

The
**COLLECTOR'S
DIGEST**

(Vol. 3) No. 30. June 1949. Price 1s 1d



Your old friend
SEXTON BLAKE
plays a prominent
part in this thrilling
and romantic nar-
rative.

Advert. for
Serial in
'Chips' -
taken from
to Union
Jack, of

17.1.1895. Note: 'old
friend - even then -

The battle with the "Hesperus." Two
women killed by a torpedo from the
"Bismarck."

He kept on drawing— with crippled hands ①

REMEMBER the Owl of the Remove—the fat boy of Greyfriars? Millions of men in most parts of the Empire knew him well as boys . . . Bunter's the name . . . Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter

MR LEONARD SHIELDS, who left £67,902, did not "create" even as an artist, Billy Bunter. He was the creator, as artist of my other character, Beattie Bunter.

The character of Billy Bunter in *The Magnet* was created by me, as author, and by Arthur Clarke, as artist. Whether Mr. Shields was one of the many artists who drew Billy Bunter after Arthur Clarke's death I do not know. In the present Bunter series the artist is R. J. Macdonald.

It is good news that the artist was able to save "thousands." He had better luck than the author, who is still under the necessity of kicking for a livelihood while getting on for 80.

Frank Richards,
Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea.

The hands that drew him—and a hundred heroes of school-boy fiction—belonged to Leonard Shields, an almost unknown artist and illustrator who left £67,902 in his will published yesterday.

He died in January, aged 72. "I didn't know how much it was," said Mrs. Ada Shields at their home in Campion-road, Falmouth, London. "But I am not surprised; he worked hard for 68 years. Most of his work was unsigned. It appeared in the *Magnet*, *Oceanic Gleanings*, *Playbox Annual*, *Boys' Own Paper*, and other publications."

PAID PRICE

The hands whose craft raised millions of schoolboy guffaws—and enabled the State to collect £17,500 death duty—paid a price.

"For the last two years they were crippled with rheumatism," said Mrs. Shields, and he was only able to do a little work at a time. He was in great pain; but he so loved to draw—especially boys."

Boys who followed the adventures of Harry Wharton and company were often surprised at the accuracy of the drawings of the "lab," where "sink bombs" were made.

The explanation from Mrs. Shields: "My husband was trained to be a chemist, and studied at Sheffield University. When he wanted to take up drawing, his father, himself a chemist, was rather doubtful.

"He didn't think my husband could earn a living at it.

"My husband never went back to chemistry, except in imagination."

TRICANT: "Mention from the *Illustrated* party to launch new series of *How Merry* books. 75-year-old author CHARLES HAMILTON, better known as FRANK RICHARDS, creator of BILLY BUNTER and Co. Explaining on the phone from his Broadstairs home Hamilton said: "I'm too busy to get up to London. I turn out 20,000 words a week and the rest of the time I stick to the main school."

- (1) From the Sunday Express, 1st May, 1949. It carried a streamer heading across five columns "The Billy Bunter 'Thousands'" "Fat Boy" B
- (2) From the Sunday Express, 8th May, 1949.
- (3) From Ian Coster's Column, Daily Mail, 18th May, 1949.



(Vol. 3) No. 30

Price 1s. 6d.

Post Free

JUNE 1949

Next Issue July

Editor, Miscellaneous Section
Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,
C/e Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

A Ten Minutes' Thrill: There was a telephone in the room where the May meeting of the Old Boys' Book Club was held, and by arrangement I put a call through in the evening just after the meeting was over. That man of ideas, Len Packman, had evidently all the gang lined up, and I was able to have a few seconds chat with each. It worked like a charm; in rapid succession without interruption they came. First Bob Whiter, then Charlie Wright and Mrs. Wright; followed by Johnny Geal; "Robby" (John Robyns); Bob Blythe; Bernard Prime; Cliff Beardsell; Ian Whitmore; R. Mortimer; Frank Keeling; Ben Whiter; and then to wind up Len himself again. You could sense they were in high glee, especially the Lee fans; and no wonder, seeing they had been listening to Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks for nearly an hour. You'll be able to read all about that in other pages. All I'll say here is that Bob Blythe has told me more than once that he

would never been content until he got Mr. Brooks to a meeting. Well, it was your hour, Bob, and no member of the clan will begrudge the Leesites if they felt a little cock-a-hoop.

As for that 'phone call, I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was well worth the special walk to make it.

Death of W. H. Neate Once again it is my mournful duty to announce the death of a member of our circle - William Henry Neate, of Wenlock, Burnham, Bucks. The news came to me in a letter from his father stating his son passed away on Meroh 5th. He was only 38.

Many of us were familiar with his cheery letters, and many had the good fortune to obtain some fine and scarce copies of various papers from him. He could always be depended upon for a square deal.

All members will deeply sympathise with his father, Mr. H. J. Neate, in his great bereavement.

The Passing of Leonard Shields: Another of the well-loved figures who helped to make happy our boyhood days has passed on. Actually, he died in January, but it wasn't until the "Sunday Express" ran a story on May 1st arising out of the publication of the will that the news became generally known. A well-deserved tribute by Bob Whiter appears elsewhere in this issue, but as I have admired Mr. Shield's work for over 40 years I feel I must say a few words here.

The "Express" story says he was an almost unknown artist. Well, maybe he never aspired to be "hung" in the Royal Academy, maybe Sir Alfred Munnings had never heard of Leonard Shields. If he had I am sure he would have looked at his work with an approving eye, for there was certainly nothing Picasso-like about it.

I am no art critic, but I cordially agree with Bob Whiter that Leonard Shields was the better of the two Magnet artists of the later years. By his hand the Famous Five were really attractive, manly looking boys; Mr. Quelch seemed not quite so swa-inspiring; He used, too, a more kindly pencil where the less reputable characters were concerned. Vernon Smith appeared not quite so much a "boulder"; and Bunter a little less a rascal. For example, his beaming countenance on the cover of Magnet 1151.

During his long association with the Amalgamated Press,

Leonard Shields must have illustrated thousands of stories, for he drew not only for the boys' papers but for those catering for women too, and no one was more adept at portreying a charming girl than he.

Although he did not draw the first Bunter, he had one claim to fame, for he did illustrate the very first St. Jim's story dealing with Jack Blake's arrival there, and a few weeks later gave the world the first glimpse of elegant D'Arcy. That was in "Pluck", of course, in 1906, before the arrival of Tom Merry.

There was a touch of pathos in the statement that he went on drawing with crippled hands during the last two years of his life. He had no need to do so, of course, (I was told by a fellow artist when I was in London last September that Mr. Shields was comfortably off apart from his earnings with his pencil) but he worked on because, like the actor who takes his last call, then dies in the wings, his art was his life.

Through fifty years he gave pleasure to millions; he was a good trouper; may the earth lie lightly on his grave.

That Broadcast: I asked for opinions on the "Boys Will Be Boys" broadcast. I got them in no uncertain fashion. Summing them up, on Gallop-Poll lines, the result would appear to be something like this:-

20%	Enjoyed it immensely
50%	Good in parts
20%	Rather a "flop"
10%	Decidedly a flop

Which would make it appear it wasn't quite as popular as a "Have a Go" programme, at least not where the faithful were concerned. Was that because we are too sensitive about our favourites, I wonder.

There was one brief section about which all were in agreement, for all enjoyed hearing the voice of Frank Richards. The only grouse was he did not speak long enough.

In striking contrast there was a howl of protest from the Lee fans over that strange error of the commentator's concerning the authorship of the St. Franks stories. If his ears were not burning it's a wonder.

The Hamilton group were not too happy either about the Greyfriars episode. The general opinion appeared to be that the boys taking part were too young. "Not a bit like the manly

Harry Wharton, hero of a hundred fights and adventures" was the cry.

Personally I must say I was rather disappointed with it. The book with its delicious wit and delicate touch of irony gave even hard-boiled journalists a nostalgic treat; it was a fine boost for the hobby, for it gave many who read it a wistful desire to renew acquaintance with the heroes of their youth. My post-bag since its publication has proved that.

But, somehow, I don't think the broadcast would have the same effect, even though it was mainly built up on the book. It seemed to play down to the subject, burlesque it, treat it in rather joking fashion. As my colleague pointed out last month, for instance, they had Sexton Blake completely out of focus. By seising on a passing reference to a girl friend in a story written in 1895 and linking it up with the Roxanne episode, they gave the impression to the average listener that women played a big part in Blake lore, which of course is absurd. Why couldn't they have given some pithy dialogue where Blake was at grips with Plummer or Kestrel, or some descriptive passages from a Hamilton Teed story laid in foreign lands like The Yellow Tiger? That would have been more like the real Blake.

Then they gave an extract from that devastating attack on the "penny dreadfuls" which appeared in No.1 of the "Boys' Friend" in 1895, with its assertion that the men who wrote the stories were drink-sodden wretches who lived in doss houses and scribbled their illiterate screeds on dirty bits of paper. It may have been true about a few obscure sheets, but it was probably out of date even when it was written. It didn't apply to the real rivals of the "Boys' Friend" of the day - the papers published by Hendersons, neither those by Brett or the Aldine Co., full-blooded though the stories may have been. And it certainly did not apply to the men who wrote for boys after the 20th century dawned, the men we admire and reverence. But the B.B.C. seemed to fail to point that out. We know they were men of the public schools and universities, of culture and wide world travel.

So it seems to me that the B.B.C. somehow got a little off the rails.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

LEAVES FROM THE DIARIES OF MAXWELL SCOTTContinuity by John P. Wood

IV

And now we skip a year - to 1897, when Maxwell Scott writes "On March 19th I received a letter from W.M. Meas, whom I have previously mentioned as a former editor of "Pluck". He wrote to say that he had joined the firm of C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., the publishers of Pearsons' Weekly, and Harmsworths' greatest rivals. He said he was bringing out a new boys' paper to be entitled "The Big Budget", and he wanted me to write for him. He was especially anxious that I should 'invent another detective character on the lines of the popular Nelson Lee' and that all my detective stories in 'The Big Budget' should have this new detective for their central figure.

"...Needless to say, I jumped at Meas' offer. I invented **KENYON FORD, THE UP-TO-DATE DETECTIVE**; and from June 19th (the date of the first number of the 'Big Budget') to December 23, I had no fewer than six stories published dealing with the supposed adventures of this wonderful hero, for each of which I received £8.8.0.

"By that time the editor of 'Pluck'" (who had had a disagreement with Maxwell Scott in 1896, and had shown an inclination to drop him from the paper) "had discovered that I was not quite so dependent on him as heretofore: and as I showed no undue haste to supply him with any more of 'the popular Nelson Lee stories' he calmly engaged another man to write stories about Nelson Lee!! I was furious when I saw the announcement of the first of the new series. I wired a protest. He replied that he could not admit that I (the inventor of the character!) had 'any vested interest in Nelson Lee'. So I wrote to Alfred Harmsworth himself, repeating my protest and threatening to send the correspondence to the Press unless I received a prompt apology and an assurance that the offence should not be repeated.

"I received both; and by way of a peace-offering I wrote three more Nelson Lee stories for 'Pluck', all of which were promptly published and for one of which I received £11.11.0. And on Dec. 1st he wrote to say that in future 'he should be very pleased to give me £8.8.0 for all Nelson Lee stories.'" "

(He had previously reduced payment for these to £7).

In 1899, despite the break of a continental holiday, Maxwell Scott's productive powers in the story-writing line showed no sign of diminution. "I wrote fifteen stories for the Big Budget, six for Dan Leno's Comic Journal, one for Home Notes, and one for the Union Jack, and five for a monthly paper known as Homeland... Speaking of Homeland reminds me that my photograph was published in that paper in July. Which again reminds me that an alleged portrait of me was also published in the Big Budget on June 17th of this year. Both these papers applied to me for my photograph about the same time, and I sent them each a copy. The Big Budget commissioned one of its artists to make a 'live drawing' from the photograph.

"But the stories I have mentioned did not by any means exhaust the list of my productions. On October 8th I began the publication of a serial football story ('Hard Pressed') in the Big Budget. This story proved phenomenally popular, and actually ran for 43 weeks - until July 26th, 1900. I received a cheque for it every week, according to the length of the current instalment (at £1 per 1,000) and altogether it earned me £205.16.0, the biggest amount I ever received for a single story."

On August 13th, 1900, his sister's baby was born in London, and, writes Maxwell Scott, "when the baby was about a month old I decided to go up to London to inspect her! I wrote to the editor of the Big Budget telling him I was coming up to Town and that I should call to see him; whereupon he promptly asked and obtained permission from his proprietors (C. Arthur Pearson) to organise a picnic up the Thames at their expense in honour of my visit!

"I arrived in London on Sept. 7th, and on the following day, in company with the editor and a number of Big Budget authors and artists, I went up by launch from Shepperton to Windsor, and we spent a very enjoyable day.

"Whilst I was in London I called upon Hamilton Edwards, who was at that time editor of 'The Boys' Friend' and 'The Girls' Friend'; both of which were published by Harmsworths. He had written a few days previously to ask me to write a serial for 'The Girls' Friend', and my object in calling upon him was to

explain that girls' stories were not in my line. Not to be balked of a serial from my pen, he then asked me if I would write a detective serial for 'The Boys' Friend'. As this interview with Edwards resulted in a long connection with 'The Boys' Friend' and 'The Boys' Realm', from which I received hundreds of pounds, I may fairly say that my visit to London was in every way a pleasant and successful one.

And on that happy note of optimism for the future, I think it would be well to leave Maxwell Scott to turn the pages of another century next month, when we shall hear something of "Birds of Prey", "The Silver Dwarf" and "The Seven Stars".

THE NORTHERN DINNER: A fair number in the northern counties have already notified Tom Sinclair of their intention to be present if a dinner is arranged, but more are required to make it a practical proposition. So would those who are in favour of the idea please write him direct at 9 Branston Terrace, Leeds 10, as soon as possible? Come on, northerners, think what good times the Londoners are having!

If you have a **COLLECTION OF OLD BOYS' BOOKS** for sale, or part collection, consult Wm. Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10. You can count on a square deal.

WANTED: Early issues of Gem, Magnet, Pluck, Dreadnought. A few Magnets and Gems for disposal, and Red-covered Magnets for Exchange only. Eric Fayne, 23 Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

WANTED: "Horribles", any period. Buy or Exchange. E.V. Hughes, "Caswell", 25 Hillboro' Road, Bognor Regis.

WANTED: Complete Fantasy Stories, Ferrars Lord, Captain Justice, etc. Exchange Sexton Blake Libraries. Henry J. H. Bartlett, Pess Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

"THE COLLECTORS' MISCELLANY", a printed journal for collectors of old boys' books. Profusely illustrated. No.15 now ready. Specimen copy 1/3. Jos. Parks, Printer, Saltburn-by-Sea, Yorks.

ROBIN HOOD, AND HIS AUTHORSBy T. W. Puckrin

In the "Story Paper Collector" some time ago I made some reference to the "Aldine Robin Hoods". As the rover of Sherwood has a peculiar fascination for me, and I hope, other readers of the story paper magazines as well, I would like to enlarge a little on the above topic. Much has been written about Robin Hood. It has even been suggested that the bold Robin, like Charles Dickens' "Mrs. Harris", never existed. But from the various legends that have been handed down from time immemorial, it does seem fairly clear that a character of his description did have some place in history. Historical evidence of an authentic nature, it must be admitted, is somewhat scanty. Few people bar the monks could write, and they were hardly likely to keep records of an outlaw whose attitude towards established religion was, to say the least, decidedly unflattering.

And one proof of Robin Hood's existence can be brought in evidence. Nearly every writer, and their numbers are considerable, has stressed Robin's dislike of abbots and monks. The connection between Robin Hood and King Richard appears without fail, no matter what author deals with the subject. Nearly every author marks him out as a man above his fellows, and in every way fitted to stand up to the overbearing and cruel Norman Barons. Time and legend may have made Robin a rather more picturesque figure than he really was. But the 11th century was a stern and somewhat cruel age, and Robin of Sherwood was a product of that time.

What of the men who have handled this daring opposer of constitutional authority. Our editor did some time ago send me a book concerning Robin Hood. Unfortunately the author's name did not appear on the title page. From the Victorian style of writing it appeared to have been written about 1850. Most of the incidents touched upon by the later authors were there and as far as I can see it must have been one of the earliest modern accounts published. In 1902, the Aldine Publishing Coy. launched Robin on the market and he was so popular that the first editions had to be duplicated. This edition was reprinted three times in 20 years, and I have the last, though somewhat battered; Master Arthur Puckin has almost read it to death. A syndicate of

authors wrote this edition in varying degrees of excellence. Escott Lynn, probably the best of them all; G.C.Glover, a good second; Arthur Dare, who wrote only two, and two of the best; Charles E. Brand, whose style smacked of Sir Walter Scott; Singleton Pound, who cultivated the dramatic touch - robber monks and packs of wolves haunted his pages; A.S.Burrage, probably the youngest of them all. It was said that he wrote his stories at the tender age of fifteen. Ogilvy Mitchell wrote nearly half the series, but his style tended towards the humorous. H. Philpot Wright was another fairly constant contributor, but like Mitchell, the dramatic touch was missing. There were three or four other writers, but the ones I have mentioned wrote the majority of the stories.

I have read a good deal of literature concerning the outlaws of Sherwood Forest, but the Aldines were undoubtedly the best. There was a mature ring about their work, a crisp and competent handling which is the criterion of the really good author. You could always read them again.

Now for another author of a different kind. Readers of the "Boys' Friend", and the "Boys' Herald", those who can go back for forty years or more, should remember "Morton Pike". He wrote Robin Hood stories for both papers. Here are three of them. "Guy of the Greenwood" (1904), Boys' Friend. "King of the Woodlands" (1908), Boys' Friend. "The Longbows of England", Boys' Herald. The first two, I have read. "King of the Woodlands" has come into my possession lately. It is a good story and well written. There is a difference between Morton Pike and the Aldines. Pike's Robin Hood was not as clearly drawn as one would have liked. In "King of the Woodlands" I could have wished for more of him, and a little less of Godfrey Fitzgodfrey. Little John, Will Scarlet, etc. etc. do not seem to stand out in the same bold relief as in the Aldine Publications. In fact, Morton Pike seemed to want to take the "blood" out of "bloody". Whether this was in deference to Hamilton Edwards' desire to keep slaughter down to a minimum, one cannot say. All that I can say is, a little more "bite" would have done the stories no harm. However, he was a good workmanlike author who knew his job. What of the remainder? Wingrove Willson, who wrote for "Chums" has written more than a few Robin Hood stories in book form. His style was decidedly juvenile. Paul Herring, who wrote "King Richard's Hansome" in the "Scout", was tepid, nothing more.

S. Walkey, another "Chums" author with a flair for pirate stories, traced his hand at Robin in "Hurrah for Merry Sherwood". This would be written about 1911. It was a similar story to "King of the Woodlands", with a missing treasure as the main theme. I think this was the only venture S. Walkey ever made with Robin Hood, and of the two stories, I prefer Morton Pike's.

Glancing as I do in shop windows from time to time, one can always see some juvenile literature devoted to the hero of Sherwood. It is a theme that never seems to pall. And while stories of brisk adventure, the wide open spaces, daring deeds and the old, old story of the fight for freedom against hopeless odds, still hold us in their grip, let us hope that it never will.

(If lovers of gallant Robin and his merrie men do not wish to be disillusioned, I advise them not to read "The Nutbrown Maid" by Philip Macdonald, for therein they are made out to be a sorry band of rascals, and doubt is even cast upon the virtue of "sweet Maid Marion". - H.L.)

NEW COLLECTOR compiling detailed catalogues of stories from papers which published stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's, urgently requires assistance in regard to the POPULAR, NUGGET WEEKLY, NUGGET LITERARY, GREYFRIARS HERALD, DREAMBOUGHT, BOYS' REALM, TRIUMPH, EMPIRE, BOY'S FRIEND (weekly) CHUCKLES and others. Can YOU help? Please write air-letter (6d) for particulars required. Postage refunded. Correspondence welcomed. ALL letters answered. A.J.Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

WANTED: Magnets 880-887 inclusive and most 650-880 Gems, pre-1064; 2d. Populars; S.O.L's; Nelson Lee's April-June 1933; Triumphs, Boys' Friends and old school stories. - P. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middlesex.

WANTED: Aldine Publications, Turpins, Duvals, Robin Hoods, etc. E.R. Landy, 4 Nuneston Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED URGENTLY: Gems No's 356, 358, 359, and 375. Top prices paid. - Leonard Peckman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Report of Meeting held at Hume House, 136 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E.22, on Sunday May 1st.

Thanks to the enterprise of our worthy chairman, we had a fine meeting place in which to greet the famous Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake author, Mr. Edwy Searles Brookes. Coming after his fine work in connection with the recent successful exhibition, Bob Blythe surpassed himself, and to the immense delight of the Nelson Lee supporters persuaded Mr. Brooks to come along. Arriving at 4.30 p.m., Mr. Brooks took the chair and after an address of welcome from Len Packman, very genially and good-naturedly answered a barrage of questions all about Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake. He signed numerous autograph books and after partaking of some refreshments, and a hearty vote of thanks in his ears, left about 5.45 p.m. Photographs were taken outside his car and he went on to another engagement with the expressed hope that he would like to attend some future meeting of the club.

The chairman then commenced the ordinary business of the club with an address of welcome to new members and visitors. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and duly signed. Then followed the treasurer's report and the reading by both the secretary and the chairman of the month's correspondence. Peard Sutherland of Vancouver, Canada, has written expressing a wish to become a member, this being agreed to.

Then came a presentation to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Blythe, to mark the occasion of their recent marriage. This consisted of a cakestand and was made on behalf of the club by Frank Keeling. Also a suitable Nelson Lee drawing by Bob Whiter was presented, and the couple were wished all the very best for their future welfare and happiness.

Club notepaper not yet to hand will probably be distributed to postal members next month.

It was announced that No's 139, 140, and 141 Nelson Lee 1st series were unfortunately stolen from the recent exhibition, and all members and collectors were asked to help in the replacing of these books to Bob Blythe's collection.

It was agreed to hold future meetings on the third Sunday in the month, commencing with the month of June. However, an extra meeting will be held at Mr. Keeling's residence in Stanmore, Middlesex, on Sunday May 22nd. The June meeting will be held at Charlie Wright's home on Sunday the 19th.

Then came an unusual diversion when the worthy vice-president, Herbert Leckenby, telephoned the club. Most of the members present had a few words over the 'phone and the gesture was greatly appreciated.

Ian Whitmore handed in some more Rockwood research jottings.

A very good quiz compiled by our worthy host and chairman was won by Charlie Wright, with Ian Whitmore second, and J. Waite third.

And so concluded a meeting which must have brought a great deal of satisfaction to not only the Nelson Lee supporters but to all members of the club.

Attendance. - Edwy Searles Brooks, Len, Jose and Eleanor Packman, Charlie and Olive Wright, Bob and Laura Blythe, Frank and Mrs. Keeling, John Robyns, John Geal, Ian Whitmore, A. Malone, J.E. Daly, F.C. Beardsell, B. Prime, R. Mortimer, E.P.K. Willett, J. Waite, Miss P. Pluck, R. Knight, Bob and Ben Whiter.

BENJAMIN G. WHITER
Hon. Sec.

LEONARD SHIELDS

A Tribute

By Robert H. Whiter

In Putney, South-West London, last January died Leonard Shields, famous for his illustrations in the Magnet. Thus have we, the collectors of that very fine periodical, lost a great celebrity of wide renown in the circle of schoolboy fiction. Mr. Shields, as far as I can make out, commenced drawing for the Greyfriars stories in the twenties, but it wasn't until the early thirties that his work assumed the brilliant craftsmanship that distinguished it from his contemporaries. Many people have in

the past mistaken his work for that of Mr. C.H.Chapman, the other famous Magnet illustrator, certainly there is a resemblance, but in the writer's opinion Chapman was never in the same street as the subject of this article. Chapman's drawings suffered from several faults; his figures were always too angular, their feet never looked natural, whilst the whole lay-out generally gave one a feeling of haste on the part of the artist in completing the picture. Shields always looked to detail, the background whether town or country always had an appealing look about it. The scenes in Courtfield with policemen or passers-by shown were always drawn with meticulous care, Who can ever forget his river scenes, the banks with ferns, and fences running down to the edge, with the island in the distance most enticing on a June day, the famous five rowing lazily down its course, keeping an eye open for Sir Hilton Popper!

Shields drew the inside illustrations until the second story in the Poker Pike series, No.1473 May 9th 1936, when Chapman took over, leaving Shields in the most part to do the covers. The last time we were treated to his drawings as interior artist was during the Holiday series on the Thames with Shifty Spooner after the Water Lily. This unfortunately was only for a week or so, Chapman once again taking over, with Shields doing the covers, a combination which lasted until the Magnet's final close down. Shields did illustrations for many other books, including the Holiday Annual, Film Fun etc. He also did the first drawings of Bunter's famous sister, Bessie of Cliff House. He did not of course create Billy Bunter as an artist; that distinction must go to Arthur Clark from the descriptions of his real creator, our own incomparable Frank Richards.

WANTED: Schoolboys Own Libraries, 230 and 214. Good copies. G.C.Foster, 26, Kelso Place, London, W.8.

WANTED: Magnets, 1930 and earlier. FOR SALE or Exchange, 64 Magnets, 1930-1939. Lowes, 15, Edith Street, Tynemouth, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Have you paid your Subs yet?



Caracture of Leonard Shields taken from
Magnet 1036, December 24th, 1927.

NEW COLLECTOR requires DIGEST Nos. 1, 5, 7, and 13. Also COLLECTOR'S MISCELLANY No.13, and STORY PAPER COLLECTOR Nos.6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 to complete sets. A.J.Southway, P.O. Box 3, Besaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

AN INEXPENSIVE HOBBY Collect specimen numbers of Victorian boys' papers. I can supply Boys of England, Boys' Standard, Boys' Comic Journal, Boys of Empire, Young Englishmen, Boys' World, Black Bess, Black Highwayman, Sweeney Todd, Blueskin, Tyburn Dick, Ching-Ching, Harkaway and hundreds more, 6/6 per dozen.
6, Woodlands Road, Ilford.

THE ISLINGTON EXHIBITION

The display of old boys' books at the Islington Central Library closed at the end of April after several weeks successful run. It received quite a lot of useful publicity and the following interesting comments appeared in the Library Bulletin for April.

Remember Billy Bunter?

While the name of Dick Barton is known in every home in this country, how many of us can still remember the names of Jack Harkaway, Nelson Lee (and Nipper) and Sexton Blake (and Tinker)? How many of us will deny that in our youth we revelled in the more youthful but equally impossible escapades of the famous schoolboys Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry and, of course, Master Billy Bunter?

The "penny dreadful" and the "twopenny blood" have always been abused and derided yet many of the world's greatest men have publicly acknowledged their debt to this type of literature as an introduction to the world of books and reading.

A special exhibition tracing the development of the boys' magazines from the real "bloods" of the 'Eighties to such periodicals as the "Scout" of to-day has been arranged by the London "Old Boys' Book" Club and remains on display in the Central Library until the middle of April.

We feel sure that the colourful array of well-known favourites, including the "Gem" and the "Magnet", while arousing many adult nostalgic memories, will certainly excite the envy of our more youthful readers.

Children's Newspaper, April 16, 1949When they were young

We suspect that quite a number of C.N. fathers have been making a sentimental pilgrimage to the Central Library at Islington in London, to meet some old friends.

Daddie has been able to see there, in an exhibition of boys' literature, some of the periodicals he used to read under his desk at school, and recall with a sigh the days when he swapped a Sexton Blake for a Magnet or Gem.

The "penny dreadfuls" of the nineteenth century which are also on show at Islington illustrate the changing tastes of succeeding generations of boys, for those sensational old yarns and pictures are as amusing now as they were dreadful then.

North London Press. Friday, 1.4.49.

Comics!

After a spate of political literature it was refreshing to visit an exhibition of children's comics and magazines at Islington Central Library.

Like most other visitors, I would give a hearty pat on the back to the chief contributors, the London Old Boys' Book Club, for providing, as one visitor puts it "A happy hour away from the problems of the world."

On display at the library are the "penny dreadfuls", "thrillers" and "bloods" of long ago. One of the most interesting exhibits is a copy of "Boys of the Empire," claiming to be the first journal printed all in colours, with "fun, instruction and romance," dated February 13, 1888.

Nostalgia

Another section of the exhibition follows the progress, through the years, of magazines like the "Gem" and the "Magnet", and the "Nelson Lee" and "Union Jack" libraries with the adventures of Billy Bunter, Sexton Blake, and all the other ageless characters.

One visitor says, "There were many wistful looks on the faces of the elderly visitors as they stared at Jack Harkaway and Sexton Blake again. I, a mere 40, could look back nostalgically only to Nelson Lee and Nipper. I congratulate your library on a very fine piece of work."

Credit also goes to the man who thought up the idea of the exhibition, Mr. Robert Blythe, of Alsen Road.

(In view of its success and the undoubted pleasure it gave to thousands of visitors, it is a thousand pities that it was marred by a deplorable incident. A show-case was broken into and three of Bob Blythe's Nelson Lee's stolen. The thief couldn't have done more damage to a collector than that, for, as far as is known, Bob's was the only complete Nelson Lee one in existence. We were able to quote the stolen numbers in our May number, but as the matter is so serious, we repeat them here - Old series, 139, 140, 141.

If any reader has them, and feels he can spare them, here's a

The Nelson Lee Column

All queries and suggestions to Robert Blythe,
46 Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

Some time ago, when Mr. Kenneth Brookes came to a club meeting, I said that we in London would not rest content until we had persuaded Mr. E.S. Brooks himself to come. At that time, although we were hopeful, we were by no means confident. A tentative approach had been made and a half promise given, and there we had to leave it.

However, after his letter in the C.D. in February, another request was made. This time, you can imagine our pleasure when a definite promise to attend our meeting was given. Hamiltonians can rave, and go into starry-eyed raptures over their hero (and rightly so), but after all, we Leites have the right to go slightly hazy over the prospect of meeting a man who has given us so many years enjoyment with his stories.

He had promised to arrive at 4.30, but stated that owing to a previous engagement, he would have to leave at 5.30. Well, he arrived at 4.15, and left at 5.45, and obviously thoroughly enjoyed himself. To him, I suppose, it must have been like reliving that period of his life when the St. Franks characters were a large part of his world, now, alas, dead these 17 years.

For those who are perhaps wondering just what he looks like, and are perhaps thinking that he must be an old man, let me hasten to assure them that E.S.B. is far from being old, either in years or looks. On the contrary, he did not look a day over fifty. He is a large man, not necessarily tall, but broad, with light hair going thin on top, brushed well back. Has a deep voice and perhaps, most important of all, an excellent sense of humour.

For the best part of an hour he was bombarded with questions, including some rather personal ones, all of which he took in good part, and our knowledge of the inner workings of the Old Paper increased in consequence. The questions answered, unfortunately, were too numerous to detail here, but later I hope to write a short history of the paper, based on his answers.

When the time came for him to leave, I'm sure he left behind a most appreciative audience.

An important sequel to his visit, is that he has promised to attend the next meeting held at Dulwich, when he is prepared to stay much longer and will answer as many questions as we like to put to him. This meeting is yet to be arranged, but the date will be announced in good time to enable anyone interested, who can make the journey, to be there.

I was rather disappointed with the results of my appeal last month, and apart from one or two very interesting and helpful letters, I'm afraid that the situation remains unchanged. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that it is lack of time and not lack of interest, that prevents most of you from writing, and therefore I shall carry on with the lists and items of interest as usual. However, please feel that if at any time, you have a query or have discovered an interesting item of Nelson Lee history, then this column is yours to tell everyone about it.

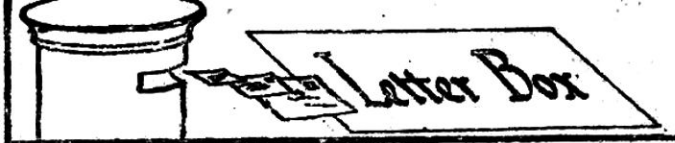
I seem to have taken up more space than usual this month, so here now is this month's continuation of the series and titles.

Series

- O.S. No. 442-447 Intro. Ulysses Spencer Adams
 " " 448-454 Dr. Karnack
 " " 455-463 The barring-out against Mr. William K. Smith
 " " 464-470 Circus Series. Intro. The Onion Bros. & Tessie Love.
 " " 471-476 Intro. Mr. Beverley Stokes
 " " 477-484 Sahara Desert and Roman Empire Series
 " " 485-492 In which the Remove save the good name of St. Franks
 " " 493-500 Complete Stories
 " " 501-512 Tom Watson at Most Hollow School
 " " 513-515 Complete Stories

Titles

- | O.S. No. | Title | O.S. No. | Title |
|----------|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| 171 | The Boat Race Mystery | 181 | Going to the Bad |
| " | 172 Nipper in Disgrace | 182 | The Ancient House Burglary |
| " | 173 Expelled from St. Franks | 183 | The Arabs of El Safra |
| " | 174 The Remove on Strike | 184 | The Secret of the Gold Locket |
| " | 175 Poor Old Handforth | 185 | Jack Mason's Luck |
| " | 176 The Closing of the Net | 186 | The Mystery of Grey Towers |
| " | 177 The Serpent's Redemption | 187 | The Soldier Housemaster |
| " | 178 The Boy from Bermondsey | 188 | The Freak of St. Franks |
| " | 179 The Remove against Him | 189 | Discipline Let Loose |
| | | 190 | Under the Heel. |



More for Tom Merry Fans

April 30th, 1949.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thank you for your note, enclosing Dr. Wilson's letter, which I return herewith, and which I was very pleased to see. I have since had a very pleasant letter from him to which I have just replied.

I have just finished "Tom Merry's Christmas Quest", which will be published in September. I think probably I shall go on with "Skip" of Felgate, but I don't know yet. Now I am taking a couple of days off to answer letters about my broadcast the other day — It is quite amazing what a multitude of old readers seem to have listened-in. But what pleases me most is that every letter is so kind and cordial. I just love to read them.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS.

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We Get News About an Old-Time Author

100 Broomfield Road,
Glasgow, N.
28/8/49.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I have been reading your interesting article on the Union Jack in the "Collector's Miscellany". In your list of popular authors in the early days appeared the name - Julian Jackson. This at once loosed a flood of boyhood memories. You see - Julian Jackson was my uncle, and I was wondering if a few biographical details would be of any interest to you.

Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT WILSON.

(Note.— Dr. Wilson went on to give some extremely interesting facts concerning his uncle. John Park Wilson, proving that under his pen-name Julian Jackson he was a most prolific writer for E.J. Brett and the Harnsworth papers, I hope to publish them in the form of an article in an early issue. - H.L.)



All Correspondence to
H.M. Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff

THE ROUND TABLE

May 1949

Even one of those! Yet another example of the disdain for Sexton Blake was noticed in the first of the new B.B.C. series "Living and Reading" on May 1st. The speaker, F. Spencer Chapman, was telling us about some of his "books for the back of beyond", and after telling us of some of the volumes brought to him by Chinese guerillas when he was deep in the Malayan jungle, he said, "One day they brought me Ivenshoe - how delighted I was!", then, after a few more titles "and EVEN a Sexton Blake, The Murdered Mahout". Why should it not have been "and EVEN a Zane Grey" or "and EVEN an Arnold Bennett" (for he had these as well). I wondered what the great gentleman thought of the modest little paper cover illustrated with a superb trumpeting elephant by Eric R. Parker - if, of course, he would have bothered to open it. "The Case of The Murdered Mahout" was featured in S.B.L. 2nd series No. 212 dated 3.10.29. Looks as if the copy had "done the rounds" after more than 10 years. The author was, of course, the much travelled Murray Graydon.

Increase yet? Things are looking up at Fleetway House. Or so it would seem. The A.P. have just informed wholesalers that they are reprinting copies of the April S.B.L. and any number of copies can be supplied if required! Perhaps we shall see three

or four libraries a month soon - and who knows, that long awaited Blake Weekly? And I am very pleased to note the better quality of the stories these days. I wonder if they have seen the Red Light?

Lee versus Blake. From first reports it seems that the visit of E.S. Brooks to the O.B.B. Club meeting on May 1st was a bit of a flop as far as Blake was concerned. It is unlikely that Mr. Brooks will ever pen a Blake story again. Why? And he was only mildly interested in that Ironsides reprints business (see March issue).

Cheerio for now.

H. M. BOND.

SEXTON BLAKE'S GOLDEN AGE

A new article by Rex Dolphin

Part IV

Towards the end of the decade we began to get a number of real detective stories which did not depend on bizarre characters or foreign backgrounds, and the authors mainly concerned were C. Malcolm Hincks, R.L. Hadfield and Donald Stuart (Query - Were Hincks and Hadfield the same writer?). Their stories were "The Carnation Wreath Mystery" and "The Shadow Man" by Hincks, "Some Persons Unknown" by Hadfield, and "The Green Jester" by Stuart. (U.J.'s Nos. 1287, 1345, 1343 and 1379).

A specialist in "human interest", apart from his frequent stories of Leon Kestrel, was Lewis Jackson, who wrote the Olga Neamyth stories in 1927 and had the doubtful honour of writing the first story for "Detective Weekly". This story, however, was the first of the Nigel Blake series, probably the best thing Jackson has ever given us. The Kestrel stories I read with interest, but they left little impression on me, for I can't recall any particular one.

Well, those were the stalwarts of the Golden Age. There were many others; their contributions were few, undistinguished, or not known to me. The record is admittedly incomplete. Any reader who can help me fill in gaps will have my gratitude.

Variety was undoubtedly the life-blood of the Blake papers. We had no Charles Hamilton who could write every story - a super-human task with school yarns but an impossible one with detective stories. We had the thrill of meeting Blake weekly, or oftener; the same Blake, yet a different author - the same man, but in

different settings, with different problems and opponents. This is why the character of Sexton Blake stands out from the crowd - we have seen so many aspects of him.

Glancing over the whole of the vast Blake scene, we see every possible background. We see adventure, crime, comedy, tragedy, romance - every human emotion. Sexton Blake is not only a detective, but THE detective, as someone once said. He is even more. He is the universal hero of fiction except in the amatory sense. He can appear in practically any type of story laid in modern times against a factual background. Of what other fictional hero could that be said?

To be Concluded.

Welcome to ROBERT WHITER in the pages of Blakiana. He herewith contributes a most original article:

PACKING - A - ROD !!!

In the realms of writing and illustrating, faults and mistakes are to be found, even in the work of some of the "masters" as we so fondly call them. In the numerous stories and pictures written and drawn around the famous sleuth of Baker Street, firearms of all sorts were bound to figure, and the fact that the study of arms has long been a hobby of mine is no doubt the reason why any descriptions or pictures of lethal weapons has always claimed my interest. Quite a number of authors love to speak about automatic revolvers, when in fact there has only been one automatic revolver, to my knowledge, ever made. This was a large pistol made for the army by Webley Fosbery Cal .455, a holster (belt) weapon much too big to be used as a pocket or shoulder holster arm by the average creak or detective, who would naturally favour a small pistol. Most artists, when drawing pistols singly, portray a hand with a tube like object sticking out from it. I remember one very good drawing of a Webley & Scott pistol revolver on the cover of a "Union Jack", or was it a "Thriller"? The picture depicted a chap in a railway carriage holding the said weapon behind a newspaper, aimed at someone on the platform, and if my memory serves me correctly, the pistol was fitted with a moderator.

Most of our good friend Eric R. Parker's drawings are very good, some showing excellent detail, and one can readily distinguish Browning pistols from Colt and Mauser from Luger. And

the illustrations of Thompson machine carbines and Lee-Enfield service rifles also show the same careful treatment.

J. H. Valda generally drew a convincing looking pistol, but his drawings suffered from a sameness, his pistols all looking like a break action Smith & Wesson. Arthur Jones of the slough hat fame could draw a good pistol, nearly always of the self-loading pattern (Erowning). But the fact remains, so many artists would portray a self-loading pistol (sometimes termed automatic pistol) when the author clearly stated that "the crook levelled a Colt revolver at the Millionaire!" Otherwise the story would read:- "Blake tightened the grip on his automatic" and the illustration would show the detective with a long-barrelled revolver! Some people will no doubt say, "So what!" or "Why worry?" But I like to think of the saying "If a thing's worth doing it's worth doing well." I would remind such people, however, that Meissonier, the famous French artist, would think nothing of going to China, just to see how a Mandarin's cloak hung, whilst painting one of his pictures.

Another apology! In the May issue of "Blakians" I regretted the non-appearance of my new feature "Sexton Blake and the First World War" owing to my inability to complete, and promised that it would appear in the June number. Since writing those words I have decided to extent the scope of the article in order to give the younger Blake readers some idea of the actual stories printed during 1914-1918. This, of course, means that it will be quite impossible to include the whole feature in one issue, in fact, I very much doubt if it would even be completed in one whole issue of "The Collectors' Digest". I have therefore decided to present the feature in serial form and the first part is given below.

SEXTON BLAKE AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

By H. M. Bond.

Part 1. "The Early Days".

"My Chums, at the moment of writing this I learn that the great blow has fallen. England is to war against Germany! By the time these words greet your eye, all manner of awful, indescribable things may have happened."

So wrote the "Skipper" of "THE UNION JACK" in his chat in No. 568 of that paper dated the 29th August 1914. This fear

and doubt of the future (the same as we all felt on that fateful September 3rd 1939) was evidently not shared by the U.J. band of authors of that period, for, within a fortnight Blake was "on duty" and doing his bit for Britain. It seems as though the story policy had to be changed rapidly in the interests of topicality, for the usual Editor's Chat and future stories announcements disappeared completely from No. 569, except for a notice on the last page to the effect that "the best of ALL war stories will appear in U.J." On the following Thursday in No. 570 readers were treated to the very first "Blake at War" story entitled "The Case Of The German Admiral" featuring one John Lawless (later to be changed to "Lawless") and written by the late Andrew Murray. Another now famous crook, Eric Q. Maitland, and his beautiful, but dangerous accomplice Kate (commonly known as "Broadway Kate") came to the fore against Blake in No. 572 in a war story entitled "The Commerce Raider". In this topical yarn Maitland conspired to betray the position of a British liner in the Atlantic to the enemy. A million pounds worth of specie on board was eventually saved after Sexton Blake chased the liner half across the ocean in his waterplane.

George Marsden Plummer entered the "field" early in the war - and believe it or not, he was a hero, imbued, as Blake remarked at the end of the story, "with all the pluck inherent in the Britisher". And so, Plummer, aristocrat by birth, ex-Scotland Yard official and scoundrel by instinct, helped his country in its struggle against the Hun. No. 574 featured the story which was entitled "The Case Of The German Trader".

Then along came John Lawless again in No. 575 in a story entitled "Made In Germany" and in which The Man From Baker Street had some tough battles against the underground strength of the German Secret Service. This was really stark drama!

George Hamilton Teed's first Blake war story "The Refugee" (U.J. No. 576) also dealt with the Secret Service and with Germany's efforts to drag Italy and Turkey into the struggle. This story featured The Council of Eleven. After that came "Sexton Blake in Togoland", a story which describes itself to a degree. Again Maitland and his crook wife battle against Blake, this time in the Germany Colony in Africa.

Submarine warfare came to the fore in "Business As Usual" (John Lawless) in U.J. No. 578, and subtitled "A Tale of the East Coast Peril". No. 579 "The Case of the Secret Explosives"

featured Aubrey Dexter versus Sexton Blake, and once again The Man from Baker Street was faced with a patriotic fight to prevent a most valuable secret against falling into enemy hands. Later in No. 582 Mademoiselle Yvonne Cartier and Sexton Blake smashed a foul plot against "our brave Tommies" - It was planned to supply them with poisoned cigarettes! The very next week (No. 583) our hero prevented the redoubtable Maitland from making a big haul from "The Belgian Relief Fund" (The case of).

Moving on to U.J. No. 588 we find Blake in New Guinea (how he used to get around in those active days!) squashing a plot by the Germans to introduce arms to the natives with the object of combating British authority. Young Tinker joined up in U.J. No. 589 and became known as "Private Tinker A.S.C." Needless to say, his master got him out of it after some most exhilarating actions at the front. How modern the next title seems, in fact it might have been used quite recently, for it was a reminder of those long, lonely days. "The Case of the Concentration Camp" was both topical and interesting, though perhaps a little stilted to modern readers, even so, it featured George Marsden Plummer. German colonies in Africa once again claimed the attention of Blake in No. 592, story entitled "The Holding of the Kana Pass". This yarn was rather unique for it concerned the fortunes of two Blake characters whom we all look back on as "old friends". Sir Richard Losely and the Kaffir Lobangu. Cecil Hayter was, of course, the author. The Concentration Camp story mentioned above was soon followed by a sequel called, inappropriately enough, "Plummer's Dilemma". (No. 593). Then came a spell of non-war stories until G. H. Teed gave us a hint of it in his wonderful Yvonne/Blake story "The Army Contract Swindle". In this the pair "smash" yet another nefarious scheme.

To be continued.

LETTER BOX (Continued)Never an Idle Moment!

May 19th, 1949.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the May C.D. Good as ever — especially the Maxwell Scott Pages, though some of the details make rather painful reading.

The first Tom Merry book is out this month, Tom's re-birth being celebrated at a cocktail party duly reported by Ian Coster in the Daily Mail of May 18. "Felgate" will most likely be appearing in periodical form later in the year, but it is not yet settled. Perhaps you may be interested to hear that some of Frank Richards' "Barcroft" verses have just been published in "Poetry London", No.15, dated May 1949. But I would advise anyone to look at his half-crown twice, or even thrice, before expending it on the same.

Best of luck to the C.D., my dear boy, and to its able and energetic editor.

With kind regards,

Very sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

Interesting Item

The "Bristol Evening World" commenced publication on April 23rd of a daily serial "The Mystery of Study No. 1", a story of Greyfriars by Frank Richards.

It was stated it was "by arrangement with the Amalgamated Press, Ltd."

It would appear to be a reprint of an old Magnet story.

Worries dry up when subs
flow in on the tide.