

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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THE REALM OF **FUN & FICTION** ^{2a}

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Collectors' Digest

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Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

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MAY 1968

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Price 2s. Od.



YOUR C.D. TO COST MORE:

With our next issue (June) the price of Collectors' Digest will rise by 3d from 2/- to 2/3. It is with much regret that I

make this announcement, and I feel sure that readers will realise that the increase is unavoidable. The price has been held down for as long as possible, with overhead costs creeping up all around us. In March, however, the Chancellor, with one fell swoop, knocked away all the pegs, and the increase in price to readers became something which we could no longer avoid.

The previous increase in the price of C.D. was in January 1961, so possibly we haven't done so badly. The intense feeling of frustration comes over us when we think of the stability in costs in the years between the wars. The old papers which were increased to 2d in 1923 were still 2d in 1939 and 1940. We shall never see the like of that again.

THE MAGAZINE PROGRAMME

Last month Bob Blythe gave us fascinating information concerning the Magazine Programme, an Edwardian journal which was edited by the brother of Edwy Searles Brooks and to which Edwy himself regularly contributed stories. A new issue apparently came out every week, and the normal details of the current week's show at the Grand Theatre, Swansea, were included.

There is as yet no evidence to show whether this Magazine Programme was exclusive to the Swansea theatre, but I am rather

inclined to think, from the amount of printing involved and the elaborate nature of the book, that it may have been a project in which plenty of other theatres joined. All would take the basic magazine, and their special local information would be overprinted in certain spaces left vacant for the purpose.

It was the same idea, really, as that on which many church magazines are run, and provides a great deal more reading matter for the purchaser than a normal programme would.

Certainly the Magazine Programme was still being used by a number of London theatres in the two decades between 1935 and 1955. Whether this later programme stemmed from the bright idea of Edwy's brother we do not know, but there is no reason to think that it didn't.

I particularly remember the Magazine Programme at the "Q" Theatre, which stood near the Middlesex end of Kew Bridge. The "Q" was a delightful theatre. Unlike rep theatres, the "Q" presented plays acted by different companies including West End stars each week, and the theatre was used as a try-out for dozens of new shows every year. Among the stars who made their very first appearances at the "Q" were Vivienne Leigh, Richard Attenborough, Dirk Bogarde, and Irene Handl. Irene Handl, incidentally, appeared in "George and Margaret" at "Q". She played the maid named Beer, who only appeared in the last minute before the final curtain and had not a single word to say.

The owners of the theatre were Jack De Leon and Beatrice Lewisohn. De Leon died many years back, but if Beatrice Lewisohn is still living she might be able to give more details of the later Magazine Programme.

An interesting point is that "Q" Theatre was originally the Hepworth Film Studios (till, I believe, the middle twenties), and it once echoed with the voices of Henry Edwards, Chrissie White, Alma Taylor, and others of the Hepworth clan, as they made their famous silent films.

SEXTON BLAKE AT THE PRINCE EDWARD

One of the new Sexton Blake omnibus volumes (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) contains a fascinating article concerning Sexton Blake on the stage and film. As the article points out, the films were mainly "quickies," very much "B" films - or even C and D. Those produced between the wars were, in fact, nothing but quota items, run off to enable either renters or exhibitors to fulfil the requirements of the new British Quota Act. Films of

this type were really nothing but a way of getting round a not very good law. The Sexton Blake films were "renters' quota" items. They were produced as cheaply as possible to figure in the renters' lists. If any exhibitor wanted to book them, he could. The renter didn't bother either way. He probably did not have more than a print or two of each, in any case. They served, no doubt, as exhibitors' quota in a few small cinemas.

The stage shows were in a different category. Particularly interesting, in the Blake omnibus, is the reproduction of a programme for the Prince Edward Theatre for the year 1930. The Prince Edward (now the Casino Cinerama Theatre) was brand new then - even now it is one of London's newest theatres. I recall going there once when it was newly opened to see the musical comedy "Nippy." ("Nippies" were the waitresses in Lyons' Tea Shops). I do not recall at all the Sexton Blake play which may well have followed "Nippy." It was presented by Donald Stuart productions (would that be the Blake author or the husband of Rene Houston?), and Arthur Wontner played Sexton Blake. I feel that it did not run for long at the Prince Edward. Otherwise I should surely have gone to see it, and would remember it now. Does any reader recall it?

FROM THE POSTBAG:

Unusually interesting items from a very large postbag this month include a letter from Mr. J. Twells of Rugby who sends me a picture of the famous horse "E.S.B.," now enjoying retirement in some sylvan spot. Who can ever forget "E.S.B." who won the Grand National some dozen years ago, much to the delight of large numbers of C.D. readers who, quite naturally, had affectionately put their shirts on him?

Also a letter from Mr. A. Watkin of New Zealand who recently made up a special shop window display of which he sends me marvellous photographs. In his display Mr. Watkin included almost every old boys' paper you can think of, and I spent a fascinated five minutes picking them out from his pictures.

YES & NO:

The very first published story of E. S. Brooks appeared in a periodical named "Yes & No." I feel sure that I recall my sister having copies of this paper long ago - a production on the lines of Smart Novels. Like most women's and girls' periodicals, however, nobody seems to have retained it, and it is most difficult

to get hold of a copy now. Has any reader, by chance, got a copy of Yes & No tucked away somewhere? How many of our readers recall it and can give us any particulars about it?

THE EDITOR

The other "FUN AND FICTION"

By W. O. G. Lofts

O. W. Wadham's query on the FUN AND FICTION that appeared in 1929 is easily explained. Actually this was a continuation of the small BOYS REALM. Number 81 of this paper was called BOYS REALM OF FUN AND FICTION. Likewise number 82. Then it started number 1 on the 16th February 1929 titled THE REALM (in small letters) of FUN AND FICTION. The contents certainly were vastly different from the old paper of a similar title, being simply films written up in story form. It was almost identical to BOYS CINEMA. This paper ran until No. 51, 1st February 1930; then it reverted to number 1 again with a new title, SCREEN STORIES OF FUN AND FICTION. This had a fairly longish run for 289 issues - then it was incorporated with the BOYS CINEMA. It is somewhat debatable whether THE REALM OF FUN AND FICTION could be classed as a boys' paper. Its appeal could be to readers of all ages and sexes, like the old FUN AND FICTION in 1911. Being incorporated eventually into BOYS CINEMA I suppose could justify its inclusion into records of boys' papers.

WANTED - BY PERCY. F. WESTERMAN:- "War Cargo," "Sea Scouts at Dunkirk," "Alan Carr in Arctic," "Luck of Golden Dawn," "Mystery of the Key." KINGSTON'S - "The Three Commanders" and "The Three Admirals." SEXTON BLAKE ANNUALS. HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1926. DETECTIVE WEEKLY'S Nos. 1, 2, 9 & 15. CHRISTMAS NOS. UNION JACK & DETECTIVE WEEKLY. A l s o :- "WORLD OF CRICKET," 1914, "DEFENDING THE ASHES, 1920/1" P.G.H. FENDER "THE WORM" - COKE, "WICKETS IN THE WEST" - R. A. FITZGERALD. "QUEST FOR THE ASHES" - K. McKAY. "CAPTAIN'S STORY" - BOBBY SIMPSON "LILLEYWHITE'S CRICKETERS' COMPANIONS," (green) 1865, 1866 & 1870.

E. A. COOMBES, 180, KINGS ROAD, SWANAGE, DORSET.

WANTED: "CHUMS," one bound volume (12 months) year 1928 or thereabouts.

Write: J. CUNDLE, 32, PROSPECT HOUSE, GAYWOOD STREET, S.E.1.

WANTED: "Union Jacks, 1918 - 1930 vintage."
 M.P. PAINE, 3620 QUADRA STREET, VICTORIA, B.C., CANADA.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

IN PENSIVE MOOD AT ST. FRANK'S

By JIM COOK

I think it was George Bernard Shaw who said "reminiscences make one feel so deliciously aged and sad" and he may have been right, but I have just left St. Frank's with a feeling of intense gladness after spending an hour with the Duke of Somerton of Study G in the Ancient House.

The Duke and his Study chum, Cecil De Valerie, had invited me to tea, but Val had suddenly remembered an appointment with Dr. Brett and soon after the meal was over he had departed for Dr. Brett's surgery, leaving us alone.

Somerton protested when I prepared to leave and suggested my staying for a chat, so after the table had been cleared, we brought our chairs nearer to the blazing fire and made ourselves comfortable.

A subdued atmosphere had descended on the old school for it was the hour of prep. A cold easterly wind was blowing in from the Bannington Moor and rattling the study window. And outside, the dark Triangle looked mysterious and foreboding.

It was a time for sitting round a cheerful fire. A time for reminiscence, and we both felt in the mood for it.

Since Somerton did not arrive at St. Frank's when the school history began to be recorded - he came just before Reggie Pitt - nevertheless the Duke is able to recall most of the major events of the St. Frank's saga and I was regaled to a very interesting hour of past glories which Somerton can truthfully relate.

The duty of historians is to chronicle major events or, as Voltaire asserts, of crimes, and the history of St. Frank's is mainly of outstanding happenings of Crime, Adventure and Sport. Such mundane events as purchasing sardines from the village grocer for a study tea or fancy comestibles to welcome the Moor View girls after an invitation were ever hardly recorded unless such events had a direct bearing to greater issues. Sometimes they did.

Let me recall some of the Duke's recollections. Of the time the Remove were up against the Sixth for fagging. The seniors, led by Starke, Kenmore and Frinton were determined to make the juniors fag for them and the juniors in turn were equally determined not to fag. It didn't last long. Nipper told the fellows to carry out orders literally and when Nick Trotwood was ordered by Frinton

to have his bike thoroughly scraped Trotwood did just that! He scraped all the enamel off it!

But mundane things like buying eggs and butter at the village grocer I mentioned just now had to be recorded in this story since the juniors were ordered to prepare Starke's tea and they bought up all the bad eggs, rancid butter and stale bread that Binks, the grocer proclaimed he didn't store.

Well, that soon put a stop to the juniors fagging for the seniors. After that specially prepared tea the bullying seniors relied on the doubtful services of the Third.

The next event to disturb the cloistered calm of the school - as Somerton put it - was the arrival of Jack Grey, or rather Jack Mason as he was first called. But although Jack did really disturb the rustic calm during the first weeks of his coming, it was later that the great African adventure came about through Jack's possession of a mysterious locket.

But before the crowd went to Africa St. Frank's was to see an upheaval that was spoken about for years afterwards. A Colonel Clinton was due to arrive and shake the old school to its foundations.

The Colonel ran the College House on military lines and Somerton made me shiver as he described the terrible time when all the College House juniors were forced to march in the snow and drill in the icy Triangle. Later, it was found the Colonel was insane.

When the juniors came back from the treasure hunting expedition to North Africa a strange new boy was at St. Frank's. A Greek. He was a terrible newcomer, Somerton recalled, and possessed a vicious temper. He set the College House on fire and as a result the whole school had to be found alternative accommodation. This brought a period in the history of St. Frank's when the school was transferred to London. And it was probably the first time that an actual building was described to take the place recorded as the Turret School, but the juniors preferred to name it St. Frank's the second.

A Barring-Out followed the juniors' return to Bellton and a newly decorated St. Frank's. The old school had housed one or two bad masters to the Duke's knowledge in its time but a Mr. Martin had appeared on the scene suddenly and had taken the place of Dr. Stafford, who had been retired following the fire in the College House. And this Mr. Martin had turned out to be a bully. An

uncultured man of cruel ways and harsh methods. A rebellion resulted. A barring-out the juniors will remember for many a long day.

Then came the hon. Douglas Singleton to St. Frank's! Duggy is a very different junior nowadays to what he was when he first came to St. Frank's. I'm sorry I can't relate all that Somerton told me but Singleton spent money like water. He even bought a school! But with Nelson Lee looking after him Singleton's money was saved for him.

It was at this point that I noticed Somerton was glancing at a notebook. It seems the Duke also has a record of St. Frank's! Actually, he explained to me, he keeps a diary, and thus was able to follow the history of the school from the time he came.

De Valerie came into the study from his visit to Dr. Brett and I promised to attend another "session" with Somerton and his diary. It is a large diary for "Sommy" has touched only the fringe of the St. Frank's saga.

I left Study G not with sadness but with memories that will stay with me forever. For hasn't the poet told us God has given us memories that we might have roses in December!

* * * * *

Is it Nostalgia?

By CYRIL ROWE

The Nelson Lee always appealed to me. I first came across it in 1917 when I was eight years old, and I graduated from "The Rainbow" in one quick step.

Some of the early numbers, - indeed, I remember the first; "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach" came the way of my brother and myself from a young fellow just called up into the army.

I remember quite a number of "Jim the Penman" tales - "The Monk of Montessor" title stays with me.

From then onwards we took the periodical weekly, in the thin numbers of paper rationing to the improved size of type after the war ended, when pages were regained.

So I remember Nipper first arriving at St. Frank's, and how entertainingly and how pulsatingly the saga kept going through the years.

I'm fifty-eight now so it is just a jubilee ago since we first met.

Is it in nostalgia that I am now re-enjoying the whole run, through the invaluable library at Dollis Hill and the keen and

friendly librarian Bob Blythe?

I don't quite think so, though there must be an element of this in it.

In the brilliant sunshine of that great summer of 1921 when Armstrong's men kept The Ashes, Jerry Dodd was with us! I've always been and still am a keen cricketer so this was just my meat. Golden days and golden tales.

The chills and mists of evening and eeriness of dusk in the lanes of the village I lived in! Dare I go out alongside the spinney and swop with a U.J. or a Boys' Friend when Ezra Quirke and Dr. Karnac were occupying the St. Frank's scene!

These were compelling tales - I've not got back to them again as yet - and I await with some eagerness still.

Perhaps not the eagerness of waiting weekly at the counter of our local shop as the daily parcel of newspapers from the wholesaler's is opened, not worrying about The Times, The Morning Post, The News, etc. but where is the little journal hidden farther down?

But certainly I'll enjoy again the narrative, the quirks (sorry) and the byways, the tremendous puzzle and the deft solution and the happy conclusion.

I know Brooks has been accused of pouring in characters so that the chosen train of events could pursue them and create the story line. I know that some of these characters then took a subsidiary place. But may I ask what credence would be given to these immense series if they had all been pegged to two or three characters?

Could we have had Pitt, Lawrence, Dodd, as football-boxing-cricket marvels?

No, the talent must go round. The story must circulate round enough people.

A school is full of pupils, and all are individuals, and from time to time all come to the fore. The thread is always kept going by the nucleus of Nipper and Co and Nelson Lee himself.

I see no reason to quarrel with Brooks' deployment of effort, and spread of character material.

I believe it is this more than anything that keeps me satisfied with the N.L. despite the years that have gone by.

The thing which irks me most now is the first person narrative by Nipper. How much less a paragon he seemed when he became Richard Hamilton and the tale proceeded in the third person! So much easier to accept is the indirect approach. Better for Brooks

to have insight to the thoughts of his characters than that Nipper should. This I may say never worried me at the time.

How I enjoyed the series as they ran, and how welcome were the "Monster Library" volumes that contained the whole when they appeared in the mid-twenties. A poor lad, I could not afford them and keep the current supply going, but my brother did, and I believe he still possesses them, dilapidated by reading habits of the younger generation.

Has this romance been constant? I'm afraid in my early youth I forsook it in its closing years in the thirties.

However I was restored to the fold with a purchase of the SOL in the late thirties. These I later gave away during the war to the younger generation.

Now in the last few years, musing with my growing children over the old days, I came in happy contact with the O.B.B.C. and am back again where I commenced.

Fifty years - a golden wedding? - well maybe it is nostalgia, but there's a powerful lot of story content and enjoyment there yet.

So my boys tell me.

R E V I E W

SEXTON BLAKE OMNIBUS No. 3.

Howard Baker Publishers

SEXTON BLAKE OMNIBUS No. 4.

12/6 each.

Volume No. 3 contains "The Witches of Notting Hill" by W. A. Ballinger, and "Slaying on the 16th Floor" by Arthur McLean. Volume No. 4 contains "The Mind Killers" by Martin Thomas, and "Vengeance is Ours" by Peter Saxon. Each of these stories was reviewed in Collectors' Digest in 1965 - 1966, and, gathered together in these omnibuses, they provide great entertainment for any Blake fan.

The volumes are splendidly produced, and must form a welcome addition to any man's library. The price of each volume has risen from 8/6 to 12/6, probably due to the ripples from the recent Budget - but even at the increased price they are excellent value for money and deserve substantial sales. You might also bring them to the attention of those in charge of local libraries. It would be a good turn for Sexton Blake and for the enterprising publishers.

W A N T E D : "ADVENTURE;" "HOTSPUR;" "ROVER;" "WIZARD;" and their Annuals. However old or new, but particularly 1950 - 1964.
J. CALVERT, 67 BRAMERTON RD., BILBOROUGH, NOTTINGHAM, NG8. 4NN.

DANNY'S DIARY

MAY 1918

My cousin Robin who lives at Aldershot came to spend Whitsun with us, and he caused something of a catastrophe.

We went to the pictures one evening to see Jack Pickford and Louise Huff in "The Spirit of 17." Robin spent 2½d on five cigarettes, and I spent 2d on some biscuits which were shaped like letters of the alphabet.

In the pictures we had one cigarette each and we enjoyed the serial and a Keystone comic. Then we started on my letter biscuits which were rather soft and tasted very soapy. The big picture had only just started when Robin whispered to me that he began to feel awful. We couldn't stop in the cinema with Robin feeling awful, so we went out, and we hadn't enough money to take a tram so we had to walk.

Robin felt more and more awful as we walked, and before we got home he was giving proof of it at the side of the road. This made me feel awful, too, and I longed for death. We looked at one another under a dim street light. He looked gruesome, and he said I had a green tinge.

When we got in, Doug was there with his girl friend, Edith Gill. She is a horrible person. Mum was very alarmed when she saw how Robin and I looked, and Edith said, sniffing: "They've been smoking. That's what's the matter with them."

I gave her a look which I hope she will remember till the end of her days, and then I tottered away.

The Boys' Friend has been as good as ever this month. The Rookwood tales are a new series about Bulkeley. The first tale was "A Blow for Bulkeley." The uncle of Catesby is a banker who works with the father of Bulkeley. Uncle meets Catesby of the Sixth at a secret spot and hands his nephew a parcel which he must look after carefully. By chance, Jimmy Silver & Co see what takes place. Later, Bulkeley's father is arrested at Rookwood by the detective, Mr. Screw. He is accused of theft.

In the next tale "The Shadow of Suspicion" Bulkeley leaves Rookwood, and Knowles has an eye on the captaincy.

In "Rivals for the Captaincy," Knowles and Neville are the candidates, but, by a little bit of trickery, Knowles wins.

Last story was "Rough on Rookwood," with Knowles playing cricket against St. Jim's with a team composed mostly of Moderns.

This is an entertaining series.

As always, Cedar Creek has been first-class. Opening tale was the last of the Trevelyan series, "Saved by His Son," and Beauclerc saved his father while Mr. Trevelyan went off to claim the estates to which he was heir.

"Chunky's Secret" was his love for Molly Lawrence. It was Molly who managed to cure Chunky.

Then a tip-top new series. "Frank Richards & Co's Cruise" told how Frank, Bob, and Beau, through the activities of Gunten, found themselves flying loose in a balloon which belonged to a Mr. Chowder. In the last tale of the month "Adrift in the Air," the balloon came down near the Cascade Mountains, and the Co found themselves crossing swords with an ear-ringed man named Alf Carson. Lovely exciting stories.

In the Nelson Lee series the rebellion brought about by Mr. Kennedy Hunter, the horrible housemaster, has gone on, and it is developing into a very long series indeed. This month's stories - the two I had - were called "The Rebel Remove," and "Sticking to Their Guns." It is thrilling and also has plenty of fun as the Remove Revolutionary Army work hard to put paid to their hunnish master.

There was a very big air raid on London by 30 large Gotha planes. 44 people were killed and nearly 200 injured. The British put on a huge reprisal raid against Cologne in daylight.

There has been an explosion at a munitions factory somewhere in the north of England, and several people were killed. When this sort of thing happens, they don't report much on it in the newspapers.

The Gem, as it so often does, reminds me of the curit's egg this month. The taste alters as you eat it.

Each story has gone on with the Sports Contest. "The Shell Scores" was rather dull, even though it was all about a cricket match. I don't like this sort of tale.

Next week "Racke's Man" was much better. The bit about Trimble fighting with a kind of armour under his shirt, and Skimpole hurting his fists every time he punched, was silly but you couldn't help laughing. Racke has taken a bungalow called "The Hollies" and has installed there a man named Berrymore who supplies him with food against the regulations. Tom Merry quickly sends Berrymore packing. This was a good yarn.

"The Skipper of the Shell Second" was Gore, and he was captain

in yet another cricket match which was just as dull as the other one. Just facts and figures which didn't amount to much.

Last of the month was "Friends Though Divided" and this was good. Frank Levison is in charge of the book in which all the scores in the sports contest are listed - and the book disappears. This story was mainly about the chums of the Third.

The Magnet has been pretty good this month, even though none of the stories was the type I blow a trumpet over. It was Ogilvy who was "Saved From Shame" by his brother Malcolm. It was a cleverly worked out plot. Through Bunter, Ogilvy was suspected of trying to steal. His brother Malcolm, on a visit to Greyfriars before going to the Front, took matters in hand.

Next week "A Soldier's Son" was a bit feeble. It featured another Malcolm. Coker met Connie Malcolm who asked him to keep an eye on her brother who was going to Greyfriars though he really wanted to join the army.

The last two tales of the month were "The Man From the Somme" and "His Father's Son." These were very good indeed, the only drawback being that Snoop and his father were the central characters - and it is hard to believe in anybody with a name like Snoop. Mr. Snoop was an escaped convict who had joined the army. But now the law had caught up with him, and Inspector Clyne was on his track. In the end, Mr. Snoop won the King's Pardon. Two good stories.

Mum and I went to the pictures one night and saw H. B. Irving in "The Lyons Mail," and we liked it.

Also at the pictures we saw "A Branded Soul" which starred Gladys Brockwell. Owen Nares and Douglas Munro were in "Flames." Especially good was Douglas Fairbanks in "Wild and Woolly." There is a new serial called "The Red Ace," and there have been plenty of Keystone Comedies and Sunshine Comedies in the programmes. One cinema also shows a kind of magazine picture called Pathe Pictorial.

The meat ration has gone up a bit. The value of a meat coupon is now 6d instead of 5d, which is a step in the right direction.

I don't suppose we shall get much of a holiday this year with the war getting tougher, but Dad took us to London one day and we went to the matinee of "The Bing Boys on Broadway" at the Alhambra in Leicester Square. This is a lovely, huge theatre, with heaps of boxes, all gilt.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

PEDRO HITS THE HEADLINES

from GERRY ALLISON

(Concluded)

Here is the second article on Pedro by Northerner II, from the Yorkshire Post.

THE BLOODHOUND'S REVENGE

"SENSATIONAL is the only word that will serve. Before me lies sensational confirmation of my theory that Pedro, the bloodhound in the Sexton Blake TV serial, is labouring under a sense of injustice.

Earlier this week I referred to Pedro's marked lack of interest in all the excitement that goes on around him. I concluded that his boredom springs from his feeling that he should be sitting in Blake's armchair deducing whodunnit, while Blake and his assistant Tinker do all the running about.

Mr. G. Allison, librarian of The Old Boys' Book Club has kindly sent me a copy of "The Bloodhound's Revenge." This was published in the Sexton Blake Library in 1926, and gives a graphic picture of Pedro's exploits of yesteryear.

In Chapter I he is beaten up by the villainous Langham Ferrers and left to starve to death in a cellar. Rescued in the nick of time he makes a rapid recovery.

In Chapter II he tangles with Ferrers and his henchmen again. Again he is beaten up, but manages to escape with multiple injuries, including a broken rib: "He was incapable indeed, in the pitiful state he was in, of using what deductive faculties he possessed ... His one aim was that of self-preservation."

A GLUTON FOR PUNISHMENT

Cared for by a kindly farmer, Pedro makes a rapid recovery. Reunited with Blake and Tinker, he saves their lives when the Ferrers gang try to gun them down.

Pedro draws the gunmen off with a cunning that makes Blake exclaim: "The splendid old dog! It is amazing what a fresh streak of intelligence he has developed lately! He clearly understood that our lives were in danger, and he is drawing those scoundrels off to give us a chance to escape."

However, Pedro's fresh streak of intelligence does not save him from falling into a trap set by Langham Ferrers. Beaten up once more, he is drugged and imprisoned in a cellar in London, where he is kept on short rations -- "What meagre food was grudgingly thrown to him consisted of dry crusts of bread and mouldy biscuits."

But the noble hound holds out until Tinker comes to the rescue, and, in the final scene: "Baying loudly with rage, Pedro leapt at Langham Ferrers and knocked him down; crouched over him and snarled with bared teeth at his throat."

FATHER OF PRIVATE EYES?

What struck me about this record of Pedro's exploits was the number of clobberings he endured, his rapid recoveries and his dogged pursuit of the villain. It all sounded familiar.

Then it hit me. This is precisely what happens to private eyes in American thrillers.

Doggedly following a scent, the private eye enters an hotel bedroom. A blonde lies on the floor. She is dead. Very dead. A split second too late he hears the swish of a blackjack behind his right ear. The floor rushes up and hits him. He falls down a long black tunnel.

When he comes to, he has a splitting headache and a general feeling of having been run over by a tank. But after a cold shower and a slug of Bourbon he feels in fair shape to go out and get beaten up all over again.

Can it be that Pedro was the 1926 prototype of the human private eye? I have little doubt of it. I suspect that Dashiell Hammett and other top American crime writers, full of admiration for Pedro, turned their detectives into bloodhounds of his indomitable breed.

Small wonder, then, that "the splendid old dog" now feels he's had more than his fair share of the rough stuff and prefers to leave it to Blake and Tinker to take the humpty.

How can Blake be so obtuse? The sooner he moves over and lets Pedro exercise his deductive faculties from an armchair the better I shall be pleased."

Those entertaining pieces of journalism go to show how much Sexton Blake is in the news these days. The following week, I had an article of my own printed in the Yorkshire Post - again about Pedro.

After Hamiltoniana, I have lent out more books about Sexton Blake from our Northern Club library than any other form of juvenile

literature. I was very glad to hear that the London Club are discussing plans for reviving the Sexton Blake section of their own library. I never take up a Union Jack or an S.B.L. without that grand feeling of pleasurable excitement we all know so well.

* * * * *

LAST OF THE EDWARDIANS

By WALTER WEBB

It was the time of the great blitz on London by the most powerful air armada in world history. The Luftwaffe, making the most of its short-lived supremacy of the skies, was releasing its bombs on the metropolis with an utter disregard of life and non-military objectives. Choking dust and acrid smoke was a grimy, wafted curtain before the window of your watering eyes as you picked your way gingerly over the rubble and hose which littered the city streets. And from the cover of an S.B.L. numbered 715, entitled "The Case of The Dictator's Double," the sharp, unpleasant features, with their small Chaplin moustache, of the criminal responsible for the carnage, glared from bookstalls all over the battered city.

For various reasons, some good, some bad, certain stories linger in the memory long after others have been forgotten. That this one has remained in mine is not due to any sort of merit, but rather to the complete lack of it, coupled with the fact that it contains the most amazing error I have ever encountered in a Sexton Blake story. Not all the drama is to be found on the front cover of this book. Behind it is both a story and a song - the swan-song of the last of the Edwardian Blake writers. It was the last time the familiar name of Allan Blair, nom-de-plume of Mr. William J. Bayfield, was to be seen on the cover of a Sexton Blake story. It was a story behind which another, without words, lurked, but which was just as easy to read. The story of a journalist, who, having reached the summit from one side of the hill, had descended with ever increasing momentum down the other, to reach rock-bottom with the sort of story far best forgotten.

A girl is discovered, murdered, in a cupboard of a house. Blake, who examines her, is left in no doubt that she is dead. Yet, a few chapters later, the author describes her as running frantically through the house, screaming hysterically, as she is pursued by crooks. In "The Case of the Stolen Police Dossier," published immediately before the title just referred to, there is another bad mistake. A local police-officer decides to take a dossier to

Scotland Yard. It is a decision made on the spur of the moment, with no possibility of anyone being aware of his intention. But on his way to the Yard he is attacked and the dossier stolen from him. Granted there were people employed at Fleetway in the capacity of proof-readers, there seemed no indication of their presence. On the contrary, indications were strong that a very lax attitude prevailed throughout the editorial offices of the S.B.L. at that time. Both these novels were fortunate to find their way to the bookstalls, and under less indulgent editorship they certainly never would have. It is sad to reflect that after 32 years of continuous Blake writing Allan Blair should retire with his reputation damaged due to carelessness in producing two stories he obviously had very little interest in working on, although the reason seems clear enough.

Some time ago there was a pathetic reference to Bayfield, then an old and enfeebled man, of finding life in war-torn London hard to bear. This remorseless advance of that incurable disease known as old age is apt to hit the dedicated journalist with far more damaging effect than it would the man who uses his physical strength to earn a living, for many years working over a typewriter is hardly conducive to robust health, and when an undermined constitution finds itself bereft of incentives and ambitions, then life holds precious little for the unfortunate writer.

From a careful analysis of what little is to be gleaned of the author, it seems that Bayfield was born of Scottish parents in the late 1860's, and that he wrote exclusively for Fleetway House publications, for his name is surprisingly absent from papers issued from publishing firms such as Henderson, Aldine, Newnes, Pearson, and the rest. In fact, as far as can be ascertained, he was never a free-lance, as has been stated, but was employed at Fleetway House from the time he started until 1942, when he disappeared from human ken and was never seen again. Although in the capacity of boys' writer Bayfield has been mentioned quite frequently in collectors' papers, his work in the Blake field has been somewhat neglected. Described by an editor as a gentleman and a sound writer who took his job seriously, Bayfield's best period was undoubtedly that between 1908 and 1925, when he had reached the point many people are pleased to refer to as the prime of life. An author who served his apprenticeship with the firm in 1910 remembers Bayfield as one of "the old brigade" even in those days, and working for a paper called ANSWERS LIBRARY, a weekly dish devoted to harrowing descriptions of domestic turmoil, over which other

Blake authors including G. H. Teed, Gregory Hill, Sidney Drew, Andrew Murray, etc., poured all the lush sentimentality of which their ingenuity was capable. An old family periodical to which many well-known Edwardian novelists subscribed and illustrated by famous UNION JACK and MAGNET artists, it is never mentioned in the collectors' papers, though many an interesting article could be written about its career.

Although a Scotsman, Bayfield set surprisingly few of his Blake stories across the border, and his lack of knowledge of foreign parts obviously deterred him from taking the Baker Street trio too far from English shores. His first stories for UNION JACK, in which his name has been linked with that of G. Carr, were outstandingly good for the period in which they were written, and a string of horse-racing tales attributed to him in the same paper, circa 1909-10, were quite well told, although, on studying their phraseology, it is obvious that they were produced in collaboration with Arthur S. Hardy, who specialised in yarns of the Turf. The editor was perhaps inspired to publish them by reason of the dedication to the sport of the then reigning monarch, King Edward VII, whose death during mid-publication plunged both the nation and its Empire into deep mourning and brought the Edwardian era to an abrupt and premature close.

Many Blake writers have shown a tendency to take the Baker Street trio out of the country and set their stories against a foreign background. Probably it was a case of "Tis distance lends enchantment to the view" where they were concerned; but Bayfield preferred to choose some of the many beauty spots in the British Isles in which to set Blake off on his investigations. He never lost an opportunity of bringing Pedro into the scheme of things, and, having a particular affection for the canine member of the old firm, recall with pleasure many relaxed hours in following the trio in their investigations along the highways and byways of our varied English countryside. I admit to liking Blake in a foreign setting; but there was a fascination about Bayfield's conception of the English scene which never failed to attract me. The green slopes of a meadow in the West Country. The mission of the trio the apprehension of a dangerous criminal lurking in hiding nearby. Their crouching figures are shown in silhouette as the setting sun sinks behind the blushing peaks of distant hills. Silence save for an occasional rustle in the undergrowth as a rabbit is disturbed by their stealthy approach, and for the faint rumble of a train

approaching some distant station, its passage marked by a gradually lengthening and thinning wreath of smoke across the skyline. A flock of sheep. A shepherd and his dog. A solitary cyclist pedalling cautiously along a narrow, rutty lane, with, above, an untidy formation of roosters, wings flapping dully. They are the only signs of life as Blake and Tinker, with Pedro tugging excitedly at his leash, approach their quarry.

What a transformation today! The safety of the shepherd, his dog, the sheep, and the cyclist, is jeopardised by the rampaging motor-cyclist. The song of the rooster is drowned by the ear-splitting sound of the high-powered jet, whilst the countryside itself is rapidly receding before the remorseless onslaught of a housing drive unsurpassed in our history. All the simplicity which Bayfield introduced into his Blake work then finds no echo at all in the tougher, sophisticated tales by authors of the modern school. Gone, too, is the author. His passing, and the circumstances leading up to it, provide yet another problem for the Blakianian, for his death was never recorded. Was he, by chance, one of the many victims dragged unrecognisable and unidentified from the rubble of some bombed site, a victim of the devilry of the very man whose features so unwholesomely adorned the front cover of his last book? Although he lacked the brilliance of an Evans, the liveliness of a Brooks, and the knowledge of a Teed, I am happy to pay tribute of such length to the memory of a writer who, for 32 years, was such an asset to our colourful team of Blake writers.

* * * * *

"THE MAN WHO MADE SEXTON BLAKE"

By C. A. J. LOWDER

(continued)

The Editor of the Marvel, in his own small way, wanted, I think, to create a character who, come Hell and high water, would still be inexistence long after he himself was forgotten. (I think even he would be surprised, however, if he could return from wherever he is sojourning now, to learn that his brain-child has passed into the folk-lore of a nation.)

With this in mind, he probably called in one of his old reliables - or, since the paper was so young, a writer whom he knew he could depend on for a good tale - and asked him what he had on the stocks. A detective story? Fine! About a missing millionaire? Wonderful! What was the detective's name? Blake. Frank Blake? Well now, what about something a little more unusual, a little more

out of the ordinary, a little more sinister? Sexton Blake?
Perfect!

No doubt a little fanciful - but the core of Blake's birth is, surely, there. And, I think, there can be no question of the Editor's determination to perpetuate the myth he had set in motion.

Why else should Blake's adventures be continued after Harry Blyth's death?

After all, up until that moment, Blyth had penned about ten Blake stories for the Marvel and Union Jack - not more, probably less. Ten stories, at intervals over a period of little more than 18 months, cannot really be said to be the sort of thing that sets the world on fire.

Yet Blake continued to flourish, even though Blyth's style of writing, in his original tales, was not exactly brilliant. What was it, then, that the detective had that made the public want more?

I don't think the reading public of those days took to Blake until the turn of the century, when he began to appear, so to speak, in all directions at once, and was not confined exclusively to the Union Jack. This is proof positive that, by then, Blake was popular.

But through the 1890s I seem to detect a guiding hand in the background, helping him along. Explain it how you like, I prefer my Editor, a man who stuck to his guns.

Another factor, of course, is that in 1895 W. Shaw Rae virtually took over the Blake series. The very first "substitute" writer after Blyth's death, as far as I know, was that old faithful "Anon," who wrote Union Jack No. 43, entitled "Tracked Round The World." (I am, by the way, indebted to Blakiana Hostess Josephine Packman, for printing the Halfpenny U.J. list of Blake authors and titles some years back.) Probably "Anon" was Shaw Rae anyway - the latter was destined to be the first really prolific Blake' chronicler.

The point is, Rae is generally considered to have been an above-average writer. Obviously, this sort of thing helped tremendously in Blake's climb to the top. (continued)

W A N T E D : MAGNETS, pre-1940 copies of Skipper, Hotspur,
Wizard, Adventure, Rover and Comics.

DENNIS MALLET, 24, BATCHELORS BARN, ANDOVER.

HAMILTONIANA

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 123: NO SUMMER! NO STORY!

Originally, perhaps, it occurred to Solomon that one swallow does not make a summer. Had he lived a couple of thousand years later it might also have occurred to him that a sports contest does not make a story.

Two of the substitute writers had the impression that an account of a fictitious sporting event would capture the interest of a reader and thrill him to the core. And, if one event would do that, than a string of sporting events, full of detail and statistics, must be a smash-hit, unflinching attraction.

Charles Hamilton knew quite well that both these premises were wrong. A single sporting event would fascinate the reader if it came about as the climax of varying human emotions as in the cricket match when the star player, Stacey, failed and Wharton was able to show his true worth. A single sporting event would enthral the reader if it resulted in varying human emotions as when Wharton made up a football eleven which was a "thing of shreds and patches" in the Rebel series.

But stories which merely described sporting events were as dull as a thirty-year old Wisden to the average reader. The Gem suffered most from these slices of boredom, though the Magnet had more than enough of them in the early twenties.

Danny reminds us that it is just fifty years ago since the big sports contest series was running in the Gem. There were actually 25 weeks between the first story and the last of this lot, though during that time there were a few tales which had nothing to do with the contest. From its length, and from the effect upon readers of its so obviously overstaying its welcome, this series is undoubtedly the most notorious of all the sporting series. Looking at it now, one can be a little more generous and wonder whether, just possibly, it is quite deserving of the odium which it gained with many readers.

The basis of the series was absurdly slim for the length of time that it was to run. Contests were to be held between the Shell and the Fourth Forms; Lefevre of the Fifth was to be a kind of consultant umpire, and Frank Levison of the Third was to keep

the scores in a special book. This book was to feature especially in one of the stories by Charles Hamilton.

Hamilton himself wrote some of the stories in the series, and though these particular yarns were no masterpieces they were well-written and immensely readable, even though they were not sufficient to prevent the series as a whole being a black patch in Gem history.

Pentelow and Hamilton must have planned this series together. We can be fairly certain that the original idea was Pentelow's. Sporting events were right up his street, and he is reputed to have written well of them though I find his accounts in some of the tales in the series quite unbelievable. Hamilton never wrote of a sports series, and it is quite unlikely that he created or had much faith in this one.

Nevertheless, he co-operated with the series, as he had co-operated with other series which had been basically created by Pentelow. Hamilton wrote a pleasant little piece of nonsense where points were gained in a succession of japes. He wrote of the boat-race event. He took over, from Pentelow, "Racke's Man" who was some individual whom Racke had installed in a cottage near St. Jim's for the purpose of food-hoarding. Hamilton disposed of Racke's man in a pleasant little tale which had its moments. He wrote of the fight between Trimble and Skimpole in which only body blows were allowed, an amusing if unbelievable piece of subterfuge on Trimble's part. Hamilton wrote of the strange disappearance of the record book which was the responsibility of Frank Levison. He wrote of the chess encounter between Manners for the Shell and Koumi Rao for the Fourth - an encounter which eventually took place while an air raid was in progress. In one or two of the previous stories, he told of Manners planning his moves for the game of chess when it should materialise.

There is not much doubt that Hamilton loved chess, but one would not think it a game about which anyone could write in a manner which would please and excite the average juvenile. It says something for Hamilton's genius that he was able to do just that.

Anyone can assume, if he wishes, that Hamilton wrote these stories into Pentelow's sports contest series "under editorial direction." For me, such a view does not make much sense. It might be natural that Hamilton would not wish to cross swords with his editor, but, all the same, it seems obvious to me that Hamilton was far too valuable an asset of the Amalgamated Press for Pentelow

to be in a position to throw his weight about where Hamilton was concerned. Far more likely, I think, that the whole arrangement suited Hamilton's book admirably.

He was writing Cedar Creek and Rookwood every week for the Boys' Friend. Some time had gone by since he switched his main attention from St. Jim's to Greyfriars, and he was in the thick of various Redwing series. It seems feasible to think that it suited him to leave the general plot formations for the Gem at this time to Pentelow, while he himself slipped in the odd couple of tales now and then.

Probably, in my view, there was something psychological in it, too. Whatever Pentelow's worth as a general writer of boys' tales may have been, he was an also ran where St. Jim's was concerned. Hamilton's tales in the Pentelow series stood out like gold among the dross. Pentelow, possibly, could not see it, but certainly Hamilton did. And in my opinion Hamilton, being human, enjoyed it immensely.

Whether I am right or wrong, one thing is abundantly clear. Hamilton need not have contributed to the sports contest series if he hadn't wanted to. He had quite enough on his plate for him to make excuses till the sports contest had ended. Instead of writing contest stories, he could have written a new St. Jim's series all his own, to follow on when the contest had run its weary course.

I said earlier that Hamilton never wrote of a sports series. It would have been more accurate to have said that Hamilton never wrote a sports series in which the sports were the major part of the plot. He wrote "The Cardew Cup" series, 6 stories in the Gem of late 1922, but how vastly different that was from the affair in 1918. Cardew found himself very unpopular as a result of his slack habits. He conceived the idea of getting his grandfather to present a cup to be won as the result of a football tournament. Unfortunately, Cardew's plans went awry, and he found it necessary to visit a pawnshop in order to finance the project. There was a great deal of subtle, witty humour in this series, and Cardew's persiflage was a delight to read. The cup and its vicissitudes were far more important than the actual fights to win the cup. Even here, with large patches of Hamilton at his most brilliant, the series does not quite ring the bell, for, inevitably, there was too much football for the average reader. And descriptions of fictitious games do not make a story. Luckily there was plenty more than football in the Cardew Cup series. But this one was probably the last of its type in which Hamilton ever engaged. A good

job, too.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

LURIE SUTTON: I was very interested in your comments on "The Shadow of the Past." I have studied this story and, like you, conclude that the Pepper's Barn references are too numerous and fit too smoothly for the story to have been largely rewritten by Pentelow. I suspect that certain short passages may have been written by Pentelow but the story must, I feel, have been written by Charles Hamilton in personal consultation with Pentelow. As you point out, all previous references to Pepper's Barn must still have been in manuscript form - in fact the "Pepper's Gold" story to which reference is made was only published a fortnight earlier. I assume that Pentelow must have told Hamilton that he intended to revive the St. Jim's Parliament (which Hamilton established in 1908) and discussed the matter with him, for Hamilton's own stories featuring the Parliament and Pepper followed very close on Pentelow's. He must surely have been under some sort of pressure from Pentelow, however. Why, for instance, did he use Flip Derwent in "Flap's Brother" when Marjorie Hazeldene would have served the same purpose in a re-titled story?

Incidentally, there is at least one instance when Pentelow indisputably inserted his own work into a Hamilton story. This is in Gem 431 ("Grundy the Ventriloquist" - reprint 1581) in which Chapter 14 has been written in by Pentelow. A number of sentences and paragraphs were omitted from the reprint, including this very typical Pentelow: "The great heart of George Alfred Grundy swelled within him, until it was nigh to bursting. For one moment a dreadful doubt as to whether he was always and infallibly right assailed his mind. In the next it had vanished.

"Perish such doubts! When had he ever been wrong?

"He walked away with the hand of Eric Kildare heavy on his shoulder."

Kildare himself had the "great heart" in Gem 493, to which Pentelow gave the title "Kildare of the Great Heart."

JOHN TOMLINSON: My favourites at the four schools are still Jack Blake, Bob Cherry, Teddy Grace, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood. Handforth is still too much of a good thing, but whereas Bunter used to amuse me, I now find the Greyfriars stories contain too much Bunter. In fact, he has got to be almost as much of a bore as Handforth. I still regard Grundy as an intolerable nuisance.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ELIZABETH GERTRUDEwrites Norman Linford

Your letter in the Digest with reference to the revival of Bessie Bunter and Cliff House in the "Merlin" books interested me very much. The story "Bessie Bunter and the Gold Robbers" is actually a complete uncut reprint of the weekly series that ran in THE SCHOOLGIRL starting with 7 April, 1934 under the title of MABS MUST NEVER KNOW, 14th April, 1934, THE CAPTAIN THEY SCORNEED, 21st April, 1934, THE VERDICT OF THE FORM, 28th April, 1934, ALL TO SAVE HER CHUM. (4 weeks). And all written by John Wheway.

It is a matter of personal preference I think as to who wrote the best stories about Cliff House. As regards THE SCHOOL FRIEND my collection covers several bound volumes from the first issue of May 17th 1919 to January 26th 1924 (246 issues) as well as some 50 odd issues spread over the years 1924 - 1929. I have studied these stories very closely and feel that the "golden years" of THE SCHOOL FRIEND can be attributed to the works of Horace Phillips and Reg. Kirkham, not forgetting the grand old man himself, Charles Hamilton, who made such a good job of creating Cliff House and writing the first six stories. I often think had he have continued the writings he would have made quite a success of it although I remember when watching him being interviewed in 1960 on television and mention was made about Cliff House he said he thought he hadn't the flair for writing girls' stories.

I have a bound collection of THE SCHOOLGIRL from 1932 to 1940 which contained all the writings of Cliff House by John Wheway as well as the SCHOOL FRIEND annuals. Mr. Wheway's Cliff House is as you say very much different from the original -- and oh how so much different when comparing the MAGNET references to Cliff House in the 1930's, but I am bound to say my preference goes to Mr. Wheway who really had the "know-how" of presenting stories containing sports fixtures for the schoolgirl mind. He seemed able to bring the characters alive, and somewhere I seem to remember his ability being described as masterpieces of schoolgirl evolution. I admit he brought a big change into Cliff House by the introduction of new characters. The best new characters were Diana Royston, Clarke and Faith Ashton I think, although Lydia Crossendale, Leila Carrol, Narcelle Bicquet were close runners. I think his talent for bringing characters alive would have been better employed in concentrating on the old original characters of THE SCHOOL FRIEND, such as

Dolly Jobling, Cissy Clare, Annabel Hichens, and retaining these, instead of replacing with Janet Jordan, Elsie Effingham, Frances Frost, and others. But as you say there was a tendency for all new writers to bring in their own characters and who can say they were wrong as naturally with the passing of time there has to be changes. What was most confusing in the 1930's was to read of Cliff House in the Magnet and all about Miss Bellew of the Fourth Form, when you then turned to THE SCHOOLGIRL and found the Fourth Form mistress was Miss Charmant.

As regards Bessie Bunter I really think she became a much more lovable character, as when she first came to Cliff House she truly was a little "beast" and an exact copy of her brother. The reformation of Bessie was a slow process started by Horace Phillips, continued by Reg Kirkham, and L. E. Ransome (the latter's writing reducing Bessie's appearance in the majority of stories to practically a sentence or two). When Mr. Wheway took over in 1932 he had a new character in Bessie Bunter already made and happily he brought her back into the stories more prominently and polished her up.

I don't think the colour of Mabel Lynn's hair was ever mentioned in the School Friend series -- I remember Barbara Redfern being described as dark and olive skinned -- as the schoolgirl readers of the thirties showed such an interest in the characters I think Mr. Wheway was right to mention the colour of Mabel's hair. What better than to give her golden hair a direct contrast to Barbara's dark hair.

Perhaps some day we shall know more of why Charles Hamilton gave up writing about Cliff House in the School Friend, as I think he was capable of the extra output. It seems as though he was treated unfairly and thereafter one can understand why it annoyed him so about the other writings.

FOR SALE: Gems 656, 659, 664, 673, 676, 677, 681, 682, 696, 1448, 1449, 1450, 1451, 1453, 1455, 1457, 1473, 1474, 1475, 1476, 1477, 1479, 1480, 1550. Reasonably good copies 6/- each plus postage.
 Red MAGNETS: 306, 310, 311, 312, 12/6 each, plus postage.
 TRIUMPH 713 (1938) 2/6 plus postage. SCHOOLGIRL 465 (1938) 3/6 plus postage. Schoolgirls' Own Annual 1925, 5/- plus postage.
 S.a.e., first, please.

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

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh): Danny, with his wonderful diary, is most interesting, and I much enjoy his references to the old film stars. I remember the names of the stars, but Danny brings to mind the actual films. My sister has informed me that Jack Pickford's wife was Olive Thomas, who died at a very early age, so possibly Louise Huff was his second wife.

(That probably is the solution. Jack Pickford, himself, died young. - ED.)

WILLIAM LISTER (Blackpool): If over the past nine years C.D. has brought me any sorrow it has only been twice. The copy containing news of the passing of Edwy Searles Brooks and now news of the passing of Mrs. Edwy Searles Brooks.

I never met them but it stabs at the heart just the same. I wonder what will become of their collie-dog? I notice in one or two of the Berkeley Gray - Victor Gunn books some of the characters own a border collie - no doubt based on their own dog.

While being a "Nelson Lee" fan I can hardly say what I like best about C.D. I like it all - mop it up, so to speak.

What's this about Merlin books and "Nelson Lee"? It sounds good.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): What a fine, nostalgic review was Les Rowley's article. I enjoyed it so much I read it through twice just to get that warm feeling of pleasant remembrances from the past which it evoked so well.

M. LYNE (Ulverston): I liked the hard-hitting editorial in the April C.D.

Laurie Sutton (Orpington): I recently got hold of a paper called "True Blue," No. 223, published by Aldines. The date appears to be May, 1904, judging from an advert on the inside cover. The main point of interest is that it contains a story called "Edmund the Archer," a story of the Third Crusade, by M. Philpott Wright who, you remember wrote Billy Bunter stories for the Vanguard.

EXCHANGE ONLY: Magnets 1923 to 1938, some complete runs, for other Magnets of same period. Short runs and humorous stories preferred. SHEPHERD, 91, HARVEYCLOUGH ROAD, SHEFFIELD 8.

R E V I E W

"MIKE AT WRYKIN"
 "MIKE AND PSMITH"

P. G. Wodehouse
Armada 2/6 each.

Way back in 1909, the splendid Wodehouse school story "Mike" was first published. Thoroughly entertaining for senior schoolboy or adult alike, it has particular charm for the cricket connoisseur. The book fell naturally into two parts. During the first part Mike was at school at that famous Wodehouse establishment Wrykin. Making poor progress here, Mike was sent to Sedleigh, and his adventures there form part two of the book. At Sedleigh, also a new boy in company with Mike, was the old Etonian Psmith. As years passed, Psmith became famous and Mike was forgotten. Between the wars, the second half of the story was published alone to cater for the myriad Psmith fans.

Now Armada has published the whole story of "Mike" in two parts. They are a "must" for anyone who enjoys a well-written and intelligent school tale, and they are grand value for money. "Mike" is a classic for the masses.

W A N T E D ! Old paperback books of the "Human Bat" stories by E. R. Home-Gall. Also want any magazine stories of this character.
W A N T E D ! 2d. "Thriller Libraries" containing "The Shadow" stories reprinted from U.S. Magazine. W A N T E D ! Any issues of the old "Scoops" magazine (Sci-Fi etc.) Write, stating condition and price to:-

M. W. HIGGS, 6, MARLEY HEIGHTS, COLWALL WALK, ACOCKS GREEN,
BIRMINGHAM, 27.

W A N T E D : Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 960, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 427, 433, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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

FOR SALE: Holiday Annuals 1927 35/-; 1931 35/-; 1929 30/-. Skipper Book for Boys (Thomson annual) 7/6. Superb volume of whole year of Boys' Friend June 1906 - June 1907, splendid copies, first-class binding, containing school and adventure stories, Sexton Blake, Nipper, etc. £10. 12 loose Populars, year 1927, 7/6 each. Postage extra on all items.

Write with s.a.e., to ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th March, 1968

Fine spring weather and easy travelling conditions helped to boost the attendance to ten members, which included Ian Parish who has been absent for a long time.

Formal business was soon concluded and Tom Porter produced his usual feature Anniversary Number and the Collectors' Item. These were a fine copy of "The School Friend" No. 98 which was published 26th March, 1921 and 47 years old to the day and the Collectors' Digest Annual for 1947, the first ever issue of this now famous annual. It is now difficult to obtain copies of this.

Tom told the members of his visit to the Merseyside Club at Liverpool and said numbers had fallen, but the few who remain were keen and were prepared to carry on and hoped for better days.

Correspondence from Stan Knight and John Bond provoked discussion and it was debated whether or not Frank Richards tried to imitate Charles Dickens on his penny a line system.

Ray Bennett, who last month showed members his interesting selection of cuttings was invited to show more of them at a meeting later in the year. He promised to do so.

The chairman showed another film about narrow gauge railways in Wales. This was very interesting and showed remains of lines built decades before the Magnet and Gem were published.

The raffle prizes this month were kindly provided by Bill Morgan and Stan Knight. Ian Parish and his uncle Ivan Webster were the winners.

The next meeting on 30th April contains a change of programme. Ian Bennett will give a talk on "Boys' periodicals as I know them." Ian has already entertained the meeting with his Captain Justice talk and members will, no doubt, look forward to another treat.

Bill Morgan will now give his item at the June meeting.

Next meeting will be held at the B'ham Theatre Centre, 30th April, at 7-30.

J. F. BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

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AUSTRALIA

On Tuesday, March 26th, the revived Golden Hours Club held its second meeting in Sydney attended by the regulars. During the meal general discussion prevailed, and over coffee some news items were passed around. The beautifully-produced Bunter Book with its tributes to C. H. Chapman was admired. It was unanimously agreed, however, that many pages could have been used in more fully covering Chapman's life and career. "Bunter's antics" style of pictures have been done to death (they must have been popular at some time), and it was felt that many pages were wasted here. Still, the book is a "must" for the shelves.

The complete Sexton Blake programme for 1968 was next covered. The club is mystified by S.B. policy, and feel that the concentration on the juvenile aspect is the edge of the wedge.

A New Zealand "Chums" volume with no date or publisher's name was the next mystery for members. Not even known to exist, it was an attractive book remarkably like a baby brother to the old scarlet volume. Familiar authors' names and a Sexton Blake tale made it a must for Vic Colby's collection, and it now rests in his files. Silent films and Cigarette cards were discussed at length, to wind up the meeting.

The next meeting will be held at Cahill's Restaurant on Tuesday, 30th May.

SYD SMYTH

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 13th April, 1968

When Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the Meeting (which was the "Annual General") there were fifteen members there, and Bill Williamson had attended the Library Session but had had to leave.

The minutes were read by Jack Wood, who had kindly recorded the proceedings in the two-month absence of the Secretary (now back from a memorable visit to her Australian brother). Gerald Allison gave his Treasurer's Report and the Annual Balance Sheet; also good news of a visit from Roger Jenkins in June, and a letter from Ben Whiter - whose forecast regarding Leeds United all hope will come true!

There was more publicity to report too. Gerry told us of a visit from a reporter and photographers of "Reveille" which in the next week or so should have a lively account of Club activities.

Then Geoffrey has recorded an interview for T.V. which will appear in "Look North" very soon. All were very interested to hear details of the recording done in Geoffrey's home.

Now followed a resumé by the Chairman of the year's meetings with thanks to all who had taken part. Special mention of the Greyfriars Serial, and plans for more individual stories were given. Writers, to have the summer for their efforts, have also to incorporate specified words and phrases in their stories. The Election of Officers for the coming year resulted in the return en bloc of the present team who will be very happy to serve again.

A short 20 Question game came now. Harry Barlow, Harry Lavender, Jack Roberts and Keith Balmforth getting three out of four right. ("Rainbow" lost, "Potter & Greene," "River Sark" and "Gussie's Topper" won.)

During refreshments a draw for names chose Harry Lavender and the two Jacks (Wood and Allison) to arrange the first summer programme in May. This method will decide the rest of the summer meeting leaders.

A short reading by Breeze Bentley from an S.O.L. featuring Alonzo Todd "enjoying" his first breakfast at Greyfriars. Breeze brought many chuckles in his rendering of the Duffer's remarks.

The meeting ended with a film show of scenes in Australia taken by Mollie Allison, (who, though missing the lovely Queensland sunshine, was happy to be sharing again the unique OBBC fellowship). Next meeting Saturday, 11th May, 1968.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Sec

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LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the Dollis Hill meeting on Sunday, April 21st. Naturally there was a strong flavour of Nelson Lee lore, seeing that the host was Bob Blythe who had put the Edwy Searles Brooks museum on display, plus his complete Nelson Lee library collection and his great stock for library borrowing. Bob Blythe set the ball rolling with a paper on the rival merits of Church and McClure of St. Frank's and Potter and Greene of Greyfriars. A short discussion took place as other members aired their views. Afterwards members gave their own opinions about last month's item:- "What I detest about Hamiltonia." Then followed a rather lengthy discussion when the two foregoing items seem to merge.

Quite a good couple of subjects for all to talk about.

A very fine talk was given by Len Packman on "The Comic Papers." He illustrated his talk with many fine specimens and to the old timers he brought back many happy memories of yesteryear. Bill Hubbard gave out the propositions for possible future meeting programmes and plus his fellow committee-man, Bob Acraman, was adjudged to have done a very fine job of work. Bob Acraman was unavoidably absent, thus Bill Hubbard expounded the work done himself.

Len Packman had on show one complete set of Sexton Blake cards which are given away with a sweetmeat. These formed an admirable picture of Blake, Tinker and Pedro. Also on show was a copy of "Valiant" which has a picture strip of Blake.

The next meeting will be at Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey, on Sunday, May 19th. The host will be Eric Fayne and all who intend to be present, kindly inform.

With votes of thanks to the hosts, Bob and Laura Blythe, it was homeward bound on a beautiful spring evening.

THOSE COMPETITION WINNERS

By O. W. Wadham

Wondering, recently, who might have won a prize of £10 per week for life in a competition conducted by the Union Jack in 1924, I have since become curious as to who won many other big prizes in numerous boys' papers and comics from around 1900 to 1940.

I have copies of many different weeklies of those years. Most of them offer money prizes in various contests. Quite a few offer a first award of £500. Others settle for £250. Yet nowhere in any of those journals can I find the name of a big prize winner listed. Certainly a few winners of £5 and £1 have their names and addresses published, but big money takers are not in the picture at all.

Perhaps readers with a big collection of old boys' journals might be curious to follow up this idea. Can anyone trace a winner of even £250?

If he or she is still alive, and could be contacted, I am sure he would be most flattered. And he would hardly likely to have forgotten the paper that provided him with a rich reward. In fact, he just might be interested enough to join the happy family of old boys' books collectors, and live again the pleasures of his halcyon youth.

Especially that rare thrill of landing a big monetary reward.

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