

SEPTEMBER 1960



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# The Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Volume 14. Number 165.

Price 1s. 6d.

SEPTEMBER, 1960

Editor:  
ERIC FAYNE  
Excelsior House,  
Grove Road,  
Surbiton, Surrey.

\* \* \* \*

## *From the Editor's Chair*

THE ANNUAL: With this issue we send you the order form for the 1960 Annual. As all our readers readily understand, the Annual is an elaborate and costly production. It is not possible for us to print many additional copies on the offchance that they may be purchased by casual readers after publication date. There is no immediate hurry for orders to be placed, but those who find it convenient to order early will be helping us to plan ahead and to space out our clerical work.

We feel sure that a copy of the Annual - a publication which is probably unique throughout the entire world - is a real **MUST** for every Digest reader. Once printing of the work commences, it will be impossible for us to add to the number.

It is unlikely that the ANNUAL will pay for itself. We are making no increase in the basic charge, which will be 12/6 as for some years past. We do request, however, those readers who receive their copies by post to include with their order a small sum to cover cost of postage and packing. Such sums are trifling to the individual, but they make a great deal of difference in the aggregate. With your support in this way we can minimise any possible loss on the production.

This year, to avoid the heavy rush on the Christmas mails, it is hoped to dispatch the Annual rather earlier than usual. That is, publication day will be brought forward about a week.

We are hoping that plenty of readers will support us with advertisements in the Annual. Small ads are accepted at 2d. per

word, and an advert in the Annual will go on making your announcement known for a very long time. For the Annual is permanent. It is never thrown away. Your little ads will be a big help towards the costs of this gigantic production,

More about the Annual next month.

REAL FRIENDSHIP: What a wonderful, kindly, friendly lot of people are the readers of the Digest and the members of our Clubs! Only a day or two after the publication of our announcement last month concerning the Museum of Childhood in Edinburgh, came a magnificent offer of a free gift of scores of copies of Collectors' Digest. This was from Dr. McKim of Coxwold, Yorkshire. A splendid gesture - and our thanks go out to our warm-hearted and generous friend. The Museum now needs only about three dozen copies of the very earliest issue of the Digest. If these can be obtained, the Digest will be complete in Edinburgh.

Many thanks to large numbers of readers who wrote us with offers of copies to help the Museum. Such loyal backing is a grand and glorious tonic.

THE MAGNET LIST: Last month we drew readers' attention to the MAGNET LIST, but inadvertently we described it as a "small booklet". Actually the production, in its bright orange cover, measures 8" x 10", and it contains the titles of every Magnet ever published, year by year. In addition, it lists all the numbers which were reprinted in the S.O.L. and in the Holiday Annual. It is an invaluable reference work for everybody. Copies are still available at 2/- plus the cost of postage and packing. Requests for copies, with remittances, should be sent to Mr. Ben Whiter, 36 Newcourt House, Pott Street, Bethnal Green, London, E.2.

In conclusion, new readers may be pleased to know that one or two copies of Collectors' Digest Who's Who for 1960 are still available at the Digest Office, price 2/6d.

THE EDITOR.

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BOUND VOLUMES, Comics for sale. Jester 1908, Rainbows, Tiger Tims, Bubbles, Puck, Funny Wonder, etc.  
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A SCHOOL NEXT DOORBy Andrew Langman

The new feature, "Gems of Hamiltoniana" strikes me as one of the brightest and happiest ideas to come to that hotbed of new ideas, our Collectors' Digest. The clever, pithy little pieces to be found in Mr. Hamilton's work over the years must be almost limitless, and it is, perhaps, remarkable that this should be so where school stories are concerned. Few school story writers seem capable of these delicious little tit-bits which tickle the palate so much, but they are to be found occasionally in other literature of this type. Wodehouse, in his school stories, had a facetious strain which could be very entertaining. Hylton Cleaver was also a man with bright thoughts which he often expressed well.

The following short extract comes from the opening of Warren Bell's story "Taking a Trench", and it has always struck me as being deliciously amusing. If it does not strike you in the same way, it may mean that our senses of humour differ. Or, possibly, that you live near a school - and find the site of your abode as anything but funny.

"People who live next door to a school may be said to be in the anti-ablative case, because they don't like living by a school, they don't like living with a school and they don't like things, such as brickbats, old tennis balls, and broken racquets, which find their way over the wall from a school. Major Mackaboys was a case in point. He had lived next door to Greyhouse for many years, and had always been at war with it. For one thing, the school had all that time been wanting to buy up the Major's place and absorb it, but the Major wouldn't listen to such a suggestion. It had been his father's, his grandfather's, and his great-grandfather's before him, and he announced his intention of living and dying there. The school had plenty of evidence of his living there, but it seemed to them that he was a considerable time in coming to the latter part of his declared programme."

In that brief par I feel that Warren really rang the bell. Heavens! I must ring off - I'm being facetious, too!

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EDITOR'S NOTE: One of Warren Bell's stories, "Sir Billy of Greyhouse" was serialised in the 'Gem' in blue cover days.

JOHN NIX PENTELOW - EDITOR OF 'CRICKET'By W. O. G. LOFTS

In view of Don Webster's recent statement that John Nix Pentelow was never editor of 'Cricketer', I will, in the interests of accuracy, give the facts of the case for the benefit, not only of Mr. Pentelow's admirers, but of cricket enthusiasts in the C.D. Circle.

Don is in fact quite correct; and there seems to have been some confusion between two different publications. For the record 'Cricket' started in 1882 and ran until 1913 - when it was reproduced again in a new format entitled "World of Cricket" which unfortunately ran for only 23 issues. Mr. Pentelow was editor and proprietor of the above papers from January 1912 onwards. At some later date, the famous cricketer of England and Lancashire, A. C. McLaren (who holds the record individual score of 424 in county cricket) joined Mr. Pentelow as joint editor, but I am told on good authority, that it was only his name that was used, as a sort of boost for circulation, and that John Pentelow wrote nearly all the material. This information was given to me by the late A. C. McLaren's younger brother.

'Cricketer' did not start until April 1921 when it was edited by P. F. Warner the famous England and Middlesex Captain and is obviously the better known of the two publications. In closing I would like to quote a short extract taken from the cricketers bible "Wisden's Cricketer's Almanack" 1932:-

"John Nix Pentelow - a great authority and a prolific writer on the game, died at Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, on July 5th, 1931, aged 59 years. He was a frequent contributor to 'Cricket' of which he was editor and proprietor from January 1912. He was born at St. Ives, Hunts, on March 26th, 1872."

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**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Will friends please note that the new address of Tom and Beryl Porter is 1, TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

# B L A K I A N A

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

In view of the space taken up by Walter Webb's reply to Mr. S. Gordon Swan's queries on "Authorship" last month, the promised S.B.L. titles and authors had, of necessity, to be held over.

Walter's final instalment this month being extra long, I am completing my quota of space with some of the held-over S.B.L. Titles. Keith Chapman's article will appear next month, together with something from the pen of Blakiana's sleuth, Bill Lofts.

Martin Thomas will, I am sure, be interested to hear that apart from the article by Keith Chapman mentioned above, the response by readers to my request for material on the modern Blake at the present time (8th August) has produced - nothing! I am still hoping that Mr. Thomas will consider my suggestion of sending me something himself - to be published under any pen-name he likes!

JOSIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

## CENTURY-MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB

### Instalment Eighteen

### Newcomers on Parade

First on parade was W. Howard Baker, introduced in the preceeding instalment, who combined the roles of editor and author. His entry was marked by a dispute in the printing trade, resulting in no issues of the S.B.L. being published in April 1956. More praiseworthy, then, was his effort in presenting a total of eleven novels that year, six under his own name and five under the pseudonym of (133) PETER SAXON. A record? Far from it; for way back in 1919, the late Andrew Murray presented no fewer than 14 book-length novels for publication, two of them appearing in the same month on three occasions - March, April and August, and that record will obviously never be beaten, as far as the S.B.L. is concerned. Before his name appeared on the cover of an S.B.L., W. Howard Baker did a few articles for TIT-BITS in 1953. He was in distinguished company then, for his work was published cheek by jowl with that of such well-remembered old-time authors as John Hunter,

Capt. Frank H. Shaw and Dudley Hoys, all of whom wrote for the old UNION JACK'S companion paper, THE THRILLER, in the 30's.

For a time, commencing with issue No. 356, published in March, pin-ups were introduced, following the pattern of the majority of sensational American magazines, and these, despite the fact that they differed from their U.S. counterparts by being somewhat overdressed in comparison, provoked much protest. No tears were shed on their withdrawal, for their place was obviously in the pages of papers like BLIGHTY and other journals which catered for the requirements of the strip-tease faddists.

June 1956 was a month noteworthy for the fact that Paula Dane was introduced for the first time. Since then, she has kept intact her place in the Blake saga. The cover of the particular volume which introduced her (No. 359) is worthy of comment, since it must have provoked some portentous frowns amongst many regular subscribers. Pictures of startled-looking beauties in black, lace-trimmed underwear and dis-ordered scarlet housecoats were rare enough even in 1956 to make the Blake reader sit up and rub his eyes in frank disbelief. Hitherto, an artist, in a daring moment, might have sketched a knee, or trailing shoulder-strap. But Roxie Marlow, the shapely brunette portrayed on the cover of the S.B.L. in question, showed much more than just a nyloned knee - she revealed the entire nylon. A little risqué, perhaps; but this cover stands as one of the most attractively-drawn in the new look S.B.L., better than many of the present-day drawings, good as they undoubtedly are. Designed apparently with the object of attracting new readers, it obviously succeeded in that purpose.

July saw the first Blake novel by (134) ARTHUR MACLEAN, who was followed in August by (135) ARTHUR KENT. Two months later (136) JAMES STAGG made his debut. The fifth name of the new order writers to be introduced in that eventful year was that of the inimitable (137) JACK TREVOR STORY.

But if 1956 was eventful, 1957 was to border on the sensational, for something without precedence in the history of the S.B.L. occurred. No less, in fact, than the withdrawing of a novel, entitled "Scandal Street" from publication at the last moment. "Scandal Street" was billed, in advance publicity, as "the story that never made the headlines." As it turned out, it never made the news-stands either! Unconfirmed reports, at the time, said that the book was banned as a result of governmental pressure, and perhaps it is better, at this late stage, to let it go at that. Certainly, politics of a sort were instrumental in the suppression of the book, and also the cause of the wholesale revision of its companion volume "Panic in the Night."



The story rushed into print to take the place of the rejected one was entitled "Homicide Blues" and this saw yet another new name on an S.B.L. cover - (138) DESMOND REID. Thereafter, there was a general toning down in subject matter and treatment in the S.B.L.

New subsidiary characters were now being introduced, such as Splash Kirby, Superintendent Grimwald and Nick Reuter. Then Arthur Maclean brought in one of the greatest of them all - the aged and brittle Eustace Craille in "Dark Frontier", one of his best-remembered novels. JONATHAN BURKE (139) came along in July with a disappointing sort of story, his debut coinciding with a new, glossy cover, an innovation which materially improved the appearance of the magazine. The name of (140) WILLIAM ARTHUR appeared the following month. In August, a new and interesting little feature appeared on page one - the publishing of the photograph of the author of the story that graced that particular volume,

Came October, and, with it, a writer who was to figure nearly three years later in a controversy embracing subject matter in these very columns; he was (141) MARTIN THOMAS who created a favourable impression with his first Blake story, "The Copy-Cat Killings" (S.B.L. No. 392). In November, the name of both the cover and thumbnail sketch artist was given for the first time. A strange contrast indeed, that in nearly 40 years' publication the S.B.L. used the services of only three cover artists - A. Jones, H. M. Lewis and E. R. Parker; then, in the space of the next five years, no fewer than 21 other artists were called upon to share the work. For the record, here they are in alphabetical order.

F. N. Carcupino, Caroselli, Frank Daniel, De Gaspari, De Seta, Favelli, Fratini, Bodolfo Gasbarri, W. S. Greenhalgh, Margaret Higgins, Jacoby, Lionel Morgan, Olivetti, Hugo Pratt, Putzu, Sandri, Simbori, Marcus Stone, Symeoni, Malcolm Tompkins, and Dabid Wright. That most popular of all Blake artists, E. R. Parker, also has two covers to his credit - not nearly enough in the opinion of his fans.

Inside illustrations have been shared by 12 artists, and these, also in alphabetical order, are as follows:

Noel Cooke, Frank Daniel, Jack Dunkley, Bert Forbes, R. E. Forrest, D. J. Gold, Margaret Higgins, A. Horowicz, Anton Locke, E. R. Parker, E. Ratcliffe and Bill Ward. Jack Dunkley is of course, the well-known artist whose drawings are familiar to readers of the DAILY MIRROR and the RADIO TIMES.

The December issues of 1957 brought the year to a notable conclusion, for they introduced a new feature in the S.B.L. - the

MAGAZINE SECTION, and this marked the comeback of Eric Parker to the pages of the Library, as well as introducing the pleasing work of one or two newcomers. Then there was that really outstanding story "The Last Days of Berlin" (S.B.L. No. 395), one of the finest Blake novels of this or any other era, fully reviewed in C.D. No. 132.

One new author in 1958; he was (142) EDWIN HARRISON, and the month following his debut saw another new feature. This was the PORTRAIT GALLERY of famous characters appearing in the Sexton Blake stories. Appropriately, Blake himself was the first to be featured, but Marcus Stone's drawing of him was completely out of character. It may be that some forthright opinions were sent to the editorial office, for, three months later, the same artist submitted another illustration, which was a vast improvement.

At the end of particularly successful year, in which "The Sea Tigers" was another outstanding Saxon achievement, the MAILBAG appeared, fulfilling a long-felt want. To Vic Colby of Australia fell the distinction of being the first correspondent to have his letter reproduced in its columns. In January, 1959, we welcomed back Rex Hardinge - with somewhat mixed feelings. His comeback novel, "Consider Your Verdict" was an excellent one, with a good plot, which was, however, elusively familiar. Particularly so was the character of Max Merlin, the illusionist. Max had been killed off twice before - once in the Detective Weekly, and later in an S.B.L. novel. Now, here he was popping up yet a third time to meet a precisely similar fate as had befallen him on the two previous occasions. "Safari With Fear" another excellent novel, was also a part rewrite. The weary little sundowner and the rondavel on the African veld came up for at least its fourth airing here, which was overdoing it with a vengeance.

Debutante in February was (143) D. HERBERT HYDE, and following him came (144) REX DOLPHIN, whom I seem to remember as a contributor to the first post-war TOM MERRY'S ANNUAL. Two issues were lost in 1959, a further dispute in the printing trade being the cause.

A first-class novel by (145) WM. A. BALLINGER, making his first S.B.L. appearance, sent the Library off to a flying start in 1960. This and the withering fire on BLAKIANA policy by Martin Thomas, plus the return of George Marsden Plummer, bids fair to make this year the most eventful of all.

The Martin Thomas epistle was unique, in that its criticism was directed against material which, as a collectors' magazine, the C.D. is dedicated to publish. To the impartial observer and the devotee who likes his Blake, irrespective of any particular era, the situation

was not without its entertaining side. For, like all claims based on nothing more substantial than mere assumption, those voiced by the author were shorn of much of their force by their undoubted lack of authenticity. How came he to decide so conclusively that there is nothing in Blakiana to appeal to the contemporary Blake reader? Remember that every Blake follower was a new reader at one time or another. The collector, at least, not only went forward with Blake, but went back into the past with him as well. Obviously, to catch up with what he'd missed before becoming acquainted with the character. Therefore is it not reasonable to suppose that the new reader of today, on learning from the front page of every current issue of the S.B.L. that Blake, having been in the business for over 60 years - "a record unique in the history of publishing" - would have his curiosity aroused sufficiently to want to delve back into that history and learn a little from it? Into those sixty publicised years, one senses an element of editorial pride, and one derives a little satisfaction in the thought that although there appears to be contributory condemnation on the one hand there is editorial recommendation on the other.

When this modern world accepts an archaeological little classic like "Boys will be Boys", it is difficult to accept the author's line of reasoning. The antiquated data in this informative work extended far beyond the birth of Sexton Blake. Really, it should have flopped. On the contrary. The publishers were inundated with correspondence to the extent that the author was asked to submit a revised version nine years later, in 1957. The only concession to modernity in the book was a chapter devoted to Dick Barton, who has long since drifted into obscurity. Like all modern characters who are suddenly thrust into the limelight against a background of haze, when the haze disperses, so does the character. Not so with Blake whose background, established over 60 years, has been seized upon and made the subject of many an article in the C.D.'s thirteen years of publication. What matters which particular period of his career is chosen for exploitation? - he is still Sexton Blake, and it is up to the modern reader to substantiate the claim made on his behalf by Martin Thomas that he wants to read more about the contemporary character, for there is not the slightest proof forthcoming as yet that this is so - just Martin Thomas' assumption of the fact. No editor can base his policy on what he assumes his readers want - he needs concrete evidence, verbal interest, that is, not silent appreciation. The doors of Blakiana, like those of the old Windmill, are never closed; one does not need to break them down to get in, as Keith Chapman has demonstrated. Which brings this marathon

effort, covering, but not including, all aspects of the Blake Saga to its close, save to edge in at the last moment that welcome new recruit who joined us in April (146) PHILIP CHAMBERS.

If not the next, then a future milestone in Blake history - December 1963, which will see our unique character celebrating his 70th anniversary in crime fiction. Let it be the primary object of all Sexton Blake fans to keep him going until then, at least.

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ODDS AND ENDSBy Gerry Allison

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A GREAT ARTIST. A hundred years ago today - on August 5th, 1960, was born a man who probably gave more pleasure to young people by his drawings than any artist before or since. His name was Louis Wain, and he had only one subject - cats. But what cats! As H. G. Wells said in 1925: 'He made the cat his own. He invented a cat style, a cat society, a whole cat world. British cats that do not look and live like Louis Wain cats are ashamed of themselves.'

My very first Christmas Annual as a child was one by Louis Wain and it contained nothing but pictures and stories about cats. The book would be a collector's item today, comparable in value to a No. 1 Magnet. His work appeared in almost every children's book, and there were few homes without Louis Wain Cats smiling down from the walls.

When I read of the centenary of his birth this evening, I reached down my precious volume of "Playbox Annual" - so precious, that even my two darling grandchildren are forbidden to touch them!

On page after page appear those deliciously human cats and kittens. Here on page 5 of the 1915 issue, an elderly cat is reading the newspaper at the foot of a flight of stairs. "Half past five" says Mr. Fluff, "and tea isn't here yet. I shall be very angry if it doesn't come soon." Behind him, shooting astride down the bannisters, is a kitten with a laden tea-tray on his head! The drawing is captioned "On the Way!"

The principal cat artist in "Playbox" was S. J. Cash, whose many pages of mischeivous pussies entitled "The Furry Fluffkins" were really delightful. But on the few occasions when Louis Wain drew the Fluffkins one saw immediately the difference between talent and genius. On page 184 of the 1914 "Playbox Annual" is a full-page picture "The Fluffkins at the Races." I wish our editor could reproduce that drawing by Louis Wain, and that could study those twelve cats - all on their hind-legs!

Many and varied were the artists who entertained us in the halcyon days of yore, but I give Louis Wain the palm for the joy his drawings gave us. He died in 1939, having spent his last 25 years tragically in a mental home, following a bus accident in Bond Street in which he was severely injured.



HAMILTONIANA

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THAT ARTIST QUESTION

The intriguing problem as to which artist was responsible for drawing the pictures at the head of this column, pictures which adorned the Gem in white cover days, continues to provide a fascinating topic for our readers. The following most welcome letter has been sent to us by Mr. Basil Reynolds, the nephew of famous Warwick Reynolds:-

"I was most intrigued by the paragraph under Hamiltoniana, regarding the controversy as to whether my late uncle, Warwick Reynolds, drew the sketches at the top of the page.

I have examined these very closely, and it is my definite opinion that the drawings were done by either R. J. Macdonald or C.H. Blake, who were contemporaries of my uncle.

I am extremely pleased that so many people still take an interest in the work of Warwick Reynolds. I, too, am an artist, and have indeed been closely connected with the Amalgamated Press - now Fleetway Publications, as I was the last editor of 'Tiny Tots' before its sad demise.

Before closing, I must express my delight and approval of your choice of cover for the August issue - Nelson Lee was my favourite reading matter. As a point of interest, I knew one of its last editors, H. T. Cauldwell."

Grateful thanks for this delightful letter, Mr. Basil Reynolds.

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ROOKWOOD AGAIN

We understand that there is to be some modification in the policy of the present-day "KNOCKOUT", with more reading matter and less pictures. From the beginning of September, KNOCKOUT is to present a

a serial "The Fighting Four", which is the Schoolboys' Own Library Story "Jimmy Joins Up." This is the very first story of Rookwood which ever appeared in the "Boy's Friend" and, as such, will probably be of considerable interest to our readers.

The editor of KNOCKOUT tells us that little or no abridgment of the story will take place, which is good news.

\* \* \* \* \*

(REVIEW)

BUNTER KEEPS IT DARK

Cassells 9/6d.

Frank Richards

"BUNTER KEEPS IT DARK," just published, is certain to please all Frank Richards' countless admirers. The basic theme, of Bunter adopting the guise of an Indian boy, was used in the later days of the Magnet, but there are many novel twists and turns in the development of the story and it is in no sense a re-hash of the old Magnet tale. Like all the new Greyfriars stories of recent years, it is purely a vehicle for Bunter's fun and games, and it is of certain appeal for younger readers. Older readers will find it contains many attractive sequences for them, and an episode where Prout and Gosling search for the Owl in the dark is hilarious.

Why Bunter's home has once again been moved from Reigate to Redgate is a mystery to which we can offer no solution, unless Bunter Villa is a caravan.

\* \* \* \* \*

BUNTER ON TELEVISION

BRAINY BUNTER, the second of the new T.V. series, was presented on July 31st, and if it was below the normal standard, the blame must rest squarely on the shoulders of the producer. The two coshings, and Bunter's collision with Quelch before a backcloth depicting a country lane, were so unconvincing as to be pathetic; the actor playing Quelch, with horn-rimmed glasses slid down to the tip of his nose, was reminiscent of anything but the Magnet; the boys were unrecognizable as Greyfriars characters. The Bounder - presumably he was intended to be the Bounder - would have been more at home in the part of the Gem character Grimes.

Competently produced the playlet could have been entertaining, although Mr. Quelch had some incredible lines. It had a couple of extremely novel sequences - Bunter planning to run away from school,

with a series of sketches showing how he imagined himself in various careers, and Bunter losing his memory and finding himself only able to speak in verse. It could have been a riot, but even Bunter seemed disheartened by the lack of support.

BUNTER KNOWS HOW. Like a warm sunny day in a wet summer came this, the third of the new series. Far superior to the previous two, it was easily one of the best of all time. To Magnet fans, the story was familiar, but that was no draw-back. The two seniors were delightfully played. John Downing, who was rather too old as Harry Wharton in last year's Victoria Palace show, was excellent as Wingate, and Tony Parker was completely convincing as Loder. George Woodbridge was fine as Joe Banks, the bookmaker. The younger boys rose to the occasion and did really well, the cricket match was cleverly suggested, production was well above average. The new Mr. Quelch helped by only making a token appearance. Tip-top entertainment.



LORD BILLY BUNTER. This story seemed very, very familiar, and it had no unexpected twist. Reasonably well-produced, it probably had average appeal for Bunter fans. It was handicapped by extreme economy in "sets" and by the meagre cast. Is such cheesesparring presentation really necessary from the B.B.C.?

Highlight was when Bunter announced that he was "going to see Baggy Trimble at St. Jim's." A few more reminiscent items of this type would be most welcome.

\* \* \* \* \*

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 35 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 12 - "Expelled"

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton were in trouble and sentenced to be



expelled on more than one occasion, but Jimmy Silver's misfortunes are not so widely known. We tend to think of Uncle James as the serene philosopher who never came unstuck, but there was one disastrous occasion when even Jimmy failed to 'Keep Smiling.'

Like many of Jimmy's misfortunes, this one stemmed from Mornington, soon after the arrival of that unpleasant character. Rivalry about games, and Jimmy's steadfast refusal to play a brilliant but unreliable man, led to an ingenious plot to get members of the team stranded at various railway junctions en route to St. Jim's. Mornington's cronies picked quarrels with the players so

that trains were lost, and in the end Jimmy was forced to ask Mornington to play, but the sequel to this plot was totally unexpected, and Mornington was left nursing a grudge even more bitterly.

As in one or two of the very early Rookwood stories, the author seemed to find the shortness of each story something of a handicap when dealing with dramatic episodes. There seemed to be insufficient space to allow the atmosphere to build itself up. Certainly the scene in which Mornington prevailed upon Beaumont, the prefect, to assist in the plot against Jimmy Silver appears to suffer from this handicap, but after that the story maintained its momentum splendidly, and the first climax came when Jimmy Sil-

ver was searched, and on him was discovered the £5 note bearing the number 0002468 (a banknote which must have circulated both at Greyfriars and St. Jim's at varying dates).

Charles Hamilton in this story, like many a writer of detective stories, did not altogether play fair with the readers. We knew the details of the plot in advance, of course, but we did not know how any proof of the plot could ever be established. When Jimmy was expelled he refused to go, and locked himself in the end study. Mr. Silver was sent for to take his son home, and it was then that Rawson revealed the extent of his investigations, including many facts that were hitherto



unknown to the reader. The grand climax was extremely satisfying. Mr. Silver demolished first Beaumont's story, and then Mornington's, to the great astonishment of Dr. Chisholm. Beaumont left Rookwood, but what happened to Mornington is another story.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THIS MONTH'S COVER

Our special cover this month is a reproduction of the cover of the Schoolboys' Own Library, No. 12, on which Roger Jenkins has based his delightful article.

\* \* \* \* \*

### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions, on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

#### No. 42. THE MAGIC OF YESTERDAY.

In last month's "Yours Sincerely" a reader asked: "How did Charles Hamilton win and retain the interest and affection of his readers, remembering that in many cases they had nothing in common with the schools and schoolboys he wrote about?"

That should be an easy question to answer - but it isn't. I can't even answer the question for myself, let alone for the countless thousands who have loved Mr. Hamilton's stories down the years.

Was it that the tales were so well written? That helped certainly. Was it the Peter Pan aspect of the characters, the unchanging face of the settings? I think that was a factor, in a world of people ever getting older, a realm of constant change.

Was it the team spirit, the sense of loyalty, the high moral values? I think they played an important part. Was it the ideals, the perfect friendships, in a world where nothing is certain, friendships are so brittle, human relationships are so frail? I think to some extent it was.

Why did you and I, why did the lads from the council schools, why did the intelligent and the less intellectual, why did the rich and the poor follow with delight the adventures of wealthy boys at public schools as related by the prince among school story writers? Why did we model ourselves, rather unsuccessfully, on Harry Wharton and Tom Merry? Why did we find joy in the comradeship of the Terrible Three and the Famous

Five? Did we hope to find such comradeship in real life? When heroic deeds were done, did we think we could imitate them?

I just don't know, and I reckon you don't know either. More likely it was a combination of all the factors I have mentioned. But the magic was there - and we know it was there. We don't know what the magic was, but proof of its existence has been found in every phase of living, in every walk of life. Were we better fellows for this magic of yesterday? I'm sure that we were.

In last year's Annual a character in a story said: "The shop won't half seem funny without the Gem!" We took the Gem and the Magnet for granted. We might have said: "England won't half seem funny without the Gem and the Magnet."

It does seem funny too, and not so pleasant. Would the youngsters of today be influenced by the magic in the same way that we were influenced? Possibly not - but we don't know. There has been no Gem or Magnet for twenty years.

Recently two reports appeared in the national press. One told of seven young school-leavers, sixteen years of age, who said farewell to their schooldays by daubing slogans, in whitewash, on the front of their school, draping undies around, and lining up beer bottles on the Head's desk. The father of one of them said: "I knew what they were going to do. Had I been younger, I would have joined in myself. I am sure all the parents are on the children's side." That father's remark may explain a lot.

The second report told of a grammar school leaver who went outside the school gates, took off his school blazer, cap and tie and made a bonfire of them. Then he lit a cigarette, made a defiant signal to the masters watching from a window, and left.

A real Smithy? Well, hardly.

The first group may have been just high-spirited, though there seems some difference between their spirits and those of pre-war students who placed a utensil on the top of a flag-pole. The second fellow leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. There is something mean, petty, spiteful in his action.

Is there any consolation in the knowledge that the father who keeps his son from school for three months because he will now allow his boy to wear school uniform is making a rod for his own back? Precious little.

Whence will stem the loyalty of the Britons of tomorrow? What is the promise of youth for the future? Is the bonfire of the school cap and tie symbolic of the age? What was the magic of yesterday?

England doesn't half seem funny without the Gem and the Magnet!

Perhaps they died just when the country was needing them most.

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

\* \* \* \* \*

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

NO. 40. CONTACT!

FRNAK LAY. I cannot agree with your remarks on "Between Ourselves" and I think that your comment that the impact on an adult in a new age is probably quite different is very true. For myself, in the twenties I found the feature most interesting, and to be able to correspond with a "real" author and make suggestions and criticisms was quite a thrill. As far as I know E.S.B. never actually edited the Lee, but at the height of its popularity there was very great co-operation between Editor and author, but when the editors were changed the co-operation changed too, and E.S.B. got bored and lost interest and the stories lost much of their earlier appeal.

The sense of repetition is to be expected - after all, was there not a lot of repetition in all boys' papers? - it is to the credit of E.S.B. that he made so few mistakes, due mainly to the marvellous records he kept. I think part of his appeal in Between Ourselves was that he gave the impression of meeting his youthful readers on their own level.

I am quite sure that if Frank Richards had been given the opportunity and could have spared the time, such a column under his name would have been a great success. As for the "aura of mystery" that you say surrounded the author(s) of Hamilton stories, I don't know what you mean. As a youngster I cannot recall being mystified. I accepted Frank Richards as such and similarly Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest, etc., as writers who wrote fine stories but occasionally had an off day, and it was only in later years when this question of substitute writers cropped up that any question of mystery arose. However, perhaps you'll have more to say on this subject.

BILL LOFTS. By some uncanny reasoning you have hit the nail on the head. The Nelson Lee Library in 1925 was in a bad way, and E.S.B. did, as you suggest, practically run the paper himself. It is true that there was an editor, a Mr. Harold May, but he was a man with no strong personality. When May left the A.P. in 1928, the Nelson Lee became a paper that no editor wanted, and it went from one department to another, being under the control, in turn, of Alfred Edgar, H.T.T. Cauldwell, and C. M. Down.

As you so rightly suggest, it would have been a sheer impossibility for Mr. Hamilton to have answered correspondents owing to his great output of stories each week. But all the same, Mr. Hamilton today answers correspondents in very friendly letters, despite the fact that he probably receives hundreds weekly from old and new readers. I feel sure that, had it been at all possible, the Magnet readers would have been highly satisfied with his replies.

\* \* \* \* \*

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

The bumping of the stairs ceased as Mr. Prout reached the next landing. But the voice of Prout did not cease. His remarks, like those of Truthful James' partner, were frequent and painful and free. That Prout was not severely injured was proved by the powerful volume of his voice; his vocal chords, at least, had suffered no damage. But he was hurt, if not seriously; it was impossible for a stout gentleman

who had completed his half-century and a little over to roll down the stairs without getting hurt. The voice of Prout, like the voice of the turtle, was heard in the land - and it was heard far and wide.

(Sent in by W. H. Goodhead of Derby)

\* \* \* \* \*

"Poor old Gwunday! It's weally fwightfully hard on you, in my opinion. Linton ought to take into considewion what an uttah ass you are —"

"What?"

"I mean, if a fellow with any bwains did as you did he ought to be flogged, of course. But in your case Linton should weally have wemembered that you are pwactically an idiot —"

(Sent in by Laurie Sutton of Orpington)

\* \* \* \* \*

Book prizes have been sent to the contributors of each of the above. Have you a favourite GEM OF HAMILTONIANA? If so, copy it on a sheet of paper and post it to the editor. Your item may be taken from any Hamilton story of any period, but the title of the story must be indicated, and the extract must be short. If the editor finds it suitable for publication, you will receive a book prize.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: SBL, 1st series - 41, 51, 77, 86, 95, 106, 111, 115, 127, 139, 147, 155, 156, 160, 172, 218, 238, 255, 296, 370, 374. SBL, 2nd series - 13, 21, 33, 53, 84, 114, 149, 155, 196, 242, 259, 285, 291, 296, 312, 320, 335, 672. SBL, 3rd series - Previous to 1959. Buffalo Bill Novels 4d. - 24, 41, 43, 47, 48, 50, 58, 61, 66, 119, 120, 211, 234. Boys' Friends, Old series - 10, 39, 49, 54, 57, 68, 72, 96, 102, 105, 107, 123, 124, 131, 155, 165, 172, 177, 199, 228, 246, 248, 302, 307, 367, 368, 369, 371, 433, 458, 469, 485, 520, 539, 556, 561, 566, 575, 578, 597, 601, 606, 618, 623, 624, 625, 626, 628, 644, 664, 665, 681, 688, 690, 704, 716, 717, 738, 727m 732, 733, 749, 761, 762, 763, 764. Boys' Friends, New series - 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 26, 28, 29, 30, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 49, 50, 51, 53, 57, 58, 60, 69, 77, 78, 82, 103, 114, 128, 133, 141, 142, 151, 201, 206, 208, 234, 258, 280, 292, 388, 392, 443, 508, 628, 655, 671, 687, 690, 698. S.O.Ls - 112, 118, 128, 132. Nugget 3d - 53, 58, 64, 67. Monster - 3, 6, 10, 12.

R. W. STOREY, CANADA, advertisement continued overleaf....

Continued

Magnets - any complete run between 400 - 600, 900 - 1100, 1400 - 1683.Gems - any complete run between 300 - 500, 800 - 1000, 1400 - 1663.

R. W. STORY, 70 BERWICK AVENUE, TORONTO 7, CANADA.

WANTED: The Popular: 127-135, 137, 138, 141-145, 147-159, 161-163, 169-171, 174-184, 186-188, 190, 191, 193-201, 203-205, 207-211, 220-229, 231, 311, 313, 314, 316-318, 320-322, 325-334, 336-343, 345-347, 349, 350, 353-361, 380, 381, 388-398, 404, 411-415, 418, 428, 449, 451, 452, 454-456, 459-463, 465, 466, 469-488, 499, 518, 544, 545, 547-551, 556-558, 560-566, 568-571, 572, 577, 578, 581, 591, 596-599; S.O.Ls - 60, 68. DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.I.

WOULD COLLECTORS with copies of Popular, Gem, U.J., B.L. Libs., School-girls Own Library, kindly help me with data for my catalogues. All letters answered.

A. J. SOUTHWAY, P.O. BOX 4, BEACONSFIELD, CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries. 1st Series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Union Jacks No. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 820, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.

MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

FOR SALE: Schoolgirls' Own Annuals. 1925 and 1926 5/- each. 1930 (cover loose) 4/-. Gems 882 to 921, 925 to 933, 4/- each. 934, 937 to 947, 949, 952, 955, 957, 958, 960 to 963, 966, 969, 971 to 973, 978, 981, 982. 3/9 each. 1090 to 1100, 1103 to 1105, 1107, 1108, 1119, 1123, 1124, 1127, 1130, 1135, 1138, 1139, 1141. 3/6 each. Postage extra. Gems Nos. 1 and 2 offers please.

V. A. PAGE, 23, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

10/6 EACH OFFERED by the LONDON CLUB LIBRARY for the following: Magnets 751, 1225. S.O.Ls 269 and 275. Gems 549 and 550.

ROGER JENKINS, "THE FIRS", EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

WANTED: S.O.L. 58; Boy's Friend Green 'Un 762, 764, 780, 1042, 1257, 1264, 1294 to 1298; Nelson Lee Old Series - most numbers before 129. TOM PORTER, 1 TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

# Sexton Blake Today

THE LATEST (AUGUST) EDITIONS OF THE SEXTON  
BLAKE LIBRARY ARE REVIEWED BY WALTER WEBB

THE WORLD-SHAKERS! (No. 457)

DESMOND REID

It had to be a matter of international importance to claim the attention of Craille. This affair is of such world-shattering portent that it impels the old man's active participation at the side of Sexton Blake. His place is taken by Tinker when, following the death of a high-ranking Foreign Office Official and another from the Air Ministry, Blake sets out for Iceland to attempt the location of a base from which flying saucers are taking off.

The coming of the "saucer-men" was the result of a meeting between three world-famous scientists, an Englishman, a German and a Russian, and the resultant pooling of their intellectual resources towards the realisation of their life's ambition - World Government. In Paul Haussman's case, however, it went further. The German wanted World Domination. And in their discordance, so was lost their ascendancy, which, on being taken over by Sexton Blake and Tinker, spelt the utter ruin of their ruthlessly laid plans.

One thing must be commented on. The author's name is given as Desmond Reid, but it is obvious from the style of writing that Rex Dolphin was responsible, and as this, in my opinion, is his finest Blake novel yet, it is to him that the credit of achievement must go.

Rating ..... Excellent

LARGE TYPE KILLER (No. 458)

RICHARD WILLIAMS

Misfortunes thick and fast pile on Percy Roynter artist and editor of "Tommy Tucker", a comic for infants, published by Consolidated Periodicals Ltd., of Fleet Street. Percy has cause to regret deeply his misguided sense of humour, when, on finding himself in a lift with an attractive girl, he slides an iced lolly down her back. In transit, the lolly becomes a snowball, gathering in size and momentum as it rolls downhill. Poor Percy's troubles accumulate accordingly, until, at length, he is suspected of the murder of a boy on Wimbledon Common. How Sexton Blake saves him from a seemingly unextricable murder charge forms the basis of a moving and well-written thriller.

Incidentally, in complete contradiction to its title the latter part of the narrative is printed in the smallest type ever used in the construction of a Blake story - most microscopic ever, in my experience. Young Aubrey Coker, the murder victim, had a squint. Similar symptoms are likely to become prevalent amongst S.B.L. readers if they are called upon to wade through many more pages of this sort of print!

Rating ..... Excellent

## GENERAL COMMENTARY

CENTENARY: Pride of place must be given to the Centenary portrait by Henry Fox. The 26 members, a combination of authors, artists, principal fictional characters, and editor (not forgetting Millie, the firm's Siamese cat) are splendidly presented, and no

photograph could have done them better justice. So amazingly lifelike are they, from Coutts in the background to the ageless Mrs. Bardell in the foreground, that the publication of the identification key was hardly necessary. A fitting memento to a historic occasion, this drawing is one which every Blake devotee will want to keep. Congratulations, Henry Fox!

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LETTER FROM A READER

MARGARET COOKE writes us as follows:-

Would you allow me to correct a statement made by Walter Webb in the July C.D.? I am not attacking Martin Thomas over "an alleged major error." My letter on "Masters" was intended to be a little private protest to Mr. Baker against the use of the Holy Ones of any, or all, religious faiths as characters in an S.B.L. I would be profoundly shocked to see the name of Jesus Christ in such a setting, yet to millions of Asians the Bodhisattva holds equal rank as the great "World Teacher." We should respect other people's beliefs even though we disagree with their views.

The passage in my letter concerning the Bodhisattva was a quotation taken from a small book on the Masters which was sent to me by someone who had spent many years in the Dalai Lama's monastery in Tibet at a time when I was living in a room at a G.F.S. Lodge next door to a woman who practiced Black Magic -- an experience which I do not care to remember. Mr. Baker, for whom I have a great respect, saw fit to publish the letter - without quotation marks it is true, but quite accurately otherwise, unlike a previous letter which was cut.

I have no intention of entering into any correspondence on this matter. I know too little about the religion concerned to do so. At the same time, I shall be most interested in any reply to my letter which may appear in the S.B.L. Mailbag.

(No further correspondence on this subject can be published in the Digest.)

\* \* \* \* \*

# Nelson Lee Column

(Conducted by JACK WOOD, 328 Stockton Lane, York.)

This month we begin the serialisation of what I feel sure will rank as one of the Digest's major "scoops." The serial will appear at two-monthly intervals, uncut and unaltered from Herbert's own words, and those of us who knew him well will "see" him again through his travels along the Street of Memories.

THE CAREER OF NELSON LEE

(Being Chapter 13 of MEMORIES OF OLD BOYS' PAPERS  
written by the late HERBERT LECKENBY in 1943)

- - - - -

Note - This is a faithful transcription of Herbert's own writings in



his volumes of 'memories'. In this particular chapter we find recorded a little incident which took place in those far-off days when Herbert was a schoolboy. I feel that Herbert would be happy in the knowledge (and maybe he does know) that some of his writings - the labour of love - penned, to a great extent, during air-raids, are now being re-produced in his beloved Collectors' Digest.

Leonard Packman.

No. 17. "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.



In the summer of 1912, I paid my first visit to London, and it was only for a day. For a dozen years or more I had read stories with the plots mainly concerned with the great metropolis, and the names of many of its streets were as familiar to me as those in my own native city. Regent Street, Piccadilly, Shaftesbury Avenue, Oxford Street, Tottenham Court Road were more than just names to me. But there was one which interested me more than any of the others - Grays Inn Road - running from King's Cross to Holborn; for was it not supposed to contain the residence of my, then, favourite hero, the "world's greatest detective" Nelson Lee?

As the train carried me ever nearer to London that night, I kept thinking to

myself 'I do hope I shall see the Grays Inn Road,' for as I was just one of a large conducted party I should have to go whither we were led.

On arrival at King's Cross as dawn was breaking our guide assembled his flock, and I heard him say, as I was in the vanguard: "We will walk to Fleet Street to our hotel for breakfast." "Good!"

thought I, for Fleet Street, the famous Street of Ink, was another name which interested me vastly. We crossed the Euston Road and turned left in one long line. I looked up at a street sign, and there met my gaze - "Grays Inn Road"! 'Gee' said I, 'this is a good start', for here I was in the magic street. I looked about me as we traversed its long length. I don't know whether I half expected to see Maxwell Scott's famous character, or Nipper, emerge from one of the houses, but I saw no sign of them. Maybe it was too early in the morning, or perhaps they were away in some distant land chasing a "Mark Rymer", or a "Chief of the Ring."

Actually this road which leads into Holborn is an unpretentious sort of thoroughfare, a conglomeration of modest houses, undignified shops and commercial premises, and hardly the place in which to find the home of a great detective. I have walked its length many a time since, but never with the same thrill I got that summer morning just over 30 years ago, for as we continued our way along Chancery Lane and into Fleet Street I was saying to myself 'I've seen the street in which Nelson Lee is supposed to live,' and if I had seen nothing else in London that day (actually I saw a great deal) I should have thought my journey worthwhile, such was the impression Maxwell Scott's detective of fiction had made upon me.

However, having let the foregoing serve as an introduction, I will now endeavour to describe some of the events of his long career, and give details of some of the stories he appeared in, for I am afraid it will not be possible to find them all.

Nelson Lee, then, was the only detective in boys' journalism to really rival Sexton Blake; scores of others, such as Royston Gower, Stanley Dare, Kenyon Ford, Gordon Fox, Dixon Brett and Martin Dale, took the stage for a time, and then passed into oblivion. But Blake and Lee lived on through three decades or more, and whilst Martin Scott, at least, told of the adventures of Nelson Lee he was greater than his rival of Baker Street.

Sexton Blake was first on the scene, but only by a few months, for he made his entrance in March 1894, in No. 2 UNION JACK, whilst Nelson Lee followed in a story entitled "Nelson Lee, Detective" in the MARVEL 31 October of the same year. This would be about No. 50 of the MARVEL.\*

(\*It is of course, now well known that Sexton Blake's first appearance was in  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. MARVEL No. 6 dated 20th December 1893, under the title of "The Missing Millionaire" - written by Harry Blyth, L.P.)

I have before me No. 71 PLUCK 27th November, 1896. This, also, is entitled "Nelson Lee, Detective" and it is probabl it was a reprint of the MARVEL story, for the plot is laid in 1894, and Maxwell Scott was usually right up-to-date with his stories. At the end of this story it refers to it as The Clue of the Dead Man's Hand. It appeared to be a more descriptive title for the story, but maybe some careful editor thought it would appear too "penny dreadfulish!" Another story, "The Further Adventures of Nelson Lee" appeared in a later issue of the MARVEL.

"A Christmas Mystery" was one of the two stories in PLUCK Christmas Double Number 1897. There may have been others, but I have been unable to trace them. One or two also appeared in the later issues of the ½d. BOYS' FRIEND. It was not until the BOYS' FRIEND became a penny however, that Nelson Lee really settled down.

When this first issue appeared upon the bookstalls on the morning of Wednesday, June 15th, 1901, the front page displayed a thrilling scene from "Birds of Prey", the first of very many serials of Nelson Lee by Maxwell Scott, otherwise Dr. John W. Staniforth of Hinderwell, Whitby. It was to be followed by a great many others, in an almost continuous stream, in one or other of the companion papers for more than ten years. In my opinion Maxwell Scott never wrote better than his first one telling of his favourite detective's battle with the "Order of the Ring." Since that first issue saw the light of day, I don't think I ever saw it again until a few days ago when, as has happened on several occasions with others of the old papers since I began to record these "memories", I had the thrill of seeing it again. Not so very long ago I should have thought the chances of this heppening as being a million to one, yet here it was along with other issues of those long-distant days, and as I turned the pages of that No. 1 there flashed through my mind a memory, a mournful memory, of an incident concerning it a few days after it was published in those far-off schoolboy days in 1901. I think it is of sufficient interest to record here for the perusal of those who were also boys when the twentieth century was so very young, for some of them may say "Oh yes, something like that happened to me, too."

To be continued.

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# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## MIDLAND

Meeting held July 26th, 1960

After an absence of three or four months, we were glad to welcome back Tom Porter. An added pleasure was the re-appearance of old stalwarts in Jack Bellfield and Tom Smith. The change over to Tuesdays had some results, though much disappointment was felt that others had not seen fit to make use of the change. Another welcome member was Joe Marston. There were three or four absent on annual holiday, but with the four already mentioned, Norman Gregory, myself, Beryl Porter, Madge and Jack Corbett, George Chatham and Ted Davey, we were able to field a full "eleven".

The Meeting was rather late getting under way but we made a good start by sitting back to hear George Chatham's list of books he would take on his desert isle. His eight selections were actually eight sets of books. First set included "Phantom of the Towers," "The Secret of the Holiday Annual" "The Greyfriars Hikers" all S.O.Ls. Second set "The Freak" Gem 1193 with "The Great Bat Mystery" Magnet 448. For the third set George turned to his other hobby (or one of them) narrow gauge railways. A thriller by Raymond Chandler "Farewell my Lovely" would be fourth choice. Number five would be "A Certain Snub" by Francoise Sagan. Being fond of Beverley Nicholls' writing he would take "A Thatched Roof" for the sixth choice. Coming to the seventh selection George did not forget one of his other hobbies - so he listed "Film" by Roger Manvell. To wind up there was the Cassells books "Rivals of Rookwood".

There was no quiz tonight, instead we had a couple of word games prepared by Tom Porter. These kept the members busy till the interval during which the library came into operation again after an absence of a month or so. There was the usual raffle and a ter that a reading by Tom Porter.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

## NORTHERN

13th August, 1960 at 239 Hyde Park Road.

In spite of the rain eighteen members were present including our regular and popular visitor, Roger Jenkins. We really shall have to apologise to Roger for the bad weather we seem to have provided him on his last few visits.

Business was soon dealt with, after which Gerry Allison read out a letter received from Herbert's son, Raymond Leckenby. In his letter Raymond said he wished to thank all members of the O.B.B.C. for all the pleasure and enjoyment their meetings, letters and friendships had given Herbert over the years. It was decided to invite Raymond to be an honorary member of the Northern Section.

The fourth instalment of "The Boy without a Name" was read by our guest for the evening, and we were left at the point where Clare was discovered in his study, insensible and the place reeking of whisky.

After refreshments, Elsie Palmer gave us our first quiz of the evening - some of the questions being Latin and Greek quotations used by Charles Hamilton. I am afraid some of our translations were what might be expected from Bunter. Geoff Wilde gave us the second and this was much easier - not so many gasps each time a question was asked. By this time it was half past nine and when the points were totted up we found

Roger was the winner. As he provided the first half of the evenings entertainment, it seemed fitting end to another enjoyable meeting.

R. HODGSON - Hon. Secretary.

### LONDON

Quite a homely, jolly, and happy meeting at East Dulwich on Sunday, August 21st. The three Packmans were ideal hosts, and provided a very fine spread. A warm vote of thanks to them was the result of a proposal from Don Webster.

Amongst those attending were Jimmy Iraldi of New York and Ray Hopkins from Seattle. Robert 'Bill' Story of Toronto only just missed the meeting by a day, whilst brother Bob also missed the occasion - he is at present searching for the Rio Kid in California. The enjoyable items of the meeting were a Sherlock Holmes-Greyfriars quiz, prepared specially for Jimmy Iraldi; a fine "Down you Go" quiz by our Eric Fayne - he presented the winners with fine souvenirs with the usual witty repartee; Don Webster's "Nationalities" quiz; Roger Jenkins' "Numbers" quiz, plus a reading from a February 1926 "Union Jack" Detective Supplement. These items were greatly enjoyed and with the good news that the Hamiltonian section of our library has over 1100 books and that there was a good programme arranged for the next meeting on Sunday, September 18th, provisional venue being at Bob Blythe's Neasden address, we indulged in the usual conversations ere we all went happily home.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

### MERSEYSIDE

#### August Meeting

The August holidays played its part in reducing the attendance to a minimum. This is to be regretted as the members who turned up had a most enjoyable evening.

The programme opened with a lengthy discussion on the entries for the Greyfriars Cup Competition. The basic plays of all three stories have been written. Criticism and suggested improvements were made to enable the budding authors to perfect their work.

As soon as tea and library business were over we settled down to Don Webster's quiz. This was a letter building effort based on the Hamilton and Brooks' schools. This was won by Frank Case who was well in form this evening.

The next meeting - when we expect a full house with the holiday season over - to be notified to all members by post.

NORMAN PRAGNELL - Secretary.

### AUSTRALIA

On Thursday, August 18th, members had the pleasure of welcoming a visiting collector from Victoria, Mr. Tom Dobson, who was holidaying in Sydney. Informality was the keynote of the evening and after an excellent dinner, members settled down to hear about Mr. Dobson's unique collection. Another member, Mr. Holland, had sent along a travel magazine containing an excellent magazine containing an excellent reproduction of "The Shambles" which showed the home of the C.D. - not only was this of great interest to all present but it awakened happy memories for Mr. Dobson who had had the pleasure of meeting Herbert in 1954. Our visitor had brought along some rather unusual books from his collection and these were passed around for perusal (and return.)

The usual welcome batch of letters from averseas had been increased by two from Canada.

Members were pleased to hear from Bill Gander and Tex Rickard and thank them for

good wishes extended to the club. As usual the "Newsletter and Foghorn" which do so much to keep us in touch with our friends overseas, were shared around and discussed.

The Chairman, Syd Smyth, then gave the very welcome news that issue No. 2 of the club magazine is in the hands of the printers, so will be available by the time this report appears in the C.D. If anyone is looking forward with keen anticipation, to this number after having enjoyed the original issue, I can assure them that they will not be disappointed. An excellent cover drawing of a well known personality by a famous artist gives a promising introduction which is more than fulfilled with outstanding articles by Mr. H. W. Twyman and Mr. Semways. Those who would like to obtain a copy may do so by forwarding an I.M.O. for 4/- (English) to S. Smyth, 1 Brandon Street, Clovelly, N.S.W.

Mr. Dobson was our first visitor and we hope we will have the pleasure of welcoming him again and extend a sincere invitation to any other collector who may visit Sydney at some future date.

BETE PATE - Secretary.

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 Yours Sincerely

D. NEWMAN (Welwyn Garden City) I thought you might be interested to know that an issue of S.B.L. No. 167 "The Mystery of the Red Cockatoo" by Anthony Parsons, has now been published as a paperback novel by Brown, Watson Ltd., at 2/- under the title of "Murder at the Red Cockatoo". Everything in the story is the same except the names of the three characters - Sexton Blake, Tinker and Superintendent Verner.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent) Easily the best of the later Blue Cover Gems are the Valentine Outram stories, but why wasn't the tale ever re-printed about how he came back (Christmas 1917), and Levison atoned for his caddish behaviour? At this period, too many characters cluttered the stage, and I am sure that Charles Hamilton, in his post-war stories, has been wise in clearing out the "dead wood." Perhaps it's sacrilege to say so, but there was, I think, too much about Talbot at that time.

(The omission of "Shadow of the Past", the Outram story, from the re-prints was probably due to muddled thinking in the Gem editorial office at that time. - ED.)

NEIL LAMBERT (Chessington) With his appearance of T.V. and the London stage, one feels that Bunter has now become a living personality of international fame, even surpassing the literary character we pictured in our minds when reading of his escapades in the Magnet. I was an ardent reader of the Hamilton papers from about 1927 till 1933, but, on leaving school, no doubt like many others, my interest waned. I am now endeavouring to pick up the threads again and hope to build up a library once more.

Continued success to the Digest. May its circulation rival that of the Magnet and Gem in their heyday - and may its life be even longer.

JAMES W. COOK (Wembley) With references to the article about the Digest's July cover, I cannot understand Robert Blythe's opinion that this series was obscure. That the series is "hardly mentioned" is surely not due to lack of popularity since most of the Lee tales would have suffered like fate were it not that somebody takes the time to contribute to the Nelson Lee Column.

The Jerry Dodd story is a very plausible account of a fine cricketer from another land, and if Brooks introduced an exotic flavour to his exciting dish, he was not departing from his usual formula of giving us such excellent literature. E.S.B.'s explanation towards the end of the series must rank as one of the cheekiest ever appended as

the reason for the denouncement.

It was indeed a pity that Bob Blythe selected this particular series for a cover illustration, inasmuch that it is one that persuaded him to write such a deplorable opinion. But Bob has done so much good for the Lee in the past - in fact, he is the founder of the Nelson Lee Column - that I shall always forgive him, no matter how he strays from praising the Nelson Lee Library.

(The selection of the cover was an editorial decision, and it had brought in dozens of letters of praise. Mr. Blythe was invited to comment on the series thus called to mind, and kindly agreed to do so. Bob's affection for the Lee can never be in question, and his opinion of this particular series so frankly given, is evidence of his integrity. Inadvertently, we gave the name of the junior as Terry instead of Jerry. It was no fault of Bob's. - ED.)

KEITH CHAPMAN (Enfield) With regard to Walter Webb's comments on S.B.L. No. 362, the cover picture is signed. It is by Carcupino, and the top halves of the initials of his signature may be faintly distinguished along the bottom edge. Out with the magnifying glass, Mr. Webb.

Mr. Frank Hancock and many others will doubtless be pleased to hear that negotiations concerning permission for the filming of a Sexton Blake T.V. series have been completed for some time between Fleetway Publications and the British subsidiary of an American programme company. When the time is fit, Mr. Baker will no doubt be giving us full details of the great news in the editorial columns of the S.B.L.

I would like to say how much I agree with Mr. Symond's remarks about the smaller type now being used in much of the Digest. Eventually I hope we shall see it being used throughout the magazine. It is undoubtedly neater in appearance, certainly no more difficult to read, and, most commendable of all, it offers at least a third more reading matter per page. Yes, the smaller type is a very good idea, Mr. Editor.

(We're with you all the way, Mr. Chapman - but increased reading matter means increased production costs. - ED.)

GERALD ALLISON (Ilkley) May I suggest a subject for a future cover? What about a reproduction of Henderson's Young Folks' Tales? With Wakefield's striking drawings of King Pippin, and the charming "surround" it would be quite good I think. My own 27 copies are most precious but I would loan you one. What say?

(A magnificent article by Otto Maurer, on Young Folks' Tales and Tales for Little People is a feature of the 1960 COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL. The article is illustrated by two pages of pictures. Does that make your mouth water, Mr. Allison? - ED.)

J. H. BUSBY (Acomb) I should like to say how much I enjoy reading the Digest, and how pleased I am with the new layout. I look forward to the beginning of each month to see what lies in store.

VERA NICHOLLS (Leeds) Have you any idea why the authors nearly always mention escaped convicts as wearing broad arrows? This style of clothing disappeared in 1923, but it is still the popular idea of convicts today.

(The Magnet's "Loder's Convict Cousin" series of late 1936 described the convict as wearing broad arrows, and the artist depicted him in arrows, knee-breeches and football stockings. - ED.)

FRANK UNWIN (Liverpool) I was most impressed again with the current C.D. Another masterly production, absolutely packed with attractive items. I was particularly pleased with the Nelson Lee cover, one of the best ever, and it will thrill all Lee

readers well remember Jerry Dodd. Yes, the C.D. is improving with every issue, so after the sincere compliments I'm going to make one criticism, namely, that your editorial is becoming rather too formal - indeed, the current one appeared even frigid to me, and it lacks Herbert's warm-hearted informality.

(It's working in the wee small hours what does it, as Mrs. Bardell might have said. We'll try to warm it up a bit. All the same, our July editorial brought in more than 80 letters from readers who were pleased with it, so maybe we have our warm moments as well as our chilly ones. - ED.)

MARTIN THOMAS (London) I must say I like your more extensive use of the smaller type, which gives the magazine a "professional" printed appearance. If the same type were used throughout, the result, considering the very clear illustrations too, would be of a standard one would once have thought far beyond the reach of duplicated work. Continued increasing success to the C.D.

JIM HEPBURN (Blyth) The standard of the Digest is very high, and the added illustrations enhance it quite a lot. More articles on the old comic papers would help to give a little variety. They always interest me, for they were my first love, in light reading. The Sexton Blake controversy was most interesting. I do think that a change had to be made. After all, we are living in a new era, and even Blake should make some progress with the times.

CHARLES VAN RENEN (South Africa) I am very fond of good old St. Jim's. There is a charm peculiar to the St. Jim's stories. The C.D. makes its welcome appearance here regularly towards the close of each month. Truly a red-letter day for us when it turns up. I must say I like the reproductions from the old papers - the C.D. doesn't seem complete without at least one or two of them. I love the general set-up.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley) I wish Mr. Howard Baker could introduce a few of the really strong old characters against whom Blake used to pit his wits. I think the modern Blake is short of a regular enemy on the lines of Zenith, that most colourful creation of Anthony Skene - or Dirk Dolland, the Bat. However, I enjoy most of the stories of the modern Blake, and have a particular liking for Martin Thomas' stories, with their occult flavour. This, despite his recent remarks about us "old un's" in S.B.L.

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### "UP FOR THE JUBILEE"

The illustration on the centre pages is a specimen of the work of Leonard Shields. The illustration is taken from "Up for the Jubilee", the charming story in the Magnet of late May, 1935.

