

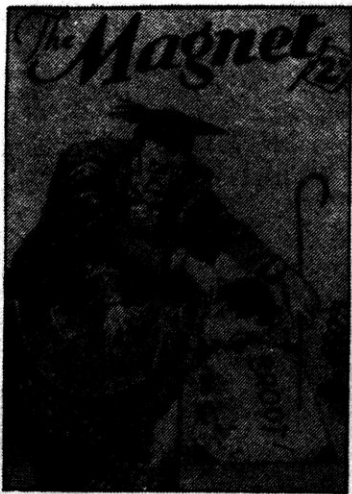
The  
**Collector's**  
**Digest**

Vol. 6. No. 65.  
May 1952.  
32 Pages again.  
Price 1s. 6d.  
Post Free.

Magnet Cover  
No. 1431. Vol:  
XLVIII, dated  
20th July, 1935,  
redrawn by  
Mervyn Lewis,  
of Folkstone.

---

---





Vol.6, No.65

Price 1s.6d.

Post Free

MAY 1952

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

No! No!! No!!! Recently a provincial newspaper published quite a lengthy account of an interview with a collector of Magnets and Gems. It contained some interesting details about our activities, but also, unfortunately some regrettable statements about the alleged value of copies of the two papers. For instance, it was said there are believed to be only four copies of the first issue of the Magnet in existence and they are each worth at least £50. Further the reader was told that "Old Boys' Book Club members exchange copies for sums varying from one shilling to £10 or £15."

Now it is true that some reporters love big figures and aren't above doing a little multiplying; it's happened before now in our experience. I don't know if it was the columnist or the interviewed who was at fault in this case, certain it is that it is a thousand pities this old bugbear of inflated prices has cropped up again, particularly as here it is more exaggerated than ever.

In one particular, however, there is no over-estimate,

that is the statement that only four copies of Magnet No.1 exist. Actually there are eight, possibly nine, in our own circle, but, four or nine, I don't think any of our members would be foolish enough to pay £50 for one of them. I hope not, anyway. Neither at all the Club meetings I have attended north and south have I seen a collector nonchalantly handing a tenner over for a single copy of any paper.

It is true that in various forms of collecting one hears of strange things happening. A stamp collector, for instance, will pay a handsome sum for a specimen just because of a flaw in the printing, and a millionaire will hand over several thousand pounds for an old master even though he knows not the slightest thing about paintings. He does it just to be able to brag about it.

But surely in our little world we have a very different motive. We collect, surely, because of a real genuine regard for some particular paper, or papers. We find that they recall happy boyhood days, and that we can read them with as much enjoyment as in the days of long ago. We know that owing to the inexorable law of supply and demand we must pay more than in the days when we could trot along to the newsagents with a copper in our pockets. Nevertheless, for heaven's sake let us keep a sense of proportion. I am in touch with our members as much as anyone, and I know that the great majority are fellows with modest incomes who have to think in shillings rather than pounds when desirous of purchasing a few of their favourites. And that's going to be the case more than ever as time goes on.

So when being interviewed let's be modest, don't foster this inflation business, don't broadcast a statement that you've got a small fortune in the house. If you do there's always the risk that some wide boy will be coming along and pinching the lot.

Seriously, though, if these ideas persist there's a danger of the fascinating hobby of story paper collecting becoming no longer a relaxation for the average man, but a business for super-tax payers only.

Postscript: No sooner had I written all this than I received a post-card sent out by a bookseller on the south coast (one outside our circle) offering four Magnets, one 1914, two 1915, one 1933 and a Gem 1915. Three had no covers, one started

at page 3, and all admitted to be "somewhat frayed".  
(Another note from someone who has seen them says they were  
in disgraceful condition). Price for the five 30/-!  
Well, there you are.

-----  
Something Different. If old-timers would like to read  
again of events which created great interest at the time I  
recommend them to get in touch with C. E. F. Vennimore,  
25 Byron Avenue, West Hounslow, Middlesex. He can offer  
in mint condition papers like Answers, Pearson's Weekly,  
Tit-Bits, Ideas, London Opinion, London Mail, John Bull, and  
many more. I've had quite a number and they make very  
absorbing reading.

-----  
Omission and Error: Last month I forgot to give the  
address of the Reading and Berkshire Review, and I was soon  
paying the penalty for my stupidity. Anyway, if any of you  
are still interested, it's Market Place, Reading. It's the  
Merch number you want, of course.

And in my reference to the Portsmouth Greyfriars Club  
my wretched handwriting made me say "Portsmouth Club  
Librarian". It should have been City Librarian.

And, oh yes, quite a number drew my attention to that  
1/ld. on the cover. I never noticed it until I had got  
nearly all the copies posted. 'Fraid it was an error though.  
No chance of price reduction yet. Anyway, it shows how  
thoroughly you chaps examine the C.D. and I take that as a  
compliment.

-----  
It Happened at Foyles: I've just been looking through  
a copy of Foyles Bookshop Magazine (kindly loaned me by  
Stanley Smith) which contains a report of the luncheon to  
mark the publication of E. S. Turner's "Boys Will Be Boys".  
Oh yes, I know it's old history, but in view of my favourite  
theme, that we were pioneers, some remarks of Mr. Turner's  
are worth quoting even now, for I don't think they got  
publicity at the time. Here they are:

"When I first took the plunge at this subject of Boys'  
thrillers I was very interested to find there were groups  
of people who met regularly to hold discussion groups  
about the literature they read when they were young.

They discussed the relative shortcomings of Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee, and whether Greyfriars was a more plausible academy than St. Franks. I think those people must be chuckling at the thought that some five hundred people have gathered here to-day inspired by the same sort of affection for the literature of their childhood.

And the five hundred included such notables as Compton Mackenzie, Sir John Hammerton, Gordon Harker, the Headmaster of Repton, and Arthur Askey.

Oh yes, Mr. Turner, we, their masters chuckled, and are still chuckling.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

### DEATH OF A FRIEND

By Herbert Leckenby

During my long years employed in a busy telephone exchange it has been my lot to handle many a call which has brought sorrow to someone. On the morning of Wednesday, March 26th, I received one which meant sorrow for me, for over the line I heard Norman Smith's voice saying, with a catch in it, "Poor Reg Hudson died suddenly on Sunday afternoon." Even though I knew full well that my old friend had been a very sick man I was stunned by the suddenness of his passing, and of the loss to our little community.

I first made Reg's acquaintance some nine years ago, and it came about in an interesting way. One night whilst on fire watch during the war I came across a letter in a Leeds evening paper signed "Magnetite". The writer paid tribute to the work of Charles Hamilton and said he would dearly like to get in touch with him to thank him. I answered that letter inviting the writer to get in touch with me when maybe I could get him his wish granted. "Magnetite" proved to be Tom Sinclair, but I also got several other letters, one of them being from Reg Hudson. Some time later Reg, Tom and I met one night in Leeds and within a few minutes were like old friends, as so often happens in our happy brotherhood.

During the years that followed Reg and I met frequently

He had more than his share of trouble and several bouts of illness. Whilst he was in hospital some years ago he received the sad news that his wife had died suddenly. After that, except for the company of his son, then at school, he led a rather lonely life until our little fraternity was organised. I know that meant a great deal to him, for he often told me so.

He had a great liking for the work of Charles Hamilton, especially the St. Jim's stories, and loved to talk and correspond about them.

Came the forming of the Northern Section, O.B.B.C.; shortly afterwards Reg was appointed chairman, and an ideal one he made, with his happy knack of saying just the right thing. I can see him now as he welcomed some new-comer, a kindly smile lighting up his rugged features.

Last May he was one of the little party which attended the memorable London meeting. There in a perfect little speech, full of sincerity and feeling, he endeared himself to all our London comrades. How happy everyone was that day: we little knew of the tragic event that was looming ahead.

He returned home, and a day or two later was struck down with a grave heart attack, and rushed to hospital. For many days he was very near to death. We who visited him found him surprisingly cheerful, ever talking of the time when he would be able to get back to the meetings, which meant so much to him. After several weeks he got his discharge, even though a ward sister had once said, ominously, that he was a very sick man. He was at home for a week or two, only to return to hospital for a few days.

Then came a strange, inexplicable change in him. Gone was the animated conversation, never once did we see that kindly smile. We who visited him, Gerald, Norman, Vera and myself were distressed. It made one's heart ache, to see him crouching over the fire in his little room. He seemed to be obsessed with some dread fear. We tried to cheer him but I am afraid we failed; only once did we succeed in getting him to a meeting.

I called to see him on the day of the March meeting. How difficult I found it to talk. On parting he did say he would try and get to the important meeting in April. We

gripped hands and said Goodbye. I walked away sad at heart, but little thinking that it was a last Goodbye.

The end came suddenly on the afternoon of Sunday March 23rd. He was only 47. They buried him in Hunslet Cemetery the following Thursday. The Northern Section O.B.B.C. was represented by Gerald Allison, Norman Smith, Tom Sinclair and Albert Thomas.

Even now I can hardly realise that never again shall we meet in City Square, talk Club matters over a cup of tea, and take the road to the meeting by way of Woodhouse Moor.

May the earth rest lightly on your grave, Reg, dear friend and one of the best. We who knew you will miss you when we gether in that room with so many memories of you.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST

No.17 - Tip-Top Weekly

By Herbert Leckenby

"Tip-Top Weekly"? Never heere of it! I can hear you say. Well, perhaps you haven't, for you see, it was an American five cent paper for boys of the long ago, yet I think a good case can be made out for including it in this series. For one reason, it was certainly popular for it ran to 850 numbers at least. What's more, it had much in common with the Magnet and Gem, so surely that's a sufficient reason. Here's why. The stories throughout concerned the same main characters; they were all written by one man, under a pen name; the author was idolised by American youth just as Charles Hamilton here, and the stories were re-printed in book form, the Medal Library, three or four together in the manner of the Schoolboys' Own Library. The only difference was that the characters grew up.

Finally quite a number of our American cousins take a great interest in many of our papers, so why not return the compliment of looking at one of theirs. That's just one point here though in dealing with Tip Top Weekly. I shall be writing mainly from memory of a paper which died a long time ago, so if I get a little astray I am sure they will excuse me. Now down to brass tacks.

The author of the "Tip-Top" stories was given as

Burt L. Standish, but his real name was Gilbert Patten. I believe it is true to say that he wrote every single one of the eight hundred odd stories. He died towards the end of the war, and was mourned by countless men who had loved his stories in their youth.

The stories dealt with the adventures of the Merriwell brothers, Frank and Dick, and were published by Street and Smith, a concern almost as prolific in its output as our Amalgamated Press in its heyday. "Tip-Top" had a long start on our "Magnet" and "Gem" for it started early in 1896. For the first three years or so it had 32 pages in addition to a coloured cover, the page size being a little smaller than that of the Magnet. Then the size was increased to about that of the "Detective Weekly" still with 32 pages, the type was larger than that of our papers and very easy on the eyes. The price was five cents and the paper carried the slogan "An ideal publication for the American Youth".

Frank Merriwell was the elder of the two brothers, and the start found him entering Fardale Academy. He proved to be a great athlete, an expert at almost every game, especially baseball and football. In the early years of the century "Tip-Top" and other publications from the house of Street & Smith used to come across here regularly, and I remember how in my teens I would cycle over to Leeds to buy them. "Tip-Top" was my special favourite and I read it so keenly that I got quite a good idea of the rules of baseball, for sport played a great part in the stories.

A favourite theme with Burt M. Standish was the bitter enemy who ultimately became best friend. First and foremost in Frank Merriwell's case was Bert Hodge. Standish was excellent at character drawing and I can remember Jack Diamond, a proud Southerner, Jack Ready, a cheery fellow, and Harry Rattleton, who was noted for his Spoonerisms. These were friends of Frank, but he had also many enemies, some of whom, however, he "converted". Many of the stories dealt with the evils of drink and gambling among American youth.

Came the time when for financial reasons Frank had to leave the school. If I remember rightly he worked on the railroad, went on the stage, and came to Europe, including England. Later fortune changed for him again, and he



entered the great university of Yale. Then came many stories concerning great games with other great seats of learning, Harvard and the like.

Meanwhile Dick Merriwell had been introduced. He had been brought up in strange surroundings by an old Indian, Joe Crowfoot. In consequence he was not quite such a placid character as his brother, so when he went to Fardale he at first found trouble. He, too, later went to Yale.

With the coming of Dick the stories were shared by the two brothers, Frank having a run for a time, then Dick. Towards the end came Frank Merriwell, Junior.

The ladies played a part in the stories, just as in the Magnet and the Gem, but in Tip-Top their presence was more pronounced. Being America, this is perhaps not surprising. It did not spoil the interest of the stories, however, and was natural seeing the boys were growing up. In the case of Frank there were two girls whose lives he saved on several occasions, fair, winsome Elsie Bellwood, and dark, vivacious Inza Burrage. For years controversy raged as to whom he should marry. He eventually chose the brunette, his best friend Bert Hodge claiming the blonde. When his time came the gallant Dick had the choice between, yes I think I'm right, Doris Templeton and June Arlington, fair and dark respectively, but which of the two became Mrs. Richard Merriwell I'm afraid I cannot say.

Another interesting feature about Tip-Top was the amount of space, several columns devoted to readers' letters. They appeared under the heading "Applause". Here devoted readers expressed their likes and dislikes forcefully and fulsomely, especially about the marrying off of the ladies. It may be assumed from this that the readership of "Tip-Top" was somewhat older than that of the Gem and Magnet. Maybe that this was so but don't forget that quite a number of Hamiltonians were quite interested in George Figgins and Cousin Ethel (remember Figgy's Folly?) and Bob Cherry and the fair Marjorie.

Sometimes there was a discordant note in the correspondence. Writers signing themselves such as "I.M.Knocking" and "I.M.Kicking" jeered about the moral tone of the stories and apparently went on reading them. In all likelihood these letters first saw the light of day in the offices of Street and Smith, in order to bring indignant retorts. I

have sometimes wondered if H. A. Hinton had been reading Tip-Top when he published those incredible letters from Master "Melpess" and his kind.

I believe I am right in saying that not long ago there was an attempt to put Frank Merriwell on the air, but that it was not a success. I am not going to be drawn into an argument as to whether there again there was something in common with Greyfriars.

There is something else though where the Magnet and Tip-Top are much alike. Copies of the once thriving American weekly are very scarce and consequently demand high prices averaging maybe a dollar (7/-) a copy. For that reason I am afraid there is little chance of me renewing acquaintance with these popular characters of my youth.

---

WANTED: Nelson Lees old series 105/111, 130/147, 166/167 and 337. For Disposal: A number of S.B.L. present series early numbers. C H Churchill, 123 Pinhoe Road, Exeter.

A FEW 1d. GEMS; No.1 1d. Gem, Boys' Own 3d Lib. and oddments for disposal. WANTED: Nugget Peter Flint series; Lot o' Fun, Ally Sloper, odd copies, and certain Aldine Turpins. W. H. Clough, 3 Fonthill Grove, Sale, Manchester.

ANSWERS, Pearson's Weekly, Tit-Bits, Ideas, London Opinion, London Mail, John Bull, etc. etc. Mint condition. Preserved by secret process, 5/- per doz. assorted. Post free, from C. E. F. Vennimore, 25 Byron Avenue, West Hounslow, Middlesex. Owner of No.1 of "Magnet" - "Gem" and "Greyfriars Herald" etc. etc. Also 150 No.1's of periodicals from 1908 onwards, not for sale. Collection consists of over 30,000 periodicals.

WANTED: "Union Jack" 896, Sexton Blake Libraries 1st Series 54, 57, 219, 229, 233, 241, 253, 271, 276, 283m 307, 312, 325, 356, 358, 360, 366, 371. Second series; 1, 8, 16, 21, 25, 35, 41, 42, 73, 77, 52. Good Prices offered. Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Road, E. Dulwich, S.E.22. Many thanks to all fellow collectors who have supplied my wants in the past.

WANTED: Magnets 1087, 1088, 1089. Gems 1087, 1088, 1089. Nelson Lees 550, 551. R.V. Bennett, 64 Dudley Rd., Tipton.

HAMILTONIA

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Echoes of Greyfriars Television. Controversy rages still. I am indebted to Len Allan for a copy of B.B.C. Viewer Research Newsletter No.29, and he gives me permission to quote what was said therein. Here it is in full.

Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School is perhaps naturally enough having a better reception from its young audiences than when it is repeated for adults in the evenings. For the first three episodes in this series, the children awarded Reaction Indices in the late 70's, the adults felt the programmes were worth 61, 62, 62, respectively. Here are some comments - which speak for themselves - upon the second episode -

"We enjoyed the first one but felt we had had quite enough!"

"Why were we not left with our childhood memories? Fortunately, this production bore no resemblance to the Greyfriars we knew, and so did not disgrace it. The acting is amateurish in the worst sense. Very poor stuff."

While many viewers said that each fresh edition showed some improvement, particularly in acting and in the verve with which it was put across, the majority seemed to feel that the words "childish" and "amateurish" summed up "Billy Bunter" so far.

Not exactly complimentary, is it? However, now to quite a different story. Jonah Berrington, radio critic of the "Sunday Chronicle", said in the issue of March 30th, that Jack Harrington was quite satisfied and there was a possibility of a new series later in the year. He asked for postcards as to whether or no readers wanted Bunter back. Here's what he said the following Sunday.

"As a result of the largest T.V. ballot of my entire critical experience, I have to tell Miss Joy Harrington that Sunday Chronicle voters by a 94 per cent majority want Bunter back as soon as possible.

They regard him as the greatest T.V. character creation since Muffin the Mule.

And since these postcards seem to be divided equally among children and adults, I assure that the adult "repeat" programme at 8 p.m. is also wanted."

Well, there you are. Whatever you think about Greyfriars on television, the controversy raging round it is very absorbing.

Now once again to the "Autobiography". It has had some good notices in the provincial papers and there was quite a lengthy one in "John O' London's Weekly", (I am indebted to W. T. Thurbon and Raymond Hopkins for copies). Here's quotes:

"This Mr. Hamilton is worth knowing. Consider his achievements. He must be among the most prolific writers of modern times, having produced about sixty million published words. His readers, whose numbers are beyond computation, are spread across five continents. He has entertained three generations of schoolboys without having once had recourse to vulgarity. And he has created, in Billy Bunter, one of the best known characters in English fiction. Here, surely, is distinction."

Of the famous Orwell-Hamilton battle of arms the writer says:

"Of the quality of his work only those who were fortunate enough to read him consistently during their boyhood can testify. One of the reasons why Orwell treated it with such asperity is that he tried, as Tolstoy tried with King Lear to associate it with reality. He could not have made a worse mistake. G. K. Chesterton once observed that the truth about Mr. Pickwick is that he is a fairy; this is also the truth about Billy Bunter. Sex is tabu in fairyland, and so presumably are "class friction, trade unionism, strikes, slumps, employment, Fascism and civil war"; it was therefore not circumspect of Orwell to be surprised at their absence from the "Magnet" and the "Gem".

The review finishes on this nice note:-

"When Charles Hamilton has finally closed his typewriter, one profoundly hopes that a boys' writer equally steeped in the humanities is ready to take his place."

Agreed! But the cry will go up from a legion of Hamiltonians, "Yes, if possible, but not yet."

The Tom Merry books seem to have made a real hit. With the April numbers we shall have C. H. Chapman's work on the covers. Meanwhile here's a review of No's 3 and 4.

The New Tom Merry Books.      March issues.

No.3. The Men from the Past. Once again Reginald Talbot of the Shell finds his past life with the crooks of Angel Alley rising up against him.

Try as I will I just can't like Talbot. It is a case of "I do not love thee Doctor Fell, the reason why I cannot tell."

However, I did enjoy this tale, and the ending was very satisfactory. I hope that Talbot will now be given a permanent clean sheet. He has earned it.

No.4. Who Ragged Railton. An excellent story with Arthur Augustus in the best role for ages. The B.B.C. Breins Trust often discussed the definition of a gentlemen. Well, Gussy is a gentleman, there is simply no denying it.

And what a grand description of his fight with Cardew. It renks with the classic scrap between Tom Brown and Slogger Williams.

Cardew the Cad is rapidly becoming another Ponsonby. I find him too bad to be true.

And now, Mr. Clifford, what about a tale starring the chap we both consider our favourite St.Jim's character - George Figgins of the New House?

GERALD ALLISON.

THE PICTURE-FRAMERS

By The Rev. A. G. Pound.

Some months ago, as readers of the C.D. already know, the Midland section of the O.B.B.C. was honoured with a visit from Mr. Chapman. On that memorable occasion my wife and I were delighted to have Mr. Chapman stay overnight with us.

Before he left next day Mr. Chapman very kindly presented us with three pictures which he himself had painted. There was a fine water-coloured head of Harry Wharton and two small but attractive oils depicting natural scenery.

Of course the first thing which I did with the pictures was to take them to be framed. You know what a good frame does to a picture? It enhances the value considerably. It allows the picture to appear at its very best, as we ourselves appear at our best when we are neatly and decently dressed. It gives the picture an agreeable setting, and provides clean edges to what may otherwise be rather blurred outlines. It produces a situation in which all the finer points of the picture may be noted. It is only courteous and just to a good picture to give it a suitable frame.

Needless to say, the frames have done full justice to Mr. Chapman's paintings. Before they were framed, I thought that one of the oils was not quite so fine as its companion. It now appears just as beautiful, and its companion looks even more magnificent than it did when I first saw it.

A very large number of us are enthusiastic admirers of the genius of Charles Hamilton. We are deeply grateful to the Grand Old Man who has given so many hours of healthy entertainment to millions of boys and girls - of all ages - during the past fifty years. We want his work to be duly recognised, and specimens of his best writing to be handed down to future generations. Charles Hamilton, to my thinking, has the right to be ranked with such great storytellers as Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle - who, I hope, will still be read when most of the eminent writers of the past three-quarters of a century are, perhaps not undeservedly, forgotten.

But although we acclaim the outstanding excellence of Charles Hamilton, we ought surely to recognise the splendid team-work of the Staff at Fleetway House who combined to produce the "Companion" Papers and also "The Holiday Annual". I had it, from Mr. Chapman himself, that they were a happy band, with an almost boyish keenness in their juvenile publications. Quite a number of them showed remarkable skill in their special contributions.

I hope that most of you are familiar with the Bunter

books. They are not all equally good. Frank Richards is not on top form in every one of them. He is, however, on absolutely typical top form in "Billy Bunter's Berring-Out," "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" and "Billy Bunter's Postal-Order". Yet even when one reads such excellent yarns as those, one does not get quite the impression, - "thrill", or whatever you care to term it - which one got - and may still get - when reading the old Magnets. The fact is that Frank Richards was not the whole Magnet. The main dish is not the whole meal. The picture unfremed is not the same as what one hangs on the wall.

The Magnet - or the "Greyfriars" of our memory - is Frank Richards - and. Frank Richards and Chapman, Reynolds, Shields and Macdonald - especially Chapman. Frank Richards and all contributors to the "Greyfriars Herald Supplement", not least of whom is the recorder of Doctor Birchenall. (I was very disappointed when F.R. assured me that he himself was not responsible for St.Sam's). Frank Richards and all the Greyfriars rhymesters, whose verses were often most clever, just try to write some yourself; your own best efforts in that direction will probably be as near the Greyfriars rhymesters' as the average spurious "Frank Richards" yarn is near the genuine Hamilton.) The Magnet was, in other words, Frank Richards and all his picture framers. It is the old frame which we miss in the Bunter books.

Not every picture framed is framed correctly. Some pictures are actually spoiled by their frames. The illustrations, by Macdonald, are, on the whole, a useful addition to the Bunter books, as also are the illustrations - by the same artist - in the first two Tom Merry books. But why intelligent publishers should think that the illustrations in the other Tom Merry volumes could have any value whatever - other than anti-commercial - is surely beyond one's normal understanding. The two best of the other Tom Merry books are "The Scapegrace of St.Jim's" - much the finest yarn in the whole Tom Merry series - and "Falbot's Secret". These are marred only by the illustrations on their wrappers. They are actually more attractive than other Tom Merry books because they lack interior illustrations. A picture framed in sustere neatness is

far better than one which is framed in ornate crudity.

There are, as perhaps you know, some often-quoted words in Ecclesiasticus XLIV: "Let us now praise famous men ... rich men furnished with ability ... There be of them which have left a name behind them, ... And some there be which have no memorial." All honour to Charles Hamilton, who was undoubtedly the brain of Fleetway House. May his shadow never grow less. But all honour, too, to those who were his most helpful colleagues - those who entered light - but whole-heartedly into the production of Greyfriars - those who, by framing the picture perfected its appearance. There were many giants - at Fleetway House - in those days!

-----

E. S. BROOKS AS AN IMITATOR OF HAMILTON

By S. F. Jones

Brooks has admitted the authorship of certain imitation stories. I don't think his list is complete. During the years of World War One his contributions to the Gem, for instance, are betrayed by certain stylistic peculiarities. "Kildare's Enemy" for example (about which I have written) shows definite Brooksiens characteristics, although he does not appear to recognise it as his own.

It should be carefully remembered that when imitating Hamilton he did not run riot with his Nelson Lee style. Restraining his natural exuberance he betrays himself by only a few surface errors of diction. His plots are generally feeble, boring and unconvincing, of course, but there is an attempt to follow the Hamiltonian track. He missed, what all imitators have missed, the sophistication, the irony, the effortless ease of structure which belong to Hamilton alone. Brooks writing Hamilton is like a small boy wearing his father's clothes. He really excelled at writing stories of St. Franks. I say again that here with all his faults I admire him greatly. But to have him write of St. Jims and Greyfriars - the thing's impossible. The elegance of the one can never be captured by another whose chief characteristic was a breezy and rollicking exuberance.

Brooks wrote the Castleton Series, the Handforth series, the Gem story "The Housemaster's Peril", "Rivals in Sport"



and some others not mentioned. Let us see what we can glean from them.

"The Housemaster's Peril" shows these characteristics:-

- (a) the adjective "dotty" on pages 2, 5, 22, 19.
- (b) The word "biffed" on page 3. I have not noted this word above, but it is definitely Brooksonian. Naturally the redoubtable Handforth uses "biff", probably as often as he punches Church and McClure.

(c) "Briskly" (noted above) occurs on pages 12 and 13.

(d) "My sons" and "my son" appear page 18.

(e) "It seems mighty curious," says Kerr on page 5. A hand is described as "screwly". This would have made Hamilton stare and gasp. He surely would have written "screwling". Both things are typical of Brooks' lack of polish. A criticism of the former expression is given above.

"Under False Colours" has these clues:-

(a) "Dotty" on page 12.

(b) "My son" on page 11. The Handforthian "my lad" appears on page 14.

(c) "My Goodness" occurs on page 6.

(d) The question with concluding "eh?" in Linton's talk with Castleton. The staid and severe Linton uttering a thing like "Getting tired of it, eh?" is completely out of character. If ever he said this in Hamilton you might have expected the skies to fall. Note the familiar tone - only St. Franks masters converse thus with their boys.

(e) 'd's are dropped from the and's of the cad's talk. "Tom Merry an' Blake an' that crowd," says Rache. Brooks forgets that Hamilton's cads are satisfied with dropped g's.

(f) The inellegant "gulp" occurs on pages 3, 4, 6, 8 - "said Alen with a gulp."

Another characteristic thing about this story is the introduction of champagne at that dream party of Castleton and his friends. While that orgy was going on I was waiting for a word which would describe its result, and, sure enough, I found it on page 16, the adjective "squiffy", one of our author's favourite words for "drunk". I should, however, mention that champagne was actually drunk by Levison & Co. and the word "quiffy" employed in a genuine E Hamilton Gem of 1916 or 1917.

"Rivals in Sport", a blue and white Gem, shows some Brooksonian characteristics like "biffing" on page 4, and the verb "flush" in the sentence: "Mr. Grenfel flushed." I have not noted this word above, but it is almost entirely Brooksonian. A characteristic lapse of taste occurs in the question: "Have you fellows swallowed your tooth stoppings?"

### 3. Conclusion

Brooks was much better in the Nelson Lee than in Hamilton's papers. He could not be shackled by imitation of a writer whose chief characteristic was elegance, delicacy of diction and sophistication of manner. The result is generally something flat, insipid and unsatisfactory. Compare for instance that full and tedious thing "Rivals in Sport" with the brilliant Eszter Quirke series!

-----

MAGNETS, Gems, Nelson Lees, Union Jacks, Thrillers and many others for sale. J. Dow, 73 King Street, Aberdeen.

COULD ANYONE PLEASE help me with the following:-

Magnets 881, 882, 925 (5/- each offered); any between 737 and 959, 2/6 each; 1920 holiday Annual £2, and your price for Magnets 1365, 1381, 1382, 1385. Gems 1456, <sup>1467</sup>1461, 1462, 1463, 1465, 1466, 1468, 1470, 1478, 1497, 1505, 1513, 1538, 1555. Holiday Annual 1940. Populars 268, 274, 275. Please, you fellows! I have about 60 Gems, some early, most late for exchange. Charles van Renen, Box 50, Uitenhage, South Africa.

WANTED: Any copies Sexton Blake Library written by John S. Brandon. Please write M. Jacobs, 149 Commercial Road, London, E.1.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Chums Vols. 1903, 1908, 1920, 1926-37 (inclusive). 1908, 15/- All others 10/- vol. WANTED: S.O.Ls, Gems. A. S. Matheson, 11 Ackergill Street, Wick, Caithness, Scotland.

WANTED in good condition to complete a run for binding. Union Jacks Nos. 1068, 1080, 1097, 1115, 1125, 1127, 1140. 2/6 each offered. S.A.E. - S.J.Orme, "North Dene", 37 New Road, Utttoxeter, Staffs.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB  
=====

London Section. Modern School Meeting. Surbiton.

Sunday, April 20th. proved to be a very memorable occasion as a very large gathering met, by kind invitation of Eric Fayne, at the famous rendezvous by the river Thames. Amongst those present it was a very great pleasure to have Mr. and Mrs. Gerry Allison, Mrs. Mary Allison, Miss Molly Allison and Norman Smith from the Northern Section. After the usual formalities the first good item on the agenda was a talk on the surroundings of Greyfriars given by Bob Whiter and ably illustrated by a large map, which he had drawn from the one printed in the "Magnet" No.1672. Judging by the applause given at the conclusion of the talk it was greatly enjoyed and appreciated. Chairman Len spoke a few well chosen remarks on how refreshing the talk had been. Bob Whiter then gave latest details on the progress of the club badge. Then the company adjourned to the "Rag" for a feed dear to the hearts of all. After this fine repast all went into the grounds for the Greyfriars Riot Competition. A long trail for some but short for others as there were only seven complete correct papers finished. Results were E. Reynolds 1st, R.Jenkins 2nd, A.Blunden 3rd, G.Allison 4th, J.Geal 5th, Mrs. G.Allison 6th, and Eleanor Packmen 7th. Host Eric had provided some very good prizes and even those who failed were awarded consolation gifts. Photographs were then taken by a variety of "Manners". Then it was with pleasure that the meeting was taken over by Gerry Allison, although the first task, after some fine appreciative remarks of the previous visit of the Leeds club last May, was to pay a tribute to the late Reg Hudson. He read out the written appreciation by Herbert Leckenby and then all present observed a minute's silence to the memory of the late chairman of the Northern Club. Then Gerry read out a few of his famous verses he had written about the hobby. These were well received and before he left the chair the map of the surrounds of Greyfriars was presented to him so that our Northern comrades will be able to enjoy a similar treat as afore mentioned. A paper on

Mrs. Bardell was then given by myself followed by an eight question quiz which resulted in a triple dead heat, R. Deacon, Gerry Allison and R. Blythe sharing the first place. Sales and exchanges were conducted during the meeting and about eight o'clock the party wended their way round to the other school house where an enjoyable show was had in the school's kinema. Host Eric Payne is to be heartily congratulated on such a fine meeting, the ladies responsible for the excellent catering; my word, those home made cakes, and chairman Len for the arrangements at Waterloo and the attendance of the enthusiastic member of the staff of "Reynolds News", Mr. Knight. And so homewards we went with very happy memories. My meeting at Wood Green, Sunday 18th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

Northern Section

Meeting 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, April 12th, 1952.

It was a meeting of sunshine and shadow, for on our second birthday with a report before us of splendid progress we had to mourn the loss of our grand leader and comrade Reg Hudson. In opening I said <sup>owing to</sup> that the half promise Reg had made five weeks ago I had hoped to bring him along to the meeting, instead, to my sorrow, I had that afternoon stood by his grave.

Gerry Allison then read a little tribute to my old friend of many years I had written for the C.D. He did it with such deep feeling that there was hardly a dry eye in the room.

All present then stood in silence for a few moments in memory of the one whose spirit will live with us in that room for many a day.

Then after the minutes of the last meeting came the Annual Report. It revealed a very encouraging state of affairs. For instance, whereas at the beginning of the year cash in hand amounted to "2.1.8½.", we had at the end £20.2.7. with no liabilities. In addition we had built up a library worth a handsome sum. Librarian Gerry Allison gave some interesting statistics concerning library sales.

In view of the happy position it goes without saying that secretary Norman Smith and Treasurer-Librarian Gerald Allison were re-elected without any to do. In fact,

someone suggested that we elect them for ten years and have done with it.

Quickly other officials were elected as follows: Chairman, J. Breeze Bentley; Vice-Chairman, Herbert Leckenby; Auditors, Horace Twinham and Stanley Knight.

Then came a very interesting subject for discussion. It was pointed out that in the library the members owned some valuable property, yet in the event of the Section having to be wound up there was nothing in the rules concerning its disposal. Such an unhappy event arising seemed very unlikely at the moment, but it could come about for some reason outside our control, so it was just as well to be businesslike. After discussion it was decided that the books would be sold in the following order of priority, (1) To Northern Section Members, (2) To members of other Clubs, (3) To subscribers to the C.D. and C.B. Annual, (4) To other purchasers.

The amount accruing from such sales would be divided among members in proportion to length of membership. Members not present can have details if they wish.

Business over came the lighter side of the evening. A meeting without Gerry Allison would be like Hamlet without the Prince. In addition to his activities already mentioned he now came along with a clever Quiz (won by Stanley Knight) and one of his inimitable poems.

We also had the pleasure of welcoming two new members: Stanley Smith and Tony McGarva.

It was a meeting which owing to its vivid contrasts will live long in the memories of the sixteen members present.

Next meeting - Saturday May 10th. Highlight:  
a Talk by Tom Hopperton.

HERBERT LECKENBY.

Northern Section Correspondent.  
(In view of its importance I am sure I shall be forgiven if I have taken more than my fair share of space. - H.L.)

-----  
Millend Section

At the Townsend Club, Church Street, Birmingham, on March 31st.

An apology for absence received from Frank Bourne who was still in hospital, but I am happy to say is on his feet again, and expects to join us at our April Party.

The attendance of twenty included five new faces, two of whom decided to become regular members - Mr. Chapman and Mr. Toye. Members had a grand treat in the form of a talk by Frank Willison on "This and That". Valuable and interesting information was imparted, with all Frank's skill and technique on our favourite subject well in evidence. He had brought along many well preserved vintage numbers of the Old Papers, and these were passed round while Frank expounded on them. An interesting point was that, when the sales of the early papers were faltering, the publishers very often brought in Sidney Drew to write in them and then sales would often rise again. Sidney Drew was still writing for them in 1926, and again in 1932. Number One of "The Penny Popular" which Frank possesses has Billy Bunter and his Postal Order on its cover. After Frank's talk he tested our abilities with a quiz he compiled. Boy! was it a stiff'un? This was won by one of our visitors, Mr. J. Bellfield, who received the prize of two Magnets.

A quiz on Greyfriars compiled by Sylvia Price (in rhyme) proved to be a bit of a teaser for some, and no clear winner emerged. A test question put by the Secretary decided the issue. The question was "What part of the old Monastery stood where the Greyfriars Gymnasium now is?" Norman Gregory was first with the answer which is "The Chapter House". He received the prize of two Magnets.

The refreshments and Sales Table were our last items. Meeting closed at 10 p.m.

Our Party is on April 28th and our next meeting is on May 26th, when election of Club Leaders will take place.

"Cheer Boys and Girls, Cheer."

PETER MELLOR.  
Secretary.

Merseyside Section.      6th April, 1952.

Meeting opened 7.45 p.m. to the usual attendance. We were pleased to see Ray Brown, who, for business reasons, was unable to get along to the last two meetings.

The chairman opened the proceedings by giving a resume on the section's progress, and, in particular, details of the efforts made re press publicity. There has been a

write-up on the section in the "News-Chronicle", which should be very helpful, despite the fact that there were one or two inaccuracies.

Don then gave us the news of Reg Hudson's death; news which we were all most sorry to hear, and we extend our sympathy to all those most concerned; we know he will be greatly missed by everybody at Hyde Park Road.

The secretary having read the minutes, the company got their teeth into the quiz devised by Edna Mervyn, our last winner. This was an excellent effort (too excellent, in fact, for one who shall be nameless). The winner was young Peter Webster; nice work, Peter, particularly as you were runner-up last month. He now has the task of compiling the quiz for the next meeting; we are looking forward to it.

The meeting ended at 10 p.m. with the usual library business, which, on this occasion, was very brisk indeed.

Next meeting 4th May.

F. CASE,  
Secretary.

THE "ANNUAL" BALLOT

How They Stand Now

1. Remove Form at Greyfriars.	203
2. Harry Wherton Captain of the Remove.	181
3. That Enduring Magic.	175
4. Monograph of Yvonne Cartier.	168
5. St. Franks Success of Feilure.	166
6. The Long Arm.	150
7. Every Story a Gem.	139
8. Inside Fleetway House	119
9. Gradfather Liked Them Fierce.	97
10. Hero of the Shell	90

WANTED: Magnets between 700 and 900 or Bound Copies. Pre-war Hotspurs, Triumphs, Skippers, Adventures, Wizards, Rovers also collected. Lists to P.Willett, Church Cottage, Laleham, Middx. Just returned from abroad and apologies to all those previously sending lists for not replying before.

WILL EXCHANGE Richards' Autobiography for Holiday Annual. Mell, 41 Woodland Road, Darlington.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to Robert Blythe,  
46 Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

Do you remember how Carlisle, having finished his monumental "History of the French Revolution", had it burnt? And how he got down to rewriting the whole thing again? Well, that's me this month! Not that I consider some of the stuff I churn out monumental, but the amount of energy that goes into getting down to writing leaves me almost worn out before I start.

Last month, with a fine display of enthusiasm, I actually wrote enough for two articles. Approaching this month's task, therefore, with a gay and carefree laugh, imagine my feelings when I found that what I had written was lost - gone from my gaze like a beautiful dream. Oh! the tragedy of it!

Nevertheless, "once more unto the breach, dear friends", and let me try to emulate Carlisle.

Having used up a fair amount of space very nicely on this preamble, whilst I cudgel what I laughingly call my brain for some glimmerings of what I'm supposed to be writing about, I'd better make a start.

Let's talk of the Detective Weekly this month as our starting point. This magazine is interesting to us because in it we can see the beginnings of Brook's style as it is to-day in his numerous novels. Although he only wrote 22 stories out of the 300 odd that appeared, they were, practically without exception, Brooks at his best. In the earlier stories Weldo was still his main character but he later, during the period Sexton Blake was dropped, devoted himself to writing straightforward mystery stories. It is during this time that researchers can trace the origins of several of his present novels, none of which suffered from having their origins in a boys' paper. One particular plot at least, the author must have liked more than others. In No. 1357 of the U.J. appeared a story entitled "The Terror By Night". This told of a queer bat-like figure (who turned out to be our old friend Weldo) that terrorized a certain part of Essex. In a serial in the D.T. the same plot, but rewritten with several embellishments, appeared called



"The Case of the Antlered Man". It wasn't a bad story but at least he had done better. Anyway, when he had his first novel published, this was the plot he used, still further spruced up, but with the same title.

I remember seeing this book when it was first published and remember too that in the publisher's blurb it stated that the author was a well-known writer of boys' stories. I have an idea that the book was not a great success because, apart from one other, "The Grouser Investigates", that was the last under his own name. It also explains, I think, why Brooks is not anxious to get much publicity in connection with our hobby. For if it became generally known that he had been a writer for boys it might have an adverse effect on his book sales. And who could blame him.

Talking of his books reminds me of something rather funny. As you know, he writes under two pen names. Well, should you come across any of the 2/- editions of his work, have a look at the back cover. On those of Berkeley Grey will be seen a three-quarter view of him, bare-headed, wearing a sports jacket and a breezy smile, just as we saw him at the meetings. On those of Victor Gunn, however, it's a different story. Here he's wearing a huge slough hat pulled down to his ears, (he's side-faced here, by the way), and a mackintosh pulled up to his hat at the back. To complete the picture he's wearing dark glasses and smoking a dirty great pipe, and his chin's sticks out like a battleship. Altogether he looks like something Arthur Jones dreamed up for a story in the "Thriller"!

However, I'm getting right off the track. In No. 310 of the D.W. appeared a story which must be unique in boys' fiction. It was called "Enter Sexton Blake" and was a serialization of a play that could have been heard on the wireless at that time. Needless to say, E.S.B. was the author. Surely the only time until the recent television epic that a boys' writer had achieved such eminence.

And now, still on the subject of Sexton Blake, let's go back a bit in time to the beginning of the Sexton Blake Library. Four of the earliest stories (namely 1st Series No's 6, 12, 13 & 33) all came from his pen and although they lack the polish that he acquired later (they were written in 1918) they had their full quota of excitement and mystery

that Brooks knew how to put over so well.

I should imagine that the S.B. Lib. was not a very lucrative field, for he only wrote five stories (so far as I've been able to trace) in the 1st Series, six in the 2nd Series, and only one in the 3rd. Nevertheless, in spite of the small number, they're worth reading - if you can get 'em.

Did you know that Brooks wrote other stories of Nelson Lee outside of the Nelson Lee Lib.? They can be found in the pages of the Detective Library, that rather scarce and short-lived paper of 1919-20.

As far as I know, a story of Nelson Lee appeared in all of the 50 issues but they were not all by Brooks. One series concerning "The League of the Five Fingers" and the "Black Vulture" (a woman, like the Black Wolf in the N.L.) reads like G.H. Teed. The other odd stories could have been written by anybody. However, in the main they were stories of Jim the Penman and have Brook's imprint written all over them. The Detective Library was slightly wider than the N.L. and very thin paper was used. It wasn't a very attractive magazine, very small type being used and some of the drawings, particularly towards the end, being atrocious, in spite of the four-colour printing. Still, the stories were good and that's the main thing. For most of the time Nelson Lee shared the paper with Derek Clyde (probably reprints) and Sexton Blake, but there was a serial of particular interest to Lee fans. It was called "Nipper at St. Ninians". It was, of course, a reprint of the stories by Maxwell Scott that appeared in the Boys' Herald in 1904, or thereabouts. Collectors of Scott's writing may find it easier to get these D.L.'s than the Boys' Herald.

And now with any luck I might be able to finish off the list of serials. I hope they will form a useful guide for you and especially to the chap who originally suggested it. Here we go then on the last lap of

#### THE SERIALS

2nd N.S. 156-161. The Green Button.

3rd N.S. 1- 14. Open Throttle, by David Goodwin.

15-23. Under the Flag of the Legion,

by John Ascott.

That's the lot for this month. Cheerio!



-----  
Edited by H.M. Bond. 10 Erw Wen. Rhiwbina. Cardiff. S. Wales.  
-----

The Round Table.  
-----

It might seem rather strange to be a little critical of someone who has just said a few kind words about us, but such is the case this month. We are very pleased to know that Mr. Wheeler Dryden, editor of the printed "Collecting Juvenile Literature" has found pleasure in the articles of Walter Webb (C.J.L. No 4 page 8) and trust he will continue to do so. We are hoping that Mr. Webb will be coming along with further material ere long by the way. That is the bouquet to us from Mr. Dryden. Now the brickbat to him. In the 6 page issue of C.J.L. No. 3 Mr. Dryden devoted FOUR pages to his editorial, and the whole of this editorial, with the exception of a short paragraph at the end was concerned with his unfortunate experience while he was in England last year. Readers of his magazine will know that he could not find out where the Surbition meeting of the O.B.B.C. was taking place - where Eric Payne's "Modern School" was indeed situated. I can quite understand his annoyance at missing the meeting after travelling across the Atlantic to do so, but I do not think it necessary to devote so many pages of his magazine to a detailed description of his search for the meeting place.

## Continuing the Round Table

Four or five lines of the very closely printed C.J.L. would have been sufficient for this and the other pages of the magazine could have been given over to hobby matters. I can imagine that Mr. Dryden is short of material at this early stage in his editorial activities, but surely something could be done to give the magazine the flavour which all hobbyists would expect. While we sympathise with the annoying experience of Mr. Dryden we suggest that in future he devotes less space to his own grievances and more to the hobby.

I had hoped to give you a report of the second meeting of the Sexton Blake Circle this month, but up to the time of going to press I haven't had any information at all, in fact the only news I have had this month is a letter from Bill Colcombe to the effect that the meeting was supposed to take place at his house in Southend on the 19th of April but so far he had no idea if all or any of the members were coming and mentioned the fact that an O.B.B.C. meeting had been arranged for the same day. If this was the case I am about to throw another brickbat. Surely some better arrangements could have been made to avoid a clash of meetings. Isn't Mr. Leonard Packman a member of the Sexton Blake Circle? And doesn't he have something to do with arrangements for O.B.B.C. meetings?

For the umpteenth time since 1927 I have again read through one of the greatest Blake stories of all time. Yes, it was "The Black Abbot of Chong Tu" by the late G.H. Toed. All those readers who haven't read this yarn should endeavour to do so for I think it one of the finest stories I have ever read and most certainly it is very high up in the list of Sexton Blake adventures. Never has the detective and his assistant had to contend with greater perils and never have they been so closely welded together as in this splendid story. I shall have more to say about the "Black Abbot" later. Of course you will all know that it appeared in serial form in the UNION JACK in the late 1920's. If only Toed were alive to-day! How vividly he would be describing events of the modern world!

## I WAS FIRST INTRODUCED —

Says Stanley Smith.

I was first introduced to Sexton Blake about 30 years ago. Since then I have read many stories of his adventures and although I have never been exactly a "fan" (my chief interest among what we so often referred to as "old boys books" being the school stories) I have always found a great interest in the yarns.

I was about 12 or 13 years of age when I first met Sexton Blake and Tinker. I was in hospital and one of my fellow patients lent me a very early copy of the "Boy's Friend Library" called, I believe, something like "Sexton Blake's Secret". I found this most interesting and started looking round for more stories of the same characters. I then found the "Union Jack" which I read quite often until it became "The Detective Weekly". I wasn't a regular reader so much as one who kept in touch with what was happening - if you know what I mean. Since then I have been a reader (still, I am afraid, not regularly, but rather spasmodically) of the "Sexton Blake Library".

I like the Blake stories. It's just that I have never had time to read as many of them as I would wish. You will see that I am not Blake expert enough to write the ordinary type of contribution to Blakiana, but I do hope that these rather rambling notes will interest readers of the section. They will, at any rate answer some of the questions Maurice Bond asked in the February 1952 issue of C.D. and show that the Blakiana section would be greatly missed if it were discontinued.

I was glad to hear of the formation of the Sexton Blake circle. Of course, such people are experts, but their findings will be of interest to many mere laymen like myself. The kind of things I would like to know are those:- Who invented Sexton Blake? And whom? How many authors have contributed to the saga? Who has written most about him? I ask about the number of authors because

I recently read a suggestion of one hundred and am sure that there must be more than that. I sat down the other evening to see how many I could remember and could recollect the names of over 30 without any reference. Of course, I realise that these names may make a less total of actual authors owing to the use of pen-names, but I certainly would have thought there were more than the suggested number.

Again, perhaps I'm wrong here, but I've got an impression that there was at least one woman author among them. It was round about the time when the "Union Jack" had a competition for a new Sexton Blake story and I've got an impression that either the winning entry or one of the stories published round about the same time was by a woman. Am I right here or have I got mixed up somewhere?

My favourite Blake stories? Well, I've got no hesitation here, my favourite stories were those that were written by the late Gwyn Evans. The style was so refreshing and his characters so real. I remember particularly the Onion Men series and the way in which Mr. Evans' contribution of the Tram series was linked with his own series. Other favourites were the stories of George Marsden Plummer, the Waldo series and the Nirvana yarns. I also liked the stories that appeared in the "Detective Weekly" concerning a man released from prison who tried to get his own back on all concerned with his imprisonment by giving them a dose of their own medicine. I forget the titles or author.

One little thing puzzles me. In the first series of D.W. Nigel Blake is introduced as if for the first time. Well, in that very first Blake story I ever read (the B.F.I. story I referred to) Blake was up against a crook with a great family resemblance to himself and it is my impression that it was a relation. Can anyone explain if this were so?

I have to rely on memory for most of my U.J.s etc destroyed in the blitz.

Now to the present day Blake stories. I don't think that many of these are to the old standard. I

miss the old characters. It was a real treat, about a year or so ago, to read one in which Leon Kestrel was mentioned as one from whom Blake had learned much concerning the art of disguise. It was also good to read, somewhere about the same time, that Tinker had to be left to carry on some investigation on his own because Blake was off on a Government mission. This was a little touch of tradition that I liked very much.

.....

The foregoing feature was contributed by a new friend to our pages. Mr. Stanley Smith of Basingstoke. Obviously he is one of us and talked about all the things we talk about when we meet or when we correspond. I think these personal ramblings make up the most interesting pages of Blakiana and for that reason I am going to suggest that someone write a short article replying to all Mr. Smith's queries and, if they like, making suggestions themselves. In a letter Mr. Smith asks many questions of Blakiana. Here are a few. How many of the famous characters were finally rounded up and how many were left in "thin air"? What has happened to the small background characters in the old Blake stories? Has Blake still a private museum? Where is Mary Ann Cluppings?

I am going to ask one of our oldest contributors to write a reply to this interesting feature by Stanley Smith and hope that he will be able to do so before our next issue goes to press.

H. M. Bond.

.....

#### LATE NEWS:

Enterprising Midland O.B.B.C. had great meeting 28th April, with G.H. Chapman, Laurice Down (last Editor Magnet and Gem) and Len Packman as guests. Report next month.

Chapter Ten.

After all, Blake is a tracker of criminals, not a hunter of stags. In fairness to the author, however, it must be admitted that his story, set in the wilds of Exmoor, was very well written.

There have been many cases dealing with Sexton Blake on the Turf, but none better than those which appeared in the Edwardian era and written for the UNION JACK by Arthur S. Hardy. There was "The Affair of the Royal Hunt Cup" (No. 296); "Sexton Blake, Bookmaker" (No. 308); "The Racing World" (No. 311); all published in 1909; "Warned Off" (No. 326) and "Sexton Blake, Trainer" (No. 343), which appeared in 1910. Maybe Arthur S. Hardy was not quite in the Nat Gould class, but he could convey the atmosphere of the Turf remarkably well, and whether he took you to Newmarket, to Epsom, to Ascot, or to Goodwood, you really felt as if you were actually on those famous courses, mingling with the crowd and watching the horses flying past the post. Later UNION JACK stories which featured Blake in a similar atmosphere, the majority of which were written by Mark Osborne, were not nearly so good as those just referred to, at least, not in my opinion.

It would require the entire pages of a G.D. Annual to go over more completely and satisfactorily those Edwardian stories; limitation of space must necessarily cut this survey of that period down considerably; but mention must be made of one of the best (in my opinion it was THE best) Blake adventures which appeared in those quiet, leisurely days, the days when hansom cabs and horse-driven buses were a familiar sight in the streets and when the first aeroplanes ever built were just beginning to fly through space, to the thrilling fascination of the young and the nervous forebodings of the aged. The Birth of Aviation! Such was the theme of one of the finest stories ever written by Maxwell Scott, which not only featured Sexton Blake and Tinker, but Nelson Lee and Nipper too. Chapter 11 will appear next month.