

STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol.  
24



N°  
284

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HOMICIDE!** *Rex  
Dolphin*

her indentity  
was unknown —  
how could they  
find her killer?

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AUGUST

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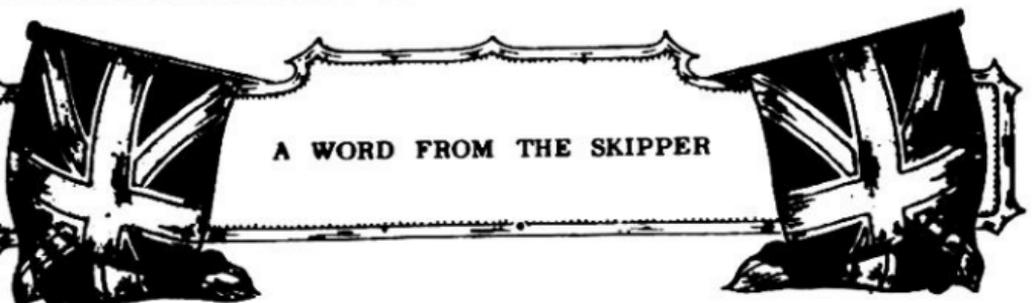
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 24

No. 284

AUGUST 1970

Price 2s.6d.


 A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER
LEONARD PACKMAN

It is only a few short weeks since I met Len Packman for the last time. It was an experience which I shall never forget. I went to try to cheer him up. But it was he who, sad though I was, cheered me up.

He had been told that he had, at most, but a few weeks left of life. He looked, and knew he was, a dying man. His quiet serenity, his calm, uncomplaining acceptance of the fact that his life was drawing to its close, his deep belief of a better life to come, were things which made me marvel. It would be glib to say that he was the bravest man I have ever known. Though he was brave, his serenity came more from happiness in his loved ones and in faith for the new life over the rainbow. Len was a deeply religious man.

Before and after his funeral service I chatted with several elderly ladies who had known him all his life. One of them was a friend

of his mother before he was born. All of them spoke with warm and deep affection of the one whose life they had followed down its 65 years, an affection which could only be inspired by one truly out of the top drawer.

I knew Len for 25 years. We were often in touch with one another, and never, during the whole of that time, was there ever a cross word between us. He showed me many kindnesses, and I am going to miss keenly a very dear and valued friend.

Soon after the end of the war, he was the co-founder of our club movement. Always acutely interested in Sexton Blake lore, he was the main power behind the Sexton Blake Circle which flourished for a long time. The death of Len Packman is a great loss for our London club. For a number of years - consecutive years in early days - he was its chairman, and a very good one indeed. Although periods of indifferent health caused him to be less active in club life in the past few years, his enthusiasm and his verve never grew stale.

Polished and dignified, kindly and straight as a die, hasty on occasion but never bitter or unfair, Len Packman is one whose memory will always be green so long as the clubs go on. He left his own worthy mark on the Book Club, and it is his own memorial.

Our sympathy at this time goes to Eleanor, his dearly loved daughter of whom he was so proud. We remember her as a child, echoing her father's enthusiasm for the hobby. Even since her very happy marriage a few years back she has never lost her interest.

And what of Josie, who stood beside him, in sickness and in health, as she vowed to do long ago. A big gap is left in her life which can never be filled. May she, with the help of the good healer, Time, find joy and contentment in the wonderful memory of the fine man whom we all respected and admired. And may the deep affection which we all feel for this sweet and charming lady help her in her great loss.

#### THE ALPHABET VERSE

Years ago, when some of us were children, alphabet verses were popular, though they seem to have dropped out in the past twenty years. Recently I came across one in an early blue Gem. I am printing it here because I think you may like it. It may not be good verse,

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but the sentiments are sound, even though they might bring blank stares from the modern 14-year old who, according to rumour (the lying jade), is "so much more responsible" than we were at the same age.

This verse was written by someone living in Bracknell which today is a small town but 60 years back must have been a mere speck in the heart of open country.

Here, then, is the A.B.C. of your favourite paper - any paper:

- A for the Authors - all second to none.
- B for the Boys, whose hearts they have won.
- C is the Confidence never misplaced.
- D for the Duties it shows must be faced.
- E for the Editor. (Give him a cheer!)
- F for the Fame, growing greater each year.
- G for the Girl readers (they know what is good).
- H is to Have it, as everyone should.
- I for the Interest 'twill ever sustain.
- J for the Joy reading brings in its train.
- K for the Knowledge it adds to our store.
- L is the Longing we each have for more.
- M for its Manliness, true and upright.
- N is our Need for its counsel and light.
- O is our Ownership so clearly shown.
- P is our Pride in the paper we own.
- Q is the Quality - pictures and text.
- R is the Rush always made for the next.
- S for its Standing - the first in all lands.
- T is the Truth which for ever it stands.
- U we Unitedly wish it god-speed.
- V is the Volume - a treasure indeed.
- W its Weal - we all have at heart.
- X is its 'Xtra Grand 'Xmas part.
- Y is our Yearning to have it, and then  
Zealously guard it until we are men.

A closing thought. If plenty of readers hadn't "zealously

guarded" their copies, we should have no collections now.

THE ANNUAL

Next month we shall send you your order form for the 1970 Annual. And speaking of the Annual, why not advertise in it? Your wants, your items for sale, your good wishes to your friends. By advertising in the Annual, you will be helping yourselves - and helping us to make both ends meet.

THE EDITOR

- - -

DEATH OF NORMAN PRAGNELL

We deeply regret to record the death of Norman Pragnell in hospital. For years he was an enthusiastic member of our Merseyside Club, his interest in the hobby falling away with the passing of the branch. We have, unfortunately, lost touch with him in the past few years, but he was devoted to the Nelson Lee and St. Frank's, and, in early times, contributed many excellent articles to our Lee Columns, and fought with praiseworthy zeal to prove that Brooks was second to none as a writer. All readers will be sad to learn of yet another stalwart being taken away.

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FOR SALE: Bound volume (brand new binding in red with gold lettering) containing 2 S.O.L's (bound without original covers): No. 15 "Football Heroes" and No. 55 "A Rank Outsider," the famous early tale which brought Lumley-Lumlet to St. Jim's: 32/-. Volume of the Captain, Oct. 1906 - March 1907: 12/-. B.F.L. No. 246 (1930) "The Island Castaways" by A. S. Hardy, lovely mint copy 10/-. B.F.L. No. 71 "The Boy Barge Owners" by David Goodwin, excellent copy 10/-. B.F.L. No. 111, "A Pit Hero" by Max Hamilton 7/6. B.F.L. No. 137 "Redcastle & Co." by David Goodwin, covers rough but repaired 5/-. Gem No. 981, 7/6. The Girls Own Paper Annual 1892-1893: 7/6.

"St. Benedict's Goes Back," excellent stiff cover copy by Hylton Cleaver: 5/-. Post and Packing extra on all items.

S.a.e., first, please, to ERIC FAYNE.

# DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1920

The 1000th Number of the Boys' Friend appeared at the start of the month. It was a special Scouts' Jamboree Number to celebrate the big scouting affair at Olympia. The Rookwood story, which split into the series about Mornington being expelled, was "Jimmy Silver & Co. at the Jamboree." All the scouts camped in Richmond Park, and the scouts of Greyfriars and St. Jim's were there as well as those from Rookwood.

Then came the last story of the Mornington series - "Back to the Old School," in which Mornington earned a pardon by saving the Head from drowning. To wind-up the month came two tales in which Putty Grace wished to prove to his friends that he should play the leading part as a schoolmaster in a play he had written. They were very good fun. The two tales were "The Other Mr. Bootles" and "Putty's Plight."

Two good pairs for Cedar Creek. Hopkins, the cockney boy, was worried because his family were to be evicted from their home-stead by their landlord, Mr. Gompers Gunten. Two stories named "Down on His Luck" and "The Luck of the Hopkinses." Then a further two tales about a new boy from the United States. His name was Buster Honk. These were "The Chum from Chicago" and "Buster Honk's Bargain."

A model of Greyfriars school - or, rather, a plan for making it - has been given with the comic paper "Chuckles."

A good tale in the Sexton Blake Library was "The Twist in the Trail." It was set mainly in Ireland, around Killarney, and it was pleasant and exciting.

All railway fares have gone up. It now costs  $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. a mile, which is a rise of 75% on 1914 fares, so they say.

The Michael Poole stories about St. Katie's still continue in the Gem. I don't like them much. The St. Jim's stories have been rather a weak collection. "The Tyrant Tamers" told of the Third Form in revolt against Mr. Selby. They sent him to Coventry, which

no boys could really do with their form-master.

"Beaten Hollow" was a story of rivalry with the Grammar School. Tom Merry & Co. were challenged by a team of girl cricketers whose secretary was Miss U. R. Dunn. Of course, the girls were the grammarians in disguise. Then a friend of Gordon Gay, a Mr. Huggins, turned up at St. Jim's pretending to be a new form-master.

"A Battle of Honour" told of a robbery at St. Jim's. A young boxer named Jim Baxter was suspected, so Tom Merry fulfilled a boxing engagement in Baxter's place. Last of the month was "All Through Baggy" in which Trimble threw a stone and it went through a hedge and hit a poor old man on the other side. The old man thought he had been hit by a ball from a junior cricket match, so everyone rallied round him. Nothing to dance about, this lot.

It is getting very expensive to buy houses. The average cost of a house today is £900. Only just over a year ago, in 1919, one could buy a similar house for £700.

Some very good pictures at the local cinemas. There was Mary Pickford in "Heart of the Hills;" Dorothy Gish in "Out of Luck;" Norma Talmadge in "The Isle of Conquest," and a lovely English film named "The City of Beautiful Nonsense," starring Henry Edwards. There is also another new serial named "Smashing Barriers."

A very mixed bag in the Magnet. "Bunter's Baby" told of a woman who asked Bunter to mind her pram while she went to look for her purse - and then failed to come back for her little boy. "The Schoolboy Artist" was a most strange tale. It was not by any means a bad story, and told of a new boy at Greyfriars. His name was Teddy Tenniel, and he was appearing professionally on the Music Halls as a lightning artist. He had just one more engagement to carry out - at the Courtfield Theatre, so the chums went to see him. One would have thought that it was going to carry on into quite a good series, but so far we have heard no more of Teddy Tenniel.

"A Bid for the Captaincy" was a pretty awful tale, even by modern standards. Harry Wharton fell down a cliff and was injured, so Bunter tried to become captain. Best thing about it, it was short. To wind up the month was "Archie Howell's Return." He came back in the Remove instead of in the Fifth. I wish he had stayed away altogether.

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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

## EARLY STRUGGLES

by Robert Blythe

### CHEER BOYS CHEER

Was there ever, I wonder, a more unusual title for a boys' paper than "Cheer Boys Cheer?" There was, of course, "Ally Slopers' Half-Holiday," and "Ching Chings Own," which want some beating, but certainly at the time of its publication between the years 1912 and 1913 it must have been the most odd.

However, be that as it may, odd title or not, Edwy, always ready to enlarge his market, decided that here was a likely field for his talents.

Our old friend Horace Phillips, was editor of this new venture. "Cheer Boys Cheer" was a paper the size of "The Magnet" had buff coloured covers and the contents consisted of short stories with an adventurous or patriotic flavour. Edwy had submitted a short detective story with the character of Nat Pinkerton, an American, as the detective, which was accepted, although as you will see, patriotism succeeded in ousting the American in favour of a Briton - Clive Derring.

We commence the correspondence at the point where the editor had accepted Brooks' first story.

Fleet Street.

May 21 st, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brookes,

I hope to start number one of your Nat Pinkerton series in an early issue of CHEER BOYS CHEER. Will you please give me a call this week with regard to another story?

Yours sincerely,  
HORACE PHILLIPS

E. S. Brookes, Esq.

In his reply Edwy had to make excuses for the delay in sending the manuscript and makes the first of many promises not to let it happen again. He was to make many such promises during the next few years and to different editors. This may or may not have been due to his increasing output, and also to the fact that he never turned down the opportunity of getting a story published, even when he knew his

time was fully occupied. It was this willingness to supply a story at the drop of a hat, which made him a valuable acquisition to the various editors and which, I'm sure, was the cornerstone of his later success.

May 28th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Am sending off that Nat Pinkerton yarn so that it reaches you to-morrow (Wednesday) about mid-day. I should have despatched it with this letter only it is not quite all typed and corrected. I'm sorry for the delay, especially as I promised you I would send it off on Tuesday. However, you can rely on getting the succeeding stories in promptly to time; I will send three during the next fortnight so that we can get ahead a little.

Again apologising,

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely,  
E.S.B.

May 29th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Nat Pinkerton story enclosed herewith, 4,000 words as near as I can reckon. I'll send in the next yarn so as to reach you next Monday morning certain. Perhaps, if you want the story to be about any special subject, or to be laid somewhere abroad, you will drop me a line?

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely,  
E.S.B.

Fleet Street.

31st May, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Thanks for the 2nd Detective story.

If you have not already started on No. 3, please make it an adventure abroad. I must have the M.S. by Monday midday at latest.

The detective's name has been altered from Nat Pinkerton to Clive Derring, a British detective.

Yours sincerely,  
HORACE PHILLIPS

June 3rd, 1912.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Thanks for your letter of the 31st. ult. I had just started on a Nat Pinkerton story with the scene laid in England, but I laid it aside and commenced the enclosed. I should have sent it in previously, only I have laid the scene in Constantinople, and I had to make sure of my subject before I could get on with the writing. Without a little local colour the yarn would have been very bare.

As you will see, I have altered the name, according to your suggestion, to Clive Derring.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours very sincerely.

Fleet Street.

June 12th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am very disappointed that you have not sent me this morning, Wednesday, your next Clive Derring story. We are very much behind with this series, and you said you

would get forward. Unless you can do this at once, I shall have to distribute the series amongst several authors.

To put matters right I ought to have another story on Tuesday, and still another on Friday of next week. You could then follow with one story a week.

Yours sincerely,  
The Editor  
CHEER BOYS CHEER.

E. S. Brooks, Esq.

Bures, Suffolk.  
June 16th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I am sending on the next Clive Derring yarn - "The Missing Junior Clerk" so that it reaches you on Tuesday morning, as you requested in your last letter. This will be followed by another on Friday. From then onwards I will make a strict point of turning in a story every Friday. You can absolutely rely upon my keeping to this.

With kind regards,

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely,  
E.S.B.

June 17th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Through utterly unforeseen circumstances I have been unable to complete the Clive Derring story enclosed - complete it, that is, in time for this post. I promised it for Tuesday, and I will post off the latter portion so that it reaches you about two o'clock - so - shall be keeping my word. I'm sorry I can't send the lot, for it's such a small thing to break up, but I'm sure you would rather have the bulk now, rather than wait. The next story will be in your hands Friday morning, first post, CERTAIN.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely.

June 20th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Herewith you will find enclosed the next Clive Derring yarn. Perhaps you would like the next one to be about a particular subject, or with the scene laid in a foreign country? If so, will you please drop me a line, so that I shall know what lines to work on.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely.

All this rushing to meet deadlines must have had an adverse affect on his writing as Mr. Phillips doesn't hesitate to say.

Fleet Street.  
June 21st, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am sorry to say I shall be unable to use the "Clive Derring" story, which I am returning herewith. The tale is much too wild and unconvincing for "Cheer Boys Cheer," and in spite of the extravagant ideas there is really no thrill in it.

I would like the next story laid at the seaside, but you really must make the stories more plausible and exciting if I am to keep them on. Will you send me a synopsis for approval?

Yours sincerely, Horace Phillips  
"CHEER BOYS CHEER."

---

This had the necessary effect although it didn't produce the next story any quicker.

June 23rd, 1912.

Horace Phillips, Esqre.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I'm sorry you don't like the last "Clive Derring" story I sent you. I admit it is improbable, and will make the next story - laid at the seaside - more plausible and exciting. You can trust me to send in something that you will approve of. I will send it Tuesday, and follow it up with another to reach you on Friday, to make up for lost time.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely,

June 25th, 1912.

Horace Phillips, Esqre.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Sorry I am unable to enclose the Clive Derring story herewith. I am posting it to-morrow, however, certain, and shall - as I said in my last letter - follow it up with another to reach you on Friday.

I apologise for the delay, and hope you are not inconvenienced.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely,  
E.S.B.

June 27th, 1912.

Horace Phillips, Esqre.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I intended sending another Clive Derring by this post; but it struck me that you might want to make a suggestion with regard to its setting. Therefore I have put off writing it for to-day. The last two stories of the series have been adventures in England; do you think the next one had better be enacted in a foreign country - France, or Germany? I have been thinking that an aeroplane story, set in France, would be a change. In any case, if I don't hear from you by Saturday, I shall know that you approve of this idea, and let you have the yarn by Monday.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,  
Yours sincerely,  
E.S.B.

Fleet Street.  
June 28th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

In reply to your letter of yesterday's date, I have to inform you that Mr. Phillips is at present away on holiday. He is returning on Monday next, so I think you had better wait till you hear from him before getting on with the next Clive Derring Story.

Yours sincerely,  
R. T. EVES  
"CHEER BOYS CHEER."

July 1st, 1912.

Horace Phillips, Esqre.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I enclose herewith a 5,000-word adventure story, and trust that it will meet with your approval. When I showed you the synopsis, some time ago, you said you liked it, and told me I could write it up.



Percy Mellish fails in his bid for leadership of the juniors, and Figgins plots a plot — in this 65-year old story of St. Jim's.

## STAUNCH CHUMS AT ST. JIM'S

Matters were going from bad to worse in the School House. Percy Mellish's bid for the leadership of the School House juniors had ended in disaster, but Blake's position remained unchanged. He was cut by the whole house, with the exception of the chums of Study No. 6: and when it became quite clear that the chums had no intention of casting Jack out, they were sent to Coventry too.

The whole school had made up its mind that Blake was guilty. In the days that elapsed since the theft nothing had transpired to change the complexion of affairs. The money had not been found, and no facts had come to light either to clear Blake or to direct suspicion upon anyone else.

The doctor had given Kildare his word, and could not go back upon it, and Blake had a chance yet of clearing himself if he was innocent; but it certainly seemed that if the truth was not out yet it never would be out.

Blake was noted in the school for his nerve and coolness, which seldom failed him under any test; but he had never experienced a situation like this before.

For the first few days Study No. 6 had more fights upon their hands than they had had in the whole of the previous term; but they could not fight the whole house, or keep on at it for ever, and so things gradually settled down into quietness, and Study No. 6 accepted their exclusion from the society of the rest of the house with patience.

Blake felt the trouble which was brought upon his chums more than his own. They kept up an appearance of cheerful carelessness, which, however, did not deceive Blake. Their loyalty to their chum was made to cost them dear in every way.

And the School House juniors, who had concurred in thus dethroning their old leader, were made to realise that the loss of him was a serious one. For now that Study No. 6 kept to themselves, the

juniors felt the want of a leader badly, and there was no one to adequately supply Blake's place. In the skirmishes with the New House the School House began to get the worst of it.

The New House were never tired of pursuing their advantage. They nicknamed the School House "the thieves' kitchen," "Pentonville," and "Wormwood Scrubs;" they made an elaborate pretence of buttoning up their pockets whenever a School House boy came by, and they made frequent and solicitous inquiries as to whether any property had been missed lately.

When Percy Mellish suggested that a round-robin should be sent to the doctor, asking him to expel Blake at once, he found many sympathetic hearers.

Percy had not yet given up the idea of leading the School House juniors. The taunts of the New House were so exasperating that there was certain to be an outbreak before long, and Blake's mantle would certainly fall upon the shoulders of anyone who could gain a victory over the enemy; and Percy, though his repugnance to any kind of rough play was strong, was determined to make a bid for the giddy eminence.

The expected "row" came the day after Figgy's visit to the Rylcombe Arms. Morning school was over, and the quadrangle was a scene of noise and life. Pratt and some more New House juniors were punting a football about, when they came into collision with a School House group. Pratt raised a shout of mock alarm: "Look out! They'll pinch our footer if we don't look out!"

"Beware of pickpockets!" yelled the New House juniors.

"Oh, go for 'em! We've had enough of this!" said Walsh, in a white-heat of rage, and he hurled himself upon Pratt, and they rolled in the muddy quadrangle.

In an instant the row became general. Reinforcements for both sides hurried up, and black eyes, red noses, and thick ears were distributed on all sides with

remarkable rapidity.

But now more than ever the School House missed the cool head and the strong arm of Jack Blake and the sturdy chums of Study No. 6.

They were swept back by the New House, and Figgins & Co. coming upon the scene just then, and joining in the fray without asking why or wherefore, the retreat of the School House was speedily changed into a rout.

It was then that Percy Mellish rose to the occasion. Taggles had recently been at work on the bicycle-shed, and a pail half full of tar was standing where he had left it. To seize the tar brush, plunge it deep into the sticky mess, and then rush into the fray was the work of a moment for Percy.

The tar brush was planted full in the unfortunate Figgy's face, and he staggered back, half choked, half blinded, and wholly hors de combat.

Percy rushed on, brandishing his terrible weapon. The New House juniors fell back before him. King Arthur's sword Excalibur did not cause such dismay to the foe as did that tar brush. Kerr received a dab in the face, and Wynn a pat on the head, and they retired hurriedly from the contest.

The School House, with a cheer and a roar of laughter, rushed on, backing up Percy, and the New House were swept back.

The New House juniors hurriedly retired to their own house. There, they felt that the foe dared not follow them, for fear of masters and prefects, but the pride of victory had mounted to Percy's head, and he rushed after them recklessly.

He was going to show his house-fellows that he was quite up to Blake's mark as a leader, if not a bit above it; and so he chased the retreating juniors to the steps of the New House and into the deep porch, and there he met his Waterloo.

For the sight of a master's head poked angrily out of a window had caused the School House to fall back hurriedly, and the over-bold Percy was alone with the enemy.

He was surrounded and seized on all sides, and Figgins wrenched the tar brush away from him. Percy struggled, and

would have yelled to attract a prefect to the spot, but Figgins dabbed the tar brush into his mouth. Percy choked and gurgled, and the yell remained unuttered.

A dozen or more of the New House boys were smeared with tar, and they were all feeling extremely vengeful. They trooped into the junior common-room, and bore Percy in their midst. They closed the door, and locked it in case a troublesome prefect should come inquiring what the noise was about; and then they turned their attention to Percy.

"Is this what you call playing the game," demanded Figgy - "smearing chaps and spoiling their clothes with tar?"

Percy struggled desperately.

"Hold him!" said Figgins. "He shall have what's left on the brush, and we'll make it up with soot!"

The grinning juniors held Percy in a deadly grip. He could not escape. Figgins rubbed the brush well over his face and hands. By dint of squeezing the brush was made to yield up really a goodly quantity of tar. Percy was soon transformed into a Hottentot of the deepest dye.

Then Figgins groped up the chimney with the brush, and brought it out again thick with soot, and recommenced. Percy gasped and begged for mercy, but Figgy, with his own face smeared, was not likely to give quarter.

"There!" he said, when he had finished. "I think that will do. It will be a lesson to you, I hope, and put you up to a wrinkle about tarring people's dials. Chuck him out!"

The door was opened. Willing hands assisted Percy to depart, willing feet helped him out of the New House, and he sprawled in the quadrangle. He picked himself up and streaked for his own house, and a yell of laughter greeted him.

"My hat!" exclaimed Walsh. "What is it? The wild man from Borneo?"

"No, it's Umslopogaas."

"It's a Christy Minstrel."

The unfortunate Percy escaped from the chaff of the juniors, and went off to clean himself, in a fearful temper. He realised that he had made his last bid for the leadership of the house, and had

failed. One who jeeks command cannot afford to make himself look absurd, and Percy cut the most ridiculous figure the School House had seen for a long time.

It was days before the last traces of the tar were removed from his face, and longer still before the Fourth Form allowed him to forget his misadventure.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hallo, Figgy!"

"I want to speak to you, chaps."

"Go ahead, old son!"

Study No. 6 were taking their solitary exercise in the gymnasium. One unpleasant effect of the Coventry was that the chums were barred from the Junior football practice, and this was what hit them hardest of all. They supplied the place of the beloved footer as well as they could by extra time in the gymnasium.

They were so employed some time after the "row" in the quadrangle, when Figgins came up to them. He was looking very serious.

"I don't want to say anything at present," said Figgy, "I haven't any proof yet, you understand; but I think I have the whole story clear enough."

"Just one question. Do you know who the real thief is?"

"Yes."

"For certain?"

"Yes."

"My hat! And it's only a question of obtaining proof?"

"That's all."

"And you think you can do it?"

"I hope so."

Blake thumped him on the back.

"But, I want help," said Figgy. "I can't explain exactly now, but I want you to trust me, and I think it will come out all right. Now, young D'Arcy is always rolling in money. Have you got a ten pound note, young Algernon?"

"I have two fivahs," said Arthur Augustus.

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**WANTED:** Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. Also POPULARS 401, 403, 407, 413, 415, 422, 441. Also GEMS 727 - 737 inclusive.

**ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.**

"Will you lend them to me - not to spend, you know, but for a certain purpose? You shall have them back safe and sound. There's a slight risk of losing them, though."

"I don't mind," said D'Arcy. "If it would clear Blake, I'd gladly give a tennah, or a pony!"

"That's all right, then. First, though, I want you to take down the number of the notes. You chaps will witness that he does it."

"That's easy enough," said Blake. "But I'm blessed if I can see what you're driving at, old Figgy."

"Never mind that," said Figgins mysteriously. "You'll see soon enough, if the wheeze works, and I think it will. Let's have the notes."

It did not take Arthur Augustus long to fetch them, and Figgy went back to the New House with the two fivers in his possession, leaving the chums of Study No. 6 in a state of considerable astonishment.

"It's all serene," said Figgy, when he rejoined the Co. "Aubrey stumped up like a little man. Here are the notes, and the numbers are down all right in No. 6 Study. Chaps, this little game is going to be a howling success."

"You think you'll be able to manage Kildare all right?"

"What ho! He'd jump at a chance of clearing Blake."

"I suppose so, Figgy, old son, you're a genius!" said Kerr admiringly. "They can talk about Sherlock Holmes. Why he ain't in the same street with you, Figgy."

"Well," said Figgy modestly, "I don't want to blow my own trumpet, but I really think I have worked this thing out pretty well. Mind, you've got to back me up, and don't you give the game away."

(ANOTHER INSTALMENT NEXT MONTH)

# BLAKIANA

IN MEMORY OF LEONARD PACKMAN

## TRIBUTES

LESLIE ROWLEY. In these days when it is becoming more of a rarity to bring happiness into the lives of others, the passing of Len Packman, who did just that, is an event which will bring much sadness. This is a loss which will be felt far beyond the confines of the London Club of which he was co-founder and many, not only in this country but overseas as well, will be saddened at his leaving us. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Josie who partnered him for so many years in bringing leadership and comradeship into the lives of so many of us.

ROGER JENKINS. It must be well over twenty years ago that I first saw Len Packman. As a matter of fact, I had gone to Marble Arch to meet Herbert Leckenby after years of correspondence, and Herbert, diffident as always, had asked Len to approach me and make contact. I remember thinking then that Len had a most distinguished air, and when I saw him in the chair at meetings of the London Club I was confirmed in my impression.

Underneath his confident and business-like exterior, Len had a deep and at times passionate interest in almost all aspects of the hobby and of the club, of which he was rightly proud of being co-founder. There was nothing selfish or profiteering in this interest, and many collectors in different parts of the world have Len to thank for the treasured items which he had obtained for them at a modest sum. It gave him great pleasure to assist other collectors in this way.

In recent years Len was content with a seat on the back benches of the club, but he could always be relied upon to contribute to discussions and he was indeed a source of knowledge and information on all sorts of topics. Frequently in ill-health, he had made so many surprising recoveries that the news of his death came as a considerable shock to us all, and he will be greatly missed in club circles. Our sympathy goes out to Josie in her sad loss.

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W. O. G. LOFTS. Another giant has left us, and, indeed, Len was a giant among us all. Co-founder of the Old Boys' Book Club; chairman for many years; a born leader; a brilliant organiser. Colourful, with his purple period of 1917. Tall, angular, temperamental, tempestuous, but above all, with a heart of gold. Sincere in everything he did. He was a great friend to me from the time I joined the hobby, and he probably obtained for me half of my valuable collection of 1st editions. He supported me in everything I did, and he is quite irreplaceable in the hobby. The meetings will be quieter and emptier now. Thank you, Len, for being such a loyal friend, and for what you did in the hobby. I, for one, will never forget you.

REUBEN GODSAVE. Len will be greatly missed by all members of the London club. Under his influence the club was kept on the right lines, and it flourished.

THOMAS JOHNSON. I had known him as a pen friend for well over 20 years, and although my one regret was not having met him personally, I still felt him to be one of my dearest and closest friends.

Our interests were mutual, and many letters passed between us concerning the good old days of the cinema and particularly Pearl White.

I am sure that all our heartfelt sympathies are extended to Josie during these sad days. We shall all miss Len more than words can say, but we have the knowledge that he is at rest and in God's good keeping.

I shall never forget his kind and encouraging letters sent to me during my three months in St. Paul's Eye Hospital both during and following my operations. The world can ill afford to lose such staunch and lovable characters, whose sincerity is something to cherish always.

We shall all miss you Len, but although you are no longer with us, we can still retain our fond memories of happy days spent with you and the hobby. Bless you for everything and Goodbye.

GERALD ALLISON. What a grievous blow to us all is the loss of Len Packman. Len was the hobby personified. Dedication and devotion shone in his eyes. The first time I met him was at the Inaugural Dinner of the Northern Section in June, 1950, when Len, as a matter of course,

was in the chair. I remember that, meeting him, I felt like a first day fag at Greyfriars in the presence of George Wingate.

Neither shall I ever forget the visit to London in May 1951, when Len arranged accommodation for ten of us from Yorkshire, and did everything possible for our comfort. It was at the never-to-be-forgotten meeting at Hume House, Lordship Lane, on Sunday, May 13th, 1951, that Len presented to the Northern Club his handwritten volume containing the titles of every Gem, Nelson Lee, Magnet, Union Jack, Schoolboys' Own, Boys' Friend Library, Monster Library, Sexton Blake Library, Thriller Library and many, many more. How many hundred hours of work that book cost Len it is impossible to say. It has been my vade mecum ever since. As librarian to the Northern club it has been quite invaluable, never a day goes by on which I do not consult it.

Tennyson wrote: "Death closes all; but something ere the end, some work of noble note may yet be done." Len Packman is dead, but his work for the Old Boys' Book Clubs will never be forgotten. We shall always remember him with loving gratitude.

ROBERT BLYTHE. When, on that day in 1947, I called at 27 Archdale Road, on the off chance of meeting someone called Len Packman, I little realised what would come from that initial meeting.

During the years, that which started as an acquaintanceship, deepened over the years into firm friendship. It is true to say that this meeting added new interests to both our lives, inasmuch as the London Club, and all that stemmed from it, had its inception in our discussions at this and later meetings.

Len had his faults (and who hasn't) but his good points far outweighed them, and I shall always be grateful for some of the things he did for me during the years, particularly during my own long illness some years ago.

As our chairman for many years, Len was in his element, and I am sure that others who, with me, have filled that post, will agree that he was the best man for the job. Certainly the meetings will not seem the same without him.

Goodbye! Len, old sport. It's been a real privilege to have known you.

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MESSAGE FROM MRS. JOSIE PACKMAN

Mrs. Josie Packman asks us to express her thanks to the large number of our readers who have written to her during her bereavement. It is not possible for her to reply individually to all who have written, but she has found great comfort in the many sympathetic messages she has received.

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REVIEWEIGHTH SEXTON BLAKE

Howard Baker Publishers

OMNIBUS

21/-

This volume includes two Sexton Blake novels, both by W. Howard Baker, from the more recent Sexton Blake series. "The Fugitive" is in itself a re-write and extension of an earlier Blake story of nearly twenty years ago, then entitled "The Frightened Lady." This was the very first novel to introduce Paula Dane who was destined to be one of the most controversial characters in Blakian history. Even all these years later, ripples from that old, old argument crop up occasionally. Whether or not you liked Miss Dane, "The Fugitive" is a famous story and a good, thrilling novel.

"Fire Over India," in the same volume, is also an extension of an early post-war S.B.L. entitled "The Angry Night." Set in the year 1942, this is less of a detective story and more of a Secret Service adventure with a wartime background. A tale which builds up to a strong climax. It is remarkable as reintroducing, after nearly twenty years, Sexton Blake's brother, Nigel, and also their father, Dr. Barclay Blake.

For Sexton Blake fans, this is an historic volume which must find a place on their shelves. Production is excellent.

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OUR USUAL SEXTON BLAKE ARTICLES WILL APPEAR IN NEXT  
MONTH'S BLAKIANA

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 149. PASSED - WITH HONOURS

A report in the national press recently told of two young men in trouble. One had impersonated the other and had sat for an examination - and passed - in his friend's name. The reporter commented that it was a situation only found normally in school stories.

He was off-side. Of necessity, the academic side of school life is neglected in stories of fictional schools. In real life, so unlike fiction, examinations are a necessary evil. My main memories of summer terms at school is that they were ruined by study for and sitting for examinations. And, as I was a cricket fiend, that aspect of school life was a minor tragedy for me.

In Read's "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" the story centres round a senior who is suspected of cheating in an examination. It is the only example I can bring to mind in stiff-cover school stories.

The only plot I can recall in which one boy took an exam in another's name is the excellent blue cover Gem "Bought Honours." In that one, Levison sat an exam disguised as Arthur Augustus. In those days, Levison was a good impersonator and specialised in copying handwriting. Away from fiction, schoolmasters seldom run across boys with those accomplishments, but they are certainly acquainted with cheats, sometimes without recognising them.

Education is a dull subject for fiction, but Charles Hamilton gave it a passable showing down the years. Greyfriars seemed to specialise in scholarships of one sort and another. Harry Wharton was concerned with at least two of them. There was the famous early Magnet study of Harry being put off his stride in an examination because a shrewd rival removed the waistcoat-button with which Harry was wont to fiddle. And, years later, we found Wharton, at loggerheads with Colonel Wharton, sitting an examination in order to try to secure educational independence from his uncle.

The Magnet's most famous scholarship of all was the one founded by Mr. Vernon-Smith with the specific intent that Redwing should win it and thus become a Greyfriars man. Mark Linley, too, was at Greyfriars on a scholarship, but the theme was never really well-

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handled in the Magnet. Scholarship stories, and, in particular, those starring Linley, were marred by the stress on poverty and the extreme and often unbelievable snobbery which the scholarships evoked among so many of the blacker than black characters.

The theme was far more naturally handled at St. Jim's. Most Gem readers of later days were unaware that Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were scholarship boys. The St. Jim's fellows quickly forgot that the New House trio were at St. Jim's by virtue of scholarships, and that, in my experience, is exactly what happens in real schools.

The tale in which Redfern & Co. arrived was a delight. When St. Jim's knew that three scholarship lads were coming, plenty feared that three fearfully slummy characters were to enter their midst. On their journey to school, Redfern & Co. learned, by means of the innocent Gussy, what fears were being entertained concerning them. They were tickled to death, they plotted a plot, and the result was that three fearful scarecrows arrived to take their places among the young gentlemen of St. Jim's.

It was all great fun, and handled with a deft touch, all vastly different from the rather painful incidents with which the early Greyfriars abounded in tales of this type.

Though snobbery is considered by some, not without certain foundation, to be even more evident at Rookwood than at Greyfriars, the only scholarship boy seemed to be Rawson, who was really nothing but a one-series star.

To study the theme, in connection with Charles Hamilton's writing career, is rewarding. Before the first world war his handling of the snobbery theme at Greyfriars, and, of course, in stories like "King Cricket" would seem to indicate (together with other pointers) that he held pronounced radical views. As he grew older his views would seem to have changed very considerably.

One final thought about examinations. In a riotously funny sequence in one of the early Will Hay films - I forget whether it was in "Boys Will Be Boys" or in "Good Morning, Boys" - a group of youths were shown sitting for an examination and adopting all kinds of outrageous means of cheating.

# The Postman Called

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

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): I would like to express my appreciation of the old story being serialised. It is good to have my favourite character, Jack Blake, in the lead, but apart from the fact that it features well-known characters, it is a good school story in its own right. You have mentioned the change in Hellish from an aspirant for the junior captaincy to just being a dingy rotter and sneak, but there are other and more subtle changes. George Herries is more of an individual character, and not just the owner of "Towser;" Figgins is the detective and not Kerr (as far as the tale has gone, anyway). Who, however, is Walsh? Monteith, while being several sorts of a cad, does not seem to have the deep-seated rottenness of his friend Sleath. I've always wanted to read this story, and wish I could read the revision and enlargement in the "Gem" years later, which I believe was entitled "Jack Blake On The Warpath," although it looks as if Figgins went on the warpath.

There is not enough about Rookwood in our "C.D." these days, many of us think.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Jack Blake on the Warpath" had no connection at all with "Staunch Chums." A few of the old Pluck stories were re-written and extended, possibly by Chas. Hamilton himself, but so far as I know "Staunch Chums" was never re-issued in any form.)

F. R. LOWE (Derby): I wonder what became of all the Nelson Lee readers' "exchange photographs." If they still exist, they would be full of interest. In 1927, when I was 12, I sent E.S.B. a photograph of myself sitting on a donkey in the rain on the beach at Skegness. This was a tinplate, printed on the spot. In exchange for this I received the splendid autographed photo of Edwy which I still treasure. I often wish I had sent him a better one, but it was the only one I had at the time.

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby): I was not using the terms "shocking" and "horrifying" in a derogatory sense in applying them to "A Very Gallant Gentleman" although I did not like the story.

In view of Mr. Samways' explanation of the reason it was written, I think Mark Carthew should be deeply thankful that Ralph Reckness Cardew went to St. Jim's and not to Rookwood.

But I was not being wholly critical of Mr. Pentelow. Surely my contention that his theme was so vividly remembered that it was used in "The Archers" thirty-seven years later - and again vividly remembered - is a compliment to him.

I know deaths were common in children's literature at one time, and have read some of the stories Gerry Allison mentions. But they were not common at Greyfriars and this, added to the fact that Greyfriars seemed so real to many readers, is why I think they must have shocked young readers when they occurred.

Perhaps I was more sensitive than most but I well remember being shocked at the age of eleven when I thought Lumley-Lumley had died at St. Jim's - although this was more than compensated for by my delight when Levison almost literally dug him up the following week.

Gerry also warns me not to read the three final chapters of the Bulstrode Minor story which the real Frank Richards wrote.

Unfortunately this warning (though I freely admit I could have done with it) comes a little too late. I read that story shortly before reading "A Very Gallant Gentleman," and I think it was the more horrifying of the two. It seemed more realistic.

In "A Very Gallant Gentleman" the sentiment seemed to be far too thickly laid on. The word "dying" was used much too frequently in the final chapter, presumably because Pentelow was determined that the more dense section of readers should be in no

doubt as to what was going on. Then, in a few lines, we were told that Violet Valence died soon after Courtney. This was just too much to take in, particularly by readers who had already had more than enough.

But the Herbert Bulstrode tragedy was so horribly effective because in that case death struck so suddenly, unexpectedly, and with startling effect, at the end of what had previously appeared to be a normal Greyfriars story.

Much as I admired its effectiveness I cannot understand why Charles Hamilton wrote it. I don't think Herbert had ever been heard of before and feel sure that most readers would have preferred not to have heard of him at all.

**T. SHERRARD (Potters Bar):** I remember when I was a boy about 60 years ago it was a great thing to be given the 4d. or 1d. to spend on reading materials.

I, myself, used to buy a Magnet or Gem then exchange cigarette cards for another from another boy. Armed with these two copies I would run along to a stall in Wellington Street, Camden Town, where a man had a large variety of boys' papers. Magnets, Gems, Union Jacks, Nelson Lees, etc. I would exchange my two copies for one, sometimes in a rather sad state, but nevertheless very welcome.

I also remember that my parents did not mind me reading the Chas. Hamilton papers, but U.J. and N.L. were frowned upon as "bloods" - I could not take them into the house. I had to hide them and then go to a churchyard, of all places, to read in the evenings.

I will say this, that of all the writers it would appear that the name of Frank Richards has survived mostly in older men's memories.

Now I am no longer a boy reading "boys' papers" but an Old Boy reading Old Boys' Books - and still enjoy them. Somehow modern stories do not appeal much.

What was that something the "old" writers had??

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## REVIEW

BILLY BUNTER AND

Frank Richards

THE TERROR OF THE FORM

(Howard Baker Publishers) 50/-

This 8-story series, the Flip series, comes from the later part of the golden age of the Magnet, and followed on the fine Mauleverer Towers Christmas series. The year was early 1932. It is a series of much charm, and is noteworthy for the love and extreme respect which the little waif, Flip, felt for Bunter. The opening story, set at the close of the Christmas vacation, is exceptionally delightful. There is much originality in the series, marred only slightly by the rather hackneyed development of the "missing heir" theme and the temporary schoolmaster who is a crook. Roger Jenkins once wrote of the series: "It was not perhaps in the top rank, but it was crisp and entertaining, and - unlike some later series in the Magnet - it never overstayed its welcome."

Production of this volume is very good indeed; superior to the Bunter Court volume in which the copies gave the impression of having undergone guillotining. Excellent value for money.

FERRERS LOCKE

By D. A. Liddell

I was especially interested in several articles and comments on the Ferrers Locke stories which have appeared in Collectors' Digest over the past year or so.

One of the Ferrers Locke stories which I particularly enjoyed myself was 'The Curse of Lhasa' which ran as a serial in the Magnet round about 1927/28. It was later reprinted as B.F.L. No. 175 in 1929 rather ineptly abridged but still recognisable as a good story.

As in the previous printing it bore no author's name but on the back page advertisement in the B.F.L. companion volumes, the author is given as Geo. E. Rochester.

Despite his predilection for 'Peril from the East' themes it did not seem to be quite in Rochester's style. He was a versatile author and it is often difficult to tell. The story was concerned with the adventures of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake in a formidable quest for a lost exploration party in Tibet, who unfortunately had got within the sights of Kang-Pu an oriental despot just as he was about to embark on a programme of world conquest in truly epic style.

Even as boys in these far off days we had little belief that such things were really possible but we have alas, lived long enough to know better. In the late 1920's the Magnet serials tended to be provided by Geo. E. Rochester and Stanton Hope, and I have many happy recollections of the 'Bulldog Breed' by Rochester and 'Gold for the Getting' and 'Red Sea Patrol' by Hope. Their names, however, invariably appeared on their work. Stanton Hope wrote at least one Ferrers Locke story published as B.F.L. No. 731 (1924) 'The Yellow Spider,' so that he was no stranger to the manners and methods of that particular private eye. His Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake tended to be rather formal in their relationship and although there was no touching of forelocks the reader was left in little doubt as to who was the senior partner in the enterprise.

My recollection was that the Locke/Drake organisation was a little more free and easy in the 'Curse of Lhasa,' but as much of the action took place in Tibetan torture chambers, perhaps a little less formality was only to be expected. There are few clues in the

vocabulary or style although there is a recurring use of the word 'sonorous' as applied to the oriental voice. Curiously enough Hope also used this word frequently in this connection but so may dozens of others and the observation may be of little diagnostic value. If the author had not been to Tibet and that I think can be ruled out, then he had done his home-work remarkably well and produced a not unfitting accompaniment to the main Hamiltonian dish. I cannot help being still a little curious after all these years. Was the author Rochester or less likely Hope, or was it after all the work of the very able Hedley O'Mant, to whom many of the Ferrers Locke stories are credited? I wonder if anyone knows for sure.

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## NEWS OF THE CLUBS

### MIDLAND

#### Meeting held on 30th June, 1970.

Only nine members attended the June meeting - viz. Mrs. W. Brown, Miss W. M. Partridge, Ian Bennett, George Chatham, Ted Dodd, Norman Gregory, H. J. Heap, Tom Porter and Ivan Webster, but like all our gatherings it was enjoyable and satisfying, but also like all our gatherings went all too quickly.

The minutes were read and approved, and the anniversary number and collectors' item were then displayed. These were respectively N.L.L. (O.S.) No. 108 dated 30/6/1917, and a St. Frank's League Certificate dated 7/11/1927, and both aroused much interest.

A tribute was now paid to the late Len Packman of the London Club, all members standing in silence for a minute in respect to his memory.

On a happier note the chairman followed this tribute with the news that two members had contributed £4.10s.0d. as a gift to the club funds.

After this came the programme as already arranged - a reading from the 1932 Modern Boy Annual, a discussion about a proposed autumn outing, a series of games and a quiz devised by Gerald Allison

"Located at Greyfriars, Kent."

The last event of the evening was the raffle, the winners being Mr. Heap, Ivan, Norman and Ted Dodd.

The next meeting will take place at the Theatre Centre on August 25th from 7 p.m. onwards.

TOM PORTER

(Correspondent)

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SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Although under the threat of demolition as Sydney's building boom continues, Cahill's Restaurant was still available for a rendezvous when members gathered for their third meeting of 1970 on 30th June at 6.30 p.m. Despite the fact that it is mid-winter here, the weather remains fine and sunny, and members arrived full of enthusiasm, bringing indoors the bracing atmosphere to add to the comfortable surroundings provided by this restaurant which has afforded such an ideal meeting place for so long.

Over the excellent dinner, members passed round the outstanding new reference book catalogue, the result of immense research on the part of Derek Adley and Bill Lofts. Also of great interest was the dust-jacket of the Leslie Charteris Biography - an impressive production doing full justice to the work Bill Lofts has done on this subject. Talk then centred on obscure detectives, and members argued over the definition of a detective.

Part of the evening was spent in sad reminiscences of the fate overtaking second-hand bookshops, now rapidly disappearing from the Sydney scene.

Members remembered Victorian collector Tom Dobson, a loyal friend who was killed so tragically just a year ago.

E. J. PATE

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NORTHERN

Saturday, 11th July.

The holiday season had its effect on our July meeting, with several regulars missing, but, nevertheless, there was a good turn out when Jack Allison, in the absence of Geoffrey Wilde, was voted to the chair for the evening.

The acting chairman paid tribute to the work for the O.B.B.C. of Len Packman, of whose death we had heard with deep regret.

Jack Allison announced that he had solved the mystery of the Latin quotation sent two months ago by Bessie Baron. He thought he recognised the style of writing as that of Cicero, and felt very pleased when he proved to be correct. It was, in fact, Cicero's thoughts on the delights of reading to young and old in his Pro Archia, a legal plea in court for the right of an Asian immigrant to Italy to a vote in Roman elections. A singularly appropriate quotation, both topically and from the hobby point of view.

Jack Wood opened our third series on the theme of Hacker against Wharton and Quelch with a dramatic start to the Hidden Hand. Hacker was struck down by Stephen Price on a bounds-breaking expedition, and regained consciousness to find Wharton bending over him, jumping, inevitably, to the wrong conclusion.

After refreshments we had two short quiz items. One, by Cliff Webb, provided 20 questions about Greyfriars, with 24 points at stake. Ron Rhodes had 22, Bill Williamson 21 and Ron Hodgson 19. Jack Allison provided the second item, with anagrams on six hobby personalities. Ron Rhodes, Bill Williamson and Ron Hodgson gained full points.

Another enjoyable meeting ended about 9.15 p.m. Next meeting, Saturday, 8th August.

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LONDON

To the tranquil old world atmosphere of Ruislip, a fully representative gathering of club members met at the Friardale home of Bob and Betty Acraman on Sunday, 19th July.

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The Chairman, Leslie Rowley, gave an address of welcome to one and all. Then he called upon those present to stand, and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we stand in remembrance of, and in tribute to, Len Packman who, with Bob Blythe founded this Club many years ago. Len's interests in the hobby were as wide as his heart was big. He spared no effort in giving happiness to us all, whether our own tastes lay with Hamilton, Lee, or the many authors of Sexton Blake. We all extend our sympathy to Josie and the other members of the family.

"We all feel this loss deeply, but think that Len would be the last person to wish that this meeting and those that follow should be conducted in an atmosphere of gloom and shall therefore continue as we have done for the several years that he was with us. Thank you."

Roy Parsons gave a good talk on the Sparshott school stories published just after the war. He exhibited his own bound volume of the six issues and a "Picture Post" issue with an article in it about Sparshott which was written by Sidney Jacobson.

Ray Hopkins rendered a reading about William Napoleon Browne from a Nelson Lee Library. Charlie Wright conducted a quiz which Don Webster won easily. Leslie Rowley conducted a Greyfriars Scrabble competition which Eric Lawrence won.

Next meeting will be held at 71 Olive Road, Cricklewood, London, W.2. Phone 453-8143.

Finally a hearty vote of thanks to the hospitable Acraman's.

Roger Jenkins will have the Hamilton Library at the August meeting, but borrowers are asked not to post books to him between August 12th and 31st.

#### UNCLE BENJAMIN

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#### THE "CLIVEDEN SET" OF 1913

by O. W. Wadham

Can anyone who has made a comprehensive study of the Charles Hamilton saga tell me if that famous writer's stories in the Magnet and the Gem in the long-lost year of 1913 were really up to his usual standard?

At that period Charles Hamilton was writing stories of the Fourth Form at Cliveden for the then flourishing Dreadnought. Those

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yarns must be the poorest sample of any to come from his pen. They concerned three chums, Lincoln G. Poindexter, a Yankee junior, not of the Fisher T. Fish kidney; Micky Flynn, a wild Irish lad, and Dick Neville a more or less normal English type.

The three were termed the Cliveden Combine, and Poindexter appeared to be the hero and leader of the three.

Other lads mentioned in those 1913 stories were Simpson and Hill, and a pluckless type termed Teddy Trimble. Crane and Cuffy were two Fifth-Formers often mentioned in the six page tales in the Dreadnought.

In 1913 the Dreadnought had 36 pages for one penny, and must have been a popular paper. The Hamilton yarns were at the end of the paper, and were certainly not up to the standard of other yarns by Andrew Gray, Mark Darran and others. And I wonder: was American junior Poindexter still leader and hero some twelve months later when the Great War got going? If so he certainly fared far better than Greyfriars Fisher T. Fish.

Some time later the Dreadnought began to reprint early Magnet stories by Charles Hamilton. Writing to New Zealand collector, Frank L. Knott, on August 30th, 1951, Hamilton says: "Very many thanks for your letter with the old number of the Dreadnought. It certainly clears up a doubtful point. The story is a reprint of a very early Magnet - about seven years old at the time it was reprinted, and apparently followed by others. Really I could hardly guess how often my old stories have been reprinted. Herbert Hinton was editor at that time, and he used to churn them out over and over again till I wonder that readers were not fed up with them. I notice in the Collectors' Digest that it was stated that I had written for the Nugget, a paper with which I never had anything to do, but on looking into it, I found that it was so. Two old stories from the early Union Jack had been reprinted there. One of these days I almost expect to see my first story written in 1890 reprinted somewhere."

There can be no doubt that those Dreadnought reprints of early Magnet tales would receive more favourable reception than the Cliveden Combine contributions.

It is significant that Charles Hamilton did not mention them at all in his letter to Frank Knott.

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DOMINATING CHARACTERS

by R. J. Godsave

Reading the early St. Frank's Nelson Lees, one gets the impression of something missing. Knowing that followed over the years it is obvious that E. S. Brooks had the rather difficult task of building up St. Frank's as regards scholars.

When Nipper first arrived on O.S. No. 112 the scarcity of dominating characters in the Ancient House was such that it was no easy task to form a respectable cricket eleven. Some of those selected would have been classed as reserves or dropped from the team in later Lees.

It is interesting to note that the portrayal of Edward Oswald Handforth at that period was rather that of a clown.

The lack of dominating characters seriously affected the solidity of the early St. Frank's Lees. The fact that a reader is aware of the existence of certain characters, even if not mentioned in a series, gives the backing which is so important.

As the majority of leading 'lights' were yet to come, this was very much to the advantage of Brooks as a new scholar usually held the stage in the series in which he arrived. The arrival of the Trotwood twins was somewhat overshadowed by the arrival of Col. Howard Clinton, the temporary Housemaster of the College House.

This series was a powerful dramatic one which held the readers attention, as apart from the school side of the story there was mystery and what was thought to be a murder by Col. Clinton. Cornelius Trotwood shared the limelight by the use of his peculiar gift of ventriloquism together with a wonderful memory.

Some two years after taking over the sole authorship of the Lee, Brooks had sufficient dominating characters to be able to write the fine series that were to grace the pages of the Nelson Lee Library.

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