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S. GORDON SWAN

We are all deeply saddened at the news of the death of our Australian friend, Mr. S. Gordon Swan who died recently, at a wonderful age, the victim of a heart attack.

For a great many years there have been very few issues of Collectors' Digest which have not contained an article from Mr. Swan. He had the gift of writing entertaining items, often thought-provoking, and he had the flair, so dear to the heart of a harassed editor, of saying all he wanted to say in articles of restrained length. Mr. Swan's

faculties never faltered, and he used his remarkable age and excellent memory to write with compelling conviction. His main interest was Sexton Blake, and it is our Blakiana column which is going to miss his work the most of all, though, at times, he contributed items on other branches of the hobby.

His name is assured of a place in the C.D. scroll of fame. We owe a lot to S. Gordon Swan. We could never forget him.

THANK YOU

In mid-month, as I write now, Madam is just starting her seventh week in hospital. Though she is still very ill, her progress has been helped by the immense wave of love which has gone out to her from her friends, and I hope it may not be too long before she is back at Excelsior House. My very grateful thanks to the scores of readers who have written to her after the publication of our August issue. Deeply-felt thanks, too, to so many who have sent me personal letters which have been of great comfort to me. Some of them have been expressed in terms which will make me retain them for the rest of my life.

Please accept these few lines as a token of my gratitude to you. As you will understand, at the present time I cannot answer by letter.

Madam was in Frimley Park Hospital for a week; then a fortnight at the Atkinson Morley Hospital at Wimbledon; and now she is back at Frimley again. Naturally, I have not missed a day in visiting her, and some of my adventures, as one who has to rely on public transport, may even make an article for these pages, one of these days. I have found the train services invariably excellent - but the buses! One has to suffer the horrors of our appalling bus services to realise the agonies of frustration and weariness suffered by the poor who are obliged to try to use those so-called services. It needs a Dickens or a Hamilton to put them down on paper.

And the eating out, with the nightmare of messy chips with everything, which makes one yearn for the days of the wonderful Lyons' Tea Shops and Corner Houses. And the cafes with their indescribable juke boxes, with children pouring in two-bob bits to maintain the awful racket. Yes, an article is indicated - one day.

In the meantime, please continue to remember us in your prayers -

and be patient if it becomes necessary. Thank you all.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

Madam was very ill through that long and anxious Sunday night. The next day the ambulance arrived to take her to hospital, and I went with her. The Princess Snowee was never neglected, but she was clearly disturbed.

On the Monday evening, when I returned, the Princess had disappeared. I called and searched, and searched and called, till after midnight. No Snowee. I put down her food, ready for her when she came through her cat-door.

At six in the morning I rose and dressed. The food hadn't been touched. Once again, I roamed the deserted streets, in case she might have been run over. There was no sign of a Princess, dead or alive.

That evening when I came home from the hospital about 9, she was still missing. Once again I roamed, enlisting the aid of folk living near, many of whom know her. She had now been absent for over 24 hours.

Oh, goodness, I thought, her Mum in hospital - and I've topped everything by losing her beloved pussy-cat. I had no idea where that puss was. Run over, stolen, shut in somewhere, or anything. Yet she carries her address and her phone number on a medallion which hangs round her neck. So nobody who mattered had found her.

Hopelessly, I put down another dish of food, after I had roamed the streets and lanes again until midnight.

At six, on that Tuesday morning, I rose again, and went downstairs. The dish was empty. The food had been eaten. Nobody can realise the relief.

"Thank God, she's back!" I said aloud. Talk about an answer to prayer. I went into our sitting-room, and there she was, fast asleep in my rocking-chair.

I ought to have scolded her and shouted at her. I didn't. I stroked and fondled her and talked nonsense to her for ages.

Of course, she had been upset - and her 30-hour disappearance was the result. Where she had been I never will know.

During that awful day before, I had told lots of white lies to her

Mum in hospital. "How's my darling Snowee?" she asked me, time on time.

"Oh, she's fine!" I had lied glibly, knowing all the time that I had no idea where her darling Snowee was.

I hope I may be forgiven when the time comes.

THE EDITOR

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WE HOPE TO SEND YOU, with this issue, the

ORDER FORM for Collectors' Digest Annual

1979 edition

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

SEPTEMBER 1929

It has been the sunniest September since records were kept. From 22nd August there was no rain in London until 29th September. Most of the month has been very hot, and in the second week the temperature in London reached 88.

Stanley Waldo, the son of the Wonderman of Sexton Blake fame, has arrived at St. Frank's. The opening tale of the series, in the Nelson Lee Library, is "Waldo, the Wonder Boy". It's rather a good idea, I think. Waldo is able to do the most weird and wonderful things - like his old man.

Next week, "Spoofing the River House". The new boy at River House School looks meek and mild and inoffensive to Hal Brewster & Co. Actually it is a giant prank, and the new boy is none other than Waldo of the St. Frank's Remove. Next week "Waldo's Foe". The foe is Sam Wilkes who, to gain revenge on Waldo's father, strikes at Waldo, the Wonder Boy at St. Frank's.

Final of the month ends the series with "The Arrested Schoolboy". Stanley Waldo is arrested on a charge of robbery, but the man behind it all is Sam Wilkes. And Waldo puts paid to him at the end. "You're a wonder," says Betty Barlowe softly to Waldo - and lots of others think

she is right.

I continue to have the Modern Boy, but I miss the Ken King tales which ended last month. There is a railway series, a Canadian North-West series, and an air serial by G. E. Rochester.

Two good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "Bunter the Blade" tells of Mr. Bunter doing well on the Stock Exchange and sending his son £20, while in the second half of the tale it turns out, temporarily, that Bunter is a viscount. He even adopts Gussy's lisp. Quite funny. The other S.O.L. is "Facing the Music", another collection about Mornington. The Morny tales are always good, but there is too much Morny.

In the Gem "Baggy's Bargain Sale", in which he finds a hidden dump of stolen property, and proceeds to sell his treasure. "The Silent Witness" next week is a story about an invention by Bernard Glyn which he calls television, and Skimpole also tries to invent something of the sort. Next "Gussy's Noble Sacrifice". Finally "Grundy's Ambulance Brigade". There is a new serial in the Gem called "The Worst Form at Codrington" by David Goodwin.

The foundation stone of the new United Nations building has been laid in Geneva. I wonder whether the United Nations will work. Doug is a cynic, and says it will - so long as every country gets what it wants. And America, the greatest country of all, is not in it at present.

The Magnet started off with the final story of the series about Harry Wharton & Co. on holiday at Ravenspur Grange. It is entitled "The Terror Tracked Down" - and it starts by Ferrers Locke, the detective, being ushered in by Packington, the butler. And Sir Richard Ravenspur, Nugent's Uncle, rises eagerly to his feet. At the end of the story, Locke has nabbed the villain. A marvellous series with a terrific atmosphere. And the only holiday series, so far as I remember, with Billy Bunter entirely absent.

Then a new series to start off the new term. "The Boy Without a Friend" is a new boy, Julian Devarney, who takes an intense dislike to Monty Newland, the Jewish junior. The next story is "Monty Newland's Enemy". Final story in this quite entertaining series is "The New Boy's Feud". Devarney's family had been defrauded by a man who had an alias "Shem Isaacs", though he was not Jewish at all. In the end,

Devarney leaves Greyfriars, but not before he and Newland have become good friends.

At the pictures we have seen Richard Barthelmess in his first talking picture "Weary River". He is one of my favourite actors, but he has a squeaky voice which is a disappointment. The record of the song "I have been just like a weary river which is winding aimlessly" is played by Jack Hylton's band on HMV, and Doug bought it.

We have also seen Jack Holt and Agnes Ayres in "The Donovan Affair"; Charlie Chaplin in "The Circus"; Clive Brook in "The Perfect Crime"; Lon Chaney in "Laugh, Clown, Laugh", and Victor McLaglen in "Captain Lash".

The opening Rio Kid tale in the Popular is "Ambushed". The Texas Rangers are trailing the Kid, and they are led into an ambush of redskins. Next week "Cornering the Kid", and the boy outlaw is cornered by the Rangers in the Mal Pais, the "Evil Country". But the Kid saves a Ranger, Jim Hall, from the floods. Next week the Kid helps "Five-Hundred Dollar Smith", but when Smith tries to double-cross the Kid, the rascal runs into trouble. Final of the month is "The Puncher of Blue Bird Ranch" in which Red Harris finds himself swinging at the end of a noose - and when the Kid rides away, the punchers wave him a cheery good-bye.

The series about the Greyfriars chums in the Sahara is still going strong in the Popular.

A new book by G. B. Priestley has just been published. It is entitled "The Good Companions" and it is a story about a concert party.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 107, "Bunter the Blade" comprised a Magnet story of the same title of early 1915, plus one of early 1917 on similar lines, entitled "Viscount Bunter". The two tales welded together well. "Viscount Bunter" was a famous tale in its period, though, read now, one gets the feel of it that the author was below par at that time. So many of the wartime tales were of indifferent quality. The other S. O. L., No. 108, is an example of the weird thinking that went into the compiling of the S. O. L. Only a couple of months earlier they had published a much later tale in which Mornington was expelled at the finish. Yet No. 108, two months later, "Facing the Music", was another Mornington tale from a much earlier period. Two tales in the collection come from September 1917 and concern Morny in the period when he lost his money to 'Erbert, and actually worked for a Founder's Scholarship. Then a move forward of several weeks to collect a Cuffy story, incongruous in this book, followed by the two succeeding stories which concerned Mornington

and 'Erbert. Melodramatic stuff, but great entertainment, provided one was not too flabbergasted by the Rookwood non-sequence of events in the S. O. L. The Rookwood tales in 1917 were very much longer than they ever were again, and five stories of this time fitted in snugly.)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I do hope my readers have enjoyed the first part of the Dr. Huxton Rymer story and that they will be looking forward to further instalments. This month's Blakiana contains an article by a new author but not a new member of our circle. It brings to mind the old question as to why very few articles have been written about the New Look Blake but at least one of those stories brought back a very young sheep into the fold.

THE DR. HUXTON RYMER STORY

by Josie Packman

Part 2

Now, back to 1913 and the start of the story, which begins in U.J. No. 488, "When Greek meets Greek". In this tale we hear that Blake has met Rymer in New York and foiled one of his plans. He escapes from New York and boards a boat running to the small Republic of Salnarita in South America. The cargo turns out to be guns for the usual rebels in that particular country and it is here that Rymer also meets Mlle Yvonne Cartier for the first time and falls in love with her. At that time Yvonne is still the Adventuress and invites Rymer to join forces with her, but a reckless disobedience of the rules laid down by her had severed their relationship and Rymer had been set adrift but with well-lined pockets.

He landed in Melbourne and set about enjoying the luxurious life he loved, but soon the demon drink overcame him and he was eventually down to his last shillings and living among the dregs of humanity. This adventure is related in the Easter Double Number of the Union Jack No. 493 called "The Diamond Dragon", a tale of Chinese intrigue in which Rymer gets involved, but after returning to England with his loot he eventually ends up in Bleakmoor Prison.

These two stories pre-date the only Rymer one in the Boys'

Friend Library of May 1913 entitled "The Great Mining Swindle". Rymer has been transferred to Bigmoor Prison which is supposed to have been the most secure of all the English Prisons, but he escapes with the aid of some of his criminal friends. It was during the course of this adventure that Rymer showed he still had some remnants of decency. Although in the earlier adventure with Yvonne he had tried to kill Tinker, in this one his better nature comes to the fore and he rescues Tinker from sinking to his death in the quicksands near Bigmoor Prison. One cannot but admire this man who could at one time submerge himself in medicine and surgery to help others, and then the next fall victim to drink and drugs.

By now the true character of Dr. Huxton Rymer had been set by the author who then went on to enlarge on his theme. The great Doctor succumbed to the snares of drugs and in the adventure related in U.J. No. 512, dated 2 August, 1913, he continues his disastrous career by becoming involved in the plans of Prince Wu Ling (who had appeared on the scene by this time) and once again he lost the fight and ended up in another small Republic in South America. Time and again Rymer returned to that part of the world as there were ever rich pickings to be made and no extradition law existed between South America and the European countries or North America, thus making a safe haven for the wrongdoers. But the Chinese plots follow him there as told in U.J. No. 526, "The Yellow Octopus". The next adventure has already been mentioned - "The Sacred Sphere" in which we first heard about Rymer's treatise on Cancer. This was also a Christmas Double Number of the Union Jack, but although Rymer appeared to profit from his many crimes he was a spendthrift and soon ran through the money he obtained and often he was foiled by Sexton Blake from making the large coups he had planned.

A gap of several months passed before another tale appeared, but it was worth waiting for. This was a Spring Double Number and the story was of such a length that the magnificent plot could be unfolded to the full. Dr. Rymer decides to use his remaining capital to return home to England and books a first class passage with the hopes that something big might turn up. It did, but vastly different to what Rymer expected. He comes into contact with a wealthy landowner, one Thomas Brail, who

is suffering from Cancer, and thereby lands in a most unexpected situation. Thomas Brail is hoping to find the man who wrote the wonderful treatise on the cure of Cancer and when he learns that Rymer is that man he offers him a fantastic fee to cure Brail, a fee that should have satisfied even Rymer's craving for money. However, from the moment he first examines his patient a marvellous change comes over Rymer. Every thought of a criminal nature fled as he was gripped by his professional instincts. For part of the voyage home Rymer was satisfied to treat his patient and plan the further treatment when various drugs were available. But gradually the idea came to him for getting his hands on a larger sum than even the huge fee Thomas Brail had offered him. The criminal instincts once more came to the fore and in spite of Sexton Blake's eventual appearance on the scene Rymer did cure his victim but got away with a considerable amount of his wealth. This he was able to do because Brail was grateful to Rymer, not only had he been cured but re-united with his estranged wife and daughter. The plot of this story is far too long and complicated to tell in a few words, but if anyone is lucky enough to possess a copy or able to borrow one, of this Union Jack, then they are in for a real fine read. The number is U.J. 548, dated April 1914, and entitled "The Case of the Radium Patient". In my opinion this is one of the very best of Teed's fine tales. These double numbers of the Union Jack certainly did give the author scope for wonderful tales, as well as developing the character of Dr. Huxton Rymer to the full.

To be continued

DANGER'S CHILD

by Barry Macilroy

Very few enthusiasts of the Sexton Blake have ever known that in the Autumn of 1940 and Spring of 1941 a young, eager, aspiring new author was lost to that small band of writers of our favourite detective. No-one can be sure just how great a loss this was to the Library, what splendid yarns of detection would have flowed from his fertile imagination ... no-one, that is, but for myself.

As a young evacuee, 8 years old, my war-time world centred upon the weekly arrival of the Knock-Out Comic, with its recipe of Deed-a-Day Danny, Stonehenge-Kit (the Ancient Brit!) ... and two or

more pages devoted, in picture-strip form, to 'Sexton Blake on Secret Service'. The villain of the piece for much of those early years of the war was 'The Hooded Stranger' ... an excellent foil for Sexton Blake and Tinker, and their exploits into enemy territory to destroy 'heavy guns' that fired shells from the secret depths of a castle-moat ... and earth-mole machine tunnelling beneath the sea-bed towards our shores ... with the hooded stranger and best part of the German Crack Troops ... yes, these were heady days indeed.

Apart from the Knock-Out I had already been totally captivated by Sexton Blake's Radio Serial 'A Case for Sexton Blake' by Edward Holmes. This had all the ingredients to satisfy the most ardent of youthful fans ... an old Northumberland Castle with secret passages, creaking doors and staircases, clanking chains, 'cliff-hanger' endings to each episode, and a splendid villain in the mysterious 'Man in the Iron Mask'. Indeed, as far as I was concerned there was only one 'Man in the Iron Mask' ... I had never heard of the book by Dumas, and when I eventually did, considered that he had copied the idea!

I sat down in the Autumn of 1940 to produce my own Sexton Blake story, and it will come as no shock to you now to realise that I intended it to be a mixture of story 'written', and story 'pictures'. It was to be serialised, so I devised a small magazine - to be totally filled with my own interests - S.B., Bunter (also picture-featured in the Knock-Out) and any other items I could glean from my school-chums. The title of this adventurous periodical was to be 'The Daily Weekly' ... which seemed to me to be ideal, but unfortunately filled my grown-up relatives with abounding merriment. 'You just cannot say that' I would be advised ... but it still seemed perfectly reasonable to me. Just as clever, in fact as, 'A Hard Day's Night'.

I suppose the final crux of the matter was really that the small enterprise became neither one thing nor the other ... since there were only two editions, and I regret that material couldn't be put together in time to produce a copy for two days in succession, nor was I versatile enough to turn out the second edition within a week of the 'first'. What a collectors item they would make!

However, it was neither the magazine's title nor production that caused its swift demise. I really cannot remember in clear detail the

whole devilish Sexton Blake plot, but just one or two drawings which featured German bombers with large swastikers, monster British tanks with Sexton Blake and Tinker destroying the one with the aid of the latter. The down-fall was simply my failure to grapple accurately with the English language. One solitary phrase still echoes down the years . . . it gave my parents, aunts, uncles, and an untold bevy of grown-ups totally undisguised belly-laughs for years to come when I penned the words ' . . . Tinker triped up!'

Despite the assumed loss of those thrilling tales that I might well have provided for the warm admirers of our Library, there can be no doubt that the S.B. Library was to enjoy the services of a number of very fine authors who kept Blake's name on the newsagents' shelves for another twenty years and more. Neither was the Library lost for inventiveness. In its latter years came the move from Baker Street to Berkeley Square and the introduction to the 'Blake Family' of Paula Dane (his secretary), Marion Lang (Receptionist) and others. Change was bound to please some and upset others. Many of the old-established writers gradually faded from the scene but equally good, new writers seemed to fill their places. No-one could say at this point that the Library was stagnating. It was, in fact, reading S.B.L. 477 'Rogue's Harbour' by Jack Trevor Story in June 1961 (the month of my honeymoon!) that I became introduced to the Library after a lapse of fifteen years. The story seemed so good that I decided there and then to 'place an order', which was to continue right through to the end.

Yet if that was the story which rekindled my interest in Sexton Blake I have to confess that it was this author who penned a story which I consider should never have passed through the editorial hands of Howard Baker and appeared in print.

One would have thought that there were very clear guide-lines given to those who wrote the Sexton Blake stories, and upon reading a story say from 1927 and comparing it with a yarn dating 1957 I think we have a right to expect the principal characters to be much the same. The style of writing will have changed, the spoken language will also have altered, but surely the characters which we have come to know should not have changed.

Sexton Blake has always appeared over all these years to his

many admirers as the champion of clean-living, perseverance, patience, understanding, strength of character ... the Robin Hood of Today ... righting wrongs, upholding the Law, bringing the guilty to their just deserts.

What place, then has such a story as S.B.L. 487, 'Danger's Child' written by Jack Trevor Story, within the Sexton Blake Library?

The plot is well-woven in the author's typical style ... rather tongue-in-the-cheek, slightly humorous, but based and rooted in an assumption which is distasteful. We are led to believe, reading between the lines, that Sexton Blake had an affair with a fellow student in his university days, no less than the College Dean's daughter!

After such a long passage of time since his life at Cambridge Sexton Blake receives a written plea for help from his youthful 'flame', who is blessed with the name of Charmian.

The narrative is written in the first person, as if dictated by Sexton Blake. He decides to drive to Huntingdonshire to see Charmian and there are some fine descriptive passages which eloquently paint the countryside traversed during the journey.

A rather nice aside comes on page 7. 'But with me the fen mood is a mingling of pain and pleasure because in a distant way I belong here the Blake bones usually come home to the fen soil for the Blakes originally came from a long line of sextons of Blakeney Abbey'.

Further into the plot Charmian arranges a private meeting with our hero aboard her husband's motor-cruiser. It is the first opportunity for Blake to learn just what her 'cry for help' is all about. Page 29 is virtually devoted to an account of their close embrace and its aftermath. Although the reader is left to read into this page just whatever he prefers - (a subtle touch) - Blake comments 'At the time I did not know how long we spent together ... Only afterwards did I appreciate that it must have been at least two hours'

Now as far as I am concerned this just does not fit into Sexton Blake's character. I'm no prude, and if James Bond needs to be over-intimate with his female acquaintances, all well and good, but Sexton Blake ... No! I cannot imagine him throwing caution to the wind, allowing himself to become emotionally entangled with an old love affair, being swept off his feet by someone he had loved many years ago, on

their first meeting after such a lapse of time. I'm sure that most admirers of Blake would have been fascinated with a story in which he went to the aid of a woman whom he had deeply loved in his Cambridge days. It could well have been a very fine story if treated with sensativity.

Charmian has a daughter, Sable, (a nice name!) who is implicated in murder. Sexton Blake is ready to call in the police, but, (and here we have it right between the eyes!) ... (Page 37) ..! (Charmian) was looking at me in that soft appealing way again ... 'What would you do if she was your daughter?'

From here on in, Blake is rather the victim of a series of happenings, with very little detection apart from a final enlightening of just what all the mystery is about. He fails miserably to see Charmian's true character - how could he be so blind? On page 60 we learn that Charmian had been highly flirtatious at University and the identity of Sable's father leaves a variety of choices, to say the least. Is it likely that Blake would have felt a strong love for a girl of this temperament? I doubt it very much. No, I think that this story points to an opportunity missed; an old romance misguidedly dealt with in a flippant and unsympathetic manner.

However, I shouldn't lay all the blame at Mr. Story's door. He may have been advised to write this tale from a framework given to him.

I have enjoyed so many fine stories from the pens of Howard Baker and Jack Trevor Story and the antics of the latter writer's lovable villains - the Magnus family - have been a source of personal delight.

Nevertheless it is my opinion that the 'powers that be' did their supporters a disservice when this edition of the Library found its way on to the bookstalls.

Perhaps we might heed the bucholic wheeze of that gnarled old Ancient, Gosling, the Greyfriar's School-Porter. I can almost visualise that look of outraged dignity upon his unshaven features, and the aggressive tilt of his pipe, clamped between smoke-stained teeth, eyes gleaming angrily above a nose that owes its glow to many years of 'tipples'.

'Danger's Child' he might say .. 'Danger's child ought to have been drowned at birth!'

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

HANDFORTH - THE GALLOPING GOURMET!

by William Lister

I've done a little cooking myself since I retired. Never had time nor inclination before. Not that I'm a galloping gourmet, by any means, but I do like the T.V. programme of that name. One wonders if St. Frank's fans know that the Remove once tried their hand at this cooking lark. It was due to a strike in the 1920's.

A strike in the 1920's? one may ask. Indeed, yes! The only difference being that in those days strikers fought hard for a living wage (and a poor one at that) today with a couple of cars in the garage, and a cocktail bar in the front room, with holidays abroad, plus a few nights a week in the local pub or Working Men's Club and a five-day working week (or less) they strike to keep that lot going.

The catering staff of St. Frank's College were not saddled with top-heavy commitments of this nature. All they wanted was a wage to help them pay for the kind of life the worker lived in those days.

So spare a thought for those hard-working caterers of over fifty years ago. The St. Frank's boys and their headmaster did. They were sympathetic towards the strike. However you can't have a strike approved or disapproved without trouble and the Removites found the trouble was - there would be no dinner or for that matter one or two other meals. Pause a moment, gentle soul - and ask yourself how a strike like that would strike you. No dinner? Perish the thought! One would have to shake the weary old bones and provide one's own meals.

With Fatty Little in a state of collapse over the meals blackout, Handforth, Watson, Pitt and De-Valerie were appointed temporary cooks; and Handforth, having a domineering nature like Peggy Mount of T.V. fame - soon took over as chief cook and bottle washer as the saying goes.

Now cooking (for the uninitiated) can be a risky job. A little too much water in your stew or too little - results in failure; watery soup or a burnt pan is all you have to offer the dear souls with their feet under your table. Should the pudding boil over as you are washing the soapy water from your hands could flavour the said pudding, as Handforth found out. You could include the wrong ingredients in your meal also as

Handforth found out.

When the Removites sat at the table to enjoy their repast, even Fatty Little couldn't face the result. Ye gods! it must have been bad.

Strike or not, you've got to eat, at least, that's how Nipper and the Remove figured it out and as parents were paying fees the thing was to visit "Binks" for a meal and send the bill to the school governors. Well, as I said, "strike or not, you've got to eat".

It takes good cooking to satisfy the palate as the strike-bound St. Frank's Remove found out. So if the wife's figuring on a strike or perchance going out to work, buy yourself a good cook book or read carefully the instructions on any packet food in the pantry. Even with tinned goods and tinned soup a few words of instruction are usually found on the labels, even if it's only to tell you not to bring the soup to the boil or it will spoil the flavour.

You'll never be a Galloping Gourmet, but you'll do a lot better than Handforth. It is said that anyone in the Remove that dared to refer to that meal in after days in Handforth's presence received the proverbial punch on the nose.

Further perusal of "The Servants' Strike" series of the "Nelson Lee", old series, 250-255, or the single copy No. 251, "School on Strike", March 1920, will keep you informed of the outcome of this strike. From the early pen of Edwy Searles Brooks comes this story of industrial unrest in the 1920's.

DIFFERENT STYLES

by R. J. Godsave

It is generally agreed that the writings of Charles Hamilton and E. S. Brooks are so very different in style, etc., that it is practically impossible to make a comparison. Hamilton wrote many fine series with the Three Fishers public house as a corner stone.

A low class tavern near Greyfriars School, the haunt of race-course hangers-on together with bookmakers' runners. Before the second world war there were no betting shops and betting by bookmakers' runners was a hole-in-the-corner business which was illegal. This state of affairs made it fairly easy for juniors and seniors to place bets on horses running on the Wapshot racecourse.

It was, of course, necessary to exercise great caution in entering

the Three Fishers as it was made out of bounds by the school authorities. To be caught in this place or seen to enter would mean serious trouble for any schoolboy. The great attraction in this place was the billiard room, where Ponsonby of Highcliffe School played with Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars occasionally.

In contrast, E. S. Brooks made little use of the White Harp, a shady inn on the outskirts of Bellton village, near St. Frank's School. In the second St. Frank's story in the Nelson Lee Library written by Brooks o. s. 114, "The Boy from California" one gets the impression that it was his intention to write stories in future Lees using the White Harp in a similar manner to Hamilton's use of the Three Fishers. The following is an extract from o. s. 114 of the Nelson Lee Library.

'Jonas Porlock the Innkeeper, was always pleased to see Fullwood & Co. They spent much of their cash at the White Harp. There were other St. Frank's fellows who were suspected of visiting the inn, too. Starke and Kenmore of the sixth, both of them Ancient House prefects, were generally credited with playing billiards and cards at the White Harp'.

With the stage set for stories which must be of similar nature to those of Hamilton, it is possible that Brooks realised the danger of being accused of copying the Three Fishers type of story, and of a consequence, practically dropped the White Harp from the St. Frank's stories. Mention of the public-house was only to be made, more or less, in passing in future Lees. Any transactions with bookmakers appears to have been done by the bold blades of St. Frank's in the neighbouring town of Bannington.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 157 - Magnet No. 133 - "The Postal Order Conspiracy"

By the year 1910 Bunter had become firmly established as an unsympathetic character. The good-natured duffer of 1908 was transformed into a cunning young rascal, a character change that remained static until the Whiffles Circus series of 1928. "The Postal Order

Conspiracy" was a story containing a number of loosely-strung incidents connected by the theme of Billy Bunter's birthday, and the title referred to a trick of Bulstrode's: he sent Bunter a number of shilling postal-orders, payable at various towns and villages in the neighbourhood. This must have been the first time that Bunter's celebrated postal order arrived, but Mrs. Mimble refused to cash any of them, and Bulstrode succeeded in tantalising Bunter with the prospect of money that would be difficult to realise.

Bunter's artfulness was well displayed by his invitations to Marjorie and Clara and D'Arcy to attend his birthday feast. He then told Wharton that he expected him to lend him the money for the feast, knowing full well that Wharton would not allow these guests to be disappointed. How Wharton managed to entertain the guests without letting Bunter join in was the crux of the matter, and was achieved in a way that was really only poetic justice.

The story also related the return of Vernon-Smith to Greyfriars after a mid-term holiday specially granted to him. It was clear that he was allowed favours by Dr. Locke though no mention was made of the fact that Mr. Vernon-Smith had a hold over the Head. What was clear, however, was that Mr. Quelch was allowing no favours and, when Vernon-Smith refused to accept his punishment and said he would appeal to the Head, the form-master seized him by the collar and thrashed him across the shoulders. Nevertheless, in a later passage it was made clear that Vernon-Smith was aware of his unpopularity and wished things were otherwise.

The other chief actor in the story was Alonzo Todd who had arrived eight weeks previously and was featured a good deal at this time. Naive, credulous, benevolent, tactless, clumsy, he was a well-imagined eccentric character, but a little of him went a long way, and he played too great a part in this story. It is curious to reflect that, while the Gem was now presenting long stories with well-constructed plots, the Magnet was still publishing inconsequential tales in which characterisation was everything and plotting almost non-existent, but then of course the Magnet came of age much later than the Gem.

GIRL GUIDE STORIES

by Mary Cadogan

The August C.D. certainly emphasized the girls' part in the old

boys' papers! S. Gordon Swan wrote of those tough, but terrific ladies in the Sexton Blake saga, while Reuben Godsave and Danny mentioned the Moor View girls. Let's Be Controversial highlighted one of my favourite early Gem stories, The Boy Scouts' Rivals, in which of course Cousin Ethel played a leading role as a Girl Scout.

Charles Hamilton was indeed one of the first writers to produce a girl scout story. Let's Be Controversial mentioned a Girls' Reader serial called The Girl Scouts: this was written by Evelyn Yates and in fact it preceded Hamilton's story by a week or two, appearing originally in a July 1909 Girls' Reader. Hamilton's story followed in an August 1909 number of the Gem. The Northcliffe papers were very quick off the mark. I think I am correct in saying that Dorothea Moore wrote the first full-length Guide story, which was Terry, the Girl Guide (1912). This contained a foreword by the first Guide president, Agnes Baden Powell.

The girls, of course, actually gatecrashed the Movement, improvizing their own patrols in 1908. Baden-Powell had to make them official towards the end of 1909 when he changed their name to Girl Guides, to make them more distinguishable from the Scouts.

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MID-SUMMER MUSINGS

by H. Truscott

I can understand R. J. Lewis's puzzlement over Hamilton's references in 1927 to what he had already discussed in 1923, concerning Levison's past at Greyfriars. But I think there is something that Mr. Lewis has forgotten. In four years at that time the Magnet would have picked a few new readers, who would not necessarily know of Levison's previous period at the school, or why he left. One of the advantages of Baker reprints is that they enable one to read a whole series straight off, and also to pass from one series to another, which may have actually appeared a few years later or earlier. But it does have this kind of unavoidable drawback. Hamilton was not writing for Baker reprints. He was writing a saga for a weekly paper, which constantly at that time gained new readers (it gained me in 1923), and he had to fill them in.

There is also a point raised by the notes of the Midland Club's June meeting. Mr. Geoff Larner is reported as saying that "the time given for the large number of lines was quite unrealistic. It was impossible to do them in the time suggested by the story". It depends to some extent on the number of lines and the particular story. But often juniors are given a hundred lines in the morning and asked to deliver them by 6 p.m. - which does not seem unrealistic to me. I always have felt that the reaction of the boys to having a hundred or two hundred lines to write was often out of all proportion to the time it need take to write them.

Four of the Famous Five are often shown waiting for the fifth to finish, and wasting about half the afternoon while he writes a hundred lines. Juniors, such as Wharton, or Peter Todd, are often shown with pen racing across the paper. Some years ago I decided to try this out. I took one hundred lines from Morris's Earthly Paradise, lines of a fair length, and, to be fair, also did one hundred lines of Virgil, since Latin is a language I am not familiar with beyond the odd word here and there. It took me, with a handwriting that would, I think, have passed muster with Mr. Quelch, 15 minutes to do the Morris; the Latin took a little longer, 18 minutes. Of course, I was often memorising two lines at a time as I wrote. But the experiment proved something to me. Most of the grumbles at the amount of time it took to do a normal length impositions were not justified.

* * * * *

Drawing to a close.

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

"That is a very peculiar wish for you, of all boys here, to express," said the doctor. "Why do you wish him not to be expelled, Blake?"

"Because he doesn't understand what it means to him, sir. He didn't know what he was doing, really; and he didn't know how serious it was. I know he's a beast, but it's partly because he can't help it."

Dr. Holmes smiled faintly.

"I see. Then you desire him to remain?"

"No, that I don't!" said Blake promptly. "It isn't a question of what I want. He may never have had a chance to grow up anything but a howling cad, sir; and it would stick to him all his life if he were expelled, though he can't understand that now."

"I am glad to hear you speak like this, Blake. It shows a thoughtfulness very commendable in one so young." Blake blushed. "I will consider. But have you forgotten that this boy having taken so violent a dislike to you, you will hardly be safe in his presence when off

your guard?"

"No, sir; but that could be arranged, sir. He could be shifted into the other house, and then I shouldn't have anything to do with him."

The doctor's expression brightened a little. He had a keen desire not to fail with Marmaduke; not to send him home as big a cad and snob as when he first came to St. Jim's.

Blake's suggestion was a way out of the difficulty he had not thought of. He might make a fresh start in the New House and have a chance of turning over a new leaf amid new surroundings.

Blake waited for the doctor to speak. His concern for Marmaduke was genuine, but he had not been able to refrain from using this chance of scoring off Figgins & Co.

"That is a sensible suggestion, Blake," said the doctor. "I will think over it. You may go."

Blake went back to the Form-room. He sat down near Figgins, who whispered to him as soon as Mr. Lathom's

back was turned:

"What's the verdict, Blake? Is the rotter to be fired out?"

"I think not, Figgy."

"You don't mean to say they're going to let him stay after that? Well, my word, it's hard lines even on that rotten menagerie of yours they call a house."

"Oh, that's all right," said Blake serenely. "He's not going to stay in the School House."

Figgins stared at him.

"What do you mean? Are they going to build a special hutch for him?"

"I fancy he's going to be transferred to the New House."

"He's going to be whatted? Don't talk rot!"

"Figgins!" Mr. Lathom was glaring at the excited junior through his spectacles. "How dare you talk in class? Take fifty lines."

Blake grinned gleefully.

When the form was dismissed, Blake went out in high spirits, but Figgins was furious and alarmed. He confided the threatening peril to Kerr and Wynn who were equally furious.

The whole New House was soon aware of the danger. It became known that Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, had gone to see the Head. That increased the general uneasiness.

"He's gone to arrange about taking in that outsider" groaned Figgins. "He doesn't care. He'd have the brute all the more if he knew how we hated the idea. He doesn't like us."

"And we're such nice chaps, too," murmured Kerr.

When Mr. Ratcliff returned to his

own house, the juniors watched for him uneasily. A pasty-faced, sullen youth was at his heels, and a general groan announced that Marmaduke had arrived.

"Ah, Monteith!" said Mr. Ratcliff, meeting the head prefect of the New House in the hall. "This boy, Marmaduke Smythe, is coming into our house. The doctor has asked me to take charge of him. You will see that he is assigned a place in one of the Fourth Form studies."

"Certainly, sir," said Monteith. Mr. Ratcliff walked away, and left the sullen Marmaduke in the prefect's hands.

Monteith looked thoughtful. His gaze fell on Figgins, who was positively trembling. Monteith smiled grimly as his glance met Figgy's.

"Let me see, Figgins," he said, with an air of reflection. "I think there are only three of you in your study, aren't there?"

"It's a small study, Monteith," said Figgins eagerly. "So small that --"

"Most of the Fourth go four in a study. You are only three, are you not?"

"Yes, but, you see, Monteith --"

"Smythe will go into your study, Figgins. Show him where it is, and help him carry his things from the School House."

Monteith walked away. Figgins & Co. looked at each other with feelings too deep for words. Marmaduke scowled at them.

"Well, are you going to show me where that room is, Wiggins or Higgins, or whatever you are?" he exclaimed impatiently.

"Hold me back!" murmured

Figgins. "If I start on him I shan't leave a spot of grease to tell the tale."

"I am waiting," said Marmaduke.

"We mustn't keep him waiting, the cherub," said Kerr. "Let us show the dear boy to his quarters, kind schoolmates."

Figgins & Co. were wild. They would gladly have impaled Mr. Ratcliff and scalped Monteith. Unfortunately, housemaster and prefect were beyond their vengeance. But Marmaduke wasn't. They lifted him, marched him into their study, and dropped him on the floor.

"Now," said Figgins, as Marmaduke rose to his feet, considerably rumped, "listen to me."

"I won't."

Figgins shook a threatening forefinger at him.

"You've got to learn some sense. You've been kicked out of the School House, and they've had the cheek to shove you into the New House. You'll disgrace us, if we let you. Mind, you've got to turn over a new leaf."

Marmaduke scowled savagely, but did not speak.

"You've got to stop your silly airs," continued Figgins, "and stop talking about your father's money. You've got to behave as though you were a decent human being, and a silly, conceited monkey. Do you understand?"

"I'll make you smart for this, you beast!"

"It's no use talking to him," said Kerr, in disgust. "We'll pass the word round to the chaps, and we'll all take a hand in educating him. Whenever he plays the giddy ox, the nearest chap is to knock him down. Is that a good idea?"

"Jolly good!" said Figgins, with prompt approval. "You do say sensible things at times, Kerr, though one wouldn't guess it by your looks. That's the ticket. You understand, Smythe? Every time you start your funny ways you get floored."

Marmaduke growled, and the chums let him go. They were angry and disgusted, but fully determined to carry out Kerr's brilliant suggestion. Blake had prophesied a high old time for Marmaduke when he got into the New House. It really looked as if that prophecy would be fulfilled.

Over in the School House Blake and Herries were executing a war-dance expressive of the most unbounded satisfaction. Their delight was shared by all the School House juniors.

"Figgins wasn't up to that," grinned Blake. "We caught him napping that time; and I think the present we've made him is a full payment for the little favours he's done us lately. What?"

"What-ho!" said Herries. "This is where we smile. Hear us smile."

And the whole School House heard them smile.

(ANOTHER INSTALMENT OF THIS OLD, OLD TALE NEXT MONTH)

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WANTED: 1920 Holiday Annual (original) in good condition.

WARWICK SETFORD, 155 BURTON RD., DERBY., DE3 6AB.

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 66. BOOM TOWN

Our opening feature for the term came from Warner's, and was Ann Sheridan in "Nora Prentiss". The supporting programme included a Bugs Bunny coloured cartoon "Rhapsody Rabbit" and a community singing item entitled "Plantation Melodies".

Next, also from Warner's, came Claud Rains in "The Unsuspected". The supporting bill included a coloured cartoon "Tweetie Pie".

Then, from M. G. M., Abbott & Costello in "Rio Rita". This, I imagine, must have been purely for A. & C. addicts, and I should think they were a bit miscast in musical comedy. (Many years earlier we had played an earlier version of "Rio Rita" from Radio Pictures, with Bebe Daniels starring.) The rest of the bill included a coloured cartoon "The Cat Who Hated People".

Next, from M. G. M., Red Skelton in "Merton of the Movies". A coloured Tom & Jerry cartoon was "Hatch Up Your Troubles", and a community singing item was "Let's Sing Grandfather's Favourites". Most programmes now contained a 2-reel comedy, often of 3 Stooges, from Columbia. This week's was "Go Chase Yourself".

Then, from Warner Bros., Dennis Morgan in "Cheyenne". A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Polka Dot Puss", a Pete Smith novelty was "The Good Old Days", and a coloured Fitzpatrick Travel-talk was "Glimpses of New Scotland".

The following week brought Van Johnson and June Allyson in "The Bride

Goes Wild" from M. G. M. A coloured cartoon was "The House of Tomorrow" and a community singing item was "Let's Sing a Song of the Movies".

Next, from Warner's, came James Cagney in "City For Conquest". Warner's had just re-issued this film, usually considered then as one of Cagney's best, though I forget the theme now. A big mixed supporting bill included two coloured cartoons: "Goggle Fishing Bear", a Barney Bear cartoon, and another entitled "Little Pancho Vanilla".

Next, from M. G. M., Fred Astaire, Eleanor Powell and George Murphy in "Broadway Melody". A coloured cartoon was "Lucky Ducky" and a Porky coloured cartoon was "You Ought to be in Pictures".

Then, from Warner's, Ida Lupino and Dane Clark in "Deep Valley". A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Heavenly Puss".

To wind up the term came a big one from M. G. M.: Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert and Hedy Lamarr in "Boom Town". With a cast like that, it must have made a boom. The new Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Professor Tom" and a 2-reel comedy was "Pardon My Lamb Chop".

This was the last term in which we played the news reel. So a tradition of over twenty years was now broken. Just why I did not renew my news reel contract then I am not sure. It may have been that television was taking over in the home and was more up-to-date than a cinema news reel could ever be. Or it may have been

that we were playing bigger supporting bills, and one could not spare the playing time for the News.

Throughout the whole life of the Small Cinema we had run the news from Universal. In silent days it had been the Empire News Bulletin. When we went

talkie it was the Universal Talking News, which later became just Universal News. Presumably all news reels have long gone into the back streets of memory. I wonder how long Universal News continued after we ceased to feature it in our shows?

* * * * *

News of our Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held late July 1979

We had nine in attendance at this meeting, including welcome visitors Bob and Betty Acraman. Betty said that it was only after being married to Bob that she became interested in the old papers, though she had at one time taken in "The School Friend". She remembered a cookery supplement she once had from this paper.

Bob Acraman showed interesting films concerning his visits to Eton and Charterhouse, and a number of family holiday scenes.

Our Anniversary number was Nelson Lee Library (old series), No. 8, dated 31st July, 1915, and 64 years old to the day. A collectors' item comprised a volume of Nelson Lees Nos. 92 - 104, which created immense interest.

Refreshments included a superb cake baked by Betty Acraman and called "Rum & Butter cake". The sort that Bunter dreams about.

There was a reading by your correspondent from "Bunter, the Bad Lad", showing Bunter influenced by seeing a film about Black Benito the Bandit. It was a very amusing episode.

We do not meet again until 30th October, but we shall be sending a September newsletter just to keep in touch.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent).

NORTHERN

Meeting held 11th August, 1979

The Northern Club is sad to report the loss of another of its

members. Tom Roach died a few days after attending our meeting in July. Tom was greatly devoted to the Hamilton papers of the First World War period, and had an unfailing memory for the boys' stories of the time; he had been a faithful attender at the Club for many years.

A holiday month found us with a smaller complement than usual, but a pleasantly relaxed atmosphere prevailed over an enjoyable evening. We heard of yet another young reader who is keen to join our ranks (always welcome news!) and, among other things, we discussed the problems Charles Hamilton had so skilfully overcome in writing material to suit every season of the year several weeks ahead of its time.

Two members, Harry Barlow and Bill Williamson, had thoughtfully prepared quizzes to ensure that we didn't slip into idleness just because it was August. Each claimed that he was really giving us something quite easy, a tale we have heard before. Top score in both went to the Chairman, who is obviously, as Bunter would be sure to point out, one of those beastly swots who bother with prep. In the first quiz he was closely followed by Bill and by Nigel Shepley.

Next meeting: 8th September. Note the early date!

JOHNNY BULL

LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the Cricklewood Scout Hut on the occasion of the August meeting. The President of the club, John Wernham was present and had brought along a supply of the 5th of the Charles Hamilton Companions which is entirely devoted to Rookwood. John addressed the meeting.

Reports were given of the progress of Madam, Jo Doyle and Sam Thurbon, all of whom have been suffering severe indispositions. Sam is now back to normal good health and the heartfelt wishes of all present go out to Madam and Jo for a speedy recovery.

Roger Jenkins conducted two competitions. The first consisted of a tape recording that gave extracts from four Magnet series, Flip, Hollywood, India and Stacey. Joint winners were Eric Lawrence and Winifred Morss. Roger's second effort was a Remove Form members' grid quiz. The result was a win on the last round by Eric Lawrence who just beat Bob Blythe. Ray Hopkins read a humorous chapter from

Magnet 43 which dealt with Hoskins Pianoforte Performances.

Winifred Morss read extracts from Magnet 1103, Hollywood series. Mary Cadogan played the tape recording of Arthur Marshall and her B.B.C. Woman's Hour broadcast of last June which was entitled "Don't Put your daughter on the stage Mrs. Worthington".

The next meeting will be at 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, E11 3NU, Phone 534 1737, hosts Reuben and Phyllis Godsave, Sunday, 2nd September. Sonning luncheon party is on Sunday, 2nd September.

Votes of thanks were given to the ladies for making the tea.

BENJAMIN WHITER

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The Postman Called

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

Mrs. M. CADOGAN (Bromley): It has nothing to do with old boys' books, but I think many C.D. readers will love Clementine Churchill, Lady Mary Soames' biography of her celebrated mother. I reviewed this for a paper last month, and in my opinion it is a most moving and historic book. It is published by Cassell at £7.95 and, as well as a long and fascinating text, it includes several pages of memory-stimulating photographs of Clementine, Winston and other members of the Churchill family.

Fr. F. HERTZBERG (Wirral): It is indeed infuriating when decimal equivalents are included after English money amounts - and indeed unnecessary. Even 7 year old children I teach, who never knew English money, somehow seem aware of the values. What is even dafter is cookery recipes with amounts in metric after the imperial measure as if some English people don't know the former. With changes in money, in measures, in traditional counties, even in regional telephone exchanges (numbers instead of districts now) we are being cut off from our past - quite deliberately, I'm sure.

Whilst I feel we should not sneer at the mistakes of people writing with nostalgic affection of the papers of their childhood - love is of far more value than knowledge - I agree totally with your strictures against careless journalists, who are, I fear, more the rule than the

exception. I note a few mentions of so-called 'feminists' creeping into C.D. Please let us have at least one haven from them.

Mrs. E. M. ATKIN (Stevenage): Could anyone tell me the date of a book I have entitled "Best Bits"? It is No. 5 of the Illustrated Penny Library. Does anyone know anything of that publication?

J.E.M. (Brighton): Collectors' Digest is truly - and increasingly - one of the bright spots in a dismal world and, as I've said before, something of a publishing miracle.

Recently, I especially enjoyed your brief linked history of Mary Pickford and the old papers. This, if I may say so, really "out-Danny-ed" Danny's Diary! More comparative surveys and linked social history of this kind would be very welcome - though I do appreciate the amount of work involved.

Once again, warmest and sincerest thanks for the monthly miracle. Of all the journals and papers which come through my letter-box - and they seem to be legion - none is more welcome.

G. W. MASON (Torquay): I found the August cover illustration particularly attractive and well worthy of the excellent contents.

BILL LOFTS (London): In answer to Mrs. Timmins interesting letter, as our editor quite rightly points out a number of writers cashed in on the style of Charles Hamilton in post-war years. Yet the most blatantly I have known appeared as far back as 1921, when in The Cogwheel Library a former sub-editor of The Gem wrote about Dick Merry of St. Martin's which had an Indian boy by the name of Singh Ram Jam - a double of Inky, and another double of Wun Lung even speaking the same.

I don't think there is any copyright of boys' names, except in one being so famous (such as Billy Bunter today) that it could be confused with the famous character at Greyfriars. To be fair it has always been curious that other famous names of Hamilton characters have appeared long before they appeared in The Magnet/Gem/Boys' Friend. The other Billy Bunter in Vanguard Library in 1907 is too well known to go into details again here, but there was another Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver in Victorian boys' fiction. Only quite recently I discovered a school story in Big Budget about "Dick Temple of St. Euremonds" in

1899. No authors name was given, but by the author of such stories as 'The Strange Ordeal of Alfred Wharton', whilst the characters included a Arthur Courtney. This could possibly be Charles Hamilton, but the style is difficult to tell in those early days.

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MACLAREN-ROSS AND SEXTON BLAKE by Christopher Lowder

I feel I must comment on the recent pieces by S. Gordon Swan (C.D. 390, June) and Bill Lofts (C.D. 392, August) concerning the late J. Maclaren-Ross, Sexton Blake and the London Magazine, simply to set the record straight.

First of all, the post-war London Magazine never had any pretensions to being a popular short story magazine (unlike its pre-war namesake) but is a highly-regarded - one could use the phrase world-famous without being accused of gross exaggeration - literary journal which is still being published today.

Nor was Maclaren-Ross himself some sort of shady journalist who would bung in an article on old boys' books just for laughs and a fast guinea, but a fine short story writer, essayist, critic and a parodist of some genius (his delightful parodies of Raymond Chandler, Wodehouse, Augustus John and Henry Green are particularly impressive). His novel Bitten by the Tarantula (1946) is certainly one of the best comic novels of the 1940's, and his volumes of short stories are widely acknowledged to be, of their type, matchless.

His own circle included such literary notables as Cyril Connolly, Dylan Thomas, Anthony Powell, Stephen Spender and so on, and yet, at the same time, he had a strong affection for what might well be described as the lower end of the market -- cheap fiction, in other words -- and did in fact move amongst the sort of writers who contributed to the SBL in the late-1930's. He certainly knew Anthony Skene (indeed, he adapted one of Skene's stories for the wireless) and Gwyn Evans, and was probably acquainted with John Hunter, a writer he much admired.

As for all these "errors" (Stan Swan) and "absurd mis-statements" (Bill Lofts) in the article itself, there is really only one: his identification of the creator of Gunga Dass as Gwyn Evans.

As Stan Swan points out, Dass's creator was H. E. Hill - but,

knowing something of Gwyn Evans's state of mind during the 1930's as I do, I feel it's by no means unlikely that Evans himself boasted at some time or other to Maclaren-Ross that he'd created Dass, not to mention other notable villains and main characters.

For the rest, Maclaren-Ross sensibly qualified his statements, since he was after all looking back 30 or 40 years into the past. Even the remark "we all went to France" (nothing to do with the Great War, which broke out when he was about two years old) is explained by the fact that his father took the whole family across to Marseilles in 1921, where, apart from a brief visit to London about 18 months later, Maclaren-Ross lived for the next eight years or so.

He may well have put his money on the wrong horse when he backed Eric W. Townsend as a Blake author, but I must admit to a small spark of subversive glee to see the name Eric W. Townsend mentioned at all in a magazine that also includes an assessment of Roy Fuller's novels, a review of Fellini's Eight and a Half, and a short story by Patrick White.

Surely, instead of strafing the poor chap for a couple of fairly minor inaccuracies (God knows, on the odd occasion I've seen far more "absurd" mistakes and opinions in these very pages, over the past twenty years), one really ought to be throwing one's hat in the air to find a serious writer treating Sexton Blake writers as though they were serious writers, too. As it stands, his analysis of, and judgement on, certain of the 1950's New Look authors cannot be bettered, and the points he makes about Anthony Skene and John Hunter as stylists and innovators -- not simply in the Blake field, but in a far wider context -- are startlingly perceptive.

All in all, Maclaren-Ross's literate, lively, affectionate and far from absurd, tribute is about the best piece on Blake I've read outside (and, to be frank, inside, in many cases) the pages of the Digest, and it seems to me one ought to welcome such support rather than shoot it down simply because it contains a few trifling inaccuracies that only a tiny minority would recognise anyway.

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SHERLOCK HOLMES - anything always wanted (including Herlock Sholmes in Greyfriars
Heralds). 48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL, L63 2JZ.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, 2nd new series, No. 151 (1932); old series, Nos. 256-294 and most Nos. up to 134. S.O.L. Nos. 4, 27, 120. B.F. 2nd series, Nos. 105, 451. C.D. Annuals 1959-1960. Gems, Nos. 1023-4-5. Have about 100 old series Lees for exchange, also a few blue Gems, or will pay any reasonable price.

E. B. GRANT-MCPHERSON, 'TYNINGS', UPPER MILTON
WELLS, SOMERSET. Tel. 73479

SALE: C.D. Annuals 1970, 1971, 1973, '975, 1977, £3.75 each. Bunter Books, £2-£3 each. Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Magnets.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.
Tel. 0224 - 491716

SALE: 10 C.D. Annuals, £2 each plus postage: 1967, 1968, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1969, 1970, 1971.

E. CORDY, 14 MUSKHAM COURT, MANSFIELD, NOTTS.

WANTED: "Lord Billy Bunter", Greyfriars Book Club Volumes 2, 3, 4, Baker Magnets, Vols. 16, 17, 18, 21 to 26, 32, 50, onwards. 1920 Holiday Annual (original).

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.
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HOLMES FANS: "The West End Horror", Meyer H. & S. 1976: new with wrapper; a few copies, £3 each, post paid/exchanges as previous issues C.D.

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1979 edition

COMPETITION

Here is a little bit of nostalgia for you. Can you give the titles of the well-known songs from which the following sentences are taken? At one time you were all humming the tunes to yourselves, or singing the words in the bathroom, or tapping your feet - in the days when they really wrote songs.

Try the puzzle out with the whole family; or really join in the fun by jotting down all the titles you know, making sure that you keep the numbering the same as in the list, and sending as many answers as you can to the Editor at Excelsior House. We shall send £1 each to the sender of the first two correct, or nearest correct, sets of answers received. Closing date for receiving entries: 16th September.

1. The flickering shadows softly come and go.
2. My sweetheart Flo, and girls I used to know.
3. Keep the sun out of my eyes.
4. I try to be good, for I know that I should.
5. Turn the dark clouds inside out.
6. A million hearts beat quicker there.
7. I whispered "Be true to me" and you said "Si! si!"
8. If everything's over between us, don't be afraid ter say.
9. When skies are blue you're beguiling.
10. To-morrow, just you wait and see.
11. So it's hey, then, maidens and men.
12. He flies through the air with the greatest of ease.
13. There's Mollie and me, and baby makes three.
14. Some letters tied with blue, a photograph or two.
15. You'll get no promotion this side of the ocean.
16. When an old flame dies, you must realise.
17. Where seldom is heard a discouraging word.
18. The more you have, the more you want, they say.
19. There's not a single thing that I wouldn't dare, if I knew that you would be waiting for me there.
20. They're not there to fight the foe; you might think so, but, oh, dear, no.