



## Sexton Blake v. Nelson Lee

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EVER since I was a boy of twelve the names of Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee have, rightly or wrongly, occupied a large proportion of my life. The two most important streets in London to me are, and always will be, Baker Street and Gray's Inn Road. And of the two Gray's Inn Road is the more important. As most people know Baker Street is a fairly wide and imposing street running from Oxford Street to Marylebone Road, where Sexton Blake had his home, and incidentally Sherlock Holmes. Gray's Inn Road, on the other hand, is a rather shabby-looking thoroughfare stretching from King's Cross to Holborn Viaduct, and it gets shabbier every time I see it.

Shabby and dirty as it is, it is the most romantic street in London—to me. Why? Because in a certain house in a certain row of houses, not far from Theobald's Road, resided the world-famous detective Nelson Lee. Only fiction, you say? And why prefer Nelson Lee to Sexton Blake? The first question needs no answer to intelligent readers, but the second question is the whole point of this article.

Sexton Blake has no backbone, no sponsor, no definite personality—in short, he has no originator! If he has, he is as much a mystery as the Man in the Iron Mask.

Nelson Lee, however, is quite different. He was the creation of probably the greatest writer of detective stories for boys that ever lived—Mr. Maxwell Scott.

Maxwell Scott was a brilliant surgeon who lived on the Yorkshire coast near Whitby. He was tall, well-built, and of athletic appearance, with a somewhat grave countenance. His first Nelson Lee story was published in the "Marvel" on October 31, 1894, and from that date until about 1915 this brilliant doctor and writer turned out a very large number of Nelson Lee stories, which, for the most part, appeared as serials in the "Boys' Friend," the "Boys' Realm," and the "Boys' Herald"—papers well remembered by many hundreds who read them as youths.

All Maxwell Scott's stories bear the unmistakable stamp of his individual talent: the trained university man with a thorough mastery of his native tongue, and the ability to use it with tremen-



dous dramatic power. In spite of the almost incredible speed with which he must have written these stories, his English, except for dozens of machine-like phrases of his own invention, is perfect, and I, personally, would like to see the man who would dare to change one of his words; and that is more than can be said about the creator of Sherlock Holmes, whose English at times was sloppy and exasperating.

Before writing a new serial Maxwell Scott always constructed an elaborate chart full of dates and data so that he could see at a glance where one of his characters was, and what he was doing on that particular day. Thoroughness, originality, almost encyclopedic knowledge, and a strict adherence to the time, place, and continuity of the child of his brain—Nelson Lee—has earned for this brilliant Yorkshire doctor a place among the immortals of detective fiction.

This tribute to a very remarkable man is penned with love and veneration for many hours of intensely interesting reading concerning a definite personality whose shadow still haunts the precincts of that rather shabby and unpretentious house in Gray's Inn Road.

Yes, Sexton Blake is anybody's child. Dozens of journalists

have written, and still are writing, about him, and he never gets any older.

Nelson Lee, on the other hand, typifies the gigantic intellect of a single personality—a brilliant surgeon, and one of the most dramatic writers for the young of all ages and of all times.

Maxwell Scott—real name or pseudonym—living or dead—I salute you! —Harry Dowler.

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**Wanted**—Volumes of "Beadles Weekly," "Boys of New York," "Young Men of America," "New York Weekly," "Family Story Paper." R. T. Welles, 259 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, Penna.

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### WANTED

The Following Weekly Story Papers

"**Magnet**" Library — About 150 Nos. between 1 & 1222.

"**Boys' Friend**" (New Series)—Some 600 Nos. between 1 and 838, and between 1120 & 1378.

"**Greyfriars Herald**" (New Series, 1919-22) later "Boys' Herald"—Nos. 9, 15, 30, to end.

Am also interested in the GEM Library, the POPULAR, and the EMPIRE Library

WM. H. GANDER

Transcona, Manitoba, Canada

Letter to the Editor—**THE "MAGNET" ARTIST—C. H. CHAPMAN**

To the Editor of the  
"Story Paper Collector."

Dear Sir:

I read with keen enjoyment Mr. Rickard's extremely interesting and informative article on "The 'Magnet' Artist—C. H. Chapman" (S.P.C. No. 4) and, in the main, I agree with all he says. My purple period of boyhood reading ended around 1912 and, although I have a good general knowledge of the later issues, the life of youth had then abated and I saw without noting and read without absorbing. Hence, I am unable to offer serious comment on the issues of the past 25 years, but I do claim to know something of the papers published from 1902 to 1912 so can furnish additional information and minor corrections.

In confusing the work of C. H. Chapman with that of Arthur Clarke who preceded him, Mr. Rickard falls into an almost universal error, under which I, also, laboured for years. Clarke did a lot of fine work for the "Boys' Friend," "Boys' Herald," "Boys' Realm," "Pluck," "Gem 1/2d Series," and "Magnet." To the best of my knowledge, Chapman never drew a line for the "1/2d

Gem." I rate Clarke as best of the early Harmsworth artists. His shock-headed schoolboy or factory lad, dour pitman, hard-visaged master or mill manager, and top-hatted villain are well known and beloved by old timers, while the character of Cookey Scrubbs and his 'ambone in "Pluck" will be remembered when others are forgotten.

Hutton Mitchell, who shared with Clarke the illustrating of the "1/2d Gem," also illustrated the "Magnet" up to No. 39, and then Clarke carried on in his stead for about two or three years but died suddenly, it is said, while actually engaged on a drawing for the "Magnet." Chapman was called upon to fill the gap and so well did he copy Clarke's style that few, except those in the know, were aware of the change.

As time went on, the change became more apparent and a comparison between one of Clarke's illustrations, say the cover of the "1/2d Gem" No. 19, and any of Chapman's drawings after "Magnet" No. 200, will show certain points of difference. It is possible that the angularity of the human subjects in Chap-



man's work was due to subconscious strain in curbing his natural style.

We all had our boyish likes and dislikes; Arthur Clarke, J. Abney Cummings and Hutton Mitchell were my favorite artists. I never cared for Warwick Reynolds despite his undoubted ability, while Wakefield still gives me a severe pain in the neck. He started illustrating fairy tales for Henderson in 1910 and apparently could not get it out of his system. R. J. Macdonald began much earlier; I first saw his work around 1902 in the "Halfpenny Marvel" illustrating the early "Jack, Sam and Pete" stories. His style has changed but little, then as now that monotonous sameness of the human subjects even though adventure stories offered greater scope than school tales.

But if the artists of modern boys' books seldom rise to great heights, they rarely fall below a satisfactory standard. It was different in the old days before 1890. Then the best of the old illustrations beat anything ever done today but they also plumbed the depths: Certain artists showed surprising ignorance of period costume, and publishers, towards the end of a story that had failed to take, occasionally used any passably

suitable block that might be available. A character with a flowing moustache might be clean shaven in the next picture while the artist who illustrated "Tom Wildrake's Schooldays" could never make up his mind about Dabber's wooden leg. So modern artists have, at least, the merit of consistency.

J. MEDCRAFT.

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**FOR SALE**—"Back Numbers" of "Champion Library"—dated from 1931 to 1938. Price 2 for 15c., plus postage.—Wm. H. Gander, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

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**Science-Fiction Magazines**—"Railroad Magazines"—and most others—write us your back-number wants. The School Book Shop, 530 Ellice Ave., Winnipeg, Canada.

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**Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Round-Up.** A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers of the days when you were a youngster; 8 pages full of fine articles and write-ups. Price 10c per copy or \$1.00 per year. Ad. rates, 1c per word.—Ralph F. Cummings, Dept. S.P.C., Fisherville, Mass.

# Story Papers of the Past

By HENRY A. PUCKRIN

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(Conclusion)

THE Aldine Publishing Company brought out a series of monthly complete stories in coloured covers under the title of the "Frank Reid Adventure Library," and a companion set "O'er Land & Sea." The first named series dealt with the feats of a marvellous airship-submarine-tank which covered the whole range of possible and impossible but enthralling adventure. "O'er Land & Sea" was a more miscellaneous collection, and included adventures and hair-raising exploits on this planet and other bodies in the solar system, no doubt thought feasible by the wonderful discoveries in astronomy and in science generally. These and similar books were often denounced as "ridiculous," "blood and thunder," and so on, but there is no question that if they did no good they certainly did no harm, and supplied a welcome diversion from the "daily round and common task" for many boys of that day.

The "Robin Hood," "Dick Turpin," "Claude Duval" and "Buffalo Bill" series all dealt

with the legendary and what definitely was known of the actual adventures of the characters named. The "Robin Hood" stories were re-issued in 1924 but were "written down" somewhat in contrast to the more robust and sanguinary accounts of the earlier numbers. All of these publications faded out about 1907, and seem to have been forgotten by all.

A short account of the "Union Jack Library" may be of interest. Dating from the early 1890's this paper was the first to introduce to the public the well-known detective Sexton Blake. In 1904 it was enlarged and increased in price from a halfpenny to one penny, with an attractive Union Jack and British Lion design on the cover. This paper continued publication until 1933, in which year it was replaced by "Detective Weekly." An offshoot of it, the "Sexton Blake Library," has been issued since 1915.

Messrs. George Newnes Limited attempted more than once to cater to the youthful taste in literature, but with the exception of the "Captain" failed com-



pletely to strike the right chord. The "Captain"—one of the best of its kind—was similar in make-up to the monthly "B. O. P." and "Chums," but did not include an art plate. It was published from 1905 until just after the end of the first world war. Edited by the "Old Fag" (a first class judge of what was good for boys) and served by writers of the type of H. Mortimer Batten (an authority on Canada), Percy F. Westerman, Gundy Hadath and others, and well illustrated by such artists as Stanley L. Wood and R. Caton Woodville, this paper, with its large section devoted to hobbies and stamp collecting, seems to have been as near the ideal boys' paper as is possible.

One story, "In Search of Smith," introduced the notorious Ned Kelly, bushranger and bank robber. Admirable and well written articles on engineering, travel and sport were included. The price, however, sixpence, prevented its having as large a circulation as it deserved.

The other boys' papers published by this firm were weeklies and appeared during 1905-7, with a short re-issue in 1913. Called "Boys' World" and "Boys' Life," they were all that should have appealed to the average British youth, but neither of them achieved their object, which was a pity and something of a mys-

tery, to this writer at any rate.

One other paper worth mentioning is "The Scout." Published by C. Arthur Pearson, Limited, and appearing at the time of the founding of the Scout movement by Sir Robt. Baden-Powell, it had a remarkable and instantaneous success. Produced on good quality paper with vignette illustrations to the chapter headings, it struck out on a line of its own with such stories as "Singleton the Searcher," "Boys of the Otter Patrol," "Roddy the Runaway," "Strong Hand Saxon," and "The Phantom Battleship." The last-named was one of the best boys' stories ever written and it deserves special mention. A sequel issued later, "The Captain of the Phantom," was not so popular.

All the incidents mentioned in "The Phantom Battleship" are quite possible, which was no doubt the reason for its success. After perhaps two years the paper seemed to run short of ideas, and following several fine stories by Frank St. Mars, T. C. Bridges and others its pages were filled chiefly with a somewhat boring series on "The Great North West."

Few of the subsequent papers are worthy of mention, and the writer feels that the time has come when one can truly say of these and other boys' papers "Welcome and Farewell."

## Something About---

## "The Wonder"

AMONG an assortment of items to come my way recently was a copy of "The Wonder," which carried as a sort of sub-title "The Star Story Paper"—the first copy of this publication that I have seen, though I have known of it from the time it was being issued during 1912-13.

The use of the word "Wonder" as the name of a weekly paper, however, dates back much further; it seems to have been revived on various occasions by the Harmsworth-Amalgamated Press publishing house. The earliest mention of it that I have seen was in advertisements in copies of the "Boys' Friend" of the later '90's. This particular "Wonder" was a "comic paper"—some pages of humorous pictures and some of stories.

Along about 1902 it was apparently combined with another comic, for advertisements can be found of the "Jester and Wonder"—the "Jester" being another long-established paper, which incidentally has only recently come to an end by being in turn itself merged, oddly enough, with

another "Wonder"—the "Funny Wonder."

The issue of "The Wonder" that now lies before me is No. 17, New Series, April 26, 1913. I believe it was first known, in 1912, as the "Penny Wonder," but the first series must have been of short duration. The new series did not last so very long, either, being replaced by the "Halfpenny Wonder," a comic paper, in contrast to "The Wonder," which had no humorous pictures.

Consisting of sixteen large pages, similar to the well-known "Boys' Friend," but on white paper, this copy of "The Wonder" has three serials and one long complete story. The first serial is "The Ticket of Leave Man," by John Edmund Fordwych. This title seems to stir forgotten memories—was it also a stage play? Following this is "a masterpiece of mystery," "The Winged Man, or 'Twixt Midnight and Dawn!" A thriller, no doubt!

The long complete story is the first of a series under the general title of "The Captain,



the Cook and the Engineer." Now that is a title to really stir the memories of all who were readers of boys' literature back thirty-five years or so. For didn't this series run in the old "Pluck Library" about 1906 or '07? To be sure it did, and well remembered are Captain Kelly, Engineer Donald—now what was his full name?—and Cookey Scrubbs—to say nothing of Cookey's hambone, a weapon to make strong men tremble! Years later, in 1927, these stories again appeared to amuse and entertain another generation of readers—this time in the "Boy's Friend" during its declining months.

The final item is the last instalment of "The Red Rovers," a serial story of life and adventure in a professional football team located at "Tynecastle," which may perhaps be interpreted as Newcastle-on-Tyne. Stories of the Red Rovers had run for a long time in "Comic Cuts," so this serial is likely a reprint too. Within recent years more Red Rover stories have appeared in "Comic Cuts," but all the characters were new—this is perhaps natural after a lapse of thirty years!

Altogether quite an interesting paper, good value for a penny, or two cents in real money, as Fisher T. Fish, the American boy at Greyfriars School, would say.

The "wonder" seems to be that "The Wonder" lasted so short a time. More robust was the "Half-penny Wonder," for it is still being published, lately as a fortnightly paper instead of a weekly, but for many years its name has been "Funny Wonder."

—W. H. G.

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§ Articles of interest to collectors of boys' story weekles published in Great Britain during the past fifty years will be gladly received, and if found suitable will be used as soon as our quarterly publishing schedule will permit. No remuneration can be given for such contributions.

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**Wanted:** Aldine Id. "Dick Turpins," early issues of "Magnets," "Gems," "Penny Populars," Alfred Horsey, 60 Salcombe Rd., Walthamstow, London, E. 17, England, would like to hear from anyone having these for disposal.

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**Always Wanted—**Penny dreadfuls, bloods, and old boys' journals published by Lloyd, Newsagents' Publishing Co., Fox, Harrison, Vickers, Emmett, Lea, Henderson, Temple Publishing Co., Aldine Co., etc. Single items to whole collections purchased. J. Medcraft, 64 Woodlands Road, Essex, England.

# What the Victorian Boy Read

(A letter to the Editor of "John o' London's Weekly," and reprinted from the issue of that paper dated December 1, 1939.)

Sir,—I can still enjoy the works of the authors mentioned by Mr. James Bell in his most interesting letter. I have several in my possession at the present moment, and quite often I take one down and forget the cares and worries of the present days in their perusal. "The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" is in my opinion the best school story ever written, and an excellent historical story by the same writer (Talbot Baines Reed) is "Sir Ludar." But all his stories were of a very high grade.

I liked all the Ker stories; the last I read in the "Boy's Own Paper" was "Hunted Through the Frozen Ocean." "Chums" was a favorite weekly with me, and I remember a paper published at a halfpenny, called the "Boy's Weekly Novelette." Charles Fox, I think, was the publisher, and other serial or part stories issued by him were "Tom Torment," "Only a Factory Lad," "Sweeney Todd," "The Gypsy Gentleman," and "Three-fingered Jack." He also

ran—for a short time—"The Boys of the Nation."

"The Boys' Friend" at a halfpenny was good value; also the "Ha'penny Surprise," published by the house of Brett. In "Nuggets" some thirty years ago many of the old favourites were reprinted. A few which I remember were "The Hunted Man," "The Spy of the Secret Three," "The Black Arrow," "The Frozen Pirate." The Aldine Publishing Company issued an abridged edition of "Ralpho the Mysterious" at twopence (coloured) in their "O'er Land and Sea Library." The illustration on the cover was by Robert Prowse, a well-known Aldine illustrator. He was responsible for hundreds of coloured covers. I also remember the stories of Roland Quiz, illustrated, I believe, by W. Boucher, who did a lot of work for James Henderson.

In all those books of a former generation the stories had both incident and action, and the illustrations were spirited.

B. Crocker.



## : : NOTES : :

WITH this issue "S. P. C." commences, amid practically no fanfare at all, its second year of publication. And also with this issue there appears on the front page a price—10c. a copy. It took me some time to decide to do this, and I do not expect it to be taken too seriously by my friends in Britain. Every little while the question has been asked "How much?" so here is the answer for those who queried. Should anyone living in North America who is on my mailing list think enough of the results of my efforts to become subscribers, why, I'll be duly grateful, for even such a small paper as this cannot be produced without expense for paper, ink, envelopes and postage. And if none of them do, I won't be unduly disappointed. I hope I don't lose my amateur standing because of this!

A price would never have appeared at all but for the fact that the little paper has rather outgrown what I had at first meant it to be, which was something resembling, shall I say, a pill—the reading matter to be the candy-coating for the bitter part, the advertising of my "wants" for my own collection.

The results obtained have

been mixed, good and not so good. As a means of adding to my collection, not so good, although some gains have been made through it; as a producer of interesting correspondence the results have been really good!

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This issue brings to our pages two new contributors, Mr. Harry Dowler and Mr. John Medcraft, both of England. The latter is already well and favorably known to a number of American and Canadian collectors. Contributors in Britain are at a disadvantage in that it is likely to be at least three months before they see their efforts in print. For instance, Mr. Medcraft mailed his letter on November 26th, and it did not reach me until six weeks had passed by, and now, at the end of January, I am just completing the issue in which it appears. Another month will have elapsed before he receives a copy.

Mr. Dowler has provided an interesting little write-up on Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee. I have on hand another item recently received from him, which

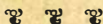
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**Wanted:** Issue No. 2 of "Dime Novel Roundup." Wm. H. Gander, Transcona, Manitoba.

will appear in No. 7; it will tell something of that prolific writer of serials, Henry St. John Cooper. . . . Another new contributor is Mr. Henry A. Puckrin, also of England, whose "Story Papers of the Past" is concluded in this issue.



Ye Editor is running short of copies of Nos. 1, 2, and 3 of "Story Paper Collector," and while a large demand is not anticipated, still it would be nice to supply late-comers with copies to complete their sets. I would appreciate it if anyone having copies of these three issues that are not wanted will mail same to me. Thanks!



Just room for a few lines left on the last page to "go to press" and along comes a copy of the "Croydon Advertiser" for January 2nd, in which "Old Thornton Heathen" devotes several paragraphs of his column to "S. P. C." and old boys' papers. It is indeed a thrill to find myself mentioned in the old home town newspaper, even if for nothing more news-worthy than the editing of a very small amateur magazine. "Old Thornton Heathen" on reading this issue will find that Mr. Puckrin did not overlook the "Robin Hood" series when writing about story papers of the past. —W. H. G.

## BRITISH BOYS' BOOKS AND PAPERS WANTED

**Boys' Friend Library**—All stories by Martin Clifford, Prosper Howard, Frank Richards and Richard Randolph.

**Chuckles** (weekly comic)—any issues.

**Dreadnought** — Any issues January to June 1915.

**Gem Library**—Nos. 3, 5, 6, 10, 11 of 1<sup>st</sup> series. Nos. 1-300, 375, 407, 452, 620-777, 1221, 1224, 1588-1611, 1635-58 of new series.

**Magnet Library** — No. 357, Christmas 1914, with supplement; Nos. 451-777.

**Nelson Lee Library**—Nos. 24 and 25 of the final series.

**Penny Popular** or "Popular"—1st Series: Nos. 1-23, 222-286; 2nd Series: Nos. 1-511.

**Pluck Library**—Nos. 106-122.

**Schoolboys' Own Library**—All stories by Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest and Richard Randolph.

**Triumph**—Nos. 812 and 814.

**C. F. F. RICKARD**

1512 First Street West, Calgary  
Alberta, Canada.