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Editor, Miscellaneous Section
Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,
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FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

The Passing of John Medcraft: Just as we were going to Press last month I received a letter from Joe Parks, of the Collectors' Miscellany, which gave me a dreadful shock, for it told of the death of a great friend. The poignancy of the news was added to because Mrs. Medcraft has been seriously ill for a long time. I am sure all members of our circle will deeply sympathise with her in her great loss.

To say that John Medcraft will be missed would be an understatement. Hundreds of collectors at home and all over the world have cherished items in their collections for which they have to thank him. It was not always just a matter of business, but also a sincere desire to help. There were some who thought he was a little brusque at times. I thought so myself once, then I really got to know him, and I found the real man. He certainly had very decided views on some subjects, but he expressed them fairly and honestly, if with, sometimes a little irony.

As is well known, John's home at Ilford housed the biggest and finest collection of English boys' journals in existence. In the Victorian section, particularly, there were rare items possessed by no one else. Those who have had the good fortune to see his collection in its immaculate surroundings will never forget the experience. I can see him now as Len Peckmen and I saw him one night just two years ago throwing open his bookcases and saying with a gesture and a beaming smile, "Browse where you like."

John will also be remembered for those inimitable articles he wrote. On the Victorian period particularly he was unrivalled. One is loth to think we shall read them no more.

John Medcraft was only 57. He was a partner with his brother in a leather goods business at Barkingside.

May I suggest an epitaph? "To the Memory of John Medcraft He always gave a square deal to his fellow men."

... ..

It Will Soon Be Annual Time: My file grows fatter, and as the articles come along I grow happier. Let me tell you of some of the fare being prepared for Christmas. To pick at random, there's Eric Payne's "Every Story a Gem", an invaluable review of the series stories concerning the boys of St. Jim's. The same sure hand has written "The Hero of the Shell".

The Annual would not be complete without one of Roger Jenkins' skilful character studies. Well, he's come along this year with "Herry Wharton - Captain of the Remove" and I can assure you it's as good as its predecessors.

Last year, unfortunately, Bob Blythe was unable, through illness, to write for us, but glory be he's back in his old form with "In the Beginning", a review of the pre-St. Franks stories in the Nelson Lee Library, stories which up to now have not had the attention they deserve.

But that's not all about Bob - or Roger - not by any means. You know that they beg to differ about the merits, or demerits of the St. Franks stories. Well, seated each side of a cosy fire they argue it out. There's thrust and counter-thrust with a vengeance, but all in friendly fashion. You'll read all about it in "St. Franks - Success or Failure", and then, I guess you'll argue too.

And here's another partnership article in which Tom Hopperton and myself are concerned. It came about in a curious way. Months ago I got to work on "After the War is Over" in which I contrast the famine of boys' weeklies in the

in the years which have followed the late war with the flood of them after the first one. Well, I had just about finished it when I found Tom Hopperton had hit on a very similar idea. When I received the result of his labours which he had called "Them Was the Days" I was so struck with the strange coincidence that after a chat with him I decided to adopt a suggestion of his and run the two articles parallel under the combined heading, "The Long Arm -". You'll see why when you read it. Honestly there's a real Piddington touch about it.

A week or two ago I got Harry Homer's "Monograph on Yvonne Cartier". When I read it I exclaimed, "Gosh, he's done it again!" You haven't forgotten his epic on the Confederation last year, have you? Well, when you've read this you'll agree with me. How much hard work and research he has put into it only he knows.

As space is running short I must refer to others briefly, that isn't to say they aren't as good as those mentioned above. There's Tom Hopperton's "The Enduring Magic" (Northern Section members can vouch for that one), "The Decline of Jack, Sam and Pete" by T. T. Thurbon; "The St. Frank's Reprints in the Schoolboys' Pocket Library" by Jack Cook (Jack's first appearance in the Annual) and "Christmas Adventure in Baker Street" by Gerry Allison and there are others still to come in.

And I mustn't forget the artists. Bob White has done the cover this time, and a fine effort it is. He has also a topping sketch of Harry Wherton. And Wilf Darwin comes along again with some of his best work.

Yes, I think I can say there'll be something for everybody. In a few weeks I shall be again wrestling with the problem how to get it all in.

Just one thing more. There's quite a number who I feel sure are practical certainties who have not actually sent in their orders or their questionnaire forms. Please do so as soon as you possibly can. Assembling the "The's Who" is a formidable business made more difficult if there's a rush at the last moment.

... ..

More Visitors: A week or two ago Norton Price, whom I had called on in Margate the day I went to see Frank Richards, walked unexpectedly into my office. Two days later Alec Methieson, whose home is at Wick, a few miles from John O'Groates,

came in. Margate - Wick, can you beat that? Unfortunately Norton's stay was very brief, but Alec was able to stay the night. He made himself very useful too, for he helped me to prepare the piles of C.D's for post.

Who'll be the next to give a pleasant surprise to
Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

LATE NEWS. The Seventh Exhibition of Old Boys' Books is to be held at Scarborough Public Library from November 1st to November 24th inclusive.

IN THE HOME OF FRANK RICHARDS

By Herbert Leckenby

When travelling down to London on the tenth of September I had not the slightest idea that two days later I should set off on another journey a little further south - to see Frank Richards. As I explained last month, that was a great surprise planned for me by that faithful secretary of the London Club, Ben Whiter. Needless to say, the news, when I heard of it, gave me a great thrill. For consider. O'er forty years ago, as a young apprentice, I had bought the first $\frac{1}{2}$ d. number of the Gem, and a fortnight later the copy in which Tom Merry was introduced to the world. Then nigh a year further on, No.1 of a golden covered little paper called "The Magnet". For years I bought the two papers every week, and throughout their long lives never completely lost touch with them. During those three decades I not only was greatly interested in the stories but also in Martin Clifford and Frank Richards. Oft-times I thought they were one and the same, at others I had my doubts, for how could one man possibly turn out week after week two such enthralling stories

The years rolled on, and at long last the truth was revealed to the amazement of a host of boys grown to manhood. I remember the thrill I got when I received my first letter from Frank Richards. I have had many since; now I was to see him face to face.

So on a lovely September morning, Bob Whiter and I, accompanied by Eileen Reynolds, another staunch Magnetite and London Club member, set out for Margate. We reached Percy Avenue, Kingsgate, where Frank Richards lives, a little early, so we walked on to the end of the quiet residential road.

We could have walked much further, for one reached a cliff with a stretch of beach about 50 feet below. We could almost imagine we were looking out over Pegg's Bay. On the right there's a flight of steps cut out of the cliff, unprotected on each side. It was easy to picture a scrap between two Greyfriars fellows with one of them in danger of toppling over at the sheerest part. Yes, we felt we were indeed in the "Frank Richards country".

We retraced our steps. Incidentally, Bob later showed me a cutting in a scrap-book, where it was stated some of the residents of Percy Avenue had been agitating to have the name changed as they thought it lacked dignity or something. Methinks if they get consent they have a golden opportunity of choosing a name which will make their avenue famous, and at the same time honour their "oldest inhabitant".

However, prompt at four o'clock we were being greeted by Frank Richards in a sunlit room. He was wearing skull cap and dressing-gown just like the pictures you have seen of him. He shook us warmly by the hand, settled down in his chair, and bid his housekeeper bring in tea. Then puffing away at his pipe and fondling the big handsome puss you saw portrayed apparently playing chess with him, he good-humouredly answered the questions we fired at him. The talk ranged from Grey's Elegy to the approaching publication of his own long awaited Autobiography.

His memory is remarkable and his brain as active as many a man's half his age. But he told us, rather wistfully, that it was seldom he got as far as the garden. He greatly appreciated those well-meant suggestions that come along from time to time that he should be the guest of his admirers at some function. But we could see that that will never be.

I told him that people often expressed to me their delight on receiving a prompt reply to a letter they had written to him. He smiled and said he didn't think he had ever failed to reply to any letter received from old readers of his stories. He had sometimes written as many as sixty a week. Think of that you youngsters who find it an effort to write even one.

Bob asked him when he considered was his best period. Without hesitation the maestro replied: "From 1926 onwards. It was in that year I developed trouble with my eyes. From then on I saw through a glass darkly, but what I lost visually I think I gained mentally."

This was very interesting, for it confirms the view of many students of the Magnet and Gem. Ponder over it, too, Oh ye who covet red-covered Magnets.

He told us that he always had a typewriter in reserve, and once travelled the Alps with a machine each side of a donkey. In reply to another question Frank Richards confirmed that although he had toured the Continent extensively he had never been further afield. This makes all the more remarkable those fascinating series laid in foreign lands - India, China, Brazil, for example - with their local colour and customs so convincingly described that one would vow they had been written by somebody who knew them intimately. The art of Frank Richards.

He was asked if a certain author who "adopted" Ferrers Locke, and used him as the hero of several serials, asked his permission first. Ferrers Locke's creator smiled wryly and replied in the negative.

We asked our host to settle a little argument - Was Levison's name pronounced "Lewson"? We got the reply promptly, "Oh no, only if it had been spelt with two e's as in the case of Leveson-Gower of cricket fame."

We got to discussing those quotations Frank Richards is so fond of introducing. "Like Peri at the gates of Paradise", "Like Rachel of old", and so on. Now it so happened that at our Leeds September meeting our No. 1 lady member, Vera Coates, had been anxious to get the source of one of Bunter's favourite assertions, "Kindest friend and noblest foe" or words to the same effect. No one could satisfy her curiosity, so I grasped the opportunity to ask the man who made Bunter say it. Frank Richards smiled and replied, "Ah, the lady doesn't read her Tennyson." "Oh, ah," thought I, "now we're getting somewhere, so I asked which poem. "In Memorium". In high glee, round about 2 o'clock the following morning, I wrote to Vera to set her mind at rest; and then retired to bed. A day or two later came a reply saying she had read "In Memorium" carefully through more than once and couldn't find it. Then several pairs of eyes got to work reading Tennyson. Eventually Vera found it herself in "The Princess". Even Frank Richards had nodded for once - just like Homer of old. But it was an illuminating illustration of the interest taken in Greyfriars lore.

We talked about the Autobiography. Its writer rather wondered if there would be sufficient people interested

in the career of Frank Richards to make it a success. I assured him that if my post-bag was any criterion he need have no qualms. In support one has only to recall the world-wide interest which was aroused when the Picture Post interview appeared a few years ago.

And in connection with the Autobiography I was pleased to hear him pay a generous tribute to John Shaw who he said had given valuable help where certain dates were concerned.

For a good deal of the time we were sitting in that room at Rose Lawn I was content to listen to the animated chatter of Bob Whiter and watch the sparkle in his eyes. And, competing with him, Eileen giving her views on the Magnet interspersed with some comments on chess. I venture to say Frank Richards enjoyed that afternoon almost as much as we did. Though he gets hundreds of letters from admirers, for reasons well known it is seldom he meets any face to face. For one of those infrequent occasions he could not have a better example than Bob Whiter. Almost ever since he could read Bob has literally devoured Magnets; he can quote lengthy extracts without hesitation. He did so on this occasion and it was obvious that Frank Richards was genuinely pleased, and I think no little surprised. Of a truth by the spoken word, he had glowing vivid proof of the affection his magic pen has earned for him. Surely a consoling thought for a man in the evening of his days.

We found to our surprise we had been there nearly two hours; we reluctantly got up to go. He waved us a kindly farewell from his chair. The three of us will picture him doing so for many a year to come.

We set off towards Margate, Bob Whiter walking on air. An ambition of a life time had been achieved.

FOR SALE: "Populars", "Union Jacks", "Nelson Lees", "Green Boys' Friends", "Boys' Realm", "B.O.P.", "Bunter Books", "Tom Merry", etc. S.A.E. for list. State requirements. G. R. Adsley, 17 Abergarw Road, Brynmawr Bridgend, Glam.

CAN ANYONE oblige with Gem number 946, please? I will pay a good price. Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

NELSON LEES FOR SALE, 6d and 9d. Wanted old series, Chums 1914, 1915, 1905, comics. L.M.Allen, 3 Montgomery Drive, Sheffield 7.

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

I am devoting all the space I possibly can this month to a very interesting article written by a "looker-on", and as it deals almost entirely with the works of Frank Richards it is only appropriate that it should appear here. The article appeared in the September issue of "The Lantern", the splendidly produced staff magazine of the Oxford University Press. We have our own views about our hobby, but as I said last month, it is very important to know what people outside our circle think. After reading what Mr. Hollis has to say I am sure you will agree that we are getting somewhere.

There was also a very nice tribute to the Gem and Magnet in the Boys' Own Paper recently. This will appear next month.

REDISCOVERY OF A PIONEER

By G. T. Hollis (Oxford University Press)

It is a mistake to let one's reading interests become too narrow, and of all forms of snobbery the literary kind is the most odious. This reflection is prompted by some explorings I made comparatively recently - I alluded to some of them in the last issue of the Lantern and I am now musing upon a very different class of writing and a new form of bibliomania which it has engendered.

About three years ago the national press burst into unwonted panegyrics over a book on which ordinarily they would have wasted no space, for its subject touched neither the flesh nor the devil nor anything of a kind likely to have newspaper-reader appeal. The book was E. S. Turner's Boys Will Be Boys, and the remarkable reaction of the reviewers stimulated my curiosity to the pitch of reading it. I may say here and now that it richly deserves the praise lavished on it, and I strongly recommend it to boys young and old.

Boys Will Be Boys is a pure delight, being a survey, and in some sense an anthology, of juvenile periodicals published over the past century. It does not deal with full length volumes of stories, only with magazines and the kind of

of publication which weekly or monthly chronicled the adventures of a particular group of characters. For the historically-minded I may say that it begins with Vernay the Vampire in the 1840's, and proceeds by way of Sweeney Todd, Dick Turpin, Jack Harkaway, Buffalo Bill, and Deadwood Dick (these are only a few of its nostalgic oases) to the Harmsworth series of the late 19th and early 20th century which introduced such a number of characters to the dream world of boyhood. I discovered the origin of many names which are apparently household words even today - Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee among the hunters of criminals, and a host of legendary heroes of stories of public-school life.

Now it happens that I missed the opportunity of reading any of this delectable fiction at the age when I was most capable of enjoying it. So, concluding that it must forever be lost to me, I put out of my mind the thought of pursuing this literary bypath until it was recalled to my memory by an entry in our Juvenile List. I found therein a book with the promising title of Penny Dreadful which led me to suppose that it was a monograph of the Turner type. I got a copy, and although I am sure it is a very nice story it was not what I was looking for. My disappointment was overheard by a benevolent person who remarked that if I was interested in the legitimate "penny dreadfuls" there worked at Neasden a recognized authority of them. Following up this clue I was led to our Mr. Blythe, and I gladly take the present opportunity to say how much I owe to his indoctrination. For Mr. Blythe together with a Civil Service friend is the founder of the Old Boys' Book Club, an organisation which exists for the benefit of the collector of just such fugitive literature as Mr. Turner wrote of. He is also connected with a monthly periodical, the Collectors' Digest, and an annual volume, now in its fourth year, devoted to the same object. I learned from him the surprising fact that some issues of boys' half-penny weeklies, published as recently as forty years ago by the Amalgamated Press (and doubtless having a very large circulation at the time) are now reckoned as bibliographical curiosities with market values ranging from five shillings apiece to as many pounds. Mr. Blythe is somewhat of a specialist, possessing the only complete collection of Nelson Lee stories in existence - that is to say it was originally complete, but yielding to the solicitations of a London public

library, he trustingly allowed some of his choicest specimens to be exhibited there, and as they were not actually glued down inside a sealed showcase the collection today has several gaps and doubtless a rival collector has filled some in his.

I am now in a condition, thanks to my instructor, to speak with first-hand knowledge of one special class of these works, the school stories, and I am at least aware of the significance of two cryptic allusions in the very unlikely sources of The Times and The Lancet. The former in a "third leader" once spoke of a Mr. Quelch, evidently a fictional pedagogue whose fame had not reached my ears, and the latter used the name of a certain Billy Bunter, equally unknown to me, as a simile for juvenile obesity - or, to use every schoolboy's common term, lipodystrophic adiposo-genitalis. But I have learned more than this. I have discovered the existence of a most remarkable real-life character, Mr. Charles Hamilton, now enjoying the evening of his days in his Kentish home. Mr. Hamilton was the author, under various pen-names, of almost all the school stories which appeared in the Gem and the Magnet (two of the most celebrated Hermsworth magazines) every week for over thirty years, besides other works of similar nature. This is a perfectly astounding feat, it involved the writing of one-and-a-half million words a year, including the production of two 24-page story magazines every week! And Mr. Hamilton is still writing; his early loves, alas, died in 1940 - that year of doom for so many periodicals but he is turning out full-length school story books for several publishers, and inquiries suggest that these sell out very quickly. Presumably they make a particular appeal to old fans of the Gem and the Magnet; it would be interesting to know the modern boys' reaction.

Considering the period of Mr. Hamilton's early work, it seems to me to have been of very good quality. On those rare occasions when another writer deputized for him, there is no difficulty in detecting the inferiority of style although the fact of substitution was carefully concealed by the publishers. Mr. Hamilton, by the way, prefers still to be known as "Frank Richards", the non-de-plume under which he wrote for the Magnet, although that journal was junior to the Gem, in which he was "Martin Clifford". His stories were always of what our forefathers called an excellent moral tone, although never priggish - his readers wouldn't have

stood for that! His characters were well-drawn and by no means of stock types, in particular he seems to have preferred the boy of weaker disposition (his boys are not in any case to be grouped as heroes, rascals, bullies, butts, etc.) he evidently liked his Vernon-Smiths and Cardews better than his Tom Merrys or even his Harry Whertons.

The stories are most commendably free from that wearisome presentation of school life as a roaring farce in which a set of eccentric pedagogues are forever the victims of pranks devised by their graceless charges. In the few specimens of early Magnets which I have seen there is what might almost be termed a scholarly background, with glimpses of classrooms where actual work is being done; the text is enlivened with classical tags; boys are no more despised for winning academic rewards than athletic fame. Not all the tales are humorous, some present serious (though seldom fantastic) situations developing special traits of character, but here it is to be noted that the author never introduces a religious element. He is definitely on the side of the angels, he shows his contempt for the waster and the crook; he is always tolerant of the weekling, though never over-sentimental. This balanced treatment seems very exceptional in stories of the period, addressed to a very wide circle of readers of whom, I suppose, the great majority were not older than 14 and probably had no better literary appreciation than could be gained from the necessarily brief time given to reading in the state schools of the day.

It is this last point which puzzles me. These stories described the life of a privileged class, their setting must have been utterly unfamiliar to most of their readers and, one would have thought, as obnoxious to them as the newspaper accounts of life in the more exotic Hollywood circles are to us today (at least they are to me). Did the readers identify themselves with the characters, as an earlier generation was said to do with highwaymen-heroes, or as teen-agers of today are supposed to do at the cinema? I once asked our Mr. L'Estrange why all school stories were of public schools; seeing that so small a section of the community enjoyed such an upbringing. He assured me that to publish any other kind of story would be to court failure, that no council-school boy would care to read the most vivid account of life in a council school.

In my last article I recommended you to sample an unusual kind of magazine I had come across. I cannot repeat the advice in connexion with the works of "Frank Richards" because examples of his early writings are now collectors' rarities. But I suggest that anyone who is interested contacts Mr. Blythe, whose Old Boys Book Club is I understand glad to welcome recruits. Those who like to have the sanction of fashion for their interests, should know that a film is in preparation which depicts the Magnet characters; that it is proposed to put them on Television; that they were included in a talk broadcast recently in the Third Programme; and that the general question of the place of the stories in literature was once an article of debate between Mr. George Orwell and Mr. Noel Coward!

The "Rivals of Rookwood" seems to have scored well for I have received many glowing letters about it. Here's a review from one satisfied reader.

REVIEW OF THE NEW ROOKWOOD BOOK

By Roger M. Jenkins

Jimmy Silver fans should be very pleased at the appearance of "Rivals of Rookwood" which has just been published by Mendevilles at 7/6d. This must be the longest single story ever to have been written about the Fistical Four, but they are still the same cheery quartet who made their last regular appearance over a quarter of a century ago! The story revolves around Lovell's blustering attempts to get his chums excused from detention, but, needless to say, the only progress he makes is from the frying-pan into the fire. The most pleasing aspect of the story is the manner of mellow good-nature in which it is written; we find that even Mr. Manders has a good side to his nature. In short, this is a story which will appeal not only to Rookwood fans but to all lovers of Charles Hamilton's work.

Magnet Titles (contd.)

"(S)" denotes Substitute

778 (S) The Jap of Greyfriars. 779, The New Boy's Secret. 780 (S) Detective Bunter. 781, The Schoolboy Hermit. 782, Just Like Bunter. 783, Straight as a Die. 784, Friends at Last. 785 (S) Alonzo the Athlete. 786 (S) The Sporting Champion. 787, Bunter's Latest. 788(S) The Supreme Sacrifice.

789, Billy Bunter's Boat-race Party. 790 (S) A Message from the Sea. 791 (S) The Jester of Greyfriars. 792 (S) Rivals and Chums. 793, How Levison came to Greyfriars. 794, The Boy with a Bad Name. 795, Under the Shadow. 796, A Friend in Need, 797, A Debt Repaid. 798, The Hand of the Enemy. 799, Levison's Triumph. 800 (S) The Haunted Camp.

THE MEN WHO WROTE FOR BOYS

No. 3. - David Goodwin

By Herbert Leckenby

During the run of our Bradford Exhibition a young reporter on a Yorkshire paper rang me up. I could tell by his manner and his questions that he was only young. However, he kept me talking quite a long time, and if our conversation had been published verbatim it would have filled about three columns of his paper. One question he asked me, after ascertaining my age, was "Do you think the boys' weeklies of today are as good as those of your schooldays?" Needless to say my reply was a derisive and emphatic "No," and I gave him what I thought were convincing reasons for saying so.

A few hours later his write-up on the Exhibition appeared; about half a column. It was evident he was a young reporter because he talked, for instance, about "a paper called the Magnet," whereas, of course, a more seasoned scribe would, more likely than not, have said "the good old Magnet of Billy Bunter fame."

But what really did rile me, and gave me a fellow feeling for Bob Blythe, was what he said about my first love - the Boys' Friend. Thus:-

"One magazine, The Boys' Friend, proudly claims on its cover "The object of the Boys' Friend is to amuse, instruct and advise boys." I searched in vain for something amusing. The advice seemed to be on how to blow your enemy out of existence."

Well, I'll tell you I felt like giving that cub reporter a ring and talk in a Bevenish manner about the Press. For one thing, all he would be able to see would be the front page as all the papers were secure in glass cases.

Now perhaps you are wondering what all this has to do with the subject of this article. I'll explain. The copy of the Green'Un he was criticising would of a certainty be

one portraying a scene from "Britain Invaded", a story written by John Tregellis, better known as David Goodwin, but actually Sydney Gowing.

That story was written in 1906, eight years before the outbreak of the First Great War, and it was followed by two sequels, "Britain at Bay" and "Britain's Revenge". In all, these stories ran two years and were brilliantly illustrated by Val Reading. 'Tis true the two heroes of the stories, Sam and Stephen Villiers (of another Greyfriars School) did deeds of derring do, defied complete battalions, and captured German generals, but that's the way of stories. Boys wouldn't have read them if the heroes had spent their time peeling spuds in the cookhouse. There was plenty of death and destruction, but anyway nothing as horrible as V2's and atom bombs.

Like I said of Henry St. John last month, I don't think David Goodwin had any army or naval experience, which made all the more remarkable his skilful description of deployment of troops on land and engagements at sea. It's true, of course, that we never suffered invasion by land, but I have vivid memories of a certain Saturday night in September 1940 when many V.I.P.'s in military circles believed it was starting. David Goodwin, as John Tregellis, wrote further stories on the same lines, all of which appeared in the Boys' Friend. These were "Kaiser or King", "The Flying Armada", "The Legions of the Kaiser" and "Under the Allies Flag". It is a notable fact that "The Legions of the Kaiser" started a few weeks before the First Great War broke out. Yes, despite our young reporter, I think it can be said the Boys' Friend did instruct even if in these particular instances it didn't amuse.

But let's leave that cynical scribe and have a look at some of the other delightful stories David Goodwin wrote - there were scores of them. His first serial, "The Boy Barge-owners," appeared in the Boys' Friend in 1903. When it was announced I wasn't impressed. "How's this new chap going to get any excitement out of a barge?" I said to myself. I was soon converted, for it was packed with thrills. It must have made a hit, for it was quickly followed by "Gunfleet Jim" a yarn on similar lines, in the Boys' Realm. Some years later there was another one in the same paper, "Dave the Bergeboy." As a result of his first successes David Goodwin was kept busy for years on the Harmsworth papers, who apparently had sole right to his services. Some of my favourite authors occasionally wrote what I considered a poor story, but

never David Goodwin. There was "Rajah Dick" for instance, his first for the Boys' Herald just after its start. I still remember the impatience with which two pals and myself waited for the next instalment. Then a little later in the same paper came two yarns of an entirely different type. "On Turpin's Highway" and "The Black Mask".

A contrast again - stories of mill life; "A Lancashire Lad" (Boys' Realm); "The War of the Mills", and "Clogland" (Boys' Herald); "Men to Men" and "School and Mill" both in the "Boys' Friend". Stories superb, all of them. What next? Why, school stories, top of the form school stories. Like Henry St. John with his St. Besils, David Goodwin had his favourite seat of learning, St. Simeons. It was a more stately, more Eton-like place than St. Besils, with a Canon for its Head, and sons of earls and dukes among its residents. One recalls nostalgically, "Barred!", "Redcastle & Co. at St. Simeons", "The Gypsy of St. Simeons", "The Honour of St. Simeons", the first in the "Boys' Realm", the others in the "Boys' Friend". Other school stories by the industrious author were "Forester of St. Osyth's" (Boys' Realm); "The Terror of the Remove" and "The Cad of St. Corton's" (Boys' Herald).

A correspondent said to me the other day, "Do you remember David Goodwin's "Middies of the Fearless" in the Boys' Friend?" Do I? Rather! Why, I consider it one of the finest serials ever to appear in a boys' paper, a rollicking yarn of the King's Navee as it was at the time it was written. It was followed by "The Fool of the Navy" which was a worthy companion.

Other Goodwin-Tregellis stories which come easily to mind were "Jack O' The Fens", "The House of Garth", "Secret of the Thames" and "Jack O' The Loom".

In addition to all these stories for boys this prolific author wrote several of "Answers" famous serials. These were later published in book form. He also penned numerous complete stories for "Penny Pictorial". For these adult papers he wrote as John Goodwin.

Although David Goodwin and John Tregellis were guilty of few cliches or mannerisms which gave them away I began to get the conviction they were one and the same, and I was always on the look-out for clues. One day I got one - like this. Instead of the real Christian name of the hero in a "Tregellis" story, that of one in a Goodwin story appearing in another

paper at the same time had slipped in and escaped the eagle eye of the printer's reader. It hadn't escaped the eye of this avid reader, who didn't get paid for looking! In high glee I wrote the editor of the "Boys' Friend", told him, and at the same time gave him a list of the stories of the "two" authors I knew from memory. Promptly came a reply saying he had sent my letter on to David Goodwin because he had found it so interesting.

A few days later, to my delight, came a letter from David Goodwin himself, signed with what I was to learn was his real name - Sydney Gowling. It was a breezy, friendly letter, one I treasured for years. What's more, with it he sent an autographed copy of a book of his entitled "The House of Nerney". He told me, with a chuckle, that it was really that Boys' Realm serial "Dave the Barge-boy" rehased a little and given the dignity of stiff covers. It will have appeared on many a library shelf. Who said "bloods"!

Something else he told me was that another book of his, "A Daughter in Revolt", under his real name was being filmed by Hepworth, the best British film company of the "silent" days.

Now I rubbed my eyes at that, for there was a remarkable coincidence about it. Only a fortnight or so earlier I had read that very book. I confess it never dawned on me I was reading a story by my favourite David Goodwin, but in the middle of it I had exclaimed to myself, "My word! this story would make a jolly good film." Strangely enough, when it did reach the cinemas I never saw it.

I was once told David Goodwin was a man of ample girth. If that was so it wasn't because he was idle. I believe, too, he was in a position to be able to spend a good deal of his time yachting - and writing for boys for pleasure. Some years ago I heard he was in Kenya.

I wonder if he is still alive. I hope so, for to me he was king of serial story writers in the days of my youth, and I like to think that such men are still with us.

WANTED: Boys Journals, Nos 1,2,3,4. 68,69,72. Boys Friend 3d Library, Nos. 2,5,7,8,10. 196,595. 1d Marvel No. 393. For Exchange, Boys Own 3d Library, Nos. 4,14,24,67,70,75,78. E. Blight, Constantine Bay, St. Merryn, Padstow.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

London Section. Blackheath. October 21st.

A new venue with the popular Deacons as the hosts and the high standard of meetings fully maintained and the average attendance well up to standard, viz.24, what more can be said? Chairman Len opened with a few congratulatory remarks to the hosts and then the formal business was soon ably dealt with. A postal members' ballot was then held and the fortunate members were J.Ireldi, R.Nicholls, T.Orr, and H.Price. Books will be sent to them as soon as available. Refreshments were then taken, a very fine spread, and then a very intelligent quiz, composed by Ron Deacon, was won by C.Wright with Cliff Wallis second and Bob Whiter third. The Eliminator quiz followed, key word Pedro, and this was won by the two stalwarts Bob Whiter and Len Packman with Eileen Reynolds third. A team quiz was then held and some very intelligent questions and answers were given. Future good things to come are talks on Gwyn Evans by myself, "The Bullseye" by Bob Whiter, and "The Victorian Papers" by C.Wright. After the talks it is intended to have a quiz on the subjects dealt with. There will be readings by R.Jenkins and Bob Whiter also to come, at the next two meetings which will be held at Fume House on November 18th and Wood Green on December 16th. Any member who requires copies of the Skilton and Mendevilla books including the "Autobiography" are asked to contact me. And so another period of "Happy Hours" terminated and it was well played everybody.

BENJAMIN G. WHITER

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Northern Section Meeting. Oct.13/51

It was good to have Reg. Hudson presiding from the start again in that pattern for all chairmen way of his. There was a formidable counter attraction in Leeds with the T.V. show at the Theatre Royal. Despite that we had an attendance of 15, one being a new member, Joseph Owens, to whom Reg. extended a hearty welcome.

The minutes of last meeting were read and passed without discussion. Gerry Allison produced figures to show the

He then refe

library was still flourishing. He then referred feelingly to the lamented death of John Medcraft, saying what a great help he had been in supplying just the papers required for the library. A resolution expressing the sympathy of the meeting with Mrs. Medcraft, herself an invalid, was then passed.

The Christmas Party, to be arranged for December 8th, was then referred to. On this occasion it is hoped to have a "knife and fork tea" as we say in Yorkshire. Members present were urged to let the secretary know in good time if they intend to be present. Absent members please note, too it was a grand occasion last year. Help to make it equally so this coming one - the more present the merrier.

I followed with an account of my London trip and my visit to Frank Richards.

Then came two novel features. The first was "Any Questions?" Here Reg invited someone to ask a question - on any topic. Followed a discussion in which all could join in. There were plenty of questions and quite hearty debate though inevitably we found ourselves drifting on to our particular hobby.

Second feature was a new kind of quiz, compiled by Chairman Reg. From "Billy Bunter's Postal Order" he had selected some short sentences, the remarks of 15 different characters. These were read out one by one and the competitor had to try and decide who had said them. It proved very interesting. The youngest member present, Keith Knight came out the winner with twelve - a very good effort.

Altogether a very pleasant evening was spent.

Next Meeting: Saturday, November 10th, 6.30 p.m.
And to repeat - Christmas Party, December 8th.

H. LOCKENBY,

Northern Section

Correspondent

Report of the September 17th Meeting
of the O.B.B.C. "MIDLAND ENTHUSIASTS"

Apologies for absence were received from Allen Fletcher who we are sorry to hear is ill, and the Rev. Wilson of Lichfield.

Twenty-three of us were present at this - our seventh

Meeting since our inauguration last April. After the Minutes and Correspondence had been read, the Chairmen announced that owing to heavy pressure of his endless duties, the Rev. A. Pound had reluctantly relinquished his office of Club Treasurer, and Norman Gregory had taken over. Mr. Pound of course remains a full Member of the Club.

After Norman had given his financial statement, members were urged by the Secretary to subscribe to the "Collectors' Digest". It was pointed out to them what an important link between Collectors of Old Boys' Papers this grand magazine is. As the "Twenty Questions" session was so popular last time, we had another, and a team of Messrs. Caroline Scott, Mrs. Devey, Norman Gregory and Yours Truly; Objects like D'ARCY'S MONOCLE, MRS. KEBBLE'S CAT, DR. LOCK'S SOCKS, etc. were soon dispensed with. Then Jack Corbett, who had been "question mester" handed over to Mr. Devey; and the rest of the Members had a go at objects like BUNTER'S STICKY POCKETS; PEDRO - SEXTON BL KE'S DOG, etc.

An encouraging number of people ordered a copy of the "Complete List of Magnet Titles" price one shilling each. These are being prepared by our Chairman. Starting next month we are holding our Meetings in new quarters, namely THE TOWNSEND CLUB, 65 CHURCH STREET, BIRMINGHAM 3. Our first meeting in our new "R.L.G." will be on October 29th, and by unanimous vote we are starting half an hour earlier, at 7-30 p.m. Wouldn't it be grand if we had some leading MAGNET personality like Mr. Chapman to visit us.

We are now enrolling Postal Members at 12/6 per year. If you're interested and can't attend our Meetings, join our Postal Membership list now, and be well informed, and well served.

The last item of the meeting was the Sales Table, and it's a funny thing - no matter what books we put on show, it's always the MAGNET in greatest demand.

Cheerio Everybody,

P. L. MELLOR, Secretary.

O.B.B.C. (Merseyside Section)

Inaugural meeting at Waterloc House, 7 Crosby Road, South, Liverpool 21, on Sunday September 30th, 1951. After the objects etc. of the club were explained, it was unanimously decided to carry on with the project, and a

chairman and secretary were elected, these being Don Webster and Frank Case respectively. Days and means were then discussed, including a proposal to institute an advertising campaign in the local press, and it is hoped to get a good response by means of this publicity. After partaking of refreshments - generously provided gratis by Mrs. Webster - a brisk trade was done in the library, and it was finally arranged to hold the next meeting at the above address on Sunday, October 28th. Proceedings were on a most friendly and informal basis, which augurs well for the future.

Present Edna Mervyn, Jim Walsh, Peter Webster, G. Simpson, Ray Brown, G. Horton, Don Webster (chairman) and Frank Case (secretary).

(Hail! Merseyside! May your numbers quickly grow.
H.L.)

URGENTLY WANTED Nelson Lee Libraries Old Series 1915-1920 Numbers 1,4,6,7,11,12,14,15,16,17,22,27,30,31,34,40,42,46, 49,50,51,53,59,60,62,64,65,66,67,68,69,71,72,73,75,76,78,82, 84,85,86,88,92,102,103. I am willing to pay any price for these or will exchange Old Series Nelson Lees at the rate of 3 issues for each one of above Nos. I have some 400 issues for exchange; also am prepared to exchange Union Jacks, before 1925, and first old series Sexton Blakes from my own collection for any of above issues. J.R. Murtagh, 509 Selwood Road, Hastings, New Zealand.

HAMILTONIANS! INCREASE YOUR COLLECTION! For any ONE of the following - Magnets, 769-773 inc.; 776;789;811-864-65;917; Gems, 604; 815-18 inc.; 864. I will send you (in advance) any TWO of the following - Magnets, 575,593,594,765,845,851, 863,875,929-30,932-36 inc. Gems 862,1297,1365-66, 1397-8-9. For S.O.L. 202 I offer No.59 (Greyfriars) Or will buy any wanted Nos. listed for cash. Have also later nos. for exchange with similar. Write to Jes. Walsh, 345 Stanley Rd., Kirkdale, Liverpool 20.

WANTED: Gems and Magnets up to Nos. 1200. S.O.L's, Champion Libraries and 4d Boys' Friend Libraries. Send lists with prices to C.A. Everett, Box 7, Brinkworth, South Australia.

WANTED: Pink Union Jack, Boys Friend Libraries containing stories by Sidney Drew and Harry T. Johnson. State price required. Frank Willison, 6 Meredith Street, Cradley Heath, Stairs.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

Communications to Robert Blythe,
46 Carleton Rd., Holloway, London, N.7.

This month we welcome to the Column my old friend Charlie Wright with an article on the Nelson Lee as he remembers it. As a lover of old boys' books his tastes range over a very wide field, whether comics or Aldines, Sexton Blake or Nelson Lee. St. Franks or the Hamilton schools, he is equally at home with them all.

So, gentlemen, pray silence for Charles.

.. .. .

THOUGHTS ON THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

By C. Wright

This article is not a learned treatise on the Nelson Lee Library, but just as it appears to me on looking back about thirty years.

I first began buying it when the detective stories were running, and some fine series were published, especially those dealing with the Green Triangle, the circle of Terror, and Jim the Penmen. The first copy I can remember buying was called, I think, "Monn the Miser". Eventually it was announced that Lee and Nipper were leaving Grays Inn Road and the homely Mrs. Jones and were going to St. Franks College as Master and pupil, to escape the attentions of a Chinese tong. This seemed to me then as a good idea, and was certainly a change from the usual run of detective tales, not realising of course that the Amalgamated Press were about to change it into what was virtually a school yarn in the same style as the Magnet and Gem. When I realised that St. Franks had come to stay and Nelson Lee and Nipper had become permanent inmates, I was not so sure about carrying on with it. But it must be admitted that Edwy Searles Brooks worked the change over very cleverly, and in a very short space of time his characters were arriving at the school at a great rate and I found myself liking the stories more and more until I was almost as satisfied with it as I was with the Magnet and the Gem.

I can vividly remember the arrival of Reggie Pitt who through his bad ways was speedily nicknamed the "Serpent", but he afterwards reformed and became more or less a model

character. The Trotwood Twins and the Colonel Clinton series come readily to mind. The Mysterious X series, the villain of the piece turning out to be a lordly sixth former, Frinton, I think his name was. Then among many others came Mason the "Boy from Bermondsay" which stories afterwards led to one of Mr. Brooks' famous holidays abroad series, of which he afterwards wrote so many, and it must be confessed that although many of us now think that a great number of these series were far-fetched, - at that time we devoured them with absorbing interest, for if there was one thing that E.S.B. could do well it was spinning an interesting yarn calculated to hold a boy's interest.

He certainly produced many fine characters among whom were Fetty Little, Willy Handforth and Archie Glenthorpe, the last named being one of my favourites, being very reminiscent of P.G.Wodehouse. He also had his rival school, the "River House", and also a girls' school, but in my opinion this was overdrawn (I hope that this does not bring the wrath of Mr. Blythe down upon my head). However, on looking back at the Nelson Lee Library through adult eyes it seems that Mr. Brooks did a very fine job to keep it going as long as he did, because on Editorial orders, as he assured us, he had to turn a detective weekly into a school weekly with the detective element nearly always present, and when we remember that he was entering a field already catered for since 1908 by that school-story genius Mr. Frank Richards, we can see that his task was by no means an easy one. He made as many of his characters as different as possible from Greyfriars and St. Jim's (no easy job this) and trying to make the school and the atmosphere seem different by such slight differences as a triangle instead of the universal "qued", letters on the study doors instead of figures at least in the early yarns, and also the very breezy style of Lee as a master. Compare if you can Mr. Lee with Mr. Quelch! and of course the controversial holiday stories. Some of these were very startling and would compare with some of the fantastic fiction of today, but they were none the less interesting because of that. Another difference was that Edwy Seerles Brooks seldom introduced form room scenes in his stories. Some people agreed with the policy and some didn't. I think he was wise in this case as Frank Richards excelled in such scenes and I don't think E.S.B. would have compared favourably.

In my humble opinion the old series was by far the best, the first new series not quite so good, That happened after that I don't know because I stopped buying it towards the close of the first series, only reading an odd copy now and then afterwards, It has been stated more than once that most of Mr. Brooks' characters were imitations of Mr. Richards' creations, Handforth in particular. It would appear at first that he was a cheap imitation of the mighty Horace Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth, but it soon became apparent that this was not the case. Fatty Little was quite different from all the other fat boys, and Willie Handforth and Archie Glenthorne were absolutely original characters. Two characters who it must be admitted were copies were Umlosi and Lord Dorrimore, both these worthies being taken from Lobangu and Sir Richard Losely in the "Union Jack" Library, but that is of little significance as Lobangu was probably pinched from Rider Haggard's Umslopogass.

The pocket size of the Nelson Lee was also an advantage in my schoolboy opinion as it would be read at school sometimes and it did not get creased across the middle as so many of the larger papers did, the greatest offender being the old green Boys' Friend which often came to one in swop with the centre almost obliterated through being olded so much to fit schoolboy pockets.

The Nelson Lee in common with the Magnet ran an insert "Nipper's Magazine" which was quite a good production, comparing favourably with the Greyfriars Herald insert. Its coloured covers stood out too among many other boys' papers in newsagents' shops much to its advantage, and I think I can safely say that some of the illustrations of colleges and buildings by Bristow were superb, but I am afraid not all Nelson Lee artists did justice to the stories in the letter days of the Nelson Lee.

Well chums, these are just idle thought on an old book that has given me much pleasure in the days of my youth (I have to keep untangling the pen from my beard), and are not written to cause any controversy, but anyone who feels like pulling the above epistle to pieces can communicate with Mr. Blythe who will cheerfully fill his column with comments abusive or otherwise.

From letters received it seems that my quiz last month went down quite well, so I think I'll repeat the mixture.

any of you who got them all correct last month can congratulate yourselves, for you certainly know your Nelson Lee Library. Of those who wrote to me, Ron Burrow of Leeds was the only one to get all ten correct. They must have been easy for him as he was not long in supplying the answers. Watch out this time, Ron. I'm out to stump you.

First, though, here are the answers:-

1) The Professor. 2) Capt. Bertram Glenthorpe, R.A.F. Archie brother. 3) Augustus Hart, Timothy Tucker (both intr. in the Boys' Realm). 4) Zenobia. 5) Manager of Onions Circus and Tesse Love's uncle. 6) It was sunk at sea off Carstowe after being carried there on two barges. The whole contraption being known as Handforth's Ark, as related in the "Flood" Series. 7) Monkhouse. 8) "A Rod of Iron", O.S. No.436. 9) "The Ivory Seekers", O.S. No.105. 10) When there were only two houses, the space between them was a Triangle. However, with the addition of the East, West and School house it changed to that of a quadrangle. But it had been known as a triangle for so long that no-one could get used to calling it "the Quad", and so the old name stuck.

Right. Here we go with some more.

1) Which of Brooks' characters were addicted to quoting from the classics at every opportunity? 2) Name the most famous occupier of the posts of Librarian and curator of the school museum. 3) Who was King Jasper? 4) Who was once on the verge of brain-fever through over-studying astronomy? 5) What was the title of the first Jim the Penmen story? 6) Who bought Farmer Holt's farm for a purpose other than farming? 7) Who was Mr. Stanley Webb, and what was his fate? 8) Which Third Former was known as "Soppy"? 9) Where is Pellton's Bend? 10) And now for a tour round St. Franks. Don't get lost! Go through the main gate and turning half right cross the Triangle to East Arch. Through the arch and keeping the Modern House to your left all the time, circle the building until you arrive at the main door of the Modern House. Walk straight ahead keeping the School House on your right until you reach the Tower at the end of the Ancient House. Turn left and walk across West Square. When you reach the tower at the end of West House keep on past it and turn left immediately. What building is now standing in front of you?

Finally, as I don't think there'll be room for the titles, here is this month's quota of serials.

1st New Series

- No's 62-66. Bucking Up Old Algy.
" 67-72. Trackett Grim's Greatest Case.
" 73-77. Pride of the Circus.
" 78-81. Joker Jones' Legacy.

All these are by Brooks under the names of Archie Glenthorne, Handforth, Willy Handforth, William Napoleon Brown.

- No's 82-95. Sons of Speed, by Alfred Edgar.
" 96-109. The Air Patrol, by George Rochester.

(Reprinted in Boys' Friend 4d. Lib. No.282)

- " 110-130. The Cruise of the Blue Bird, by Coutts Brisbane.
(Rep. B.F. 4d. Lib. 2nd Ser. No.241)
" 131-145. That's Wrong with the Rovers? by Hedley Scott
(Rep. B.F. 4d. Lib. 2nd Ser. No.273)
" 146-159. Rivals of the Blue Crusaders, by E.S. Brooks.
(Rep. B.F. 4d. Lib. 2nd Ser. No.277)

WANTED: Gems (1932-40), Lees, Boys' Realms (New Series) and S.O.L. (St.Jims and Rookwood). A. S. Matheson, 11 Lekegill Street, Wick, Caithness, Scotland.

WANTED: Gems, clean condition, Nos. 1232, 1238, 1249, 1251-52, 1254-55, 1271, 1273, 1275, 1277-81, 1283-86, 1297-98. M. Kutner, 4 New North Place, Scrutton, Street, Finsbury, London, E.C.2.

WANTED: MAGNETS and GEMS, 1930-1935. Will buy or exchange for Magnets, Gems, Lees, S.O.L. or B.F.L. T.Hopperton, Courtlands, Fulford Road, Scarborough.

HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR ANNUAL YET?

 B L A K I A N A.

NOVEMBER 1951.

WHO? WHY? and WHEN? by William Colcombe.

In the course of reading the Sexton Blake stories of the past thirty years, I have often wondered at some of the actions of the Editor and authors of the various Blake papers; so I am submitting these wonderings to the Editor of Blakiana in the hope that readers of that paper can answer my queries. When compiling a list of S.B.L. reprinted stories I came to one, No. 116 (2nd series) "The Great Trunk Mystery" the authorship of which puzzles me. The reprint is over the name of Hylton Gregory, but this was a non-de-plume used by the Editor for reprinting the work of several authors, principally of H. Gregory Hill. No. 116 does not seem like his work, it features Inspector Barker and not Hill's usual Yard-man, Inspector Rollings. The style is not unlike that of Michael Poole in his school stories - he did write one or two Blake stories, but I've had no chance to compare one of these with "The Great Trunk Mystery".

Another story, the authorship of which is something of a mystery is No. 78 (2nd series) "Who Killed Carson"; in all the lists I have seen it is ascribed to Allan Blair, but the style of writing is nothing like Blair's, it is more like that of William Murray Graydon. The yarn features Inspector Coutts very prominently (a character that Allan Blair never used in any of his other stories, nor did Murray Graydon for that matter). I am wondering if it was started by Robert Murray (Coutts being a great favourite of his) and finished by his father Murray Graydon. It is possible, for Robert was often in very bad health and it is reasonable to imagine that his father helped him to keep a publication date by completing the story. Strangely enough it was written at the same period as that ill-fated last story of Murray's Confederation series.

When the A.P. started to reprint stories in the S.B.L. they did some strange things. One story No. 704 "The Case of the Sacred Ruby" by Hylton Gregory is a reprint of an early Lewis Jackson story "The Red Heart of the Incas". In

both versions the Jackson creation, Leon Kestrol, is in evidence. Why he wasn't given credit for his own work is hard to understand, especially as numerous stories appeared in the third series over his name. Perhaps that is why he started writing fresh stories!

Donald Stuart wrote a large number of stories for the S. B. L. during the 1930's but at least two that were published as being by him are reprints of early first series stories by Andrew Murray. The stories concerned are No. 675 "The Burmese Dagger" (original No. 102 - 1st series), and No. 708 "The Secret of the Hulk" (original No. 63 first series). Yet an early reprinted work by Andrew Murray, No. 656 "The Fatal Fortune" was published under the correct authorship. Stuart had another story No. 732 (2nd series) "Twenty Years of Hate" published as by him, this was, in point of fact a reprint of an early Mark Osborne effort.

An even stranger case of crediting one author with another's work occurred with No. 734 "The Riddle of Dead Man's Bay" by John G. Brandon; this was an almost word for word reprint of Mark Osborne's story "Dead Man's Bay" which appeared as No. 358 of the 2nd series. The reason for the change of authors is obscure, because other Osborne stories were being reprinted at the same period under his own name.

The authors of many of the early Union Jack stories can be recognized by the characters introduced into them, but two, No. 956 "Threatened by Three" and No. 969 "In League Against Him" both introduce Zenith, Kestrol, and Wu Ling and is not so easy to credit to the right author. It certainly isn't G. H. Toed, as the character of Wu Ling in these two stories has not the slightest resemblance to that portrayed in his many stories of Wu Ling. The author is probably Lewis Jackson, but it is possible that Jackson and Anthony Skene collaborated for these two yarns.

When the first of a new Roxane series appeared in "Detective Weekly", with Roxane in partnership with the crooked Dr. Svenson, against Sexton Blake; it seemed as if a grand series of stories, in the old Toed manner, were in prospect. This was not to be, as, after three very good tales, the series fizzled out with the position of Roxane left in the air. Was this because she failed to appeal to the newer readers of D.W.? Or because of the untimely death of Toed? If it was the latter reason then who wrote

the stories that appeared over his name in later numbers? These being mostly non-Blake ones. In fact only one Blake story supposedly by Ted appeared after the last Roxano, this was No. 101 "The Mystery of the Girl in Blue". I am inclined to think myself that the series was cutoff by the author's death and that the later stories were either the work of A.P. staff writers, or were reprints of earlier work by Ted for such papers as "The Thriller". This point could be settled by anyone who has collections of both "Thrillers" and Detective Weeklies.

THE END.

 "MURDER ON THE PORTSMOUTH ROAD"

Does this title strike a chord in your memory? If not let me explain that it was the title of the one and only Sexton Blake gramophone record. For years nobody has been able to give much information on this disc but at last we have discovered that it is a 12" effort and features a quite thrilling Blake adventure with the famous Arthur Wentnor taking the part of the man from Baker Street. I am sure all Blake fans who have a gramophone would like to hear this recording and so I will inform anyone interested that I shall soon be able to supply copies at 12/6d each. Please use the order form below.

PLEASE SUPPLYCOPIES OF THE SEXTON BLAKE GRAMOPHONE RECORD "MURDER ON THE PORTSMOUTH ROAD" FOR WHICH I ENCLOSE ~~XXX~~ REMITTANCE FOR.....

Name.....
 Address.....

DO NOT MISS THIS REALLY GRAND OPPORTUNITY!!!!

Chapter Five.

Having afforded this brief glimpse into the career of one of Sexton Blake's most popular early writer's, let me retire Cecil Hayer to the background and introduce therefrom another interesting personality from the Blake ranks.

In 1906 there appeared on the bookstalls, the first novel by an author who, some twenty years later, was to become one of the gripping band of Sexton Blake writers. He was the 29 year old Ladbroke Black, who, on coming to London in 1899, held several editorial posts before writing his first long novel. This was entitled "The Gentle of the Emperor" and was written in collaboration with the then unknown, Irish born Robert Lynd, later to become literary editor to the "News Chronicle". Ladbroke Black followed this up in the same year with a novel called "The Eagles". Two of his pseudonyms were Paul Urquhart and Lionel Day. Born in Burley-in-Wharfedale on the 21st June 1877 he was not, perhaps, amongst the most popular favourites of Blake fiction, nevertheless he was a very good novelist, and, at least one of his creations - the man with the swordstick, otherwise Mr. Creed, the wooden faced solicitor-detective, will long be remembered as one of the most popular and unusual characters in crime fiction.

Ladbroke Black, who introduced Creed into a few of his Blake stories, died on the 27th July 1940 at the age of 63 years. Long walks by the sea were his especial delight, and, besides reading he took a great interest in boxing.

The beginning of the year 1907 saw the introduction, for the first time, of these very attractive characters, Lobangu the Zulu and Sir. Richard Leamy K.C.B. in a yarn ~~which~~ the title of which has already been given. These characters enjoyed a long run in the pages of the old U.J. and long after the death of their creator there was still a persistent demand for their re-introduction. This, on being granted, resulted in the publication of some of the finest African yarns ever to appear in the paper.

Between 1907 and the end of the Edwardian era, the Blake stories were mostly written by Mr. Murray Graydon and Mark Barran between them. In an office in Fleetway House they churned them out practically very week, making for

themselves in the process, quite good incomes; only at rare intervals did other writers get a look in. Then we had a taste of what other hands could do for Blake, and, as a change from the Graydon-Darran technique, we enjoyed (more or less!) the latest efforts of such authors as Henry St. John, Maxwell Scott, Arthur S. Hardy, Cecil Maytor, Sidney Drew, Mark Osborne and several others. Some of the stories written about this time were, frankly, poor stuff, with Murray Graydon responsible for a long string of them. A good author at his best, W.L.G. make the going very heavy for his readers when in indifferent mood. His trouble was that he, as with Darran also - though to a lesser extent, attempted too much. You cannot do good work in a hurry, and it was pretty obvious at times that Graydon had rushed his story through in order to get on with other work, resulting in an atmosphere of staleness, which, clinging to a good deal of his work, tended to decrease the readers interest in the plot. Several authors have been accused of presenting Sexton Blake as some sort of super-man, both mentally and physically; but no such criticisms could be levelled against W. Murray Graydon. Rather the reverse in fact, for in his hands Blake was a very ordinary individual, and, in the physical sense, many times hardly a match for the crook characters of the authors conception. Another fault of Murray Graydon's was that he tended to overstress the sentimental situations in his story - they were sibly and much too prolonged in some cases, whilst his heroines were all of a muchness, frail, timid, helpless creatures, and for this reason, wholly disinteresting types.

Chapter SIX will appear in January.

"CONFESSIONS OF A CRIME LOVER"

a reverie on Sexton Blake

is the title of a forthcoming article by ERIC FAYLE.

Also on the way:- "The Disappearing Trancear"

a new short article by Benjamin Whiter.

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THIS SIGNET TO
H. H. BOND, 10 BRUCEL. RIVERINA, QUEENSLAND.

THE ROUND TABLE.

I had hoped to be able to give you more definite information re the forming of the Sexton Blake circle (or confederation - as you will) this month but plans are not yet quite ready and with all the work going on in other directions I am doubtful if we can really get going on this scheme until the New Year. However, a few letters of interest have come along with quite a few suggestions which will have to be considered before we can send out a full scheme for your approval, so I hope you will be patient for a little while. After all, we hope this Blake circle to be something of a concrete and lasting nature and each idea and suggestion will have to be very carefully considered. Enough to add at the moment that I hope that our first meeting will be about Easter of 1952 all being well.

Another new friend arrived in the circle last month and, to my delight, lives in a neighbouring town to Cardiff. For the first time I have had the great thrill of meeting a keen Blake admirer within a few weeks of first contact. Mr. C. Davies of 54, Newton Road, Mables, Swansea is the name. Welcome Mr. Davies and may you long continue to be with us in the enjoyment of our own especial sleuth. Mr. Davies is hoping to form a collection of S.E.Ls from the 2nd series, so if any of you have any duplicates for sale will you please contact him.

I hope anyone interested will take the opportunity of obtaining one of the Blake records announced on another page. This is a rare item and I doubt if we shall have the opportunity to get them again. But please note that the end of December will be the final date of receiving orders.

Cheerio for now.

H. M. Bond

WE WELCOME YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF
THE SEXTON BLAKE CIRCLE.