

The Collectors Digest.

(Vol. 5) No. 52. April 1951. Price 1s. 10 Post Free
32 Pages Again : Next Month 1s. 60





Vol. 5. No.52.

Price 1s.1d.

Post Free

APRIL 1951

Editor: Miscellaneous Section,
Herbert Leckenby,
Telephone Exchange, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

A Subject for Discussion. This is a 32-page issue again, despite my warning that we simply must be satisfied with 28. Let me explain. A few weeks ago I received two lengthy cables from Mr. Wheeler Dryden of Hollywood in connection with our "We Want a Name" competition. Followed an article (in duplicate) by air-mail, and a long interesting letter. Now it was plainly evident from the article - and the letter - that Mr. Dryden follows our activities with considerable interest, and looks upon them as being of no little importance. He had gone to an enormous amount of trouble in preparing his article; he had even got the loan of the same type as that on which the C.D. is usually done. Reading it all I greatly admired his sincerity and enthusiasm, but as he urged me to publish exactly as he had prepared it I was in rather a dilemma in view of the critical paper situation, and the fact that his article ran to eight pages. However, as Mr. Dryden generously offered to pay for any extra cost, and as I was able to scout round and pick up an extra room or two, I was

able to solve the problem by adding four pages.

Now Mr. Dryden does provide much food for thought, even though we may not find his suggestions practical. In any event it is nice to think that someone so far away from his homeland follows our doings with so much friendly interest.

I propose to go more fully into his suggestions in the next issue; meanwhile, I shall be glad to have your views.

+ + + +

Advence Austrelia. As will be seen from Race Mathews' letter in the correspondence columns, real progress is being made "down under". We have some real enthusiastic cousins out there. They are handicapped by distance, of course, as they are scattered over most of the states, but a good deal can be done by post.

I can picture Jim Southway looking on with envious eye, but he is not quite alone in South Africa.

+ + + +

For Your Note-Books. Mr. A. J. Cruse, of Bristol, has written a book entitled "Hobby Horse to Ride", which is now in the publisher's hands. Of particular interest is a chapter of about 5000 words, illustrated, on our own hobby, including something about our activities. Over a score of hobbies are dealt with, among them cigarette cards, medals, railway tickets, and autographs. More details later.

+ + + +

In the News. Brian Honeysett, St. Annes-on-Sea, had a nice little write-up in his local newspaper recently. He is going to have an exhibition of books in connection with their Festival of Britain celebrations. A go-shead young fellow, Brian.

Bob Blythe, too, has had a fine half-column in the "Lowestoft Journal". There was an amusing circumstance in connection with this. "Rover", the columnist who interviewed Bob, told him that his name was Cherry, and that as a consequence he had been nick-named Bob! Naturally!

+ + + +

That One-and-Sixpence. I needn't have worried, for immediately following mailing of last month's issue letters began to flow in assuring me of support no matter what the price. They were indeed very cheering to read. At the moment of writing it is 100 per cent agreement. So the other half of the load has been lifted from the mind of

Yours sincerely, HERBERT LECKENBY.

LETTER BOX (Contd. from Page 118)

Victoria, Australia:

22.2.51.

Developments "Down Under"

Dear Editor,

Greetings from the Australian Branch of the O.B.B.C. I am happy to say that sufficient support has been gathered together to make the formation of the club possible and that Gordon Kirby and myself are doing all we can to work out details. Now for some facts. The club will probably be more of a postal type than a closely-knit organisation with regular monthly meetings, like the English clubs. This is necessary because of the manner in which collectors are scattered over Australasia: 6 are in S.A., 3 in N.S.W., 1 in N.Z., 8 in Vic. etc. Anyhow, we plan to set up some kind of central committee in Victoria to handle queries, exchanges, perhaps a library, and other services for the various collectors all over the continent. Incidentally, if you could manage an article in C.D. it would be helpful. Also any suggestions would be gratefully received.

Yours sincerely,

RACE MATHEWS.

RALLY ROUND! RALLY ROUND! Wanted, any Union Jacks for the year 1922. Your price paid. Any help greatly appreciated. Leonard and Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED: Schoolboys' Own Libraries, St. Jim's and Rockwood stories, prior to 260, particularly No. 118 T. Hopperton, Courtlands, Fulford Road, Scarborough.

FOR SALE: Four bound volumes of Marvels No's 30 to 126, Jack, Sam and Pete stories. Good condition. Best offer. Foster, 26 Kelso Place, London, W.8.

WOULD any Collector able to give me particulars (titles etc.) of ROBIN HOOD (Aldine) first reprint, also of the various Aldine BUFFALO BILL LIBRARIES kindly write me at Arthur J. Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, SOUTH AFRICA.

WANTED: Comets Numbers 85 and 116 to complete set of Greyfriars stories. Your price paid. Arthur J. Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, SOUTH AFRICA.

COLLECTING JUVENILE LITERATURE

By Wheeler Dryden

In the December 1950 issue of "The Collector's Digest" its Editor, Mr. Herbert Leckenby, writes:

"Most hobbies have a name by which they are recognised; the stamp collector is a philatelist, the cigarette-card collector a certophilist. But the hobby to which we are attached hasn't one."

True, it is often called "Old Boys' Book Collecting," and there have been formed organizations of such collectors under the name of "Old Boys' Book Clubs," but I would like to point out that these phrases are inappropriate and definitely illogical.

The name I suggest for the hobby is the title of this article:

Collecting Juvenile Literature

and for those pursuing the hobby I suggest the title:

Collectors of Juvenile Literature.

Before explaining the advantages of these new names, let me describe what I believe are the inappropriate and illogical uses of the words in the phrases "Old Boys' Book Collecting" and "Old Boys' Book Clubs."

The adjective "Old", when spoken, gives a listener the impression that it modifies the noun "Boys" — thus implying that the people indulging in our hobby are elderly men, which is absolutely misleading and untrue, inasmuch as there are, in addition to middle-aged and elderly men, a considerable number of young men and boys who are enthusiastic collectors of juvenile publications. It may be argued that "Old" is intended to modify "Books," but in no printed use of the phrases has there been a hyphen inserted between the words "Book" and "Collecting" or "Book" and "Club". Even were this hyphen inserted on all occasions when the phrases are printed visibly, the ambiguity would still remain when the phrases were used orally, in face-to-face and telephone conversation, or in radio speech. A

pause between the pronunciation of "Old" and the compound noun "Boys'-Book" would probably cause the speaker to sound unnatural (or even unintelligible!) to a listener, without the advantage of making "Old" modify "Book." A little reflection should make clear that the word "Boys!" is the main cause of the ambiguity.

A further matter for consideration: Inasmuch as many young women and girls are indulging in our hobby by collecting GIRLS' publications, why use the word "Boys" in the name of the activity? This restricts the meaning of our hobby, and its continued use is probably disliked by our charming feminine fellow-collectors. I suggest that "Boys" be superseded by the word "Juvenile" -- which has a wider and more correct application, and includes both sexes.

Returning to the word "Old": While our hobby consists mainly in collecting back issues of publications, we should remember that similar periodicals (different titles, of course, but similar contents) are published at the present time, and these magazines, "comic" books, coloured "supplements," etc., are widely collected by the present younger generation. To eliminate that word "Old" from the name of our hobby and its representative Clubs would eliminate the ambiguity already discussed, and would have the advantage of attracting to our organized ranks the tremendous number of younger collectors just mentioned.

Finally: The word "Book", as now used in the name of our hobby and Clubs, is, in my opinion, too restrictive. A more inclusive word should be substituted. It is true that collectors of juvenile publications refer to them loosely as "books" -- whether they be two-or-four-page comic papers, multi-page weekly, fortnightly or monthly magazines, or actual books with stiff covers. However, all those categories would be served by the more-inclusive word "Literature." Some readers might remark: "Ridiculous! Who would ever apply the term 'Literature' to school, travel and detective stories, written hurriedly to meet weekly editorial schedules of halfpenny juvenile 'pulp' papers?" May I point out that reputable publishing companies have sent forth many novels in the guise of "Literature," printed on "quality" paper and dressed (or should we say "over"-dressed) in a colourful "jacket" -- yet the style of the writing and the hold the stories had upon their readers suffered greatly

by comparison with the contents of many a "Gem" and "Magnet." Let us, then, not object to the term "Literature" being applied to these juvenile stories.

If the objection be the length of the word "Literature" compared to the word "Book," just remember the drawback of the ambiguity of the latter and the advantage of the more-inclusive meaning of the former. Use of the word by the hobbyist should not be of primary consideration. He knows what he means when he writes or says "Book"; the stranger to whom he is mentioning the hobby doesn't know. If the word "Literature" were used, the stranger would understand perfectly when he saw the hobbyist's collection of papers, magazines and books. To him they would be completely acceptable under the term "Literature." For the hobbyist to display the same collection under the term "Books" might reasonably cause the stranger to ask: "These are papers and magazines — Why do you call them books?" The collector would then have to spend time and energy explaining his (mis)use of the ambiguous word. Should the stranger be a prospective recruit to our hobby he might be subconsciously (or even consciously) annoyed by such an illogical use of a word in the name of our hobby and Clubs. He might think: "Um-m-m! These collectors of juvenile literature are not quite — shall we say 'normal'? I think I'll spend my limited spare time collecting postage-stamps or cigarette-cards."

Before leaving this consideration of the word "Literature": Some people might think the word "Publications" just as good a substitute for the ambiguous "Book." It is true that "Publication" has the advantage of being also an inclusive term, but it is, visually, two letters longer than "Literature," and takes a shade longer time to pronounce vocally. (Since the desirability of brevity might be used against my suggested word-changes, I'll use it myself in this instance). Besides, we must consider euphony in pronunciation: The two plural forms in "Collectors of Juvenile Publications" is awkward to pronounce, and not pleasing to the ear. No — the term "Collectors of Juvenile Literature" appears to me to be the better choice.

It seems advisable to give a hobby a name that is as self-explanatory as possible. Even the term "philatelist" has to be explained to most people — who don't usually

remain satisfied with the revelation that the word means "a collector of postage stamps." The origin of the term is sometimes requested, and one is obliged to spend time and energy on an explanation of its derivation from the Greek words "philos," meaning "loving", and "ateles," meaning "freedom from tax." Even this isn't enough for some people. They require further details of the application of the derived words to the actual hobby of stamp collecting: "Why — Why — Why?" they ask.

Incidentally, the word that cigarette-card collectors concocted (aliteration unintentional, I assure you!) as a name for themselves as hobbyists also suffers from ambiguity. The word is "certophilist," meaning "loving, or having a fondness for, cards." A stranger might wonder: "What kind of cards?" Of course the certophilist knows he is interested in cigarette cards, but the name might serve equally well for collectors of postal cards, visiting cards, playing cards, or even Christmas, New Years, Easter or Birthday greeting cards! If it seems necessary to evolve a concocted term for a hobby, it would appear advisable to use a word which is specific, and, if possible, one which is self-explanatory. However, why invent a one-word term from Latin or Greek roots for the sake of using something shorter than a simple English phrase? This mania for brevity at the cost of intelligibility defeats its own purpose. One cudgels one's brains to condense a short phrase of two-, three, or perhaps four domestic words into a one-word foreign term **AND THEN USES A DOZEN TIMES THE AMOUNT OF WORDS IN THE ORIGINAL PHRASE IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN THE ONE CONCOCTED WORD!** Does that sound like good sense?

May I therefore stress the fact that no synthetic one-word concoction of foreign derivation be used to describe our hobby of Collecting Juvenile Literature?

This brings me back to the name I have suggested:

Collecting Juvenile Literature.

Three simple English words, each individually in constant use by millions of people. Each is a specific word, and the three, used in the foregoing suggested sequence, are unmistakable in what they connote as well as denote.

The matter of their use IN THAT EXACT SEQUENCE is important, and brings me to a final remark and warning:

DON'T TRY TO TRANSPOSE THE THREE WORDS? OR JUGGLE THEM INTO A DIFFERENT COMBINATION. THAT WILL ONLY LEAD YOU BACK TO AMBIGUITY.

For instance: If the hobby is called "Juvenile Literature Collecting," the thought evoked by the phrase is that it is the juvenile (in the sense of "immature") collecting of literature — a suggestion of collecting literature in an immature sort of way, just as some people look upon "amateur acting" as immature (an incorrect conception). It is true that a hyphen placed between "Juvenile" and "Literature" would serve to form a compound noun of the two words by binding them together. However, that effect will be given only to a reader of the printed phrase. The person who only hears the spoken phrase receives no such impression — for reasons explained earlier in this discussion concerning the words "Old" and "Boys".

On the other hand, the phrase "Collecting Juvenile Literature" means only one thing, and conveys one thought and one idea, namely:

COLLECTING JUVENILE LITERATURE

— which is to say, the actual gradual accumulation of a collecting of boys' and girls' publications of many kinds: weekly papers, monthly magazines, bound books and so forth.

WHEN ONE CHANGES THE SEQUENCE OF THE WORDS SUGGESTED AS THE NAME OF THOSE PURSUING OUR HOBBY, THE INEVITABLE REVERSION OF AMBIGUITY IS EVEN MORE MARKED.

For instance: If the hobbyist is called a "juvenile Literature Collector," the phrase implies that the collector is a young ("juvenile") person. Such might be true in some instances, but in very many cases it would be absolutely incorrect, for, as has been explained, a considerable number of collectors are mature men and women — some being sixty and more years of age. Of course, the same remarks concerning a hyphen between the two words applies in the present instance as it did in the last-quoted, but, as was pointed out, only in the case of the printed phrase; the spoken phrase suffers from the same drawbacks hitherto mentioned.

Contrarywise, the phrase "Collector of Juvenile

Literature," whether written or spoken, means just one thing:

COLLECTOR OF JUVENILE LITERATURE.

This same phrase, using the plural of "Collector", can be used as the name of the various Branches of the present "Old Boys' Book Club," thus:

COLLECTORS OF JUVENILE LITERATURE
(London Branch)

COLLECTORS OF JUVENILE LITERATURE
(Yorkshire Branch)

COLLECTORS OF JUVENILE LITERATURE
(Australian Branch)

and so throughout the Universe.

It will be noted that I have used the specific word "Yorkshire" instead of that Club's present general word "Northern." This illustrates my suggestion about always using a specific word when possible. YORKSHIRE BRANCH is so complete, definite and self-explanatory: No possible misconception about WHERE the Club functions. "Northern" might mean anywhere in several Counties of England. What names will Lancashire, Northumberland, Durham, etc., use when collectors in those sections form local Clubs? Yes — by all means let us be specific. No doubt when the hobby has attracted enough followers in Australia the present Club will find it necessary to divide itself into the VICTORIA BRANCH, the NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH, the QUEENSLAND BRANCH, etc. — for Australia is a very large Continent.

Using the new system suggested above, our hobby could become a world-wide movement, each local Branch benefiting from the unifying influence of the same APPROPRIATE and LOGICAL name as its fellow Clubs, yet definitely separate and recognizable because of its parenthetical Branch Title — each Organization enjoying the advantage of its own Administration, Officers, Membership Rules, and so forth.

Readers will note that the phrase "Collectors of Juvenile Literature" contains the same number of words as does the present name of the Club. Some members of that Organization, while accepting this fact, might point out that the four words "Old Boys' Book Club" are, collectively,

shorter than the words "Collectors of Juvenile Literature," and consequently the name I suggest takes longer to pronounce. May I cite the "Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" as a nine-word title which has a long and honourable record of achievement? Its lengthy name, both in print and speech has been no drawback to the Organization's brilliant development. True, the Society's title is often affectionately curtailed to the initials R. S. P. C. A., but you may be sure that all official announcements, important printed matters, and even its letter-head stationery, bear its title in full. Similarly, members of the present "Old Boys' Book Club" who might tire of pronouncing the suggested new name "Collectors of Juvenile Literature," could easily use the initials C. O. J. L. (London); or if even that contraction seems to them too lengthy, they could follow the R. S. P. C. A.'s precise method of eliminating the "for," "the" "of" and "to," and refer to the Club as the C. J. L. (London). Surely three initials is a short-enough title?

Joking aside, this matter of the change of name by our hobby's leading Clubs is one which should be attended to immediately. The Officers of the London Branch (which, I understand, is the Parent Organization) could — after this article has been read, in toto, to its members — put the question of name-change to the vote, at their next meeting. In the event the change is authorized, the Club could inform the Yorkshire and Australian Branches of that fact, sending copies of this detailed article (which I hope Mr. Leckenby will publish in his "Collector's Digest") with their letter, and suggesting that those other Clubs follow London's example by changing their names to C. J. L. (Yorkshire Branch) and C. J. L. (Australian Branch), respectively.

In any event, it is, I feel, only courteous and considerate for everyone connected with collecting juvenile literature, individual collectors as well as Clubs, to make a definite change in the names of their hobby and Organizations — whether it be my suggested title or some other person's. Let us put an end to the embarrassment caused our many charming women and girl collectors when they are obliged to call themselves, and to hear themselves referred to as, members of "Old Boys' Book Clubs." That word "OLD" must be particularly exasperating; but even if it isn't, and even if the women and girls, like the "good sports" they've always

been, state: "Oh -- I don't mind being referred to in that way," we should realize that they are just being "nice" about the matter. We ought to eliminate AMBIGUITY, in any case, and adopt the name "Collectors of Juvenile Literature" or any other equally appropriate and logical title by which to describe ourselves and our hobby.

In all sincerity I submit the foregoing suggestions for consideration.

Although it is not customary to have one's name at the beginning and the end of an article, I take the liberty of appending mine here, so as to give readers a visual idea of that their own signatures will look like when followed by what the author thinks is an appropriate and logical term for fellow hobbyists:

Wheeler Dryden

(Collector of Juvenile Literature)

NOTE : Our fellow-collector, Wheeler Dryden, is an actor-writer-director of considerable experience. He has appeared, either in stage or motion-picture productions, in Trinidad, Brazil, the Isle of St. Helena, South Africa, Madagascar, Seychelles, India, Ceylon, Burma, Federated Malay States, Straits Settlements, Siam, Java, Bali, China, Japan, Phillipine Islands, Hawaii, and practically every city of note throughout Canada and the United States of America -- as well as in his native England. In Los Angeles, Nice and Monte Carlo, he produced, directed and acted in plays which he wrote himself. He is now in Hollywood, California, where his latest credit was as Associate Director of the Charles Chaplin Film, "Monsieur Verdoux." Mr. Dryden is the son of the late Leo Dryden, noted British vocal character actor, famous for his spirited rendering of "The Miner's Dream of Home" ("The Bells were Ringing the Old Year Out and the New Year IN"), which Dryden Senior wrote and composed. H.L.

(NOTE. - During the war years Tom Hopperton and I corresponded frequently; then circumstances parted us. Then a few weeks ago, after a silence of five years, there came a letter from him. Having got the position he was quickly into his stride. Readers can look forward to more intriguing articles from him. H.L.)

TOM MERRY'S GRANDFATHER

By Tom Hopperton

The year 1907 witnessed three momentous events. The GEM and the MAGNET were born, and so was I! It follows, then, that by the time I had graduated from Dreamy Daniel, Butterball and Tall Thomas and the like, the commercial school story had reached its all-time peak of popularity, with the A.P. delving deeply into the Hamiltonian gold mine to fill five or six papers.

Being nurtured on this light-hearted fare, Henry St. John's school stories, with their general air of being staged in a Dickensian workhouse, struck a discordant and puzzling note in me, because I could not realise that that fine yarn-spinner was something of a one man Gothic Hangover, a final link with the Victorian traditional form. Charles Hamilton himself was not immune. His Bendover Academy, while named in the Canem and Hackchild vein, was purely farcical, but thirty years before his Tom Merry and Gordon Gey provided the last of a long and honourable line of heroes with descriptive surnames - Tom Torment, Tom Wildrake, Ned Nimble, Frank Fearless, Rupert Dreadnought, and so on.

I recently discovered yet another of these chaps who might well have been Tom Merry's grandfather, who went through all the stock situations some 70 years ago, and whose story is fullest proof I have yet met that it is the dress rather than the flesh and bones of the school story which has altered.

The author of TOM FLOREMAILL'S SCHOOLDAYS, concerned lest the unusually subtle deletion of one "O" baffled the unsophisticated reader, makes it clear from the start that his fistical hero's delight is to "floor 'em all." Tom is sent to Lashem Hall School, conducted by Mr. Lashem (nick-named Tiger Bill) who had been a master's mate in the Navy, and whose cork leg and wig suffer frequently outrage. Tiger Bill has an engaging habit of strapping his charges to triangles and whaling them with a cat-of-nine-tails until the blood runs, but how else could he manage pupils who immobilise him during

one frees by knocking him down and unscrewing his cork leg? Dreadfuls were cluttered up with boys of unknown parentage who turned out to be the legitimate (never otherwise) offspring of the nobility. Tom was one, and as you can't have too much of a good thing, so was his pal, Jack Nemo. All the familiar characters werethere: Monsieur Bricksabrec and Herr Professor Pfhule, comic French and German masters, Jeremiah Mutton the fat boy, bully Boarhead, the Hon. Charles Daly, a lah-di-dah waster in the clutches of Captain Raffles, a Cardewish Beau Farthingale, and the rival school under Doctor Fungus.

The situations are as familiar as the cast. Lashem Hall had been a nunnery and is well provided with secret passages. Japes abound, from booby traps and the hiring of a swarm of barrel organs to distract the Head to flooding the cellars with several casks of the boys' dinner beer. A barring-out ends when Mr. Cutaway, the second master, fills the school captain full of lead from a blunderbuss. Tom is "framed" with the theft of a watch and runs away from school. He learns ventriloquism and creates chaos with it when he returns. Having out-Buntered Bunter, he proceeds to out-Wibley Wibley, not only in the Dramatic Society and in playing ghost, but by impersonating first a slattern who claims to be the mother of Herr Pfhule's thirteen (imaginary) children and then by eloping with Mr. Lashem in the guise of an elderly spinster. He foils Raffles, and tidies up all the loose ends just in time for a very drunken Tiger Bill to burn down the school and release him - after heroic rescues - in time to get on with Chapter One of the sequel.

Yes, all the ingredients are there, plus a few which would nowadays be blue-pencilled. And yet, to a modern palate, the cake has a somewhat unleavened flavour. The yarn is not unduly cursed with that irritating verbosity of the times. Indeed, the action is so swift that the author lightly tosses off in half a page situations that his modern counterpart would spin out into a couple of chapters. Something of the same effect - although not so pronounced - will be felt if the reader goes through, say, "The Making of Harry Wharton" immediately after reading a MAGNET dated in the thirties. The bloom, the lustre, the polish, if you like, just is not there.

Incidentally, the most entertaining of the explanations

of the popularity of the school story that I have seen is that it represents a flight from cruel reality by harrassed minds, a partial retrogression to that ideal shelter where cares and worries are unknown and from which we were reluctantly expelled - the womb! If that be so, it is difficult to account for the popularity of such flogging stories as TOM FLOREBALL.

Popular it must have been, for after being launched in the usual style with two numbers and a coloured plate for the first penny, and another coloured plate with Number 3, it ran without further external inducement to fill 266 large (10 1/2" x 7") pages. Indeed, our Tom was regarded as so well established that the sequel, IN SEARCH OF HIS FATHER, was put out without any bonus scheme at all. Alas poor Tom! His search petered out in nine paltry numbers, the last of which bear signs of rough hewing to shape his end.

In the absence of any large scale account of the history of the school story, I fancy that every collector can, at little cost in time and money but with ample reward in interest, amusement and - probably - surprise, gain a new perspective on established favourites if he too will investigate the activities of one or two of these robust grandfathers of Wharton, Silver, Merry and Co.

OFFERS INVITED FOR "The Romance of Elaine" and "The Triumph of Elaine" (containing 22 episodes of the film serial "The Exploits of Elaine". J. Hepburn, 4 Waterloo Road, Blyth, Northumberland.

WANTED: Nelson Lees (small) 141, 166, 169; third series 51, 58, 70, 152, St. Franks "Nuggets", Boys' Friends 514, 704. Film Fun 1920-23. 5/- offered. For Sale or Exchange Lees No's 225, 226, 228, 229, 231, 235, 243, 245. Gordon Thompson, 85 Deerpark Road, Belfast.

FOR SALE: Holiday Annuals, 1922, fair condition, 10/-; 1925, good condition, 12/-. Also 1922 Playbox Annual. C. A. Wood, 21 St. Peter's Street, Norton, Maltun, Yorkshire.

WANTED: "Wonder; Firefly; pre-1919 copies; Henderson's 3d Nuggets; any old libraries:- E. V. Hughes, Caswell, 25 Hillsboro Road, Bognor Regis.

WANTED: Information re large issue Drednought, when published etc. Please Help! Henry J. H. Bartlett. Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

Hamiltonia

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Pressure on space is greater than ever this month, so I'm having little to say myself here. I would like to mention, however, that I have an article in hand, "Second Thoughts on Rookwood", by Roger Jenkins. It's in Roger's best style and you know what that means. He argues very shrewdly in favour of that "third school", and it will delight all admirers of Jimmy Silver & Co. It will appear next month.

And now in response to those who have been asking for more from Peter Walker, here's one. There are several more in my file. Oh, if only paper was at pre-war prices, and as plentiful as in the days of 32-page newspapers, what a time we should have!

"I SAY, YOU CADS!"

By P. A. Walker

It is somewhat astonishing to recollect how many "cads" existed at the three main schools created by Charles Hamilton. Presumably the idea was to throw up the virtues of the "nice" boys, by contrast to the vices of the "nasty" ones.

In several instances the fearful wrong-doings of these naughty boys were brought to book, either by expulsion or a severe flogging. Severe floggings, however, didn't appear to have much effect, as within a few weeks these young gentlemen were up to their nefarious practices. Expulsion, it seemed, was the only thing.

Undoubtedly, the "baddest" hat of the whole bunch was Ponsonby of the Highcliffe Fourth. This young man stopped at nothing. It is doubtful if a more vindictive character appears in the whole saga of Frank Richards' series of school stories.

A snob of the first water, a liar and a hooligan. Supercilious, and not entirely without courage, Pon was never seen in a good light.

Some of my earliest recollections of Greyfriars are of the bitter feud Pon waged with Frank Courtenay. I would venture the opinion that the Highcliffe-Greyfriars yarns are amongst the best ever written by Frank Richards.

In the earlier stories, the pompous and contemptible

Mr. Mobbs was featured prominently, and one recalls the amusing episode of Wibley of the Greyfriars Remove's impersonation of this gentleman, to the profound discomfiture of Pon and Co.

Most Hamiltonians will remember the series of holiday yarns in which the Famous Five, with a Holiday Annual were pursued by Pon and Co. over the breadth of England. A most enjoyable series, this, right in the real Hamiltonian tradition.

The rest of this infamous Co. - Gadsby, Monson and Vavasour were but mere shadows of their unscrupulous leader, but served Pon's purpose in his various schemes. In the hey-day of the "Gem" we had Cutts of the Fifth to regale us with his black-hearted schemes. Cutts was, of course, the cool sardonic bouncer, but one whose courage failed him when in a tight corner. A Gem of vivid memory, "The Black Sheep", deals with the narrow squeak he has whilst consorting with one Tickey Tapp, a gentleman not unknown to Talbot of the Shell.

He had the advantage of being well supplied with cash, was good-looking and well-dressed, and was looked upon by many at St.Jim's as one to follow. If memory is correct, he was no mean cricketer, and if he had so desired could have regularly played for the First Eleven.

An amusing feature of the turf activities of the various "wrong-'uns" at Greyfriars and St.Jim's was their complete inability to ever win anything. Nevertheless, they kept on trying, and one cannot help but feel slightly sorry that their efforts met with so little reward!

The other senior "cad", Knox of the Sixth was, of course, the complete bully, and despite his seniority, a tool of Cutts. A senior who departed was Sefton, caught in the act of pilfering.

Earlier St.Jim's "rotters", Gore of the Shell, and Lumley-Lumley reformed, but whilst Gore remained something of a bully, Lumley became a leading light, fading, however, as the years went by.

One of the most disliked of the St.Jim's characters was surely Croke of the Shell. Many will recall how badly he showed up in the prolonged series of Talbot yarns. Prior to Talbot's arrival he was a bad hat, but became even worse after the Toff's entry and his subsequent establishment as Colonel Lyndon's rightful heir.

In the greatly reduced Gems of 1916-1919 Croke found a new ally in one of the worst types ever created by Charles Hamilton - Recke of the Shell, or Moneybags Minor. The son of a war profiteer, Recke was the most distasteful man at St.Jim's.

Surely some of the most amusing situations were those between the cool cynical Cardew and the upstart Racke.

Racke was probably as big a rogue as Ponsonby. He stopped at nothing in order to gain his own ends. His cronies, Scrope and Mellish, were more or less insignificant, although Mellish appears in the early Gems depicted as a mean little worm.

Back again to Greyfriars, and a "cad" of the first water in Loder of the Sixth. A vicious bully, this young man survived expulsion, though often richly deserved, and even became temporary Captain of the School. His two "pals", Carne and Walker, whilst enjoying his doubtful company, had not the same physical and moral courage, but the whole trio were a despicable crowd. Walker did, however, from time to time, reveal better characteristics.

A senior with an unenviable reputation who enjoyed more limelight in the later Magnets was Price of the Fifth, his friend Hilton making an unusual accomplice. Aubrey Angel of the Shell, Skinner, Snoop and Stott come under the "cads" heading, but I cannot find it in my heart to include the one and only Smithy - the Bounder of Greyfriars.

In my opinion the most interesting and diverse character ever created by Charles Hamilton, Herbert Vernon-Smith had too many good sides to his make-up to be classed as a "cad".

The curious Ionides of the Sixth, who appeared to leave Greyfriars during the latter part of the 1914-1918 war, the early Bulstrode, Bolsover Major, and at St.Jim's names like Clampe, Piggott and Chowle come to mind.

Rookwood, of course, had its retinue of rotters. Mark Lettrey may be described as the worst, and the early Mornington almost as bad. The arrival of Kit Erroll and 'Erbert made all the difference to Mornny, however.

Peele and Gower, and Adolphus Smythe with Townsend and Topham constituted a brilliant company. In these years they were known as "knuts". What is the designation today? Spivs?

A few lovely birds of passage are to be noted from time to time. Ralph Stacey, Arthur Carter, various rascally Sixth Formers and Form-masters, most of whom, however, found their rascality not worth while at the ancient seats of Greyfriars, St.Jim's and Rookwood.

And, as always, right triumphed over wrong, and the blue-eyed boys came out on top, and all was well, and we waited

impatiently for next week's Magnet. Alas! There is no Magnet in 1951.

THE PICK OF THE SERIES. No. 5.

THE BUNTER COURT SERIES. (Opening in Magnet No. 910.
Seven stories in all.)

Frank Richards has always had the happy knack of making the preposterous seem feasible, and the fantastic intensely interesting. The impossible antics of Billy Bunter, when he secured possession of a huge country mansion, complete with staff, and re-named it "Bunter Court", formed one of the most famous of the many series which appeared in the Magnet. Though Bunter was far from an attractive character in those seven stories, it was an exceedingly popular series, and the way the author saved Bunter from Burstal was a very cleverly written climax. A preposterous affair, - but grand reading. Though the Bunter Court stories had an original plot which had no counterpart in any other tales, they bring to mind another fantastic set of yarns, - the BUNTER the Billionaire series.

The BILLIONAIRE series (starting in No. 1383) ran to seven stories, and commenced in August 1934. Here, Bunter became the possessor of millions of pounds, and proceeded to spend some, in the doing of which he visited France and Italy, attended by the Co., a sinister valet, and an American gunman. The plot was cleverly thought out, and presented in Frank Richards' inimitable style.

Though the Billionaire series, like the Bunter Court stories, had no real counterpart, it was reminiscent of a story "A MISSION OF MYSTERY" which appeared in the Gem in 1914. In this tale, D'Arcy came into possession of a large sum of money which he had to spend in a week, a task which he found surprisingly difficult. But then, 1914 was not 1950. This tale was written by one of the "sub" writers, and, as "sub" stories went, was not too bad. In fact, I recall getting a great kick out of it as an infant of very tender years.

Speaking of the fantastic brings to mind the "STRONG ALONZO" series, which started in Magnet 1344, running to six issues at the close of the year 1933. Here the weedy Alonzo Todd returned to Greyfriars, and made the acquaintanceship of an eccentric professor who gave him a wonderful tonic which produced immense strength. This series contained some rather fine character writing, when Alonzo, hitherto a weed, began

to make use of his unaccustomed strength and to become an over-bearing reformer.

In the fantastic class, one would place that very fine "MR. WHIFFLES" series, which started in Magnet No. 1069, but we shall review this set of stories when we analyse the Circus stories in the "Pick of the Series".

MAGNET TITLES (Continued)

(S) denotes Substitute.

589 Treasure Trove; 590, Bunter's Auction; 591 (S) "Weggie of the Remove"; 592 (S) Billy Bunter's Bank Holiday; 593, Bunter the Bolshevik; 594 (S) The Greyfriars Swimming Sports; 595 (S) Bossie versus Billy; 596 (S) Linley's Legacy; 597, Catching Coker; 598 (S) The Great Bunter Mystery; 599 (S) Bunter's Aunt Sally; 600, The Hero's Homecoming; 601 (S) The Greyfriars Tourists; 602 (S) School boys Abroad; 603 (S) Bunter's Typing Agency; 604 (S) The Twelve Stamps; 605, (S) The Golden Clue; 606 (S) Sports Day at Greyfriars; 607, (S) The Schoolboy Barber; 608 (S) The Secret of the Wires; 609 (S) the Greyfriars Detectives; 610 (S) The Mystery of Mr. Quelch; 611 (S) Hurreeb Singh's Surprise Packet; 612, The "Herald's" Rival; 613, The Bounder's Fault; 614, Facing the Music; 615, The Right Thing; 616 (S) Cast out by his Chums; 617, The Rise and Fall of William Gosling; 618, (S) Alonzo's Agency; 619 (S) Bunter on the Boards; 620 (S) Bunter's Christmas Portrait; 621 (S) The Terror in Black; 622 (S) The Bounder's Farewell; 623 (S) Exiled from School; 624 (S) Vernon-Smith's Return; 625 (S) Vernon-Smith's Victory; 626 (S) The Jave of the Term; 627 (S) Smouldering Fires; 628 (S) Phyllis Howell's Brother; 629 (S) Squiff's Secret; 630 (S) The Hold-up at Greyfriars; 631 (S) The Silent Strike; 632 (S) Mauleverer's Mission; 633 (S) Bob Cherry's Secret; 634 (S) The Blindness of Bunter; 635 (S) The Feud with Friar Dale; 636 (S) The Circus Hero; 637 (S) Cup-tie Champions; 638 (S) The Prefect's Predicament; 639 (S) The Scholarship Company; 640, Bunter the Bankrupt; 641 (S) The Invasion of Greyfriars; 642 (S) Chums Awheel; 643, Billy Bunter's Speculation; 644 (S) Bunter the Farmer; 645 (S) The Greyfriars Minstrels; 646 (S) Fun on the Fifth; 647 (S) The Remove's Recruit; 648 (S) Her Brother's Honour; 649, Chumming with Loder; 650 (S) A Third Form Mystery.

THE ANNUAL

Present State of the Poll

The Popular Popular	185
An Amazing Pair	184
The Bounder of Greyfriars	152
Rise and Fall of the Boys' Friend	149
What Might Have Been	127
Monograph on the Criminals'	
Confederation	126
Rockwood Review	123
Serials from Victorian Papers	85

It will be seen that there have been some changes. Eric Fayne's article would appear to have been as popular as its title, for it has slipped into first position. "The Bounder" has gone up one, as has also Peter Walker's fantasy "What Might Have Been", and considering the minority of old timers the position of John Medcroft's "Serials from Victorian Papers" is quite good.

Though only the first eight articles are mentioned, quite a number of votes have been collected by the remaining articles.

Don't neglect to vote, those of you who haven't yet done so. We want a full poll.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST VOTING CONTEST

Result of Heat No. 1.

The popular vote of readers places the items in Heat No. 1 in the following final order:-

- 1st. B. The Harry Wharton v. Mr. Quelch Series.
- 2nd. A. The Bunter Court Series.
- 3rd. F. The Mr. Prout, Headmaster, Series.
- 4th. E. The Stacey Series.
- 5th. D. The Kidnapping of Mr. Quelch Series.
- 6th. C. The Smedley Series.
- 7th. G. The Water Lily Series.
- 8th. H. The Carter Series.

One voter sent in an entry which placed no less than six of

the items in their order as placed by the popular vote. The Editor, in consequence, has decided to award the full prize of ONE POUND to this competitor, and a postal order for this amount has been forwarded to

J. P. Wood,

Stockton Lane, YORK.

(Incidentally, this reader's entry was one of the very first received in this contest.)

Two other entrants sent in lists which, in the opinion of the Editor, are worthy of consolation prizes. As a consequence the prize list has been extended for this Heat, and the following additional prizes awarded.

A consolation prize of an early Red-covered Magnet has been sent to R. Cook, 30, Lucien Road, Tooting.

A consolation prize of a Blue-covered early Gem has been sent to J. R. Cook, 178 Marie Street, Benwell, Newcastle.

As a result of this contest the two items voted first, - i.e. The Harry Wharton v. Mr. Quelch Series and The Bunter Court Series will both pass into the FINAL.

WANTED: S.O.L. Rockwood stories: - 6,;2, 20, 28, 32, 36, 42, 48, 60, 68, 76, 84, 94, 100, 104, 108, 112, 118, 124, 128, 132, 142, 146, 150, 154, 158, 162, 166, 170, 174, 182, 206, and 262. Would exchange for other S.O.L. Have 34, Greyfriars, 36 St. Jim's and 47 St. Frenk's for exchange. Arthur J. Arthur J. Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, SOUTH AFRICA.

FOR SALE: In excellent condition. "THE CAPTAIN", bound volumes, 1, 2, 20, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47 and 48. Any volume sold separately or I will exchange for other old boys' papers. Offers to: Leonard Peckmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: 33 "Plucks" mostly 1909-10; 25 "Bullseyes" 1932-33; 4 Vols. "Chums", 1929-30, 1931-32, 1933-34, 1936-37. 1 Vol. Hentys "UNION JACK". Vol. 1@ complete 52 copies, mint condition. Wanted 1st New Series Nelson Lee. H. H. Smith, 13 New Road, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

WANTED TO BUY: Magnets prior 1456, Gems prior 1293, School-boys' Own prior 270. J. Hughes, 184 Riverview Drive, Chelmer, Brisbane, Australia.

Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe

(All communications temporarily to Leonard Packman,
27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.)

First of all I am pleased to say that thanks to two good friends, Messrs. B. Honeysett and R. Rouse, I am now in possession of the information I required regarding the Detective Library. Very little information on the Nugget Library would appear to be available. This is a pity, for I know many Lee-ites who are very interested in this little library. Maybe on my next visit to Fleetway House I will ask them for details. The only thing is that I already require information concerning other papers and I do not want to get thrown out on my ear. However, we shall see! And now, a little news about Bob Blythe. I am happy to report that in his recent letter to me he says he is making rapid headway. Splendid! Let us hope he will be back "on the job" very soon now, for I am sure he will give you that value for money which neither myself nor any other substitute can give.

I am also able to report that the good old Nelson Lee has another new supporter in Australia. Thanks to the good offices of a certain Bill Martin I have been able to send our friend a nice bound volume of early stories. Carry on, overseas, the more the merrier.

Here is this month's quota of Nelson Lee Library (1st New Series) titles:

105, Hendforth's New Chum; 106, Under a Cloud; 107, Hendforth's Great Adventure; 108, All-abroad for the Skylark; 109, Atlantic Flyers at St. Frank's; 110, The St. Frank's Film Actors; 111, The Schoolboy Chennel Swimmer; 112, The St. Frank's Gale; 113, The Bully of the Remove; 114, Hendforth's Return; 115, The Remove Election; 116, The Split in the Remove; 117, Tamed by the Fags; 118, Spirited Away; 119, The Palace in the Clouds; 120, The Lummer's Prisoners; 121, The Siege in the Clouds; 122, The Tyrent of Rishmir; 123, The Peril of the Kybur Pass; 124 The River House Raiders; 125, Monkey Business at St. Frank's; 126, My Only Sainted Aunt; 127, Honours Even; 128, Going to the Dogs; 129, Playing the Professionals; 130, The Plotters of the Remove; 131, Willy's Dog; 132, Corcoren of the Blue Crusaders; 133, The Remove Crusader; 134, The Prefect's Secret; 135, The

Rotter's Awakening; 136, For He's a Jolly Good Fellow; 137, The Return of Ezra Quirke; 138, The Mystery of Raithmere Castle; 139, The St. Frank's Revels; 140, St. Frank's Afloat; 141, St. Frank's in South Africa.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

London Section. Sunday March 18th

Members arriving at the latest get-together of the club thought that they were in Baker Street instead of Wood Green, as the first conversations were all about the famous sleuth of that noted thoroughfare, Sexton Blake. The water colour painting of the detective which was awaiting Charlie Wright adorned the wall, whilst another exhibit was a replica of Prout's Winchester Repeater. The increase of interest in Blake was very obvious and it was good to note that other articles up to the standard of "The Criminals Confederation" are in the offing.

The usual proceedings were quickly and efficiently disposed of. Then chairman Len related the story of his visit to the Amalgamated Press and of the great courtesy that was afforded him whilst looking up the files of the "Union Jack" for the titles that he required to complete his own records. Len is to be thanked for his good work in this sphere. The chairman then emphasised that the club exists for the collection of all kinds of books and his remarks on this subject were greatly applauded. The sale by him of several 1/2 Union Jacks testified the fact that his words on the subject are carried out.

Two quiz' were then circulated amongst those present. The eliminator one, key word "Rainbows", was won by John Geal with Len Peckman and Bob Blythe sharing second place. Fourth place was secured by Bob Whiter. Incidentally this quiz caused a great deal of amusement with some of the answers. As is now the almost usual custom, Len won the general knowledge quiz with 11 points, with Charlie Wright and Bob Blythe sharing second place.

Next meeting at 12, Ashburnham Place, Greenwich, London, S.E.10, on Sunday April 15th.

Attendance: Len Peckman, Harry Homer, Arthur Lawson, Roger Jenkins, Roger Southwood, Ian Whitmore, Alan Stewart, John Geal, Jim Perrett, Frank Keeling, Charlie & Olive Wright, E. Reynolds, Will, Bob & Ben Whiter. BENJAMIN G. WHITER.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Northern Section

The March meeting was held on March 10th, 1951, at 239 Hyde Park, with nearly a score of members present.

Chairman, Reg. Hudson, on opening extended a hearty welcome to Frank Case, who had come all the way from Liverpool.

The minutes of February meeting were read, also correspondence and apologies for non-attendance. It was also announced that our numbers had been added to during the month.

Librarian Gerald Allison in his report reveals that there were now nearly 500 books in the library, over 200 of them Magnets, nearly 100 Gems, together with Nelson Lees, S.O.L's, U.Js. Thrillers, and one or two others.

Then the chairman announced the high spot of the evening as he put it, "the talk". Speaker for the occasion was Gerald Allison, subject: "The Greatest Magnet Series of All". Before calling upon him, Reg. said the talks had been a great success, and volunteers were now wanted for coming meetings. Members not present are asked to make a note of this.

Gerald got into his stride straight away and proved himself a worthy successor to Mr. Breeze Bentley, who made such a hit last month. Gerald said he had called his talk "The Greatest Magnet Series of All", that without any qualification. After keeping his hearers in suspense for a while he announced his choice - "The Herry Wharton v. Mr. Quelch Series"

Nos. 1285-1296. Delving frequently into the classics for support, he delivered a fighting case for his client. He also read a chapter from one of the stories in real "Book at Bedtime" manner.

When he had finished he got a real hearty round of applause, but when the discussion started it was evident there was a "We Beg to Differ" atmosphere. Chairman Reg. was a doughty opponent, claiming that there was not much to the credit of Herry Wharton in that series.

Then came a proper "John Clements-Key Hammond" set-to between Reg and No.1 lady member Vera Costes. It was all jolly good-humoured fun. Yes, "the talks" are proving real high-lights. (It will be noted that the "Wharton v. Quelch series" has come out first in the second voting contest, so it would appear Gerald has plenty of supporters.)

The next meeting was fixed for Saturday April 14th. It was also announced that about eight members hoped to make the journey to London on Whit-Sunday.

After refreshments, the members broke up into groups. Came nine o'clock, one by one those from a distance went off to catch buses and trains, and another enjoyable meeting came to an end.

Attendance: Reg. Hudson, Norman Smith, Gerald Allison and Mrs. Allison, Frank Case (Liverpool), Horace Twinham, W. H. Williamson, Vera Coates, S. F. Armitage, W. Harrison, Stanley Knight, Mrs. and Keith Knight, C. Topham, A. Thomas, David Killingbeck, David Pullen and Herbert Leckenby (Northern Section Correspondent).

LETTER BOX

64 Woodlands Rd., Ilford
Essex.

John Bowls at Ben

12/3/51.

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for the March C.D. which brightened a dull evening. I am indebted to Brother Ben Whiter for his criticism of my article in the February issue, but think he would have been wiser to have reflected more before reaching for pen and paper.

Contrary to his statement, I do not dislike the Hamilton papers and have every admiration for these stories which I first read in the "Boys Herald", "Boys Realm", "Pluck" and from the first numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet" up to 1914. But unlike perfervid members of the Hamilton clan I do not blind myself to the sterling merits of other papers and the authors that graced them and, if in Brother Ben's opinion this constitutes an anti-Hamilton complex then I am most profoundly unrepentant.

Regarding the alleged "usual dig at Hamiltonia", if it is my quotation from Berry Ono to which he objects then I can only refer him to Barnstaple Cemetery. We are evidently in agreement on the subject of commercialisation in the hobby but is it not a fact that this is largely due to Press publicity which boosted prices, created false values and gave undue prominence to the Bunter angle. On the credit side it must be admitted that many new collectors were attracted to the hobby from young fellows who missed their "Magnet" to older men who in adolescence had garnered and subsequently squandered piles of papers and succumbed to a nostalgic urge to collect again. Towards the end of the war a young collector wrote me about the need for more articles on Hamiltonia in the "Collector's Miscellany" with which I was in cordial agreement. But he naively added, "I would not wish it to be turned into a Bunter magazine". This inspires the thought that the London Club might consider changing its name.

Cordially yours, JOHN MEDCRAFT.

Blakiana

APRIL.

1951.

Editor:- H.M. Bond - 10, Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, Wales.

THE ROUND TABLE.

Since the very first issue of the C.D. I have been wondering why, seeing there are so many Sexton Blake enthusiasts, my correspondence has been so small. At times I have had quite a few letters, but mostly it has been necessary to insert a little paragraph asking for remarks and contributions. All this has been altered by the mere inclusion of one small feature in the March "Blakiana". I refer, of course, to "A Job for Pedro" with it's plea for information on a mysterious character called Lestrade. A shower of letters from all parts of the country have left no doubt in my mind as to who Lestrade was, in fact I was surprised at the tone of some of those letters. It was as if I had been guilty of something much more than a loss of memory, and believe me friends it WAS just that, for, when Blakiana copy was received by friend Herbert in York he immediately wrote me and suggested that we might cut out the references to Lestrade. I told him that I did not think this was necessary and that it would be interesting to see how many reacted to the request. Herbert was right as usual, but I was not disappointed, for I certainly had the reactions. Even so I would like to point out that I am essentially a devotee of Sexton Blake and NOT Sherlock Holmes. It is years ago since I read Holmes and must confess that in the swirl of fictional detectives from all the many authors I quite forgot Lestrade. I would remind those very caustic critics that the famous James Agate once asked who Billy Bunter was? We were amazed at this statement, but, we should have remembered that Agate had spent his life in dealing with other types of literature, and while I am not trying to excuse myself for my lapse of memory I do ask you all to remember that, and apply it to your Editor. Had I the space I would like to insert some of the remarks from letters received but I am afraid that we have to economise, unless I might be able to squeeze one or two in at the end of this number.

Chocric for now.

H. LAURICE BOND.

CAN I HELP YOU by Leonard Packman.

Recently I took an afternoon off and paid a visit to the Fleetway House. Here, I found the A.P. librarian most helpful and obliging. My request was for some missing U.J. titles and when I explained who I was, the file copies of many of the early volumes were speedily placed at my disposal. I am, therefore, happy to say that in addition to amending some titles which were incorrect according to my records, I ~~am~~ now have a complete and correct list of every U.J. from 1903 to the end. Should any of "our clan" wish to complete their records I shall be only too pleased and would ask them to let me have serial numbers of these titles required.

L.P.

.....
COMPETITION No. 1.

Up to the time of going to press only FIVE entries have been received for the voting competition announced in our March number. The editor has therefore decided to extend the contest for another month and earnestly asks ALL Blake fans to submit an entry. Address your entries to "The Editor" *Blakiana*, 10 Erv Wen, Rhiwbina, Car diff. The final closing date will now be Saturday April 21st 1951.

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THE OLD BLAKE FOR "THE OLD BOYS" by Gerald Allison.

In a letter received the other day, Jim Hepburn of Blyth says, "in my opinion, the S.B.L. has now reached an adult stage, and I frankly think that very few boys will read it in it's present form." This point of view is corroborated by my bookseller who disposes of some 200 copies per month. He tells me that most of his customers are over 30 and a good proportion above 40. Of course, one usually came to Blake well into one's teens, but I do think that the present series could do with a little more of the old melodrama. The present run of "Who-dun-its" sometimes gets a bit tiring. How one longs for a master criminal like Kestrel, Waldo or Zenith. When such characters challenged Blake and Tinkor to a duel of wits one just could not put the book down.

G.A.

.....
COMING!

"In the Country of the Blind" by Tom Hopperton.

One of the best short articles ever to appear in *Blakiana*.

THE DEATH OF SEXTON BLAKE by Wilfred Darwin.

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As a rule, fictional detectives as good and as popular as Sexton Blake never die. Instead, they just go on and on for years and years until they are as old as Methuselah.

Yet, on one never to be forgotten occasion Blake did die, or at least so the newspapers stated.

No need to say it caused a sensation, not only in London, his native city, but throughout the whole civilised world, wherever the name of the great detective was known and revered.

"Splash" Page of "The Daily Radio, who had known Blake intimately, had the painful task of writing his obituary. Tinker and Detective Inspector Coutts of Scotland Yard attended the funeral, but who or what they buried on that solemn occasion it certainly wasn't Blake, for he recovered.

The great criminologist's return to active life caused a greater sensation even than his death, and certainly some misgivings to a certain gang of criminals.

The full story of Blake's untimely "end" was told in U.J. No. 1235 "The Gallows Mystery". It was one of a series by the late Gwyn Evans and featured, apart from Blake, Tinker and "Splash" Page, Ruff Hanson, the dynamic American two gun slouth, and the "Double Four". The last names were a formidable group of super criminals whose symbol was an ivory domino with eight spots, and consisted of eight members.

Their leader, who called himself the "Ace" was the most astounding criminal of all time, for he was, in reality, King Karl, reigning monarch of Sorbovia, a small state in the Balkans. This scoundrel, because of his Royal position enjoyed an immunity from the law unparalled in criminal history. The rest of the gang were not so fortunate because for at least half of them found themselves behind prison bars early in the campaign. Two who were thus confined were Doctor Gaston Lenoir, a brilliant but over-verted genius and Gold Brick Dan, one of the cleverest confidence men in the business.

Every member of the "Double Four" was a specialist in his own particular line. They consisted of Scarlatti, a stage illusionist. Lou Tarrant a female impersonator, late of vaudeville, Tiny Tony a circus nidget with the face and general appearance of a child, but with the grain and

cunning of a man, Samson a circus strong man, and Garfax Grove, son of a nobleman and an expert safe breaker.

Despite the fact that the Double Four had received many setbacks, and had been deprived of two of its most valuable members it still continued to be a serious menace to society and Sexton Blake was determined to wipe it out.

On the other hand the Double Four seemed to have similar ideas with regard to Blake. A telegram was sent to the detective supposedly to have come from Handforth Prison where Philip Carew, ex Naval Attache to Sorbovia was being held on a charge of murder. The man was accused of killing Hugo Channing a moneylender and Blackmailer. The sentence of death would already have been carried out but for the astounding fact that one the morning fixed for the execution Channings body was found on the gallows in the execution shed, still quite warm, having died quite recently from strangulation. In the dead man's pocket was a card bearing the familiar ivory domino with the eight spots, the symbol of the Double Four. This was the amazing mystery upon which Sexton Blake was engaged right up to the time of his supposed death.

Coinciding with the dispatch of the fake telegram, Scarlatti, one of the Double Four's most dangerous and unscrupulous members, was sent to Baker Street disguised as a blind neggar. As Blake stepped from his front door on to the pavement he collided rather heavily with the supposed mendicant. The disguised criminal carried a stick in the end of which was concealed a hypodermic needle charged with a deadly poison. As he staggered away from Blake he stabbed this into the detective's foot. Sexton Blake, completely unaware of the significance of the whole incident dropped the man half a crown, muttered an apology and passed on to his taxi.

On arrival at the prison Tinker was the first to open the car door and he staggered back horrified at the sight of his beloved governor lying face downwards on the floor. A doctor was called quickly and after an examination solemnly declared the great detective to be dead. To quote the doctor's own words in the story ---"My poor lad, Mr. Blake has gone. His heart has ceased to beat".

But Sexton Blake, like the superman he is, did not die. He was carried into the prison hospital, where, through the

help of a powerful heart stimulant, carefully administered, he quickly recovered.

The report in the newspapers and the funeral was all part of a masterly plan to put the Double Four off their guard and make them think that their most formidable foe would trouble them no more. But greater trouble than ever Blake had been was piling up for the King Crook.

Serbovia was in revolt. The common people, driven beyond endurance by their intolerable conditions and the apathy of the Government had risen as one man.

Orlov estate, residence of Karl's ancestors for centuries was bombarded by the rebel army and Carfax Grove and Tiny Tim Tony perished in the ruins.

The "Ace" and the other survivors held out for a while, but finally gave in and were captured by Blake.

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REVIEWS by Gerald Allison.

The Sixton Blake Library. 3rd Series.

No. 233. Another complicated mixture by the author of "When the Jury Disagreed" with the same stock characters, including another of those horrible wise-cracking dames. After a promising start the tale loses all grip and becomes quite unreal. "The Mystery of the New Tenant" by John Hunter. (Amalgamated Press 7d).

No. 234. A good scientific murder mystery with Blake and Tinkor and Chief Inspector Coultts teamed up. The killing of half a dozen people was surely a somewhat extravagant means of keeping an illicit love-affair secret, but that murder is justifiable. Anyhow the story was straightforward (what a blessing) and Blake handled things quite well. The tale was one of the kind in which the reader knows the identity of the murderer from the start, and watches with interest the powers of Justice getting "warmer" and "warmer". Recommended. "The Case of the Green Caravan".

.....
Note: S.B.L. No. 234 reviewed above was by Rex Herdinge.
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THESE TITLES ARE TENANTS.

BLAKE THROUGH THE YEARS (continued)

WALTER WEBB.

When Edward Terry opened Terry's Theatre in the 1880's one of the most successful plays witnessed there was A. W. Pinero's domestic drama in three acts "Sweet Lavender". The name of Arthur S. Hardy is not to be found amongst the London cast, which was comprised of West End actors, including the famous Mr. Brandon Thomas; it was when Edward Terry went on his long provincial tours that Hardy joined the company. And it is interesting too, to record the fact that Hardy later adopted as a non-de-plume the name of the character he portrayed in "Sweet Lavender" was back in 1888, the year in which Julia Neilson made her very first appearance on the London stage. The name of the character was Clement Halo, and readers of the Nelson Lee Library will probably recall an excellent serial that appeared in their favourite paper during the first World War, which Hardy wrote under that name, entitled "In The Grip of the Hun". Under his real name Hardy wrote very little, and I can only recall two instances in which he used it. One of these occasions was when he wrote a serial for the "Magnet" (or maybe it was "The Gem") entitled "The Red Falcon" published about 1930 and later reprinted in the B.F.L. 4th Library (No. 402) in October 1933. The other title was "Death Viley Duffy" reprinted in the B.F.L. (No. 479) in May 1935. But to get back to the year 1888 for a moment. Another interesting fact is that the part of Clement Halo when played on the West End stage was taken by Bernard Gould who was actually Sir. J. Bernard Patridge the celebrated artist of "Punch" who also did many drawings of Irvine and other actors. It would be out of place here to go into details of Arthur S. Hardy's early Blake stories, for they belong to a little later period, so I will withhold my comments until the appropriate time.

I cannot say for certain in which issue of the U.J. this popular Victorian writer ~~came~~ made his first appearance; but my records tell me that one of his earliest appearances on the U.J. stage was in 1898 (No. 236 dated 29-13-51).

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