which has been drifting around since the war is that it is only Bunter who sells Greyfriars. In our view this second myth is as groundless as the first.

As our reviewer intimated last month, these stories must inevitably be a little spoiled if they are pruned without great care. But how well they read. They do not date. They come up with all the freshness, wit, and charm which has made them indestructible. It is hard to realise that even the youngest of them is 30 years old.

We come back to earth with something of a start when it occurs to us that these tales were written at a time when moral values were very different, when there were no tape recorders, no television programmes, no hairy, scruffy young men with little or no talent squawking into microphones; when Ticky Tapp's gambling hells were illegal.

Of course, the shoddy artificiality of 1965 is only part of life, and this came to me vividly when I was recently privileged to entertain our London Club at Excelsior House. The best of youth still shines as it always did. Such young men as John and Neil Beck (both have written for C.D.) with their buoyant enthusiasm and their unspoiled charm; Nicholas Bennett, the youngest of them all, born long years after the Magnet died, yet with all the natural cheeriness of Bob Cherry himself; that very energetic young man with the camera - he won't mind if I call him George - with his infectious smile and the pleasant personality which make him so nice to know; and the jolly grandson of Mr. C. H. Chapman, so proud of his famous grandfather. How young people like this shine in 1965!

I said those Armada stories did not date. I overlook that long pleasure cruise on a yacht for twenty guineas inclusive. Such a low price was unrealistic even in 1933. They would not have spoiled the story if they had trebled the price for that cruise in 1965. These little things are only a matter of a sense of proportion.

RISING COSTS

Our few comments on rising costs, made in this chat last month,

brought in a large batch of letters from kindly people. We should add that there is no fear for the future of the Digest, though it is a long time since it made any pretence of paying its way. The ever upward trend of the cost of everything as the months slip by is one of the most depressing features of life in the nineteen-sixties. The time must come soon when the price of Collectors' Digest will have to be increased, and we believe that when that time comes our loyal readers will sympathise and shoulder the burden without reproach.

THE WHO'S WHO

In a few months' time, Collectors' Digest Who's Who for 1965 will be published. Full particulars next month.

THE EDITOR

WANTED: Copy of "Girls' Friend Library" (circa 1912-1915) entitled "The Twins of Twyneham," early Comics (1910-20), "Young Folks' Tales" (1910-20).

SALE: "Strand Magazines" 8 vols (1893-1897) containing "Sherlock Holmes" stories, illustrated Paget. 12/- each.

40 FOWEY AVENUE, REDBRIDGE, ILFORD, ESSEX.

FOR SALE: Bound volume LEES 561-568, 35/-; MAGNETS 1589-1598 (South Seas) 50/-; SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES 523, 561, 587, 611, 2/6d. each; 1961 C.D. ANNUAL 10/-; Seven BERKELEY GRAY PAPER BACKS (Mint) 2/6d. each; Two VICTOR GUNN'S 5/- each.

N. PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE ST. LIVERPOOL 7.

WANTED: A few copies of "COMIC CUTS," circa 1906-1908.

N. V. BOULTON, 51 ROCHESTER AVENUE, BROMLEY, KENT.

WANTED: Collectors' Digest 1-40; C.D. Annual 1948; Monster Libraries.

38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON

OVER 300 MAGNETS FOR SALE (1915-40). Many in Mint condition (pre-1932 copies, sale or equal exchange). Also 1920-21 complete, bound half-yearly volumes; superlative condition. £13 per volume, or exchange for same loose copies. Pay-off terms if desired.

WANTED: Pre-1932 MAGNETS. £10 for 30 offered.

Laurie Sutton, 112 Repton Road, Orpington, Kent.

BLAKIANA

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

We might have known

by IAN
MARSHALL



The great
man

News Item: Sexton Blake, the supreme hero of detective fiction, fell victim of a London magazine merger in 1963 and countless thousands mourned; now he has returned on a tide of paperbacks.

How foolish we were to underestimate him.

His old enemies would never have done that - Waldo the Wonderman, for example; and Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer; Mr. Mist, the Invincible Man; Zenith the Albino (him with the infra-red binoculars); the reincarnated Prince Menes; and the Mysterious Doctor Maldoom.

They knew only too well that the smug, invincible hawk-faced, immortal, incorruptible, know-all, heroic and sexless Sexton always comes back. Always, curse him.

Consider the time the great detective was in the basket of a balloon, fighting hand to hand with an arch-fiend determined to finish him off.

On and on raged the titanic struggle until at last "Blake then determined on taking a desperate course, for the present position of matters had become maddening. He pulled the trigger of his revolver and sent a bullet crashing through the silk of the balloon!

"The gas came hissing from the rents and the two men descended with a rapidity which robbed both of them of their senses!

"What exactly happened after this Blake could never tell. When he had at last opened his eyes it was to find himself in the comfortably furnished cabin of a steamer.

There, reluctantly, we must leave him (there's seldom time to linger, or explain, in a Blake story) and pass quickly on to introduce one of the ladies in the life of this man with the keen grey eyes, and strong jaw.

The beautiful Mademoiselle Roxane has offered Blake "a big prize" to join her in her campaign of vengeance against the eight men who have swindled her father. And the big prize (shudder) is nothing less than her love.

Blake, tight-lipped, refuses. But when Roxane falls into the power of the terrible half-caste Otto Bruner, Blake is there and "rescues her from a fate worse than death in the nick of time."

You'd think, after this, that the wench would be grateful. Not at all. Poor Blake is soon fighting to save himself from a fate worse than death.

They are in a luxury yacht moored along the Malabar coast of India (don't ask me why). But hark: "He could feel the warmth of her body through the thin silk, the soft line of her limbs as she pressed even closer against him."

Little wonder that clean living Sexton Blake is driven to desperate measures. "Crash! He assaulted the locked door with the chair again. This time there was space through which he could pass. He kicked some loose splinters away and pushed into the corridor."

Saved in the nick of time. And what a lesson for that over-sexed smoothie James Bond.

Romance aside, some Sexton Blake admirers consider that the great man was at his greatest in surviving the advance synopses of his next week's adventures. An example:

"DEAD MAN'S SECRET: Arrested - sentenced to death - hanged! Yet within a few months a series of crimes startles the country - and they are all apparently the work of the dead criminal. Here is a baffling mystery for Sexton Blake."

As you see, things could become difficult at times.

But week by dogged week, from about 1893 onwards, Sexton staggered through. Writers might weary and die (at a 1948 census, more than 100 writers had contributed about 200 million words) but the villain wasn't alive who could put Sexton under the sod.

If the going is really tough, Blake can always rely on his faithful assistants, the lad Tinker and the bloodhound Pedro.

Connoisseurs may recall the time Blake and Tinker were trapped by the masterminds of the Criminals' Confederation who buzzed off in a flying boat after lighting a fuse to burn down a building with Blake and Tinker in it.

"There was a sudden patter of feet and a fierce bay of excitement as a big, tawny object streaked across the studio and flung itself delightedly at the helpless figure of Sexton Blake.

"It was Pedro the bloodhound whom they had left tethered outside the building. The frayed remains of his leash dangled from his collar.

"The sagacious animal barked gruffly, circled around, and finally headed straight for the spluttering remains of the fuse, that was now dangerously close to the patrol tin."

After that, such villains as Rupert Waldo ("His greatest asset was his colossal cheek") and the malevolent Doctor Maldoom, with the pale, saturnine face, the brooding eyes, and the long, sensitive fingers, were reasonably easy meat.

True, Doctor Maldoom was really the brilliant Hungarian sculptor Ricardo, who liked to cast his statues from drugged living model, but Blake soon saw through him.

"All right, curse you," Ricardo whispered shakily, "You win."

Yes, curse him, he always won, the grey-eyed, strong-jawed, insufferable Sexton.

AN EVENING WITH "PIERRE QUIROULE"

By W. O. G. Lofts

Many readers of Blakiana may recall my meeting with probably the greatest of all old-time Sexton Blake writers - "Pierre Quiroule." This was fully reported in August and September 1961 C.Ds.

It is not my intention to repeat what I wrote then, though readers, no doubt, would be interested to learn more of the inside facts surrounding the writings of Walter William Sayer - his real name, and the creator of that wonderful pair of characters - Granite Grant, the King's Spy, and Mademoiselle Julie, the French secret service agent.

Quite recently, I was privileged to spend another evening with "Pierre Quiroule" - and some new facts came to light, which were not recorded in my previous articles. Now aged 73, and despite a recent six weeks spell in hospital with an internal complaint, P.G. is still a remarkably fit man for his age, and with the mental facilities of a man at least twenty years younger.

He has a copy of the Sexton Blake bust on his bookshelf, presented to him by Len Pratt, the editor of the Sexton Blake Library from 1920-57, whilst an original painting hangs on the wall of UNION JACK No.957 11.2.1922 drawn by an artist whom I must confess at the time of writing I just cannot identify even though his initials are at the

bottom. S.B. ending in Y.

Strangely, P.Q. cannot remember reading boys literature at all, and obviously inherited his grandfather's gift of knowledge of English, and writing ability. W. W. Sayer was formerly a master at Kingsland Birkbeck School, and later a school manager. His favourite reading was Charles Dickens - and a complete set of Dickens' works is in his bookcase. Sir Walter Scott was another great favourite of his which confirms our own editor's theory many years ago, that P.Q. may have been influenced by Scott's descriptive flair in his youth. If any detective writer influenced him it was E. Phillips Oppenheim and P.Q. recommends all readers to read his work - especially the novel "Havoc" - which I believe also featured a King's Spy.

Working in the Midland Bank as second cashier at the tremendous wage of £2 a week, plus having the keys to the strongroom - one can quite imagine his envy, when such authors as G. H. Teed, W. Murray Graydon were paying in huge sums of over £100 a time. When W. H. Back sent the curious P.Q. some copies of the UNION JACK to see if he could write as well as that, P.Q. was astonished, without being egotistical, at what he had missed. Apart from, as mentioned previously, first writing Inspector Will Spearing stories in PLUCK - he did pen a few of the SEXTON BLAKE tales in the PENNY PICTORIAL. But at 30/- a time - they were unremunerative to say the least.

P.Q. probably has the rare distinction of having been told by editors that his writing was too good! Many times, he was instructed to write down to the level of the juvenile market for which the Blake tales in those days were intended. A full length Sexton Blake Library novel took P.Q. around a month to write, and he could never rush things - unlike many of the other juvenile pot boiler writers at that period.

A story of his appeared in THE DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY entitled THE RED MOTOR-CAR Mystery, and it would indeed be interesting to locate this tale, as probably with his high standard of work it was the best to appear in the Thompson's library.

Neville Duke, the famous test pilot, mentions P.Q. in his Autobiography - and of the visits and enjoyable chats he had with him in war-time. An elderly ex-editor now in engineering read about this; and wrote to P.Q. expressing the great interest he still had in Sexton Blake, as he was editor of both the SEXTON BLAKE and NELSON LEE LIBRARIES, up till Len Pratt and Harold May taking over about 1920. I have contacted this gentleman, and was astonished to learn that he lives only a short distance from the home of the C.D. editor at Surbiton. Fantastic, one may say, but when I learned later that his

place of business is only a short distance from where I live - I guess that this puts all the previous hobby coincidences in the shade. Should any interesting new facts come to light, in our intending meeting, this will of course be reported in the various sections of the C.D.

Before I left P.Q. he very kindly gave me a copy of probably the rarest Sexton Blake story in the world - and which to my knowledge no other collector has ever had or read. This tale appeared in THE EVENING STANDARD (London) on 23rd November 1936 - and was reprinted in other papers throughout the world. Entitled "Sexton Blake Solves It" it took up no less than three whole pages of the London Newspaper. Maybe the longest "short" story ever written.

But some very good news for Blake fans - as already reported in a review of THE SAINT MAGAZINE - of which I have an article on the history of Sexton Blake later this year. This story in all probability will be reprinted along side with it - with of course the full permission of the people concerned who hold the copyright.

SALE: Chatterbox 1913, 1914.

FOR EXCHANGE: B.F. Lib. Rivals and Chums. Nelson Lees O.S. Nos. 187 to 194 in bound volume.

F. M. ACHIN, 38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

I HAVE NELSON LEES FROM WHICH THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE MISSING:
 Page 1, No. 140 Old series. Pages 15-18 No. 125 O.S. Page 27, 428 O.S. Page 27, 430 O.S. Page 14, 405 O.S. Covers 29 1st N.S. Page 3, 105 1st N.S. Also entire 150 1st N.S. Anybody got these missing pages tucked in their collections?

J. W. COOK, 22 LESLIE AVE., SANDRINGHAM, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND.

EXCHANGE (ONE FOR ONE)

OFFERED: Schoolgirls Own Annual 1924, Golden Annual for Girls 1925; Schoolboys Annual 1927, Champion Annual 1936, Boys Own Magazine volume II, Playing The Game (Kent Carr).

WANTED: ANY Magnets, Gems or Union Jacks.

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HAMILTONIANA

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 88. ROOKWOOD OVERSEAS

As we know, the Rookwood tales were remarkable in plenty of ways. Many of the plots remain peculiar to Rookwood to this day. A number of others first saw the light of day at Rookwood.

Rookwood is unique in its dearth of travel series. Jimmy Silver & Co. never went over the world like Harry Wharton & Co, or - to a lesser extent - Tom Merry & Co. Rookwood's trips overseas had been limited to a brief run across the Channel - yet the series of Jimmy Silver & Co. in Canada lasted longer than them all.

And that was not really a travel series at all. It was a large number of separate plots linked by the setting of the Windy River Ranch, owned by Jimmy Silver's cousin, Hudson Smedley.

The stories of Jimmy Silver in Canada lasted for the best part of a year - from early April to mid-December in the year 1923. A switch, in fact, was made from school stories to stories of the Canadian West. Inevitably the question rises whether the pull and popularity of Rookwood must have been fading for such a sweeping change to be made. There is, perhaps, one pointer which indicates that such was the case, and that is the small number of Rookwooders who transferred to Canada - the Fistical Four only.

For me, I must confess that the small number of star players meant no loss at all in the attractiveness of the stories. I always considered that Charles Hamilton had the tendency, particularly in the twenties, to burden his stories with too large a cast.

I presume that I originally read these 30 tales in the Popular re-prints. (A few of them were re-printed in the Schoolboys' Own Library.) I have now read them in their original Boys' Friend - and the Boys' Friend is not an easy paper to read when the copies are bound in volumes.

I have enjoyed them immensely. Every single story is eminently readable, and Charles Hamilton himself wrote the lot. A substitute writer could hardly have taken over in the middle of a series of this type. But the substitute writers had plenty to do in the Gem and Magnet while Hamilton was concentrating on Jimmy Silver in Canada.

There were, of course, plenty of series within the series. Tastes

vary, but probably the best was one in which a villainous hold-up man put in an appearance in the Windy River area at the same time that a jovial Irishman, Mick, was taken on as an extra hand at the ranch.

An interesting series, with an odd weakness, told of a horse, Black Prince. An immensely valuable diamond had been stolen, and it transpired that the thief had compelled the horse to swallow the diamond. By the time the Mounted Police discovered what had happened to the diamond, the horse had escaped from Windy River, and various people sought the most valuable horse in the world. It was never caught, and at the close of the series the author suggested that a horse with a diamond tucked away in its inside, might still be running wild over the foothills of the Rockies. It never seemed to occur to the author or to anyone in the story that the diamond had probably passed through the horse while the animal was still on the ranch. Or maybe such a thought was taboo in 1923.

Throughout the series high drama alternated with comedy. Jimmy Silver was the star of the series, Lovell was portrayed quite a few times at his most Lovell-ish, but Raby and Newcombe were mere names, as they were indeed through most of Rookwood history.

As the weeks swept by, Charles Hamilton built up an excellent supporting cast, and his Western backgrounds were consistent and attractive. And a consistent background adds greatly to the attractiveness of any long series.

Baldy Bubbin, the cook, brought a breath of Bunter, in one or two adventures of the Chunky Todgerish type; Pete Peters was the standard ranch-foreman; the one who had lived in my memory down the years was Skitter Dick, one of the cowpunchers.

Although there was nothing really outstanding in the actual characterisation of the series, the supporting characters were much more than adequate. The lady owner of the neighbouring Sunset Ranch made an appearance, and Lovell fell in love with her. There is little doubt that much more would have been heard of her, had the series gone on longer.

My own favourite piece of characterisation was Jimmy Silver's horse "Blazer." It seemed a shame that "Blazer" had to be left behind when Jimmy came home.

Just why was this long series written, with only the Fistical Four from the Rookwood stories playing their parts? Was it the author's idea or the editor's?

Did Charles Hamilton, as it were, give himself a holiday? Certainly there is evidence that he loved writing tales of the Far West.

On the other hand, I do not believe that he ever allowed sentiment to influence his writing.

It is possible that there was a demand for the return of Cedar Creek. Realising that this would inevitably leave more of Greyfriars and St. Jim's in the hands of substitute writers, he may have decided to swing Rookwood over to the Far West. There is some similarity, though it is not strongly marked, between Cedar Creek and Jimmy Silver in Canada.

Was it ever intended that Jimmy should remain permanently at Windy River? From the comments of the editor when the series began, and from the way the stories were handled, it seemed that the possibility was in mind.

By December, the editor was saying that he was hearing from large numbers of readers who wanted Jimmy to return to Rookwood. It is possible that equally large numbers were sorry when Jimmy left Canada.

So, in mid-December, Jimmy Silver & Co returned to England, just as suddenly as they had left it, bringing with them a not very inspired character, Texas Lick.

Rookwood was to last for over two years more, so it seems safe to assume that it remained popular. I think it is also safe to say that Rookwood was never quite the same again after the very long Canadian series. For one thing, Mornington, who had been a star turn for so many years, never figured again very prominently at Rookwood.

Soon after the end of the slightly tedious Texas Lick at Rookwood series, a barring-out was staged. Mr. Dalton was dismissed, and his form supported him by barring out on the island in the river. Again, we wonder whether the motto was: "When in doubt, put on a barring-out." The summer stories comprised a hiking series, with Lovell on a motor-scooter. Pleasant enough reading, they could not be classed as more than run-of-the-mill tales. In fact the year 1924, following the return from Canada, was a run-of-the-mill year.

In 1925, Rookwood's last full year, there were two outstanding series. Mr. Greely, dismissed from Rookwood, opened his own school at the Manor House, sponsored by Sir Edward Hansom. This was a fore-runner of the High Oaks tales in the Magnet. That summer, Tubby Muffin tricked a number of Rookwooders into spending a holiday on his uncle's "floating boarding house," a series which contained rather more excitement than the Magnet version of the same plot a few years later. (In passing, part of this Magnet series forms one of the new Armada Books.)

In the Spring of 1926, Rookwood's life in the Boys' Friend came

to a close. The final series, rather a sombre one, told of Jimmy Silver resigning the captaincy and Lovell taking his job.

It would be unfair and untrue to suggest that the post-Canada Rookwood provided an anti-climax, for Rookwood gave much excellent reading right till the end. But that cause and effect existed in connection with the Canadian series can hardly be doubted.

It is interesting to note that Wakefield, the regular Rookwood artist, illustrated the first one or two of the Canadian stories. Then another artist took over. Was this done intentionally to break the tie with the school stories? With the return to Rookwood, Wakefield became permanent once more.

An idle thought, with which to wind up. I have a fancy that Rookwood, reprinted over many years in the Popular, found more success than it did in the Boys' Friend. In the big pages of the latter, one has the impression of short, "bitty," tales - an impression that one never received in the smaller-sheeted Popular. And, of course, Rookwood had one big advantage in the Popular. It was never necessary to prune a Rookwood tale.

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C O N T R O V E R S I A L E C H O E S

No. 86. THE DEBT

GUY W. MASON: Extracts from Mr. Frank Shaw's letter in "LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL," in April's C.D., in which Compton Mackenzie is alleged to have written in his autobiography of how lucky he was to have lived in the palmy days of the B.O.P. so that he "escaped wretched papers like the Magnet," recalls the following paragraph which formed part of an article "WHAT PRICE SCHOOL STORIES?" which appeared in the October 1951 issues of the B.O.P.

I quote: "Your elder brothers and fathers will talk with affection about Billy Bunter, Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry and the famous Greyfriars characters created in the Magnet by Frank Richards. Their fantastic adventures were discussed eagerly each week. Frank Richards set a new popular level in school stories. The boarding school setting of Greyfriars was popular because so many boys identified their school and their friends with it. But Greyfriars had its rivals. I, for one, much preferred the more sober, but always entertaining, adventures in the Gem of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's. There was nothing more exciting than to slip over the school wall of St. Jim's on a hot summer afternoon with Tom Merry or Baggy Trimble, although poor old Baggy could never shin over any wall without the utmost difficulty. That incredible character, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was always around somewhere to add a touch of finesse, and inevitably we would be swinging away down a dusty Surrey lane in search of adventure, dodging in the ditch every now and then to avoid some dastardly prefect."

These were the words of the editor of the Boy's Own Paper. In point of fact, the "classy" B.O.P. was paying tributes, not to Talbot Baines Reed, but to Frank Richards; not to Felgarth and St. Dominic's, but to Greyfriars and St. Jim's!

Strange that the B.O.P. almost appeared to refute Mr. Mackenzie's ill-chosen comparisons so many years before they were written.

Shall we say in anticipation of somebody "having a go?"

L. S. ELLIOTT: Reference the mentions of Compton Mackenzie and the E.S. Brooks' books, "HISTORIC BOYS" etc., of which I have a couple, also his comment on the "MAGNET;" on looking up the comments in C.H.'s "OCTAVE ONE," he certainly made them, but if he only got his ideas about the "MAGNET" from the T.V. Series, one can hardly blame him, they would give a wrong impression to anyone, not knowing C.H. He was a contemporary of Charles Hamilton, being born in 1883. He also commented on "HISTORIC BOYS," by E. S. Brooks whom he thought was an American, as the stories first appeared in the 80's, in the "ST. NICHOLAS MAG." They were illustrated by Howard Pyle, who was definitely an American. C.H. thought "HISTORIC BOYS" one of the best books he ever read of its type, and should be reprinted now. I would like him to read some of the classic "GEMS" and "MAGNETS," he would probably reverse his hearsay opinion. His favourite T.B. Reed book was "COCKHOUSE AT FELLGARTH," which he called "FOLLISGARTH" and which he thought better than "THE FIFTH FORM AT ST. DOMINICS."

LARRY MORLEY: I think that Charles Hamilton owes a debt to nobody. He remains the supreme writer of school stories. As for copying the better (?) writers, if there is anything in it, all I can say is that the pupil surpassed the master. The hard-cover stories of such writers as Reed and Desmond Coke (beloved by Bill Hubbard and I suspect by not many others among collectors) are all right in their way but terribly dated whereas the Gem and Magnet tales are mostly as fresh today as when they were written. Granted the B.O.P. was a better-class paper, it was also very much more dull, full of flag-waving themes.

STANLEY SMITH: I am, frankly, puzzled by your comments in "Let's Be Controversial." Of course, Frank Richards owed something to Talbot Baines Reed. Every writer in a specialist field owes something to those who have helped to create that particular métier. Talbot Baines Reed, for example, owed something to Dean Farrar and to Thomas Hughes - as did other school story writers such as Harold Avery, Gunby Hadath and R. A. H. Goodyear. To go further, all will agree that Sexton Blake owes something to Sherlock Holmes. Frank Richards contributed to a specialist field of writing - that of the school story - and became the greatest of such writers. But I think that it is obvious that he owed something to those who had created the métier and to those who had helped to bring it to the stage that it had reached when he started.

Talbot Baines Reed was, I believe, the first school story writer to pen a series featuring the same characters at the same school - the Parkhurst series - and this was before he wrote any of the B.O.P. serials for which he is famous. And there were considerably more than the tales of Felgarth, St. Dominics and Willoughby. "The Master of the Shell" is definitely a school story and so is "Tom, Dick and Harry." Many of his other serials, too, have a school background in the first part and then carry on into business life. These include "The Adventures of a Three Guinea Watch," "My Friend Smith," "Reginald Cruden" and "A Dog With a Bad Name."

Talbot Baines Reed helped to create a style of writing and I believe that all school writers, since this time, cannot but owe him a debt of gratitude.

ERIC FAYE muses: Is there any reason for supposing that, as Mr. Elliott suggests, Mackenzie obtained his ideas of the Magnet from the Bunter TV series? It seems most unlikely to me.

Mr. Morley is wrong in suggesting that the stories of Coke are dated. I can think of nothing which would date them. "The Bending of a Twig" I have always regarded as the most true-to-life school tale ever written, and my personal view is that Coke was the finest of all whom we call the "stiff-cover" writers, though most of his tales were first serialised. Most of his stories are equally as good as some of Charles Hamilton's greatest, but, comparatively, the Coke output was minute.

Mr. Smith says: "Of course Frank Richards owed something to Talbot Baines Reed," presumably meaning a general debt which any writer owes to another writer who has gone before in the same field. Reed, says Mr. Smith, owed something to Farrar and Hughes.

If so, I have never heard of Reed acknowledging it, or of his being reproved for not acknowledging it. The writer quoted in our last Controversial referred to Reed as one to whom "Frank Richards never acknowledged his debt." Surely that suggested something more concrete than a general debt owed by one writer to another.

Reed's Parkhurst items - seven of them, I believe - hardly comprised a series of school stories. They were merely sketches, and, unless my memory is once again playing me false, they were actually described as sketches.

Even if one accepts all the Reed tales named by Mr. Smith as school stories - and it would take a big stretch of imagination to regard "Reginald Cruden" or "A Dog with a Bad Name" as such - the total is less than a dozen compared with Hamilton's thousand or two.

I love Reed's stories, particularly "A Dog With a Bad Name," "My Friend Smith" and "Reginald Cruden," but they are in a different world entirely from Hamilton's. That most of Reed's output is dated, even though his stories were not written such a great number of years before Coks's, can hardly be denied. But Reed wrote largely of social conditions, long since passed into history.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 20 (New Series)

King of the Islands raised his head lazily from the hammock, shaded his eyes with a brown hand, and stared shoreward.

The ketch was anchored between the shore and the outer reef. From the reef came the low, steady boom of the Pacific rollers; but the lagoon was smooth as glass. The ketch, anchored in sixty feet of water, stirred not an inch; her cable hung down as straight and still as a bar of iron.

The hammock was slung aft, under an awning that shut off the burning blaze of the sun. King of the Islands was stretched in it. He was the only white man on the ketch, and a man he was, though his age could not have been more than sixteen, and his handsome, sun-browned face was very boyish. He wore duck trousers and a silk shirt without sleeves; his muscular arms were bare and brown, and his feet were bare, though a pair of canvas shoes that lay under the hammock showed that he wore footgear when he was not taking his ease.

The five black men chewing betel-nut forward were much more lightly clad than their skipper; they wore only loin-cloths, and not much of them. But King of the Islands, though his life was passed mostly among men black and brown, never forget that he was a white man, and on the hottest days, when the sun was like burning brass, and the sea reflected a blaze of heat, he never descended to the native rag of tapa, like so many South Sea traders.

His name was Kenneth King; and his black crew called him Cap'n Ken. But as "King of the Islands" he was known to all the traders and beachcombers from the Marquesas to the Solomons. The nickname had been given him half in jest, but it had clung to him, and he liked it. The Islands were his world, and he had never known any other; but the islands he knew, and knew thoroughly.

(So Charles Hamilton opened his Ken King series in early 1928. A series which was destined to run, off and on, for more than ten years in MODERN BOY, and to cover several hundred stories, all first-class of their type. As with the Ric Kid series, Charles Hamilton wrote of the South Seas in a manner which was colourful, picturesque, and entirely convincing. His plots were superb throughout, and, once again, one wonders from whence he obtained the inspiration to write so finely of a part of the world he never visited. Many people believe that Hamilton never created a finer character than King of the Islands. -ED.)

DAN O'HERLIHY only wants one Magnet, No. 768, to complete his set. Very high price offered for same, or I am prepared to exchange my issue of No. 3.

Write: LOFTS, 56, SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Nelson Lee Library.

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

This month we celebrate a great occasion - the 50th anniversary of the publication in June, 1915, of the Nelson Lee Library. A Library which was to establish itself quickly as a strong rival to the other companion papers and set new trends in schoolboy (and schoolgirl) reading.

No. 1, The Mystery of Limehouse Reach, was written by Andrew Gray, already a well-established author of school and sport stories. It was not a great story by any standards, and its main claim to fame is merely that it launched a new publication.

Not until Teed and Brooks came along a few numbers later did the Nelson Lee Library really begin to have a character of its own, and it is well to remember that while E.S.B. produced his first Nelson Lee story as early as September, 1915, it was not until the famous No. 112, Nipper at St. Frank's, in 1917, that his major work was seen.

Charles Churchill has surveyed the N.L.L. scene and recalled some of the outstanding numbers. I'm sure his article will recall many happy memories. I hope others will also be revived as we mark up another golden jubilee.

* * * * *

"MILESTONES OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY"

By C. H. Churchill

As it is fifty years ago this month that the N.L.L. came into existence I thought it might be interesting to browse through the records and consider the various important happenings and innovations that took place over the years. I mean, of course, the ones that appeared to me to be the most outstanding.



AS THE ARTISTS SAW THEM



JIM THE PENMAN



PROF. CYRUS ZINGRAVE



MARK RYMER



THE NIGHT OWL

AND
NELSON LEE AND NIPPER



Reproduced from the pages of
the N.L.L.

June 12th, 1915, brought us No. 1 "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach" - a detective story, mediocre actually and not, of course, by E. S. Brooks. His first effort "Twenty Fathoms Deep" came in No. 16 on September 25th. I can say nothing about this as I have not yet succeeded in obtaining a copy nor have I ever read it, to my regret.

No. 23 on November 13th, introduced Professor Zingrave's League of the Green Triangle. The League was to be with us from time to time over most of the career of the Nelson Lee. In my opinion the best of all these episodes was the series of the Circle of Terror which ran intermittently from No. 85 to No. 169.

Another long lived character, Jim the Penman, came on the scene in No. 39 - "The Lightning Clue." He, with Zingrave, was to be Nelson Lee's principal opponent over the years. In later times they often joined forces to produce a most villainous combination. The only time in the very early days that they appeared together was in the very first Christmas number, No. 78, in which story also appeared Eileen Dare.

This young lady made her debut in No. 57 and bowed her way out to prospective marriage in No. 115. She did appear occasionally afterwards it is true, but only as a minor character. I must say that there was something very attractive in this series about Lee's young lady assistant.

No. 96 brought a great innovation - the stories written in the first person (by Nipper) title "Nipper's Notebook." Many readers do not like this sort of story but I, personally, prefer things this way. I always think the characters more real and that one is almost taking part in the proceedings.

Dorrie and Umlosi arrived in No. 105 "The Ivory Seekers" and were to become two of the most popular figures ever. The reader always knew when either of them was mentioned that something special was brewing be it Summer Holiday adventures or Christmas festivities and mystery.

The greatest innovation of all came in No. 112 in 1917 when St. Frank's was introduced. The change from all detective to school and detective was gradual. St. Frank's did not appear every week until No. 128 onwards. The first Barring Out series started in No. 148 with Hunter as the new Housemaster. This was an excellent effort and the first of many such. My own pet series of this type was the "Martin" affair in the autumn of 1919. In No. 158 came the opening of the first summer holiday adventure series of which Brooks was to write so many splendid ones. Who can say which was the best of them all? I

think this would be impossible as it is mostly a matter of individual taste. My own choice would be this first one and the White Giant one.

With St. Frank's as the main theme, many new characters were introduced from time to time but I will just mention five which I consider the most outstanding. Here they are -

Reggie Pitt, arriving in No. 170, September 1918.

Archie and Phipps, introduced in No. 352, March 1922.

Handforth minor gracing us with his presence in October of the same year, No. 386 and -

Browne turning up in No. 513, April 1925.

My fifth "character" is the Moor View School, the girls of which were first mentioned in No. 436, one of the Buster Boots series. Many other notable new characters came from time to time but I feel that the above were really the most important and, of course, were featured regularly till the end of the Nelson Lee.

In No. 485 Nelson Lee and Nipper were "removed" from St. Frank's but naturally had to be brought back again (in No. 515). Nipper did appear earlier, 'tis true, but both were not permanently featured until No. 515 onwards. Another "Editor's idea" that went wrong!!

September 1925 brought many changes to the old school-five houses and the reformation of Fullwood. I know several other juniors started off on the wrong foot as it were, notably Pitt and De Valerie, but I never felt as I did with them, that Fullwood's change of character rang true. His very language after the transformation bears no resemblance to that of earlier times. Perhaps the reason is that he had been a cad for so many years, a reformation took a lot of swallowing.

May 1926 arrived with a new look N.L.L. Much larger pages and quite a different type of cover. The first series of this larger type of book ran for 194 numbers and produced the usual crop of fresh faces. Many of these were quite good but hardly, I think, in the class of those mentioned earlier. Probably Vivian Travers could be called the best of them. Forrest went and had to be brought back as the position of chief "Rotter" had not been satisfactorily filled since Fullwood vacated it. Forrest was never as good in this role as Ralph Leslie, at least to me.

In January 1930 No. 1 of the second new series appeared and was the beginning of the end. No milestones here, I'm afraid, only retrograde steps. If one looks through the list of stories of this series in Bob Blythe's very excellent catalogue one finds only a hotch potch running for 161 weeks. There is no doubt that from the commencement

of these "new" series the style of the St. Frank's stories slowly changed. Nelson Lee and Nipper gradually slipped into roles more of a subsidiary character than anything else. Handforth was actually starred more, especially in the titles. Out of 457 St. Frank's stories in the old series he was mentioned in only nine titles. In the first "new" he came up 26 times out of 194 and in the second "new" 13 times out of 161, many of which were not St. Frank's stories.

What was the result of this change of policy which eased off Nelson Lee and Nipper and put the limelight on others? Answer - On February 25th, 1933, the third "new" series was issued and it was back to the old days again. Reprints of the first St. Frank's stories. It was too late, however, for the readers had nearly all gone and twenty five weeks later came the end - amalgamation with the Gem - and our jolly little book was no more.

S.B.L. REVIEW

THE MIND KILLERS

MARTIN THOMAS

"It's all in the mind" quoth Kenneth Horne laconically a week or two ago, replying to criticism of suggestiveness in his Sunday afternoon radio show. This is a story of the mind - that of Dr. Dominic Galt and the ghastly operations he performs on the minds of the unfortunate inmates of his private mental home, who are compelled to undergo "the treatment" to satisfy his mania for experimentation.

The heat is on when Jill Cottrell, one of the inmates, escapes and seeks the protection of Blake. Soars to white heat when caution, momentarily unheeded, places Blake a prisoner in the hands of Galt and his aides. Following "the treatment" he is reduced through mental torture and suffering to a mere shell of a man, dependent entirely on outside help for the preservation of his sanity. It is Paula - Paula Dane, cool, attractive, and secretary par excellence, who arrives in the nick of time, and then, when she and Blake are facing certain death together, it is Tinker whose timely arrival saves them both.

Superlatives are not always deserved in the praising of the modern novel; but this one deserves them all, for seldom in a long experience of thriller reading have I enjoyed such a masterpiece of vivid, purposeful and wildly exciting Blake writing as this effort by Martin Thomas.

For the statistician, with this issue 1,661 numbers of the S.B.L. have now appeared. This latest number is strongly recommended as being in the top ten of the whole lot.

Walter Webb.

NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

27th April, 1965

Despite apologies from Madge and Jack Corbett, Ted Davey, Ray Bennett, George Chatham and Joe Marston, nine members were present to enjoy an interesting programme, most of which was informal. A quiz by Norman Gregory was a trifle trickier than usual. Several of the eight questions were normal but the rest beat most of us. The writer was winner of this quiz with four right. Ivan Webster then read to us a chapter or so of Magnet No. 1656 "Run out of Greyfriars." This was Coker at his funniest, Coker as Uncle Clegg's new errand boy delivering groceries to Gosling - "Mr. Gosling" as Coker called him. Prout was on the scene - he was just "Prout" to his former pupil. The Anniversary number was a Magnet; to be precise No. 1680, dated 27th April, 1940, title "The Man from Germany." The Collector's piece was unique and aroused much interest and not a little discussion. This was Dick Turpin Library No. 37 "The Flaming Coach." Norman, who has a few of these Dick Turpins, gave us a short talk on the issue and drew our attention to the name of the illustrator on the cover - H. M. Brock. The library raffle was won by the writer of these notes - prize a Girls' Friend Annual 1929 plus a 3d Boys Friend Library with a school yarn by Charles Mansford. Both welcome especially the Betty Barton Morcove stories in the G.F.A. To end the evening one of my stories from the last Greyfriars Cup mag. was read. A St. Jim's yarn introducing Johnny Goggs and Gordon Gay & Co. "The Spoofer at St. Jim's."

HARRY BROSTER, Secretary.

NORTHERN

8th May, 1965

There was another good attendance for our May meeting, which got off to a rather late start, library business and various private discussions going on longer than usual. Two regulars were absent because of sporting commitments - Jack Wood at Wembley and Keith Balmforth playing cricket.

This month's correspondence included letters from our two artist members. Henry Webb sent us a really first-class picture quiz, which

we will keep for the Manchester meeting on 4th July. John Jukes had a stroke of luck and acquired a bound volume of Gems, which we purchased from him for the library - a very welcome addition.

Gerry Allison passed round a copy of 'Tit Bits,' which is featuring a new serial about Sexton Blake, by Desmond Reid. It seems a good enough yarn, although 'Tit Bits' idea of what Blake looks like is a bit startling to old-timers.

Next we had a word-building quiz by Frank Hancock - a square of 64 letters, which made up the names of ten old boys books or comics. Geoffrey Wilde was the winner, and Ron Hodgson also produced a correct solution.

Gerry Allison then produced a very interesting item. He passed round 18 cards, each bearing a short extract from a Magnet story, the question being, 'is it genuine Hamilton or a sub writer?' Some were fairly easy to detect, but others were real teasers. However, Bill Williamson and Geoffrey Wilde each had 16 right, and Ron Hodgson 15. Most of us had 12 or over, which appears to indicate that there is indeed a difference which the average enthusiast can usually detect.

Refreshments followed, and the second half of the meeting was taken up by readings from Magnet No. 252, and the Gem of the same number, published in December 1912. The basic theme was similar in both stories, featuring a wealthy boy and a poor one - Lumley-Lumley and Grimes at St. Jim's, and Vernon Smith and Linley at Greyfriars. Gerry read the Gem and Geoff the Magnet. Both were excellent examples of Charles Hamilton's writing of the period, but the difference in style was apparent, the Gem being graciously written and more leisurely, the Magnet more forceful and downright by comparison. The general opinion was that Vernon-Smith and Linley were more powerful characters than the other two. A general discussion brought the meeting to a close, among the topics discussed being the Armada books which were passed round, judgment being reserved until we have had time to read them all, although first impressions were very favourable.

Next meeting, Saturday, 12th June.

F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

- - - - -
MERSEYSIDE

Sunday, 9th May:

Because of sickness the attendance was a little below average. All of the correspondence this month dealt with the purchase of books and although we have made quite a hole in our bank balance we are still solvent, and the library has benefited to a considerable extent. We

were particularly pleased to receive two parcels of old boys books from Mr. Lister of Blackpool. These books consisted of some Champions, a Rover, a bound volume of about nine Nelson Lees, some Magnets, and others. Norman Fragnell has already written to Mr. Lister expressing our thanks.

As our purchases included an assortment of Modern Boys, Detective Weeklies, as well as some Gems and Magnets the library can now offer a much greater variety of reading matter.

We were so long on library business that very little time was left for any discussion on other topics. We did, however, have a look at the new publications of some of the Magnet stories. We were unable to pass any definite opinion until they had been read, but the first impressions were good and we are looking forward to further issues.

We were delighted to hear from Frank Unwin that Frank Case had managed to get to Wembley for the Cup Final. Frank Case was a steward at the Liverpool Club's ground before 'emigrating' to the Midlands, and a fervent supporter of the "Reds." I have no doubt that he returned home to Nottingham after the match feeling like a dog with two tails. Our condolences must, of course, go to our O.B.B.C. friends in Leeds. Secretly, however, we Lancastrians are always pleased to put one over those Tykes across the Pennines.

After tea Pat Laffey introduced us to a new form of Bingo. This dealt with the characteristics of some of the Greyfriars boys. Bert Hamblett and Jack Morgan were joint winners.

Next meeting, Sunday, June 13th.

BILL WINDSOR

LONDON

Springtime at Excelsior House, Surbiton - an excellent setting for the May meeting, partly held indoors and partly in the garden. The latter was looking at its best - Cumberland turf a lovely shade of green, flowering shrubs at their best, truly an ideal place for the photographs that were taken and the party game that the host, Eric Fayne, had organised. First pair home in the game were the brothers, John and Neil Beck, who had made the journey from Lewes with their parents.

Onlookers enjoying the game included C. H. Chapman, famous Greyfriars artist, and Bob Whiter, home for a few weeks from far-off California.

Before going into the garden we had all the usual reports on the

Hamiltonian and Nelson Lee libraries, Sexton Blake catalogue, the Armada Frank Richards paperbacks, the forthcoming publication "Prospectus," and the paperback edition of Frank Richards' Autobiography. After these items, Brian Doyle, our worthy chairman, passed over the proceedings to the host.

Our Eric commenced his collection of fun and games with an "Elimination" competition. First correct paper was that of Roger Jenkins. Runners-up were Neil Beck and Bob Whiter. This was followed by another contest "Clues & Answers." Ten clues to hidden characters were given to all present, and once again it was Roger Jenkins in first with the correct answers. This time the runners-up were Eric Lawrence and Neil Beck. Points were awarded in the varied contests and Josie Packman kept the scores.

The Bingo game was won by Len Packman, and when Josie announced the total numbers of points scored by all competitors, Roger Jenkins had the most. A number of rounds of Criss Cross Quiz were conducted amid much excitement and hilarity.

Prize-winning order was as follows: Roger Jenkins, Neil Beck, Don Webster, Bob Whiter, John Bush. But what did it matter? There were souvenir prizes for all, generously provided by the host. Also provided by the host was a very fine feed, ably served by the lady helpers.

After tea was over, Don Webster proposed the unanimous vote of thanks to all concerned in providing such an excellent repast. At the close of the evening later on, Len Packman proposed another hearty vote of thanks to Eric Fayne for organising such a happy and jolly meeting. Among those present it was good to see Miss Hood once again, and Miss Cornwall who was a close friend of Mrs. Harrison. All present - and there were nearly 50 of them - had been heartily welcomed at the commencement of the meeting by chairman Brian Doyle. The next meeting was announced to be held at "Greyfriars," Hollybush Ride, Near Wokingham, Berks, on Sunday, 20th June. If intending to be present, please inform host Eric Lawrence.

So, with Doris Doyle presenting the prizes and Mr. Chapman showing many of his original drawings, the Garden Party meeting of the club passed into the realm of happy memories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

SPECIAL NOTICE

Panoramic photographs, professionally taken at the recent London meeting at Excelsior House are available on application to the C.D.

office. These are 3/6 each 8" long, or 4/6 each 10" long. There are two separate panoramic shots of the entire party, and both are excellent. There is a panoramic shot of 14 famous people long associated with our clubs (this is the picture which was reproduced in Surbiton Borough News.) In addition there is a picture of Mr. C. H. Chapman together with Eric Fayne, editor of C.D.

Orders for copies should be accompanied by postal order to cover cost. The orders will be completed within a few days of receipt. Make it clear which pictures you want.

OH, WHAT A SHAME ABOUT JUST WILLIAM!

Under the above heading, the Daily Express published a letter from Mr. Charles Smith of High Wycombe. There is little or no doubt that all of us echo Mr. Smith's views. This is what Mr. Smith wrote:

THE MOST amazing decision of the year. I mean the ruling by the people who run Lancashire's public libraries that all the Just William books on their shelves will not be replaced.

It means, I fear, that they will all have vanished in a very short time. For surely they will be in such demand that they will soon be worn out.

A spokesman is reported to have said: "We want better quality books, not the sort of stuff children can read in comics."

I would like to know where he is going to find this "better quality." I know of few other children's books written in such a lively and straightforward manner. Any boy would do well to develop his prose style from the Just William stories. He will probably sharpen his sense of humour too.

By comparison many more modern offerings are tortuous and pompous. I am sorry that the children of Lancashire are to be denied such wonderful reading.

Charles Smith,
Walton Drive, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire.

REVIEWS

"WILLIAM & THE MONSTER"
"WILLIAM THE CANNIBAL"

(Armada Books, 2/6 each)

These two latest Armada Books contain some of the best of Richmal Crompton's "William." What more need we say to recommend them? Included in this gorgeous pair of paperbacks is "William at the Garden Party," one of the funniest stories ever, in which William is mistaken for a child genius on the piano. It is one of those tales at which you laugh more heartily every time you read it. Richmal Crompton's exquisite knowledge of human nature is shown in her glorious adult characters. In every story you meet someone you know - and how! Don't miss these two smash-hit Armadas.

CAPTAIN'S CORRESPONDENCE

By Norman Wright

The editorial and correspondence pages of the CAPTAIN make interesting and amusing reading. Readers who wrote letters and articles to the editor were often criticized for:-

"Such slovenliness, such absolute unfitness for the task undertaken, and such carelessness with regard to rudimentary rules, as in the art of writing."

And others were said to be:-

"Ill-written and ill typewritten; written on both sides of the paper; ungrammatical with commas, semi-colons, and full stops scattered in wild profusion all over the page."

Even though readers often received replies like this to their letters it did not stop them from sending, even if it was obviously going to get an unsympathetic answer. One of these such letters was written by a 16 year old boy and girl who asked the editor whether he thought a boy and girl of 16 ought to be sweethearts. The answer was "Young people of that age ought to be chums and nothing more. They are too young to be sweethearts. Let them put such sentimental ideas aside until they are a few years older."

At about the same time (1905-6) many readers were writing letters as to whether or not schools should be co-educational. This had sprung from a series of stories about a mixed school (AT HICKSON'S by F. L. Morgan). Readers for and against this seemed to fall about equal.

In December 1905 the editor appealed to all CAPTAIN readers to send a donation to help buy a Christmas dinner for the very poor. His appeal was obviously directed at the upper class as can be judged from the following few sentences taken from the appeal.

"Could the ordinary, careless, decent-hearted Eton, or Harrow, or Rugby boy accompany me on a walk through the mean streets of West Ham - to mention only one poverty stricken district - and see the wan, haggard faces of the women whose husbands have no work to do - men who would work if they could - and view the desolation of the poor homes in those mean streets, that boy would empty his pockets to provide a few meals for those hopeless ones."

It was evident from the result of this appeal that was published in the February and March issues (1906) that not many readers had "Emptied their pockets." In fact the list of donors showed that, including the editor and the Captain's advertising dep't, only 400-500 readers had sent a donation. (This included those who applied to the

editor when he offered, "Any auctioneer who wants to sell the autographs of Mr. P. F. WARNER, Mr. P. G. WODEHOUSE, Mr. TOM BROWNE, and your humble servant, can have a small batch on application." I wonder if any one has still any of these autographs that they bought in support of this appeal?) Not a very good result for a paper that boasted of its high circulation, was supported by parents, and had a good number of adult readers.

Although the CAPTAIN is probably best remembered for its school stories by P. G. WODEHOUSE. (The second NEWNES magazine to bring into the limelight world famous authors; the first being the STRAND, which launched Conan Doyle, first with his Sherlock Holmes stories and then with his historical romances and adventure novels.) At the time of the serialization of the WHITE FEATHER, this was not so and can be proved by the fact that when CAPTAIN readers were asked to vote the best stories in that particular volume, WODEHOUSE'S WHITE FEATHER was not voted in the top twelve stories?

R E V I E W

VENGEANCE IS OURS

Peter Saxon

An excellent book dealing with the efforts of the whole Blake organisation to prevent the vengeance of a group of bereaved men falling upon the head of the murderer of their wives and children; - one Joseph Dingala - now a powerful statesman of the newly formed state of Lubanda.

A swift-moving tale, full of beautifully written little pen pictures of people and places to relieve the tension.

A story based on violence and the hatred bred by violence; yet with the details of this heinous crime treated with a restraint unusual in these days of realism when little is left to the reader's imagination. Blake, torn between sympathy with the bereaved and his firm belief that vengeance belongs only to God, worked hard and long to prevent an international incident - and succeeded.

Margaret Cooke

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, 5.

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

DANNY'S DIARY

5,000 PRIZES FOR READERS!

The GEM LIBRARY



THE FOURTH I.R.N. SCHOOL STORY IN
OUR GREAT INTERNATIONAL MATCH!

JUNE 1915

I have often thought that I would like to save up my Gems and Magnets so that I can read them when I am an old man of fifty. But I'm a weak character. In the market they will pay tuppence a dozen for them - and tuppence is tuppence.

But even when I try to save those which I specially like, Mum carries on because they litter the house and harbour the dust. So what can a fellow do?

This month there was the trial of Smith, the man who drowned his brides in their baths. He was defended by Edward Marshall Hall, but was sentenced to death. I enjoyed reading about the trial, though I wasn't supposed to.

It was Alexandra Rose Day on the 23rd, which was also the 21st birthday of the Prince of Wales.

The first Rookwood tale in the Boys' Friend this month was "Rookwood's Revenge." Bagshot School had always been accustomed to beating Rookwood at sports, but a change has taken place since Tommy Dodd became junior skipper. Bagshot fielded a team of fags to insult Rookwood, and Tommy Dodd's team pretended to be losing, but finally wiped up Bagshot in a couple of overs.

Next week came "A Stern Chase" in which Jimmy Silver had another conflict with Herr Kinkel, the German master. Then came "The Bagshot Bouncers" in which Jimmy and Co came off second best in a tussle with

Bagshot school. Last story of the month was the first of what seems like a series. A new boy called Dick Oswald came to Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co liked him, but Smythe has a brother at Minhurst School, and it seems that Oswald was expelled from there.

There is another new serial in the Boys' Friend, called "Mystery Island" by Duncan Storm.

There have been plenty of good comics at the local cinemas this month. Charlie Chaplin was a winner in "Champion Charlie" in which he was a screamingly funny boxer. The big picture in this programme was "The Chloroform Clue" which was about Nat Pinkerton, detective.

Another time we saw Olga Petrova in "The Price" which was awful, and Syd Chaplin in

"Giddy, Gay, and Ticklish." Syd Chaplin is funny, but not so good as his brother Charlie.

"Lead Us Not Into Temptation" was a picture my Mum liked, but I preferred the Keystone comic "Mabel's New Job."

At the end of the month we saw Alice Joyce in "The Face of the Madonna" and Charlie Chaplin in "Charlie in the Park."

My Headmaster says that Charlie is vulgar, and he hopes his boys won't go to see Charlie's films. So I always look both ways before I go in the cinema.

This month Rookwood has come into the Magnet stories, which is rather nice. In the first Magnet tale of the month: "The Slackers' Eleven," Harry Wharton & Co have been used to wiping up Rookwood at Cricket. So Wharton tells Mauleverer to get up an eleven to play Rookwood. A day or two before the game is to take place, Jimmy Silver pops over to Greyfriars on his bike and tells Harry that there has been a big change at Rookwood now that Tommy Dodd is captain.

In "Fifty Pounds Reward," Fisher T. Fish tried to claim money from a ginger-beer firm by pretending that some boys had been made ill by drinking Gobbey's Ginger Beer. There is a new serial in the Magnet called "Driven to Sea" by T. C. Bridges.

In "The Scouts' Victory" Bunter befriended a Belgian refugee who turned out to be a German spy. Last tale of the month was "The Old Boys' Challenge." Colonel Wharton, home on leave from the front, brings a team of "old boys" to play Greyfriars First. Paul Tyrrell, Bob Cherry's cousin, came into this story.

There is another new paper out called the Nelson Lee Detective Library. Doug bought me the first copy which was called "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach," all about Nelson Lee and his assistant, Nipper. It reminded me a bit of a Union Jack story, though perhaps not quite so grown up. With the first issue they gave away a free button of Sir John French.

The Derby was run at Newmarket, and the winning horse was "Pommern." Weather has not been good this month, and much damage has been done by storms at Bristol. Some people in Yorkshire were struck by lightning. One thing, when the weather is bad there are no seppelin raids. However, there was a raid on the East Coast with 24 people killed, and another raid on the North-east coast with 16 killed.

I had one copy of the Dreadnought this month, and it contained an old Greyfriars tale about Billy Bunter being a sleepwalker.

The Registration Bill has been passed in parliament and everybody between the ages of 15 and 65 has to register. A bit of a lark. Mr. Lloyd George has introduced a Bill which forbids strikes.

The first story in the Gem this month was the third in the "International" stories. It was called "A Hero of Wales" and in it Fatty Wynn sang at a very low music hall called the Wayland Palace. He was doing a good turn for a Welsh pal of his.

Then came "Tom Merry for England" which was a nice little story. Several boys broke bounds at night to visit Mrs. Murphy's shop in the village, and one of them saved Major Stringer when he was attacked by ruffians. Some people thought the hero was Gussy, but Mellish claimed the credit. Of course, we all knew who the real hero was.

In "Grundy's Downfall," the new boy got up a cricket team by offering payment to those who would play for his eleven. This was a good story, and Mr. Railton came in it.

"Levison's Last Card" was very good. Levison was in the hands of Mr. Moses, a money-lender, and Levison hit on a crafty scheme to get out of his difficulty. In the end he was saved by Talbot. Levison seems to be reforming under the influence of Talbot.

The Gem stories this month were far better than those of Greyfriars or Rookwood.

In August we are going to have a week at Margate. At least, Mum calls it Cliftonville as she says that sounds better than Margate. Dad says we can't afford more than a week's holiday in wartime.

Bad news at the end of the month. The Dreadnought has finished and is amalgamated with the Boy's Friend. Doug says I talk rot. I say I'm sad that the Dreadnought has finished, yet I never bothered to support it much while it was alive.

And Doug has made friends again with his old girl friend, Freda. Pegleg piled on Ossification as they say in Latin.

WARNING TO READERS: Mr. Tom Porter of our Midland Club writes us as follows:

"A fortnight ago last Tuesday I had a letter from Peter Grant of Bolton Rd, Harrow, offering me some Magnets for £5. It seemed such a bargain that I immediately sent off a P.O. for that amount.

Later on that day a friend showed me a similar letter he had received, and immediately I was suspicious. Last Tuesday I wrote Grant to say I had not received my Magnets. This letter has been returned to me by the G.P.O., marked 'Gone Away.' Incidentally, inside the official Returned Postal Packet was an envelope, in Grant's handwriting, addressed to a Mr. J. H. Wynn at a Clacton address.

I have placed the matter in the hands of the police."

Mr. Porter adds "There may be a simple explanation to the whole business." There may - but on the face of things it looks as though Mr. Porter has been bitten. It could be that the elusive Grant is more unbusinesslike than unscrupulous, but the matter forms a pattern familiar down the years.

We repeat a warning to readers which we have given before. Be wary of strangers offering bargains. If a largish sum is involved, use the third party method. In any case, never send an open post-order. If your correspondent asks for one, give him a wide berth. Pay by cheque if you have a bank account - the cheat is wary of accepting a cheque. If your cheque is refused, insist on having the books before you pay.

If in doubt at any time, ring or write Collectors' Digest. We will always give what advice we can.

SEXTON BLAKE OMNIBUS FOR CHRISTMAS

A special, gigantic Sexton Blake Annual cum Omnibus cum Bedside Book is to be published in December. This will contain the two December full-length novels under one cover plus many short stories and memory-tickling pictures. The price or the actual title for this attractive volume is not yet decided, but it is undoubtedly the most ambitious Sexton Blake undertaking ever contemplated.

And here is a tip for enthusiasts. The price of the monthly Sexton Blake Library will be increased to 3/6 during the summer, probably in August, but all existing subscriptions will be fully honoured at the present price of 2/6. So, if you take out a year's subscription now (the address for same was given in last month's C.D.) you will still get your S.B.L. for 2/6 for many months after the price rises.

GERRY ALLISON ILL

We regret to learn that Gerry Allison, stalwart of our Northern Club, is ill in hospital. Readers will join with the Digest in wishing him a speedy return to good health.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

(Interesting items from
Editor's Letter-bag)



DEREK SMITH (Clapham Park): I was interested to see in this April issue how the old boys' books part of my hobby overlaps my original pastime of collecting detective fiction. The list of contributors to the Union Jack, etc., included the names of many old crime writers - for example Robert and Marie Connor Leighton, Francis Beeding and Coralie Stanton and Heath Hosken, creators of Miriam Lemaire, Money Lender (1906) one of the wickedest women in Edwardian literature!

I'm afraid that Tony Glynn was a trifle wide of the mark in claiming that Arthur Morrison preceded Conan Doyle in the Strand Magazine. Actually, Martin Hewitt was Sherlock Holmes's direct successor as the Strand's resident detective. Holmes had apparently made a permanent exit from the magazine in "The Final Problem" in December 1893, while Martin Hewitt made his debut in "The Lenton Croft Robberies" in March 1894. Morrison afterwards transferred his detective to the Windsor Magazine. Martin Hewitt also appeared in an episodic novel entitled "THE RED TRIANGLE" which, alas, is a book (like the Leightons' "MICHAEL DRED, DETECTIVE") which has always eluded me despite many years searching!

HAYDN SALMON (Ipswich): Your contributors do you proud and I certainly derive a great deal of pleasure from reading the various articles month by month, and which all in all, provide a very comprehensive history of the boys publications of ones youth, not to mention interesting aspects of hobby of collecting itself.

VIC COLBY (Australia): I think the new S.B.L.'s are quite good and certainly a big improvement on the 3rd series, as far as featuring Blake, Tinker, and Pedro sympathetically is concerned. Also in using the soft pedal on Paula Dane and the other modern innovations which irritated me so much.

ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby): I have read the new Blakes, and while they are not so good as many that were published between the wars, they are much better than the New Look of the old series. At least we hear little mention of Paula Dane and the rest of the Berkeley Square harem. I wouldn't call these yarns any more adult than the old Blake stories, except for the sex, and that does nothing for the stories at all. The Cassell Bunter series carries on, and I like them. As the C.D. reviewer says, a lot is being done to please we of the old school, and I, for one, appreciate it.

BEN WHITER (London): Since when did Tinker object to being called Tinker and wish to be called Edward Carter?

TOM DOBSON (Australia): The club tie is a terrific idea. Put me down for two if it gets going. Danny's Diary is my favourite.

GEORGE McROBERTS (Belfast): Belated congratulations on the excellent Annual. It was truly magnificent. I like the idea of a tie or a badge for hobby enthusiasts.

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): Your Editorials, as Mr. Perry says, are always pithy and interesting, although I was a little surprised at your going out of your way, so to speak, in denigrating the 'Children's Newspaper.' I agree it was never a "Magnet" or a "Gem," but then, it was never meant to be. It was, after all, a newspaper, not a magazine or a story paper.

Mrs. E. SOAR (Ilford): I must say how very much I enjoyed the exciting story "Christmas with Meredith" in C.D. Annual. To me it was just like the good old tales we used to enjoy so much way back in the early days of the Magnet, Gem, etc. I also thoroughly

enjoyed "Gold Watches & Red Noses" by G. Allison. Like Mr. Allison I, too, submitted drawings in my younger days. In my case I received a large, ornate "diploma" (no cash award, alas!)

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton): I agree with your comments about the passing of the Children's Newspaper. I, too, found it being circulated freely in the classrooms during 1919-21. I never bought it myself, nor did I know any of my chums who spent their scarce pennies on it. Recently I saw a copy on display in the children's reference section of the local public library. I studied it with a feeling of surprise at its still being in existence as, never seeing it on display at the newsagents for some years I had assumed it had ceased to function. The Children's Newspaper may have enjoyed a heyday of a sort, but the recent copy I saw was like an elderly person, "over the hill," - no ambition, and just wanting to be left alone, - to depart in peace!

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): It is hardly ever likely to happen again, so may be of interest to readers of your illustrious pages: On the morning of May 6 I was wondering why my March issue of Collectors' Digest had not arrived. Never had an issue taken ten weeks to reach me before. A few hours later I collected the mail, and found two surface mail envelopes postmarked Kingston Upon Thames... Yes, there was my belated March number, and, wonder of wonders, my May issue also! Apparently May Digest had come by airmail at surface rates. Could it be a little English P.O. discount to compensate for increased postal charges? Now I'm hoping April number will appear with the June offering cuddled close.

POINT OF VIEW

Mr. Frank S. Pepper, of Lynton, writes as follows:

The attitude towards Children's Newspaper, expressed in your editorial, rather took my breath away.

I joined the staff of C.N. in 1926 and worked with Arthur Mee for four years before leaving to become a freelance. Since then I have maintained contact with the paper, as an intermittent contributor, and by numbering members of its staff among my friends.

C.N. and the other publications which Arthur Mee founded and edited pursued a deliberate policy of appealing, in the first place, to adults, who would buy them for children.

In this they were immensely successful. Arthur Mee made a fortune for himself and for his proprietors.

It was inevitable that a department which bore the stamp of such a brilliant, original and forceful personality as Arthur Mee's should suffer heavily by his death, although the paper did continue to flourish for a surprisingly long period afterwards, while it was being carried on by men Mee himself had trained, and this in itself is, I think, powerful evidence of his editorial genius.

I have many times been grateful for the writing habits he drilled into me. At the time, as a very young man, I felt him to be too much of a martinet, ever-meticulous, too demanding and exacting. I am forty years wiser now, and realise how lucky I was to have come under his influence when I was serving my apprenticeship at the writing trade.

The Amalgamated Press never did tolerate papers which were failures. A run of 46 years before getting the chop is a pretty high achievement for any paper coming from such exacting proprietors as those who have always directed the productions emerging from Fleetway House.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS PAPERBACK

We understand that the Autobiography of Frank Richards, with the supplement written by Eric Fayne, and well illustrated, is now issued as a paperback at 12/6.