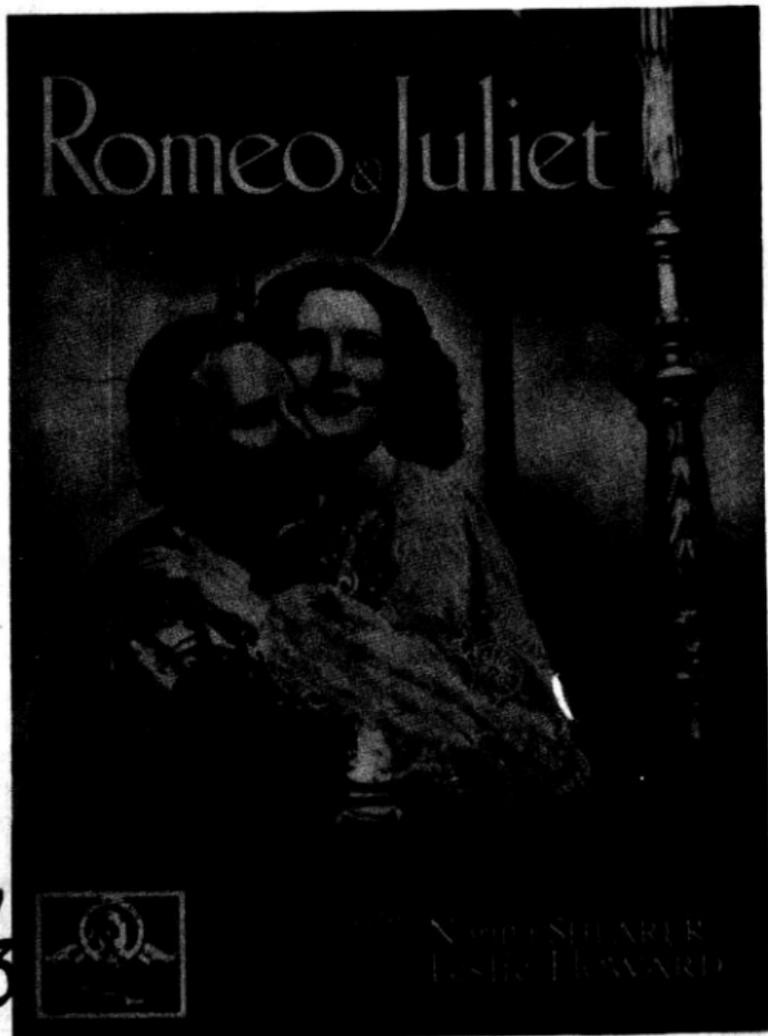


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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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SEPTEMBER 1969

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The Man of the Wheel


THE
EDITOR'S
CHAT

THE WALLACE CASE

It is likely that plenty of our Merseyside readers recall the trial of William Wallace for the murder of his wife in Liverpool in 1931. The case was not, at that time, widely reported in the London papers, but it is reputed to have caused quite a stir in Liverpool.

Since then, the astounding mystery which surrounds so many aspects of the case have resulted in its being written about more than any other crime. Dozens of books and articles have come from authors - some trying to prove that Wallace was innocent, others trying to prove that he was guilty. John Rhode (the creator of Dr.

Priestley) used the case as the plot for one of his detective novels "The Telephone Call." Rhode provided his own solution to the mystery, and the husband, in the story, was proved innocent.

I mention the Wallace Case here because the writings on it are a striking example of the power of the pen, whether the pen is used for

the denigration or for the championship of people who were once well-known. In almost all matters there are two points of view, and readers are swayed and influenced by the skill of writers, and not, of necessity, by truth.

Wallace was found guilty by the jury at his trial. The finding of the jury was set aside by the Court of Criminal Appeal, and Wallace was set free. "My Life Story" by William Herbert Wallace appeared in the periodical John Bull. It ran as a serial.

Some of the books written on the Wallace Case are misleading for the simple reason that the writers accepted the John Bull autobiography as gospel. In fact, most people who write autobiographies whitewash themselves - and Wallace was no exception.

The two most recent books on the case, however, are the most thorough and accurate, and each makes far more fascinating reading than any Christie novel or Sexton Blake Library. Yseult Bridges, a few years back, wrote to prove the guilt of Wallace. This year Jonathan Goodman has written a book to prove the innocence of Wallace. When you have read them both, you are still in doubt. One thing is certain. Wallace should never have been found guilty. The evidence was strong against him, but it was purely circumstantial. The Appeal Court was right to reverse the finding of the jury, and right in freeing Wallace. But whether he was innocent is quite another matter.

Yseult Bridges shows Wallace as a man whom everyone instinctively disliked, and his wife as a rather charming, faded little woman who had been dragged down by her husband who ran through her money. Goodman presents Wallace as a man whom everybody liked, and his wife as a rather slovenly eccentric. After you have read both books, you still cannot be certain.

I find myself with the feeling that Wallace was guilty, and this is mainly because Yseult Bridges writes with restraint, and her reasonings are logical and sound. She wins great sympathy for the wife, apart from the unfortunate woman's terrible end. She comments caustically on the John Bull serial by Wallace, and points out that "his pen served him well." At the time of the trial he had £150 in the bank, and, when he died two years later, probate was granted on his will for £2000.

Goodman, however, presents the wife as a neurotic nonentity.

All his sympathies are for the husband. If, in fact, everything was as Goodman shows it, the scales of justice were heavily tilted against the unfortunate husband. It is possible that Shakespeare would have said of Goodman: "Methinks he doth protest too much!" The general public of Liverpool, according to Goodman, were against Wallace. He ridicules the magistrate at the original hearing, and presents as incompetent villains the police officers, the prosecuting counsel, the medical witness for the prosecution, and some witnesses for the prosecution. The judge rushed things along because he was anxious to get it over before the week-end. In one place the author says: "The Judge, his eye on the clock, his thoughts on the Saturday deadline, butted in." It is doubtful that the author can have had knowledge of what the Judge was thinking.

The prosecuting counsel did not often speak normally. According to the author he "squealed," "screeched" and "screamed." The medical expert "roared wheezily." That sort of thing gets by in a novel, but verbs of that kind seem to be used just for effect when relating a trial of nearly 40 years ago. Goodman tells us that, after the verdict, the medical expert raised his hands above his head in a boxer's handclasp.

It is obvious that there was local feeling against Wallace, and it would have been more fair if the trial had been conducted away from Liverpool. Goodman's book contains a sketch made by Sir Frederick Bowman after he attended the committal proceedings. Bowman has written across the drawing: "Wallace, the Anfield murderer." Bowman, clearly, prejudged the case. But Sir Frederick Bowman seems himself to have been eccentric, according to an obituary I saw recently. Our Merseyside friends could put us wise on this, for I seem to recall that Bowman attended Merseyside club meetings years ago.

It is, at least, unlikely that all the prosecution network from the initial magistrate and the police onwards should have been so incompetent or wicked as to desire to see a possibly innocent man condemned to death. At least, Yseult Bridges gives no hint to that effect - but Mrs. Bridges believes Wallace guilty.

Goodman winds up with an interesting bit of information which strikes a chord with those of us who recall substitute writers and stories purporting to come from famous sportsmen and others who had

nothing to do with the stories apart from being paid for the use of their names. Goodman says that Wallace did not write the John Bull "autobiography." He was paid to provide the details, and the story was written up by a John Bull scribbler who tarted up the story. Wallace, in fact, did not see the story until it appeared in print. Goodman also indicates that Wallace's money came from various successful libel actions against various papers and individuals after his appeal, and not, as Mrs. Bridges suggests, entirely from the use of his pen.

As I reasoned earlier, the success of denigration or championship depends very largely on the skill of the writer. Because Yseult Bridges writes so well I believe that Wallace was probably guilty. Others may prefer Goodman's account and think Wallace was innocent.

We shall never know the full truth. It is probably seldom that we do.

THE 1969 ANNUAL

With this issue we send to you the order form for Collectors' Digest Annual for 1969. This giant Year Book is now taking shape - our 23rd edition - and it contains a great selection of first-class articles, stories and pictures. Some of this year's articles have qualities of striking appeal, and I hope to be able to tell you more about them next month.

You will help us in deciding how many copies to print, and also ensure yourself against possible disappointment, if you order early. I hope that plenty of readers and friends will use our advertisement columns. There is space on the order form for you to include your announcement. The Annual is a fine medium for sending your Christmas and New Year greetings to your hobby friends, and we hope this year to reserve special pages for Greetings and Personal Messages.

The Annual is a costly production. Your advertisements help enormously towards balancing the budget.

THE EDITOR

WANTED:- Magnets Nos. 1119, 1121, 1163, 1165, 1177, 1199, 1283, 1453, 1455.

J. P. CONROY, 256 TOWNSEND AVENUE, LIVERPOOL, 11.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES

THE "BOY'S REALM" & "PLUCK"

by Bob Blythe

(continued)

Edwy waited a week and wrote again.

Pluck Library.

Feb. 8th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

Can I send the prologue, first chapter and synopsis of the Spearing story which I outlined to you in my letter of the 1st inst? As I haven't heard from you yet I presume that the matter has slipped your memory.

By the way, have you had a chance to look over that school story synopsis yet?
I am, etc.

Notwithstanding this somewhat cheeky letter, Haydon replied reasonably and helpfully.

February 8th, 1912.

I have not forgotten your synopsis, but I am so swamped with stories for my papers of late that I have not been commissioning any further yarns. However, you can get on with your suggested Spearing tale if you like.

The idea seems good, but please make the central character a "girl" instead of a "man," and bring in some strong dramatic love scenes if possible. Spearing need not take a very great part in the yarn; he is merely a peg to hang the story on.

Please let me see the opening 6000 words when ready. The full length of the yarn is to be 22,000 words.

With your kind permission I will keep back your Realm synopsis until I have worked off some of my stock of completes.

Faithfully yours,
REX HAYDON

During the latter part of February he was indisposed, also he was very busy writing, so there was some delay.

Feb. 20th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

I fully intended sending off the beginning of that Spearing yarn on Monday, but while in London I caught a nasty cold and haven't felt a bit like work since; although I'm very much better now. I'm glad you're not in a hurry for it, for had you been I should have worried. I'm sorry for the delay, especially as it's the first Spearing story I've had to do, but I'll get on with it right away and let you have the first six thousand words, together with a full synopsis, as soon as I possibly can.

I am, etc.

A synopsis was eventually sent and was approved.

March 14th, 1912.

My dear Mr. Brooks,

I have given the enclosed a careful reading, and think that it ought to work up into quite a good yarn. Since I commissioned you to write this story I have been obliged

to curtail the Spearing yarns to 16,000 words, and I shall be glad if you will keep "Marjorie Drummond's Secret" down to that length.

I think that the prologue might very well be cut down. There is absolutely no incident in the first five folios, which means that it reads a little bit slowly. I suggest that you delete as much as possible of folios 1 - 5, leaving only that part which is essential to the story. The visit of Marjorie's sweetheart is not really necessary. He could easily be introduced casually in the prologue when the villains are discussing their plans.

I do not think you have made quite enough of the fact that the two rooms are identical in every particular. Would it not be helpful for Marbolt to take Jerrold to see the room, and to ram the fact home to the reader then? Reference can be made to it again when the actual kidnapping takes place, and also when the girl awakes. It seems to me quite a strong point in the story, and it would be advisable, therefore, to make the most of it.

I note how you intend to keep the yarn going, and quite approve. But please put plenty of vigorous incident into it.

With regard to your school serial synopsis I have not yet had an opportunity of looking at it, and as my next two school tales are already commissioned, it hardly seems worth my while to keep it. If you would like it back please let me know when next you write, and I will send it along. Of course, if you care to leave it with me in hopes of my having an opening in the remote future I have no objection.

Very sincerely yours,
REX HAYDON

E.S.B. replied.

March 18th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 14th inst. - and for your suggestions in regard to the Spearing story. I will get ahead with it this week, and send it in as soon as possible.

I shall probably be in London on Thursday next, and will call at your office with reference to the school serial Synopsiss.

I am, Dear Mr. Haydon, etc.

Rex Haydon, at this meeting, must have asked Edwy for some examples of his published school stories, and the following will, I'm sure, be of great interest to those of you who favour the "Gem." I wonder what they'll say to the remark Edwy makes in the last sentence but one! The "Gem" mentioned probably contained the story "The Terrible Three's Sub," which had recently appeared.

March 24th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

As promised I herewith enclose a copy of the "Gem Library" containing a "Tom Merry" story which I wrote. I also enclose the first chapters of another story of St. Jim's upon which I am at present engaged; it is my carbon copy, so I hope you will let me have it back as soon as you have read it. (Mr. Hinton has the top copy, so until I get the enclosed copy back I have none - the story having been written straight on to the typewriter.) These will give you an idea of my style of writing this class of school story. It is, of course, Mr. Hamilton's style, but I could write stories of another school in exactly the same way. I should very much like to do this, needless to say.

I am, Dear Mr. Haydon, etc.

E.S.B. was very busy writing at this time and so it was not until a month had passed that he finished the story.

April 21st, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

I enclose the completed MS. of "Marjorie Drummond's Secret" herewith. Fate seems to have delayed its dispatch, for I planned to let you have it early in the week. But, on the day I intended writing the last two chapters, I received a letter from Mr. Hinton asking for one of the complete "Frank Kingston" stories I am doing for the "Gem." The result was I had to put all other work aside. However, I enclose it now, and trust that you will find it suitable. I have cut some out and made one or two alterations, in accordance with your suggestions.

I am rather anxious about those school stories I referred to in my last letter, and hope you will find time to let me know whether I can have the privilege of writing some for you.

With kind regards.

I am, etc.

Things went smoothly from here on. Haydon replied favourably and made one or two comments.

April 30th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I have read the enclosed and in the whole like it quite well. There are one or two points, however, which need touching up. You do not definitely explain, for instance, the reason why Marjorie Drummond is kidnapped. Presumably it is to get her secret from her - but how? Then again what is the object of the duplicate room? You do not give any reason for it, and to a girl who is suffering from total loss of memory what would it matter if she were placed in different surroundings?

Then there is the part where Spearing is kidnapped. I think you should make Marbolt leave him to starve. You can easily account for the presence of the two villains in the grounds when they are seen by Arnoldson, by saying that one of them has got fidgetty and they are going to see if Spearing is still safely imprisoned in the old shaft.

When these points are put right, the story will be quite acceptable for "Pluck."

Sincerely yours,

REX HAYDON

Brooks replied, and you will notice how he left no stone unturned in his effort to find work.

Bures, Suffolk.

May 1st, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

Thank you for your letter received this morning. On looking through the MS. I can see that it is improved by the alterations I have made, in accordance to your suggestions. On page 11 I had made some reference to Marbolt's reason for placing Marjorie in a duplicate room, although it was not definite enough. I have now added considerably to it, making everything quite clear. The other alteration - that of making Marbolt leaving Spearing to starve - was only a matter of crossing a few lines out and substituting other words here and there. I think you will find the story now satisfactory.

I was rather disappointed because you made no mention in your letter about any other work - school stories. You may remember I sent you a copy of the GEM because you said, if it was the right style, I might be able to do some school stuff for you. If you would care to discuss the matter with me I could easily run up to town any time you wished.

I am, etc.

As far as the "Boy's Realm" and "Pluck" were concerned, he didn't succeed, as nothing further was published in "Pluck" until 1923 (The Kidnapped School) and in the "Boy's Realm" until 1919, when the St. Frank's stories commenced.

We end this protracted, and not very profitable, correspondence, with the following request, which became all too frequent in these early days, when Edwy was still struggling to make ends meet.

May 21st, 1912.

Dear Mr. Haydon,

I hardly like to make the request of you, but could you oblige me by letting me have a £5 advance on "Marjorie Drummond's Secret" this week? If you can see your way to arrange this I shall be grateful.

I am, etc.

DEATH OF PROFESSOR EUDO MASON

We deeply regret to record the death of Professor Eudo Mason of the University of Edinburgh. During a walk he died of a heart attack, brought on by the heat. Some years ago he lost his wife in tragic circumstances while they were on holiday, and his letters showed that he never really recovered from his bereavement.

Born in Colchester in 1901, he graduated in English at Oxford and in German at Cambridge. He took his doctor's degree in Leipzig, and later became a D. Litt of Oxford. In 1946 he entered the German Department at Edinburgh as a lecturer, and succeeded to the chair five years later.

He possessed a large collection of old periodicals for children, and this has been given to the National Library of Scotland. He had a number of books published from his own pen. Professor Mason had been a keen supporter of Collectors' Digest for many years and wrote first-class articles for Collectors' Digest Annual under the pen-name of "Otto Maurer." His main interests in the hobby lore were "Young Folks Tales" and "Tales for Little People." He was an expert on Pippiniana.

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Another of the posters Danny saw outside the cinemas 50 years ago.

SEPTEMBER 1919

The first week in September was spent at my grandmother's house in Layer Marney. I love the country. I often went blackberrying. There were any amount of blackberries on the bushes, for there were not many people living round to pick them. Not like in the towns, where, when you find some bushes, all the berries have been stripped off.

I like the little shops, too. The door pings a bell when you open it, and there is a kind of nice smell from the oil lamps which they light in the evenings. And the biscuits are all set out in boxes with glass tops in front of the counter.

The Magnet has been a proper wash-out this month. First story was "The Twelve Stamps." Wharton is supposed to be a stamp collector, and a

valuable sheet is missing, and Nugent Minor is suspected of pinching it. Introducing masses of fags.

"The Golden Clue" told how the Famous Five got on the track of

a hidden treasure in a cave, from some old parchment. "Sports Day at Greyfriars" tells its own sad tale, and last of the month was "The Boy Barber" in which Fish tried to make money by cutting hair. All told, a dreary month.

There are three new papers out. "All Sports Weekly" for older boys; "Bow Bells" for girls; and "The Family Pictorial" for everybody.

We have seen some good films this month. There is a thrilling new serial named "The Master Mystery" and it stars Houdini, the escape man. A fearsome thing called "The Automaton" is the villain of the serial.

Constance Talmadge was nice in "A Pair of Silk Stockings;" Tom Moore was very good in "Brown of Harvard;" Mum loved this one. Mary Pickford was very sweet in "The Dawn of a To-morrow." Viola Dana was goodish in "Blue Jeans."

I bought two Boys' Friend Libraries while I was at Layer Marney. The first was entitled "Redfern Minor," a good tale about the boys of St. Dorothy's, by Charles Hamilton. This is the first story I have read about St. Dorothy's School.

The other B.F.L. was called "Dropped from the Clouds." It was a collection of Cedar Creek tales, and it is not so long since I first read them in the weekly Boys' Friend.

A bit sad in the Gem. The wonderful caravanning series has ended. It has been a very long series, and I almost hoped it would go on for ever. The month's opening story was "Only Gussy's Way." The caravanners get to a small town and an election is taking place. They meet with Skimpole whose uncle is one of the candidates. This tale was great fun.

The series ended with "Ructions on the Road," and the caravanner meet up with Figgins & Co. and also with an escaped convict. I felt quite sad that it was the last tale of the series.

As was only to be expected, with the next week there was a slump. A really very silly tale, called "Redfern's Great Adventure." At the start, Dr. Locke of Greyfriars rang up Dr. Holmes to say that, as it was Peace Year, he had decided to give Greyfriars another week's holiday though the new term had only just started. "Besides," said Dr. Locke, "some of my boys are going to a cricket week at Wharton Lodge." So

Dr. Holmes decided he would give St. Jim's a week's holiday, too - and the two Headmasters decided to spend the week playing golf. What an ass an author must be to make anything so silly! Tom Merry & Co. went to join Wharton & Co. in the cricket week at Wharton Lodge, but, of course, it was only a bit of jiggery-pokery so that Redfern could arrange to spend the week working for a London newspaper - which was what the tale was really about.

Last of the month - "The Fag's Honour" - was also a bit grim. It starred Wally D'Arcy and Knox of the Sixth.

Summer time ended on September 29th when we put the clocks back. For a day or so we seemed to be plunged into winter, but the dark evenings really have a charm all their own. Makes you think Christmas is coming.

Rookwood has been good this month - all except the first story which was not by the usual writer. This was "The Right Sort." Mr. Bootles has flu so a new master, Mr. Cardwell, is engaged for the Fourth. It turns out he was a conscientious objector during the war.

After this, the Mornington-Captain series was resumed. These tales were all first-class. Entitled "The Mystery of Mornington," "Captain & Slacker," and "Saved By His Chum," they told how the juniors were surprised by the slackness of Mornington. He was actually visiting a gambling den run by Tickey Tapp, a character whom I remember in Gem stories. When the gambling den was raided, it was Erroll who saved Mornington.

Cedar Creek has continued with the stories of Frank Richards' holiday on the Pacific Coast of Canada. The tales were "The Man From the Sea," "The Castaway," "Perils of the Pacific" and "On the High Seas." The chums go for a trip on a brig named the "Ocean Queen," but the ship is taken over by a villainous half-caste named Benedetto. The final story was the end of the holidays for the Cedar Creek chums. All the yarns of this adventure have been great.

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 970, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 441. ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

OUR FINAL INSTALMENT. When we print a very old story in C.D. we do it with the object of giving readers the opportunity to read something which they cannot read elsewhere. "The Swoop" has now been re-issued in facsimile by University Microfilms Ltd. of Penn, High Wycombe, at 44/- . In view of this we are winding up our serialisation with the final chapter of this delightful satire. England had been invaded by seven hostile countries. Always ready to commercialise anything, the music halls offered tempting contracts to the various generals of the invading armies. It was Horace of the scouts who set them squabbling among themselves. Horace saved England - so Horace himself is commercialise

THE SWOOP

By P. G. Wodehouse

The brilliantly-lighted auditorium of the Palace Theatre. Everywhere a murmur and stir. The orchestra is playing a selection. In the stalls fair women and brave men converse in excited whispers. One catches sentences here and there.

"Quite a boy, I believe."

"How perfectly sweet!"

"'Pon honour, Lady Gussie, I couldn't say. Bertie Bertison, of the Bachelors, says a feller told him it was a clear thousand."

"Do you hear that? Mr. Bertison says that this boy is getting a thousand a week."

"Why, that's more than either of those horrid generals got."

"It's a lot of money, isn't it?"

"Of course, he did save the country, didn't he?"

"You may depend they wouldn't give it to him if he wasn't worth it."

"Met him last night at the Duchess's hop. Seems a decent little chap. No side and that, if you know what I mean. Hullo, there's his number!"

The orchestra stops. The number 7 is displayed. A burst of applause, swelling into a roar as the curtain rises.

A stout man in crinkled evening-dress walks on to the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he says. "I 'ave the 'onour to-night to introduce to you one whose name is, as the saying goes,

a nouse'old word. It is thanks to 'im, to this 'ero whom I 'ave the 'onour to introduce to you to-night, that our beloved England no longer writhes beneath the ruthless 'eel of the alien oppressor. It was this 'ero's genius - and, may I say - er - I may say genius - that, unaided 'it upon the only way for removing the cruel conqueror from our beloved 'earths and 'omes. It was this 'ero who, 'aving first allowed the invaders to claw each other to 'ash (if I may be permitted the expression) after the well-known precedent of the Kilkenny cats, thereupon firmly and without flinching, stepped bravely in with his fellow-'eroes - need I say that I allude to our gallant Boy Scouts? - and dextrously gave what-'or in no uncertain manner to the few survivors who remained."

Here the orator bowed, and took advantage of the applause to replenish his stock of breath. When his face had begun to lose the purple tinge, he raised his hand.

"I 'ave only to add," he resumed, "that this 'ero is engaged by the management of the Palace Theatre of Varieties, at a figure previously undreamed of in the annals of the music-hall stage. He is in receipt of the magnificent weekly salary of no less than one thousand one 'undred and fifty pounds a week."

Thunderous applause.

"I 'ave little more to add. This 'ere will first perform a few of those physical exercises which have made our Boy Scouts what they are, such as deep breathing, twisting the right leg firmly round the neck, and hopping on one foot across the stage. He will then give an exhibition of the various bails and cries of the Boy Scouts -- all, as you doubtless know, skilful imitations of real living animals. In this connection I 'ave to assure you that he 'as nothing whatsoever in 'is mouth, as it 'as sometimes been suggested. In conclusion he will deliver a short address on the subject of 'is great exploits. Ladies and gentlemen, I have finished, and it now only remains for me to retire, 'aving duly announced to you England's Darling Son, the Country's 'ero, the Nation's Proudest Possession -- Clarence Chugwater."

A moment's breathless suspense, a crash from the orchestra, and the audience are standing on their seats, cheering, shouting, stamping.

A small, sturdy, spectacled figure is on the stage.

It is Clarence, the Boy of Destiny.

* * *

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SEXTON BLAKE AT GREYFRIARS'

by W. O. G. Lofts

A short time ago a correspondent wrote asking me if Charles Hamilton had ever written a Sexton Blake story. I replied to the effect that, to the best of my knowledge, he had not. Even in his early days when he was writing sea and adventure stories for the 'Union Jack,' Mr. Hamilton was such a creative writer that he possibly saw no point in writing about a character that was not his own. Apart from this, I think it would be agreed by almost everyone, that writing school stories was his true vocation. I don't honestly think he would cherish the task of writing serious detective stories with a mystery element.

To my amusement, my correspondent, then pointed out that I was wrong! If the famous 'Frank Richards' was in fact the same man as Charles Hamilton, then he had done so. He had read somewhere in the past that a Magnet Greyfriars story had featured Sexton Blake. As in all probability he had seen what I had written of a substitute story with the character featured, I found the correspondence more amusing than annoying.

Magnet story No. 818 dated October 13th, 1923 and entitled 'Disgraced by His Father' was in my Annual lists as 'Probably Hedley O'Mant.' This information was based not on official records which were unobtainable at that time for this particular story, but from a sub-editor who for certain reasons remembered him having a connection with it. It was only recently that I discovered that the exact authorship belonged to Noel Wood-Smith, chief sub-editor of the Magnet, and fellow worker of Hedley O'Mant. The story is rather a hotch-potch affair, which Noel Wood-Smith had probably purchased cheaply from another author and rewritten himself. It would be almost an impossibility to tell from the style in view of this who wrote it originally, and it's one of the stories of a kind which I am at friendly loggerheads with Laurie Sutton about.

Hedley O' Mant who was in fact 'Hedley Scott' who took over the Ferrers Locke detective stories from Charles Hamilton, was writing a serial in the same issue as No. 818 entitled 'The Brotherhood of the White Heather' when Ferrers Locke was in Russia! The sub-editor of the Magnet thought probably quite rightly that if Ferrers Locke was brought into the Greyfriars story as he always was in detective mysteries - some boys would wonder how he could appear in both Russia and England simultaneously! So Sexton Blake and Tinker were introduced into a Greyfriars story for the first and only time.

The plot of the story was reasonably good as far as substitute stories went in that period, but it was a pity that the general standard of writing did not match up to it, though the obvious subbing probably made the story far worse than it probably was in its original state. Dick Russell, the champion boxer of the remove, suddenly found himself in plenty of funds, after being one of the poorer juniors at Greyfriars. His father, after a life in a working class background, had become a secretary to a Mr. Gummer, when this very generous gentleman had seemingly given him thousands of pounds for being trustworthy in his connection with Government plans and inventions. With his new found wealth, Mr. Russell had lavished unlimited pocket money on Dick Russell, who unaccustomed to such riches was giving it away freely.

Dick Russell who was stated to be the Public School Champion at Aldershot (a misleading red herring here for the G. R. Samways style and characteristic phrasing) had also hired two large charabancs to take 80 of his new and many friends at school on a trip out in the country.

He expected a letter from his pater in the post with a whacking remittance to pay for all this. It does not arrive. Then comes the dark shadow of suspicion and disgrace. His father has fled from his occupation and there is a warrant out for his arrest!

The Famous Five on a suggestion from Vernon-Smith, go to Dr. Locke to try and get Ferrers Locke, his relative, to investigate it all. Unfortunately, the popular Greyfriars detective is away from England in Russia (in the end pages of the Magnet) 'Smithy' showing something of the better side of his nature engages Sexton Blake to take his place, and the following paragraph could probably be included in the famous

Mr. Quelch's History of Greyfriars

"There's still Sexton Blake, Sir," said Vernon-Smith coolly.

With a technique that would have been more at home with Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake after an examination of charred papers in a grate, elucidates the mystery, and eventually Mr. Russell was completely exonerated, and was probably after that a much wiser man.

The writer who is credited by official records for the story is Noel Wood-Smith, who was also a well known author in other fields under the pen-name of 'Norman Taylor.' He did indeed write Sexton Blake stories in the Union Jack. But probably his claim to fame was that he was a clever inventor, and had several inventions patented, one, I believe, for counting the words typed on a machine, which was useful to authors.

Wood-Smith, who died some years ago now, may not have reached a great height in his substitute stories, but at least he did bring together on one occasion the boys from the most famous school in the world, together with the most famous detective.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: By a coincidence, we received two articles on this theme at the same time. Mr. Murtagh's article appeared recently. He credited the story to Hedley O'Mant, possibly being misled by Mr. Lofts' own list. Mr. Lofts' article, published here, gives a new slant on the same subject.)

* * *

BLAKE PLUS WALDO

by Derek Smith

"Our normal policy . . . is to have one long complete story each week. But we make an exception in this case, for we think the yarn itself justifies the experiment." That was how the Editor of the UNION JACK introduced a double-length, two-part story by Edwy Searles Brooks in 1925. The first episode was entitled "The Pauper of Pengarth Castle" (U.J. 1131, dated June 13th, 1925).

It began in Cornwall, with a howling gale buffeting the lonely road along which Rupert Waldo was driving his rakish-looking two-seater. That genial crook was on his way to Falmouth with felonious designs on a consignment of Brazilian gold in the strong-room of a steamer. Fate

intervened in the shape of a crashing tree. Waldo had to use his super-human strength to divert the falling trunk as it threatened to crush a stranded cyclist. The near-victim was Lady Betty Hamilton-Page, the daughter of the Earl of Pengarth. Waldo could hardly introduce himself as the notorious Wonder Man, so he coolly assumed the identity of - Sexton Blake! It was quite a compliment, in its way. "Waldo had a very real respect for Sexton Blake. Although the famous detective had frustrated him so many times, Waldo bore Blake not the slightest animosity. Quite the opposite. He held Blake in high esteem, for a man who could check Waldo was worthy of respect."

Lady Betty's father, the Earl of Pengarth, was a peppery old aristocrat who had fallen into poverty. The Pengarth family had been custodian of a Sacred Cross which had been stolen in a burglary sixteen years before. Legend ran that if the cross were ever lost misfortune would dog the Pengarths until they were forced to abandon their castle to the invader.

The invader was a merchant prince, newly knighted, named Sir William Brag. He had bought the castle in good faith from a rascally lawyer named Simon Slingsby, who had defrauded the Earl out of the title to his ancestral home. Spurred on by Waldo, Lord Pengarth drove off the luckless knight by force of arms.

Sexton Blake's arrival in Cornwall necessitated a tactical withdrawal by the Wonder Man. It did not prevent another invasion of the castle and the subsequent murder of Sir William Brag.

The first story ended with the finger of suspicion pointing at the Earl of Pengarth, and only the most miserly and unresponsive of readers would have been prepared to begrudge tuppence for the concluding episode, "The Curse of Pengarth Castle" (U.J. 1132).

It would be unfair to detail the complications and explanations that followed, but it is revealing no special secret to say that the butler at Pengarth Castle was as unfortunate with his relatives as his counterpart at Baskerville Hall.

The story was an interesting illustration of the somewhat equivocal relationship between Blake and Waldo. The detective could always checkmate the Wonder Man's crooked schemes but he couldn't or wouldn't arrest him. "I could not have detained him against his

will, even if I had had half a dozen helpers. His strength is colossal - his agility startling in the extreme. Sometimes Waldo hardly seems to be human."

In this adventure, at least, Waldo was more sportsman than crook. He outwitted the rascally Slingsby and restored both the Pengarth Cross and the title deeds of the castle to his host, retaining only a matter of ten thousand pounds from the lawyer's "sardine-tin of a safe."

Edwy Searles Brooks gave the story a re-run nearly twenty years later with the Gay Desperado in "CAVALIER CONQUEST," published by Collins in 1944.

Sexton Blake was of necessity eliminated from this version of the tale, but otherwise it was a considerable improvement upon the original.

"De-Blakenising," though a time-honoured process, is rarely completely successful. The result is nearly always "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark.

Brooks/Gray/Gunn, however, was more successful than most. He had an excellent cast of characters to draw upon, and in this case in particular the two-part story fitted neatly and unfussily into novel form. As usual, Conquest's cheery personality lit up every scene; and the amiable banter between Norman, Joy, and Sweet William was much more entertaining than the rather cool exchanges between Blake and Waldo.

Conquest, of course, had to manage both Waldo's chicanery and Blake's detective work at the same time. This was no great trick for Norman, who was quite capable of doubling when necessary for both Nelson Lee and the Remove at St. Frank's.

Mr. Brooks himself must have been well satisfied with the results of his experiments since most of the Berkeley Gray novels between 1943 and 1950 seem to have been constructed on the simple principle that Blake plus Waldo equals - Conquest!

FOR SALE: 2 cricket tales (both the same story. Covers reproduced in last year's Annual) "Smith of Rocklandshire" (BFL 716) by Richard Randolph. "A Wizard at the Wicket" by John Drake. 10/- each plus postage. Write ERIC FAYNE.

THE BRITISH BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EDGAR WALLACE

by W. O. G. Lofts and Derek Adley

Howard Baker (Publishers) Ltd. - £4. 4. 0.

It is with pleasure that one sees the work of our two researchers in hard-cover book form. A comprehensive bibliography of Edgar Wallace has been contemplated by many collectors for years but the difficulty of the research involved has baulked all but our investigators, and now after four years intensive work we can see the results of their labours.

It is rare for a bibliography to be proof against criticism from the experts and there is no doubt that this volume will receive probably more than its fair share of brickbats.

After the magnificent job the publishers have made of their two Magnet facsimiles, the quality of this production is a little disappointing, especially at four guineas a time. However it is the contents of a bibliography that count. Because of their limited circulation they cannot be sold cheaply.

To the serious collector of Wallace this volume will be invaluable. To the bookdealer who is concerned mainly with first editions, it will solve many problems and let us hope, prevent the passing off of later dated Ward Lock editions as firsts simply because they have a dated titlepage. The classification of the Hodder & Stoughton editions is, however, very inadequate as it fits not only the first editions but many of the succeeding ones and far more intensive descriptions should have been detailed, including the advertisements at the rear or absence of same. Again no date is given for the first edition of *The Ringer*, one is simply referred to *The Gaunt Stranger* 1925 (alternative title *The Ringer*) with a note to the effect that the *Gaunt Stranger* was not identical with *The Ringer*. As the two books were on sale at the same time, more information is needed.

The classification of the magazine stories is painstaking and thorough and it is to be hoped that the publication of this volume will bring to light the information needed to fill the several missing gaps.

It is surprising to see the number of Boys' papers appearing in the magazine listing, one automatically thinks of the border-line paper

The Thriller but not so readily of Chums, Boys' Favourite, Union Jack and Wild West Weekly.

As a first attempt at a most difficult subject this volume is first-class and will provide an ideal stepping-stone for a more detailed study in a few years' time.

F. VERNON LAY

* * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 77 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 60 - "The Scapegrace of Rookwood"

Valentine Mornington played such a large part in the Rookwood stories that it is difficult to envisage how they could have been written without the aid of such a meteoric character, whose career blazed such a sparkling trail against the sober background of the Hampshire school. The Boys' Friend series about Mornington were often rather lengthy, and when reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library they tended to appear in truncated form. Sometimes the conclusion was omitted (one Rookwood Schoolboys' Own ending with the expulsion of Mornington), whilst No. 60 on the other hand begins with his expulsion, though this was a different occasion. It transpired that Mornington had absented himself from the school, and when sentenced to be flogged he had gone into hiding again. Dr. Chisholm's patience, almost always on the short side, was exhausted and the Schoolboys' Own begins with Mornington in the punishment-room, waiting to be collected by his guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole.

Mornington's position in his guardian's home was somewhat equivocal. He had originally been welcomed as heir to the Mornington estates, but when it was revealed that 'Erbert was the true heir Sir Rupert's enthusiasm for Mornington had shown distinct signs of waning. The four Stacpoole boys had endured Mornington's freaks of temper in silence when they thought him wealthy, but now they were quick enough to taunt their cousin with his poverty. It was an unpleasant situation for which all parties bore some responsibility. It was not surprising, therefore, that Mornington jumped out of the cab on the way to the station at Coombe and left his uncle to go home alone. Mornington had

decided to remain in the vicinity of Rookwood to embarrass Dr. Chisholm, and he began by taking a job as grocer's boy to Mr. Bandy.

Before the first World War, Charles Hamilton had expressed some radical views, particularly in the Gem, where denunciations of poverty and unemployment in Chicago and London had taken almost a Dickensian turn. We do not know what caused him to change his opinions, but it was not long before Socialism was being described in the most scathing terms, as in the case of Mr. Bandy, who was described as being a grocer first and a Socialist second:

Mr. Bandy was by way of being a Socialist. It helped him to find compensation for many faults and failures in the happy knowledge that he was, after all, as good as his betters. His Socialistic proclivities helped to provide the gentlemen of the "Clarinet" with an easy living, and to save them from the disagreeable necessity of turning to work.

As the story progressed, Mr. Bandy's character was etched with revolting clarity: he toadied to wealth, but would rudely assert his rights if no money was involved; he told Mornington to mix stale eggs with the new-laid ones, and to put sand in the sugar and sawdust in the oatmeal; he had a hidden weight attached to the scales and, worst of all, he was open to bribery. In later years Charles Hamilton commented on social conditions with Olympian detachment, but in the early period his denunciations took him from radicalism to extreme reaction.

Although Dr. Chisholm intervened on several occasions to put an end to various employments Mornington undertook, he was never able quite to force the rebellious junior to return to his uncle, but each adventure Mornington commenced brought him to lower and more degrading depths. Eventually, by a freak of fortune, Mornington was allowed to return to the school. The series was typically light-hearted and careless on the surface, but underneath there lay a biting social commentary which must have left the perceptive reader with slight feelings of disquietude.

FOR SALE: Gems 1108, 1115, 1130, 1144, 1178, 1505 (Xmas No.) 7/6 each. "Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's" (Mandeville) 3/-; B.F.L. No. 104 "On Turpin's Highway" 10/-; postage extra.

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

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 138. KING CRICKET IN A GOLDEN SUMMER

Knockers are all too fashionable nowadays. Those who knock the old papers usually have but little knowledge of their subject. Those who knock Britain are a slimey lot who gain attention far beyond their merits. As for the cricket knockers, they, like the poor, have always been with us. Ever since we were children the cricket knockers have been telling us that cricket is dead or dying, and we almost believe them - until the sun shines. There is nothing wrong with cricket that a sunny day won't put right.

I am not sure whether the sun shone constantly in the summer of 1907, but it was certainly a golden summer for the cricket-loving readers of the Boys' Realm, a paper under the direction of Hamilton Edwards. From early May until mid-September the paper was packed with a variety of complete cricket stories plus articles by experts on the game. The star attraction, however, was a long serial entitled "King Cricket" by Charles Hamilton. That it was the title of the serial and not the name of the writer which was expected to "put the story over" was proved by the fact that many instalments were published without the name of the writer being attached. In those days serials were all the rage in papers for boys and for girls, and it was customary for one artist to be commissioned to illustrate every instalment throughout the run of the serial. The artist who illustrated "King Cricket" was E. E. Briscoe, who was probably more successful drawing adults and rural backgrounds than he was later on with schoolboys.

Charles Hamilton, at that time, was only on the threshold of his wonderful success, and, in several ways, "King Cricket" was one of the most remarkable tales he ever wrote. In this column, I once, quite inaccurately, described "King Cricket" as a school story. It is a story of county cricket, and all the main characters are adults.

"King Cricket" is a famous tale. All Hamiltonians know of it, yet, paradoxically enough, few have ever seen it.

At one time - and I don't know how it came about - Hamilton was reputed not to be good at writing about cricket and soccer. So

far as cricket is concerned, he gives his critics the lie with "King Cricket." The story is packed with cricket matches, and he never puts a foot wrong. The only slip, during the run of the serial, was made by a caption writer who printed: "Ringrose is smartly stumped!" while, as the author and the artist make quite clear, Ringrose was actually run out.

Even more remarkable is the county cricket background, and it is clear that there is not much in connection with the county cricket competition that the writer did not know about. The descriptions of the fixtures and of the grounds on which they were played were indicative of a man who was steeped in county cricket lore - and loved it.

Some of the games were lost; just a few of them were won; some were washed out by rain, and particularly striking are the chapters where Loamshire is supposed to be playing Hampshire at Southampton, yet the rain streams down constantly over three days while frustration grows among the men.

Some of the fixtures are merely mentioned in passing; others are described in full. Loamshire meets Yorkshire at Bradford; the Yorkshire players of 1907 play their parts in the sequence. This introduction of many real, living people into the tale makes "King Cricket" unique among Hamilton stories.

Lord Hawke and George Hirst of Yorkshire; Woolley and Hardinge of Kent; and plenty of other famous players take the field and have their day and their say in "King Cricket."

The tourists that year were the South Africans. They met Loamshire at Loamches'er, and thrashed the home team. The touring South Africans played their parts, including Vogler, who "had been or Lords' ground staff last year."

Loamshire was playing Kent - the champions - at Tonbridge, and on the third day of the match, Arthur Lovell, the captain, ordered one of his players from the field. Surrey was played at the Oval; Essex at Leyton; Lancashire at Old Trafford, and Lovell's men met C. B. Fry's men of Sussex at Hove. And all the way through, the real life players were opposite to Hamilton's fictional characters. It is an astonishing tale.

Though there is a lot of cricket, each match is completely

different from the fixture before and the one after. Hamilton was too sound a writer to believe that descriptions of cricket matches were sufficient to make a story. Comedy is lacking, but there is plenty of drama, and even a smattering of romance.

The cut-and-thrust of the changing-room jealousies is vividly brought to life, and the picture of county cricket, as it was then, is brilliantly portrayed.

Loamshire was at the bottom of the table. The reason for their lowly position was that the county had always been an all-amateur side. No pro had ever played for Loamshire.

Owing to a reversal of his fortunes, Lovell had to become a professional. Half-way through the tale, he became the captain - a pro captain. It made all the difference to Loamshire.

Social reformers like George Orwell could hardly have faulted "King Cricket" for having a snob angle, for a pro was the hero of the story and the real-life pro-players were shown in glowing colours. But it is possible that social reformers would despise cricket as the essence of snobbery, and would condemn making the boys of a nation interested in such a game.

The names of the fictional players are familiar to old Hamiltonians: Lovell, Valance, Lagden and Ponsonby. One or two episodes remind the well-read Hamiltonian of the cricket drama and excitement so finely developed in the Stacey series, nearly 30 years later. Just here and there, in "King Cricket," Hamilton drops into the present tense. It was a common trend among writers, all those years ago, and it gives "King Cricket" a quaintly pleasant old-fashioned flavour when it happens.

It seems strange that this fine story was only reprinted once - in the Boys' Friend Library - where, according to rumour, it was pruned. Yet it is obvious that the introduction of the real-life players of 1907 made it difficult for the tale to be re-issued a year or two later. And my beloved Kent have not been champions since 1913, yet I love them just the same.

Of course, Charles Hamilton never won the fame which was enjoyed by Frank Richards and Martin Clifford. Otherwise, surely such tales as "Rivals of St. Kit's," "Redfern Minor," "Arthur Redfern's Vow"

and "King Cricket" would have been revived in the thirties. Of these, "King Cricket" was the only period piece, due to its real-life players. It is, indeed, a mystery why the school stories were not featured in the Schoolboys' Own Library, and one would have thought that the S.O.L. would have been an excellent medium for "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" and "The School Under Canvas," especially as the latter was only reprinted once after its serialisation. One can only believe that nobody thought of it.

At the start of this article I spoke of a golden summer. According to "King Cricket," 1907 was a wet summer, with the rain often streaming down the pavilion windows while the players fumed and fretted in the changing-rooms. 'Twas ever thus!

* * *

ECHOES OF THAT LOVE STORY

GEOFFREY WILDE: I am sure you are right in rejecting the 1920 Film Star series as Hamilton's work. There are one or two single Magnet stories usually credited to him which I find it equally impossible to accept. And in such matters I would quite unrepentantly back my own judgment or yours against so-called documentary evidence.

There are difficulties, of course. You admit to being unimpressed by "evidence gained from the literary analysis of isolated items," and here you exercise a sensible caution. The conditions under which the old papers were produced were such that the editorial interpolation of a sentence or paragraph here and there must have been quite common. There must in the same way be a good many scattered lines in our collected Shakespeares which are the gratuitous insertions of the lead actors of the time, and which the editors of the First Folio allowed to stand.

But one thing is certain: the feel of a story, play, or whatever, taken as a whole is quite unmistakable, and the real thing is instantly recognised when one meets it.

The fact is, the layman mistrusts stylistic evidence because it seems to be based on such intangible factors, alongside which "facts" appear reassuringly solid and certain. But I'm prepared to be quite

dogmatic here and assert that a really sensitive and well-informed student's feeling for style will simply never let him down.

SYD SMYTH: I though "Let's Be Controversial" this month marvellous - of great interest to me and sending me back to the series to see for myself. Rest assured your great effort is appreciated.

W. O. G. LOFTS: In view of the controversy that has always surrounded the Wingate Love Series, I made a special double check on official records when compiling my lists. It always came up with the same answer that Charles Hamilton wrote the series. I once asked Mr. Samways whether he wrote the series and he said that he certainly did not, and to my statement that it was a poor series he said that Charles Hamilton was only human and could not be expected to write brilliant tales all the time, and in his opinion Hamilton had written them. On the other hand, though I accept official records as strictly binding, it is known that strange things were going on in the Magnet office about this time. The whole solution may be that someone with a pull at Fleetway House had written the series and Chas. Hamilton may have had the task of re-writing it up.

Personally, I think it the poorest series ever to appear in the Magnet, and one could be swayed against it being by Hamilton because it is hopelessly outdated and almost comical in theme by today's standards.

GERALD ALLISON: I am now through reading Magnets 660 - 664 for the first (and last) time.

Philip Tierney wrote to me a few months ago and asked my opinion of this series - which he had just read in SOL No. 9 - not lent to him from the club library I'm glad to say.

Now I have read the story, and agree with you that it is not by Hamilton. It is amazing though, how cleverly these sub-writers imitate the appearance in type of a genuine story. The cinders had been ground very small to avoid the agonizing 'crunch between the teeth.' One thing I find in these inferior writers - the pedantic avoidance of the word 'said' I have made a list of the varied synonyms for the simple word 'said,' and they are a convincing proof - to me - that this story is not genuine.

ERIC FAYNE says: It is news to me that controversy has always

surrounded the Wingate Love Affair series. Last month I quoted the experts who accept it as a genuine series, but I was unaware that I was following in the footsteps of others who have argued against its being Hamiltonian. I shall be glad to have particulars of where and when their articles appeared, in order that I can read them.

Mr. Samways seemed to think that it was written by Hamilton during a period of mental aberration. Luckily Hamilton recovered quickly in time for the Dirk Power series.

Euclid would have the right word for the hypothesis that someone else wrote the series and Hamilton was given the job of polishing it up. But Mr. Lofts is off-side in calling this the Magnet's "poorest series." There were worse.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

It was a sad gathering at Cahill's Restaurant for the July meeting, as this was the one which Tom Dobson from Melbourne had attended each year. Just over a month ago Tom was killed on his way home from work, and we have lost a good friend. He enjoyed life and loved his books, and his club mates will miss him.

Bette Pate writes: "I was privileged to enjoy the friendship of Tom Dobson. Remembering now a very true friend, a simple, gentle man, I give thanks for his friendship.. his generosity and kindly humour will always be remembered." Arthur Holland writes: "I was saddened to hear the tragic news concerning Tom. He was such a fine chap in every way. I will always remember his bright, humorous letters, and his kindly, generous nature."

It was a quiet night with only one new item to show around. This was the first Sexton Blake hardcover; a well-produced book entitled "Dressed to Kill." Let's hope that this one is well displayed to ensure success. General discussions continued rather longer than usual over the coffee. Next meeting will be in September.

S. SMYTH

* * *

MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th July, 1969.

I am almost afraid at having to report that for the fifth meeting in succession our attendance was eleven. Certainly if this goes on we shall have to thoughtfully cogitate on a wheezy celebration. But seriously though it would be terrifically jolly if the figure rose by another half dozen or so.

Our numbers may be small but member's enthusiasm and support is truly terrific. Vividly illustrating this it is very pleasant to report that our library has just been enriched by two very fine gifts which we most gratefully appreciate. Firstly a copy of

that very interesting new publication the Who's Who of children's literature, by Brian Doyle. This is most generously presented by our new Leicester member, Mr. Mike Follows. Secondly we had three Magnets, Nos. 1359, 1389, and 1410, very kindly presented by our much esteemed old member, Ivan Webster.

The writer expressed our most grateful and sincere thanks to the donors of these splendid gifts. Carried with hearty applause by members.

Tonight's anniversary No. was Gem 1641, dated 29th July, 1939. The Collectors' item aroused great interest, being the fine new facsimile reproduction of the Harry Wharton Rebel Series.

Although we had had so much to consider and discuss, the main and most important programme item was a very fine talk by Jack Bellfield on that famous Rebel series just referred to above. As one naturally expects, Jack's talk was both most thoughtful and interesting. Dealing very well with a very complicated plot covering 12 Magnets and something like half a million words. As Jack pointed out, the key to it all was pride, which he illustrated very aptly and interestingly with a verse on Pride from Pope's Essays. In this case we have Wharton's stubborn, mulish pride arising partly from bitter resentment of lack of faith and trust by his Form Master. This splendid talk was much appreciated by members, and clearly much discussion could have ensued, but inevitably and exorably, time ran out just as it always does at our meetings.

EDWARD DAVEY

Chairman and Secretary.

* * *

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 9th August, 1969.

August being a holiday month (and the first week traditionally Leeds Holiday) it was good to see sixteen there, when the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened the meeting after a busy library half-hour, and distribution of the Wharton Rebel No. 2 facsimiles to the delight of all who had ordered. We were very glad to see Marion Wilde, and our Treasurer-Librarian, Gerry Allison, and Myra were with us again; Elsie Taylor having come their way in her new Mini! It was Gerry's first Meeting since his set back in April, this hot weather being just right for him to get out (and what a hot evening it was!) and he had brought lots of news from our postal members.

Firstly, from Overseas, New York member Fred Griffin (now retired), his wife Mary and son Tom in their third trip to Europe had had several happy visits to Menston. Fred took opportunity to pick some library books himself and Mary said what pleasure they both had from membership of the Club. (One of their travelling adventures in Paris recounted to Gerry, had been printed by Northerner II in to-day's "Yorkshire Post" - a happy coincidence.) Second Overseas visitor was Ian Menzies from St. Johns, Newfoundland. At Elland Road last Saturday he saw Leeds United v. Manchester City, but could not get to the meeting to-day, his holiday drawing to a close, but he sent a letter of good wishes to all of us.

During his enforced seclusion, Gerry had written a paper on Miss Meadows of Cedar Creek, and now June Arden read this to us. It was very suitable that she should do so, as (apart from her melodious voice) June is an ex-schoolmistress herself, and had just returned from a holiday in Canada. Her experiences in British Columbia did not include defending herself against a maddened Mexican, against whom Miss Meadows had to defend her pupils on occasion! Everyone enjoyed this pen-portrait of one of Charles

Hamilton's happiest of feminine creations.

After refreshments, Geoffrey Wilde gave a further reading from Magnet 1683. We are now nearly at the end of this final Magnet issue, and look forward to hearing our members' efforts to give the series an ending.

There had been much chat during the evening on many aspects of the Hobby - Sub-writers, Ghost-writers, "The Name's the Same" instances, (Jack Allison had discovered there is 'Bunter Sandstone' under the North Yorkshire Moors!), but now hurrying time drew our evening to an end.

NEXT MEETING, SATURDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER, 1969.

M. L. ALLISON
Hon. Secretary.

* * *

LONDON

High summer at "Friardale," Rylcombe, on the occasion of the August meeting. Tea served on the verdant lawn in the spacious garden, complete with swimming pool, was enjoyed by all and those who wanted to see the first instalment of Dickens' "Dombey and Son" did so as it coincided with the tea break. Miss Edith Hood, up from Kingsgate, Tom Porter making the long journey from his Midland home and Leslie Rowley, back home from Bangkok were given a suitably warm welcome from Chairman, Don Webster. A good job that I passed Uncle Clegg's shop in the village as the spread was simply scrumptious. Bob and Betty Acraman were thanked at the conclusion of the meeting. But ere that moment came, we had been entertained by three readings, the reader, Len Packman. First from an issue of "People," an Australian magazine, the article being entitled "The Immortal Fat Boy" and it dealt with our Australian friends including Bette Pate, that stalwart Blakiana fan. Second reading by Len was from Newsletter number 15, August, 1953 dealing with a "Cherry Place" meeting. The third reading was from the London "Evening News," by John London, about Derek Adley's and Bill Lofts' research and production of a bibliography of Edgar Wallace which has been published by Howard Baker. Winifred Morss rendered a discourse on Laurel and Hardy which seemed to go down well.

Bob Blythe read and elucidated on "Further Leaves from the Brooks' Papers."

Time passed all too quickly and items left over from the agenda will be done at the September 21st meeting at the Richmond Community Centre. The change of venue was decided on when it was agreed to waive the Hove outing and meeting until next year. Kindly let Don Webster know if intending to be present at Richmond so that he can order the right amount of teas.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

The Postman Called

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

BILL LOFTS (London): Re E. S. Brooks' letters; I wrote several years ago that Pelham School was created by Charles Hamilton, and then other writers continued the series. Jack Noble of Pelham eventually joined The Blue Crusaders, and possibly E.S.B. did have one or two yarns in this series.

Regarding the Spearing stories in Pluck, they have been established as having been written by many authors including W. W. Sayer (P. Q.) and the E. S. Brooks story has been known for a long time. Rex Haydon certainly was shifted about in editorial posts. In the 20's he was on religious papers, and he was the brother of the more famous Percy Montague Haydon. Rex died some years ago.

I thought Roger Sansom's article on the Modern Blake well-written. I'm sorry to disappoint him, but Arthur MacLean, Arthur Kent, Jack Trevor Story, Martin Thomas, Rex Dolphin, Wilfred McNeill Philip Chambers, V. J. Hanson, James Stagg, and E. Harrison are real persons, as I have met them all. He is quite correct in saying that W. Howard Baker has used many pen-names in this field.

L. S. ELLIOTT (London): I am very interested in your comments on the Gold Coast begging-letters of 1926. I was the reader who received more than one of these, my name and address being culled, I believe, from a comment by E. S. Brooks in an issue of the Lee, and I wrote to the editor about it. At the time I was corresponding regularly with Brooks, and I mentioned the letters to him.

Later, I discovered that there were quite a number of these begging-letter "con-men" operating on the Gold Coast, mostly Kroos. These Kroos were - probably still are - notorious even among their own countrymen as wily lads. The late Edgar Wallace made one of them famous in fiction - the fantastic "Bosambo of the River," who conned his way from the Gold Coast to become a tribal chief. At no time, either in my mind or, I am sure, in the mind of the Nelson Lee editor or E. S. Brooks, was any thought of "anti-colour." We were not so obsessed with the subject in those days.

Mr. Len Wormull's comment about "anti-colour" is so ridiculous as not to warrant second thoughts, and I suggest he does not see prejudice where there was none.

(Mr. Wormull drew attention to an interesting item from the past, and it is fairly obvious that his comment was merely intended as a joke. — ED.)

JACK HUGHES (Brisbane): The 'dusky merchants' of the Gold Coast were still in business as late as 1940. On October 31st that year I received a small parcel by mail containing a piece of monkey skin with

a shorthand printed letter on a sheet of school exercise book paper. The request was that I send a Kodak camera in exchange for the skin. The writer said that he had received my name from a friend. My address used was one I had not lived at for some time but was shown in a Pen Pal advert in a Gem in 1938.

BOB BLYTHE (London): It seems rather captious to criticise last months Summer Number, when four extra pages were provided at no extra charge, (which means of course, that the charge was borne by yourself) but really I must protest, on behalf of all Lee supporters, at the proportion of pages allotted to their interests - 3 pages out of 36!! Bearing in mind that, at a conservative estimate, one third of your readers are Lee fans of varying shades of interest, what do we find? Directly or indirectly Hamiltonia - 11½ pages, Blakiana - 6½ pages, Nelson Lee - 3 pages, Miscellaneous material, Ads. etc., 15 pages.

Is it possible that you hold nothing further from your contributors on Lee matters? No, this cannot be true, for even if no-one had written anything, then you could have used the other half of my own article to make up the deficiency. However, I cannot believe that the Lee fraternity are so devoid of writers that at least six pages of the normal C.D. could not be devoted to Lee matters.

Looking back over past months, it seems that you have set a limit of four pages for the Column regardless of the material at hand. Surely, six or even seven pages are not too much out of thirty-two, when, as I have said, at least a third of your readers have an interest in St. Franks and E.S.B.

Having let off steam somewhat, I'd like you to know that, in spite of these remarks, I consider the C.D. to be one of the finest amateur magazines to be printed in England. But, please, more space for Nelson Lee!

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: A section of the Editorial, a bit of Danny, and a space in the Letters section were devoted to the Nelson Lee in the August issue, as well as the Lee Column. What does our reader suggest should have been left out to make room for more Lee?)

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