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A REAL DETECTIVE!

A REAL DETECTIVE is W. O. G. Lofts, a real fellow for digging out the facts! His article on George Richmond Samways in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 71 was excellent material and interesting reading.

It has always been a passion of mine to know more and more about the inside workings of The Amagamated Press. As more and more information is made known to collectors and those with a nostalgic interest in old boys' books, we realize that the editors, writers, and illustrators were, after all, very human.

There was a time, however, when these people, personalities, if you will, were magnified in our eyes to supermen set in the heroic mould. Around the years 1918 to 1921 I lived not too far from where these rare mortals were supposed to do their writing and illustrating, a twopenny bus ride from my home just east of Aldgate pump to Farringdon Street where stood the huge, white, awe-inspiring building called The Fleetway House.

I had no "tuppences" to spare on bus rides but I could, and did, walk frequently to The Fleetway House, like one of the

faithful making a pilgrimage to Mecca once a week, to kneel against the great wired windows which were on pavement level, gazing down into the huge light and airy basement where the great and numerous machines were busy at work.

I would go from one window to another, twisting my young head this way and that, trying to catch a glimpse of a *Magnet* or a *Gem* actually in process of being printed! I must confess to never having identified any of the numerous publications which were being fed through the machines, a case of the machine being quicker than the eye.

It never entered my mind to walk boldly up the steps of the main entrance and ask for the answers to the questions which were often in my mind. I knew nothing, of course, of "sub-writers" or the various noms-de-plume under which Charles Hamilton worked, in fact I doubt if the name of Charles Hamilton meant very much to me. I am sure even had I been so bold I would have got no further than the commissionaire, and his answers, if any, would have been no more enlightening than the answers to my infrequent letters "to the Editor."

Mr. Lofts is doing the likes of me a great, if rather belated, service. —MAURICE KUTNER

The Story Paper Collector

No. 72—Vol. 3

Priceless

BABBLINGS ON BROOKS

By BERENICE THORNE

THE NELSON LEE was always primarily a detective and adventure paper, and in this field Edwy Searles Brooks had few equals. His plot construction was sound, his inventive genius knew no bounds and his breezy, enthusiastic style admirably suited the type of stories that he wrote. Thrills, action, and suspense were his strong suit; characterization, unfortunately, played a lesser role.

This was perhaps because mystery stories did not demand such a skilful interplay of character upon character. But mystery stories have one great limitation: they can only be read once with full effect. It is a pity, therefore, that Mr. Brooks did not devote more attention to the fuller development of his characters.

Let us first look at Nipper, the pinion upon which the tales

revolved. He has been the subject of unfavourable criticism from the earliest days of *The Nelson Lee*. Numerous letters appeared in the "Chats" criticizing his self-righteousness, his conceit, and the insufferable "holier than thou" attitude that he exhibited towards his companions. In my opinion he was guilty of all this and more, but in fairness to Mr. Brooks it must be admitted that his task in making Nipper into a believable character was not an easy one. As he often argued in defense of Nipper, he was the assistant of Nelson Lee and necessarily more astute and quick-witted than his schoolmates.

In the days when Nipper himself narrated the stories, E. S. B. must have found it difficult to instill any distinguishing characteristics into him. Nipper played a passive role in those days,

hovering in the background but rarely appearing in the limelight. When Mr. Brooks took over narration of the stories, Nipper finally emerged as one of the boys but unfortunately, rather an unpleasant one. I have always felt that the resentment that Handforth occasionally showed of Nipper's omniscience was a reflection of the author's own feelings, though, like Baron Frankenstein, he could no longer control his own creation.

HANDFORTH, another of St. Frank's most prominent and controversial figures, seemed to me little more than an overbearing bully and braggart. His treatment of Church and McClure, had it ever reached official ears, would surely have earned him a term in Borstal! I grant that he could be very amusing, but this was his only asset. His much-vaunted fearlessness in the face of danger was more often due to sheer foolhardiness than true bravery.

It has been claimed that the character of Handforth was derived from Coker of Greyfriars and, while I find the similarity too striking to be coincidental, it must be said in Handy's favour, that at his worst, he was never as hopelessly dense as the redoubtable Horace James.

Archie Glenthorn, William Napoleon Browne, and Vivian Travers are considered three of Mr. Brooks's outstanding character studies, and deservedly so. They are three of a type, founded on common basic qualities, among them good breeding, wealth, an almost breath-taking self-assurance, and a certain droll manner of speech peculiar to each of them.

Like Handforth, Archie Glenthorne was heavily overdrawn, but this did not impair his effectiveness. His purpose was to amuse and this he did, unmarred by the annoying traits that characterized Handforth. His greatest asset was his extraordinary mode of expressing himself. Mr. Brooks's account of his arrival at St. Frank's is a delight to read. His phenomenal laziness, his taste in clothes, his utter dependence on his valet, Phipps, do not perhaps render Archie a believable character, but his lack of credibility was amply mitigated by his charming personality.

Browne was borrowed from P. G. Wodehouse, as was Glenthorn, but whereas Archie was a caricature, Browne was a character. The veneer of polite good breeding did not entirely disguise a nature that got what it wanted from life, though Browne achieved this with

charm rather than ruthlessness. His deathless exploits were well calculated to appeal to the average boy and his mocking but gentle wit was a perfect foil for the blunt Stevens. However, the one thing that spoiled him was his polished egotism, which could be almost as annoying as Handforth's bluster.

BUt THE CREATION of Vivian Travers earned Mr. Brooks his greatest laurels. Some of the inspiration for this character would seem to have come from Cardew of St. Jim's as well as from Browne and Glenthorn. Travers was a skilful combination of the best characteristics of all three along with a unique charm of his own. He lacked Archie's foppishness and apparent stupidity, Browne's arrogance, and Cardew's malicious, vengeful spirit. His humour was satirical without being unpleasant, and his occasional lapses from spiritual grace enhanced rather than detracted from his personality.

Like Browne, Travers possessed great determination and single-mindedness of purpose that proved him a dangerous enemy when provoked, though his means of achieving an end were rather more suspect than good conduct would dictate. He was truly Mr. Brooks's greatest

character study and it is a tragedy that he arrived so late in the history of *The Nelson Lee*.

Like so many writers of his time, Mr. Brooks was greatly absorbed with the possibilities of reforming his notoriously "bad characters," but unfortunately, these possibilities rarely materialized. This overworked strategem caused the death of many a good characterization, merely for the sake of writing a popular series.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was a sad example of this. For eight years he reigned supreme as the Cad of the Remove. Bad characters came and went but Fullwood seemed incorrigible, until Mr. Brooks, acting on the whim of his readers, wrote a series in which Fullwood reformed. The series was undeniably good and Bernard Forest was brought in to fill the void, but his calculated villainy never rang true as the spiteful Fullwood had done. And what of the reformed Ralph Leslie? He sank into oblivion, to become one of the names that occasionally appeared in class lists or *Who's Whos*, a sad fate for such an interesting character.

Reggie Pitt was another victim of this policy, though a rather less tragic one than Fullwood. Pitt was apparently destined for reformation from the

time of his introduction, so there is hardly cause for complaint on that point. Nevertheless, I feel that "The Serpent" had great potentialities and the reformed Reggie did them less than justice. His change of heart was rather sudden as was that of Fullwood, but this could have been excused had the character that emerged from this baptism of fire been as promising as the one that had entered it.

The new Reggie was a pleasant enough character, and, let it be admitted, he possessed a sparkling sense of humour, but little else to justify his being termed one of Mr. Brooks's greatest creations.

IN HIS ENTHUSIASM for spectacular action involving large numbers of characters, Mr. Brooks introduced droves of new boys into *The Nelson Lee*, who, having served their purpose in one series, sank into the background to be called forward from time to time, as extras in crowd scenes. In an effort to identify these characters in the mind of the reader he generally gave them one characteristic or peculiarity, hence, Dick Goodwin was an inventor, Clarence Fellowe spoke in rhyme, Alf Brent was a Cockney, and so on.

Charles Hamilton also used this method of identification but

never to the extent that Mr. Brooks used it. In this case, he might have done better to have adopted another of Mr. Hamilton's practices, that of removing these "new boys" from the scene once they had served their purpose.

Another of Mr. Brooks's labour-saving devices was the use of freaks to remove the necessity of creating characters with definite personalities. Under this category can be listed Timothy Tucker, the Trotwood Twins, Stanley Waldo, and too many others. They impaired the reality of the stories and it would have been better if, at the cost of a few series, he had never introduced them.

CONSIDERING the lack of emphasis on the scholastic side of school life at St. Frank's, it is strange that the school boasted no less than eleven permanent masters, five of whom had little connection with the academic endeavours of the boys. The headmaster seemed to be little more than a figure-head, whose purpose in life was confined to presiding at public floggings and expulsions. The headmasters of St. Frank's were numerous, but Mr. Brooks's first love, Dr. Stafford, with his stately dignity, his wisdom and affection for his pupils, seemed

to personify the Spirit of St. Frank's better than any of his successors. Morrison Nichols was merely a name; Nelson Lee had too many irons in the fire to devote his whole attention to the post; and Beverly Stokes, who occupied the position for a short time, was too radical in his methods to ring true. Stokes's relegation to house-mastership of West House gave him a rather more conservative outlook. He lost that overgrown schoolboyish attitude which, however successful it may be in today's modern grammar schools, was somewhat out of place in a staid old Public School like St. Frank's.

I am no admirer of Nelson Lee as a detective, but as Master of Ancient House he seemed to strike the balance between the stern, impersonal pedagogue of the Victorian era and the "progressive" master that Mr. Brooks tried so hard to emulate in the creation of Barry Stokes and Alington Wilkes. Nelson Lee commanded the respect and affection of the boys but on his own terms. He did not find it necessary to lower his dignity as a schoolmaster to achieve this.

ST. FRANK'S, in common with most other fictitious schools, had its share of freak masters, notably Mr. Pycraft, Bar-

naby Goole, Alington Wilkes, and Professor Tucker, not to mention several transient members of the staff. Horace Pycraft was the epitome of all that was unpleasant. His counterparts, Selby and Ratcliff of St. Jim's, were mere shadows in comparison. Pycraft was without a saving grace, a fact that made him an unlikely as well as an unpleasant character.

It is perhaps unfair to classify Alington Wilkes as a freak. He was untidy, easygoing, kindly, and something of a "dark horse" as the juniors realized on more than one occasion. Of course, there are such people in the world, though one would hardly expect to find them in Public Schools like St. Frank's. But to give due credit to Mr. Brooks's creation, Wilkey was a unique and lovable character, and the most interesting of the four housemasters.

Barnaby Goole was merely another freak in a House full of them, and Tucker conformed to the rather hackneyed caricature of the absentminded science master.

IN ACCORDANCE with the best traditions of mythical Public Schools, St. Frank's boasted a substantial international contingent—indeed, the reader might have been tempted to wonder

if Mr. Brooks had not gone a little overboard in this respect. However, E. S. B. was not a man for half measures and with its bewildering array of foreign and colonial characters, St. Frank's was second only to the United Nations in the realm of cosmopolitanism.

These overseas lads were all necessarily "nice types," but only one personality stood out among them—that of Ulysses Spenser Adams. Adams was a fairly good characterization of an American boy, full of "pep" and resource and an utter contempt for all things un-American. His slang was, unlike that of Fisher T. Fish, completely authentic if a little too much in evidence. The fact that his parents were divorced gave to the stories an adult touch that one rarely finds in school-boy literature.

In this review of the St. Frank's characters, we cannot overlook the Moor View girls. Indeed, Mr. Brooks's courageous and realistic treatment of the fair sex deserves whole-hearted praise. Charles Hamilton's delicate, Dresden-doll-like creatures were a relic of the Victorian age, characterless and idealized. But Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, and Winnie Pitt were remarkably human in their relationships with the Removites. As individual personalities, the girls did not shine.

Their chief difference lay in their affiliations with the various members of the Remove. All were pretty, good-natured, and care-free, with an unsuspected propensity for mischief, as the Removites were ruefully forced to admit. Doris Berkeley had the makings of an interesting character, though her appearances in the stories were too limited to warrant its full expansion.

IN REVIEWING the characterization of *The Nelson Lee*, one cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that Mr. Brooks's character drawing was a rather hit and miss affair. This is not to say that he was incapable of creating a good character—the well-knit personalities of Travers and several others prove the contrary. More likely is the explanation that he regarded characterization as taking a second place to the other aspects of the story. Mr. Brooks wrote for a class of readers who revelled in high adventure in the best traditions of Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Rudyard Kipling. Such stories required humanity en masse rather than individual characters.

By the time that Mr. Brooks's writing had reached maturity, his stage was so crowded that one could not see the wood for the trees and the well-drawn

characters were lost in the multitude of indifferent ones. Such was the tragedy of *The Nelson Lee Library*. Whether this deficiency was responsible for its inglorious demise it is impossible

to say with any degree of certainty. Yet it may well have been a contributing factor, for even the most avid reader will tire of high adventure, unrelieved by sound characterization.

Old Weekly Ends, New One Starts!

ONE MORE boys' weekly has bowed to the picture-story age. This time it was *The Hotspur*, published since September 2nd, 1933, by D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd., Dundee and London. The end came with Number 1197, dated October 17th, 1959.

Its place was taken the next week by *The New Hotspur*. While the old paper contained all reading-stories, the new one is comprised largely of picture-stories. But there are some reading-stories, four to be exact in Number 1, two serials and two completes, the rest being picture-features. Those individuals who still prefer to read are not completely neglected.

I Wish to Obtain . . .

—Copies of *The Ranger* containing Grimsdale stories.—Syd Smyth, 1 Brandon Street, Clovelly, N.S.W., Australia.

C. H. Wrote Parodies Of Famous Poems!

THOUGH I do not like Mr. Samways' "sub." stories, I must admit that his efforts in relation to building up the background atmosphere of the Hamiltonion schools is deserving of the highest praise. The play in verse he refers to was printed in a *Holiday Annual*, I seem to remember.

I do feel, however, that it needs to be said that the poems which were parodies of famous poems were mainly written by Charles Hamilton himself: he has stated this, and I find no difficulty in crediting his claim. —ROGER JENKINS

I Wish to Obtain . . .

—S. P. C. Number 10.—A. S. Fick, Box 58, Fort Johnson, N. Y., U. S. A.
—S. P. C. Numbers 2 to 11, 13 to 16, 32, 34 to 38, 40 to 43.—Tom Langley, 340 Baldwins Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham 28, England.

HERBERT LECKENBY: KING OF COLLECTORS

A TRIBUTE By W. O. G. LOFTS

THE CITY OF YORK is famed throughout the world for its association with Dick Turpin, the notorious highwayman. It was about the year 1737 that Turpin was alleged to have ridden from London to York on his steed Black Bess. This ride has been proved mythical, invented by that romantic novelist William Harrison Ainsworth for his story, *Rookwood*.

Herbert Leckenby, I know, would have liked me to record this in an article. But whether York is famed for Dick Turpin or not, I and probably many hundreds of collectors throughout the world will always associate this city with Herbert Leckenby, who in my opinion was easily the greatest and best-loved "old boys' books" collector of all time.

On October 21st, 1959, I received through the post a letter from Herbert (as I will now call him), the last of the many hundreds I have received from him in the past few years. Briefly, it read as follows:

Dear Bill:

Many thanks for your latest "Samways" article instalment. It is really very kind of you and other collectors to worry about my health, but I assure you that there is nothing seriously wrong with me. I have just lost a little weight through the effects of the recent hot summer.

That same evening I was most distressed to learn that he was dead.

As soon as his death became known, letters of sympathy and regret came pouring in to Old Boys' Book Club secretaries and other persons actively connected with the hobby in England, and especially so to me, I having a large correspondence with collectors all over the world. From a lonely sheep station in Queensland; from a well-known film star in Hollywood; from a member attached to the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya; whilst another tribute came from Bombay, from an Indian who had never met Herbert in his life. Men from all different walks in life,

all paying tribute to a humble, ordinary man from Yorkshire.

What sort of man, then, was Herbert? Probably it was my privilege to know him far more than the ordinary collector, so I will try to convey to the reader my personal recollections of one of the finest men, and best friends, that anyone could have.

IT WAS IN late 1953 when I first met Herbert, not long after I had become a subscriber to *The Collectors' Digest*, of which he was Editor. So interested was I in this magazine, and the personal letters which he wrote to me, that I made a special journey to York to see him. Although owing to the severe weather conditions my train was over two hours late and it was long past midnight, he was waiting for me by the platform barrier to be sure of giving me a real Yorkshire welcome. That was my first glimpse of the many qualities in Herbert: conscientiousness and consideration at all times for other people.

"Train's a bit late, Bill," were the first words that Herbert spoke to me as I met him at the platform barrier. Then, despite the fact that it was past midnight and he was obviously very cold and tired after waiting nearly three hours for me, he said, "By the way, what is John Hunter's

real name?" (I had in correspondence told him that I knew Mr. Hunter personally.) Those few words gave me the first inkling of the tremendous enthusiasm he showed at all times for the hobby.

On another memorable occasion when I visited York we spent twelve hours together at his house at the end of appropriately-named Herbert Street, when almost without a pause Herbert talked about the old story papers and authors. His knowledge was really amazing, and I say in all sincerity that he knew far more about the history of old papers than I shall ever know.

Come to that, he was easily, in my opinion, the most knowledgeable collector who has ever lived. Maybe a reason for this lies in the fact that Herbert probably was unique as a collector: unlike many of us who have only in recent years collected papers that gave us such pleasure in our young days, he never dropped his interest or his collecting since his boyhood days around 1900.

Unselfishness also was a great trait in his character. Many collectors who have large collections owe a great deal to Herbert for his help in obtaining wanted numbers. Indeed, it was often that precious papers from

his own collection were given to *Collectors' Digest* readers at a very low cost. Sometimes no payment at all was asked for copies which, at market value, would have been a financial help to him.

Another aspect of his unselfishness can be seen in the back numbers of *The Collectors' Digest*, in that in the main it catered for the Hamilton type of papers, Herbert did not have much interest in *The Magnet* and *The Gem*. The older type of papers, such as *The Boys' Friend*, *The Boys' Realm* and *The Boys' Herald*, and other papers at the turn of the century, interested him most. Stories by David Goodwin, Sidney Drew, Henry St. John Cooper, and especially the cricket yarns of John Nix Pentelow, were his favourites. Yet despite this, he edited the *Hamiltoniana* section of *C.D.* for many years, putting aside his own personal interests.

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST was Herbert's life, and it is worth recording that there would not have been a *C.D.* at all if *The Story Paper Collector* had not ceased publication for a time, due to the illness of Bill Gander. Maybe I can say this to W.H.G. whilst he is setting this in type: "Thanks, Bill, for giving us *The Collectors' Digest* by stopping *The*

Story Paper Collector for a short while."

Herbert started *The Collectors' Digest* in November of 1946, in joint editorship with Maurice Bond, a Sexton Blake enthusiast, but it is divulging no secret to tell the reader that the bulk of the work fell on Herbert's shoulders. After a time Mr. Bond dropped out, leaving Herbert as sole Editor. Apart from the work of producing the monthly *C.D.* and the *Annual*, the amount of correspondence he received was enormous. On an average Herbert received at least forty letters a day, and all these were answered within a day or two. Often he would write to me and say that it was three o'clock in the morning and that he had several more letters to write before going to bed!

RUNNING *The Collectors' Digest* was no "bed of roses" nor was it "all bees and honey," to use Herbert's favourite expressions. Often there were differences of opinion between collectors regarding articles printed, which he in his usual tactful manner smoothed over without difficulty. Many readers complained of too much "Billy Bunter" material, whilst others, ardent *Magnet* fans, complained that there was not enough. I might add that I was guilty in

this respect, but it never marred our friendship, as Herbert probably knew.

Another aspect, and one that was a constant worry to him, was the matter of subscriptions to *The Collectors' Digest* and the *Annual*. Many readers took advantage of his easy-going nature and kept him waiting for months for payments which they owed, while others, it is sad to report, did not pay at all. The sad fact has come to light that he was running *The C.D.* and the *Annual* at a great loss, making up the deficit out of his own small pension which he could ill afford to spare. Maybe if readers who owed him money, and are reading this article, could send their "conscience-money" to the new Editor, Eric Fayne, I am sure that he would be pleased to receive it to help meet the heavy loss sustained in producing the latest *Collectors' Digests* and the *Annual* after Herbert's death.

ONE OF HIS greatest joys was the trip he made to London several times each year, during which in recent years I have in a way acted as host to him, owing to Leonard Packman being unable to do so. Of medium build with a fresh complexion, bushy eyebrows, casually dressed in an old-fashioned way, easily his main characteristic

his light blue eyes, his was a figure which when once seen would be hard to forget. I think I could not give a more accurate description than that of my good friend Eric Fayne in his *Tribute* in *The Collectors' Digest* for December: "He had more in his shop than he showed in his window."

On Herbert's last visit to London in September of 1959 it was obvious to all who met him that he was a very sick man, and I will always feel that he knew he had very little time left. Always considerate and thinking of others, he arranged for Eric Fayne to take over *The Collectors' Digest* and the *Annual*, so that the magazines which he loved so well would be continued after his death for the enjoyment of collectors in years to come.

As I saw Herbert off at King's Cross Station in London late in September for his long journey back to York, he was a pathetic, frail, and very tired old man. I put his suitcase on the rack, showed him to his reserved seat, and switched on the reading light. "Don't put on the light, Bill," said Herbert. "I just want to sit in the dark and think of all the happy times I've had in the hobby. It will pass away the hours in getting back home."

As mentioned at the start of

this article, tributes have come from all over the world in appreciation of Herbert, but one of the finest tributes it was possible to give him appeared in Number 441 of *The Sexton Blake Library*, one of the December, 1959, issues. How proud would Herbert have been to know that his epitaph would be in a paper which featured Sexton Blake, his favourite character! It is probable that Sexton Blake is recognized by most collectors as the "King of Detectives." Herbert Leckenby will undoubtedly be long remembered as the undisputed "King of Collectors."

*

HERBERT LECKENBY was born on July 2nd, 1889. He went to school at Park Grove School, York, and began his working life as a printer, learning his trade with *The Yorkshire*

Herald and with the firm of J. L. Burdekin. He joined Northern Command at the outbreak of the 1914-18 War and stayed there until he retired in July of 1954, after forty years service as a switchboard operator. Very little is known of his early life except that gleaned at times in articles written by him of his schoolboy days. He was married, his wife dying a few years ago. I believe he had a daughter as well as a son, but neither of them took any interest in the old story papers. Herbert obviously came from a well-to-do Yorkshire family. One of his brothers was a director of several firms and also a director of York City Football Club. Another brother, whom I met, owned a large ice-cream factory in York, and Herbert proudly showed me around it on my visits to York.

A Wonderful Thing!

ONE OF THE wonderful things about *Chums Annual* was that it weighed five pounds and you could wander into it as if you were exploring thick spring woods, stopping to pick up little mushrooms of information, or settling down beside a warm swamp of prose and never com-

ing out the other side. I never met a boy who finished reading *Chums*, and I hope I never will.

We read *The Boy's Own Annual*, James Fenimore Cooper, and *Scouting For Boys* . . .

— From *How I Learned From the Magic World of Books*, by Robert Thomas Allen, in *Maclean's Magazine* (Toronto) for January 30th, 1960.

Where Are The Old Sexton Blake Authors Now?

By W. O. G. LOFTS

THIS IS THE concluding part of this list of Sexton Blake authors, the first part having appeared in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 70. Where a pen-name was used, the real name follows in parentheses.

Lewis Jackson (Jack Lewis).—Living in semi-retirement in Sussex.

Warwick Jardine (Francis Warwick).—Still writing, but mainly women's fiction.

Hilary King (John Grierson Dickson).—Writing high class crime fiction.

Andrew Murray.—Died in the early 1920's.

Robert Murray (Robert Murray Graydon).—Died in 1940 in Sussex County Hospital.

Andrew Parsons.—Believed to be living in France, but no trace of him since he last wrote of Blake in 1956, his 99th novel.

Michael Poole (Richard Heber Poole).—Lives in Surrey and writes educational literature.

Pierre Quiroule (Walter W. Sayer).—Believed dead, but not confirmed. Left his occupation

as hotel-keeper some years ago; no trace since.

George E. Rochester.—Writes mainly women's fiction now. I have met him often when in Fleet Street.

Hedley Scott (Hedley O'Mant).—Died December 31st, 1955, aged 56. This information is authentic and confirms my previous statement in my article *Inside the Magnet Office*.

Anthony Skene (George Norman Philips).—Now lives on the Isle of Wight; does not write fiction at all.

Donald Stuart (Gerald Vermer).—Lives in South London; present occupation unknown.

G. H. Teed.—Died in London Hospital in 1940, aged 61.

Walter Tyrer.—Writes mainly women's fiction; was heard of recently.

FOR READERS who are interested in this feature, I should like to mention that a complete list of every Sexton Blake author, with pen-names and the papers written for, will be found in *The Collectors' Digest Annual* for 1959. This was compiled by Derek Adley and myself. Starting in the new year in the *Blakiana* section of the monthly *Collectors' Digest* will be an official list of *Sexton Blake Library* titles and authors, beginning with the first series which started in 1915.

Wurds ov Wit & Wisdum

THE FEATURE occupying the last inside page of *The Marvel* Number 417 (halfpenny series), the date probably being January 2nd, 1901, is headed *Wurds ov Wit and Wisdum* by Pimple, O. B. "O. B." doubtless meant "Office Boy." This is evidenced by the spelling: all story and comic paper office boys must have been only semi-literate. It was too big a "chore" for us to make our way through nearly a page of that spelling in the hope of winnowing some wurds ov wit and wisdum.

* * *

A FOOTLINE in Number 447 of *The Union Jack Library*, November 15th, 1902 (it looks like 1902, but is not clear), reads: "*Partners in Peril.*" Charles Hamilton's great story of adventure in the *Wilds of America*, will be published in next Friday's *Union Jack*.

* * *

IN *The Union Jack* Number 89, the date of which looks like January 2nd, 1896, a reply to a reader begins: *I think you have been listening to a lot of twaddle, "M.S.B." (Colchester). There is no doubt the earth is round, not flat, as your friend tells you.*

* * *

AN advertisement in *The Union Jack* Number 89: Read "A New Year Mystery," by Sexton Blake, in this week's *Funny Wonder*.

Sexton Blake, Author?

* * *

THIS is by the Editor in the same issue of *The Union Jack*, halfpenny series Number 89: In answer to many of my readers, I will express my opinion on the subject of reading. Books of all kinds—barring pernicious and trashy literature—have a great effect on the character of young people. It is an education in itself, and all great scholars have had to go through a long course of reading. It improves the mind, and teaches the wonders of the world to those who may not be able to journey and view them. I can positively say that stories in the *Union Jack* are instructive and interesting, and good and fit stories for young people.



ON the front page of this issue is our second and last reproduction of a Christmas Double Number of *The Gem Library*. We have no others.

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