

Vol. 15, No. 173

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MAY 1961



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FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 15. Number 173

MAY, 1961

Price 2s. Od.

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,
Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

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EDITORIAL

ERIC FAYNE,
EditorHERBERT LECKENBY,
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EditorERIC FAYNE,
Editor

THE POPULARITY CONTEST: The stream of entries for our new contest continues to flow unabated into the editorial office. Large numbers of letters, too, are being received in praise of the arrangements for the contest and the aims of same.

The utmost secrecy is being preserved as to the progress of the voting - there is no possibility of a "budget leak" - but we can let out that, right from the opening, one character has led the way. In fact, for several weeks he was so far ahead that one could imagine he would romp home an easy winner. In the past few days, however, several other characters have come bounding up and are close on the leader's tail. It is anybody's race, and the excitement in the editor's den can almost be felt.

We can also disclose that every character in the list is receiving his share of the votes, though one - and only one (a surprise, too) - was a slow starter. The field is beginning to straggle out, but the

final placing is still as open as the great plains of Australia. HAVE YOU VOTED YET? Please do not forget it. It's not much trouble to fill in the form and post it, and the heavier the poll the more authentic the result will be. PLEASE VOTE, if you have not already done so.

Mr. J. Lennard of Manchester has sent us two fine new volumes, recently published by Odham's Press and each containing three complete novels, with the request that we award these as second prize in the contest, as some return from the great enjoyment he derives from our magazine. Without prejudice, we have decided to accept Mr. Lennard's gifts, and the two books will make a splendid addition to any library. They will be awarded as second prize, providing the results are clearly defined. In the event of ties, which we hope will not occur, this award of the two volumes may possibly not be practicable, in which case we shall hold them for a later contest.

The award list in the contest is now as follows:-

1st Prize - £5

2nd Prize - 2 volumes, handsome books for your library.

Four prizes of 10/- each for the next four runners-up.

A Collectors' Digest Annual for 1960 for each of the next two runners-up.

Closing date : June 3rd, 1961.

Our JULY ISSUE will be a very special number, containing the full results of the competition, with a special article on the leading character, and an analysis of the voting. Don't miss it.

THIS MONTH'S COVER: This month's clever and delightful cover is specially drawn for this issue by Mr. H. Webb of Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk.

YOUR EDITOR IN BIRMINGHAM: A few weeks ago I travelled to Birmingham to attend a meeting of our Midland Club. It was a joyous experience to meet in person the kindly folk with whom I had corresponded for so long, and I was deeply impressed by the warmth and friendliness with which the meeting was conducted. My Midland friends said "Come again!" I certainly shall.

THE EDITOR.

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WANTED: MAGNETS Nos. 648, 768, 771, 773, 933 and 1066. 15/- each offered or Red Magnets in exchange.

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HAMILTONIANA



"YOU CAN COME OUT!" SAID THE NEW MASTER.

FAMOUS SERIES No. 7

In January 1919, there commenced in the Boys' Friend an unusual series concerning masters on strike at Rookwood. Mr. Bootles had been dismissed by his hasty and pompous Headmaster - and the other masters supported him by "withdrawing their labour". The story from which the above picture is selected was entitled "The Master with a Past", and, like many of the Rookwood tales of this period, it was immensely entertaining for boys, though an adult reading it years later, can pick holes in it on the grounds of credibility. A plot that was "peculiar" to Rookwood.

The Artist - W. G. Wakefield.

This month, for the first time in over four years, our regular feature LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL does not appear. We are holding it over to give space for the story which follows. LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL will present its FIFTIETH edition in our June issue.

For some time now one of the most frequent laments from readers has been the fact that it is a number of years since Charles Hamilton has presented us with a new Tom Merry book. When is the next Tom Merry book due? ask so many correspondents. Sorrowfully, we can only say that we do not know - but it seems likely that it may be a long way off. Occasionally it has been suggested that Collectors' Digest neglects St. Jim's. Therefore this month we are presenting you with a new St. Jim's story, written for the Cup Contest. Once again it is our hope that you may regard it as "Paddy, the Next Best Thing."

SELBY'S LUCKY STRIKE

Mr. Selby had "scooped the pools." It was the sensation of the term. The news went through Lower School at St. Jim's like fire through a gorse bush. Among the juniors, it was the only topic of conversation.

Where the report had originated nobody seemed quite sure, but Trimble of the Fourth was apparently the source of the story. While builders continued to provide keyholes in doors, Trimble always would be the source of any startling story.

Rumour was uncertain as to how much Mr. Selby had won. At lunch-time, when the news broke, it was in the region of £1000. By tea-time he was credited with bagging £75,000. It seemed probable that by dorm-time, the master of the Third would be a millionaire at least. The story lost nothing as the hours passed.

On the evening of that day, Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther were doing their preparation in Study No. 10 in the Shell passage when there was a tap on the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered. His aristocratic visage wore a stern and serious expression.

"I have a problem to discuss with you men," he announced.

Tom Merry looked up from his book. "We're doing prep, Gussy," he said. "Take a pew and sit quiet, like a good little ass."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy —"

"Better still, clear out!" suggested Manners, less politely.

"Weally Mannahs —" Arthur Augustus removed his monocle from his eye, and commenced to polish the famous eye-glass with a cambric handkerchief. "I am approaching you, Tom Mewwy, as the leadah of Lower School. I bwing a special message for you Mannahs. I twust you may have the courtesy to listen."

Tom Merry sighed, and threw down his pen.

"Make ^{it} snappy, Gussy" he implored. Unhurriedly, the swell of St. Jim's closed the door, and sat down gracefully in the armchair against the fire. He crossed one elegantly-trousered leg over the other.

"You men have heard that Mr. Selby has won a vewy large pwize in a football pool. According to weports, it is a pool won by a London firm - Scope's Pools, I think they term themselves."

"Cope's" corrected Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, Cope's!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Do you not wegard it as uttahly disgusting, Tom Mewwy?"

Tom Merry rubbed his nose with an inky finger. He looked thoughtful.

"Plenty of jolly nice people do football pools, Gussy," he said mildly. "After all, even schoolmasters ain't immaculate."

"No business of ours," growled Manners. "That is where you are wrong, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus. "It is my business and yours, because we each have a minor in Mr. Selbay's form."

Manners stared at him.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Young lads like Wallay and Weggie model themselves on their form-mastahs, Mannahs. If a form-mastah is cowwupt, his pupils are thus liable also to become cowwupt."

"Corrupt!" gurgled Monty Lowther. "Are you calling a man corrupt, because he sends in a football coupon, you ass?"

"Old Taggles has spent five bob a week on the pools for six years, and he was in a seventh heaven when he won four-and-six last winter - the only time he has ever won a sausage. You wouldn't call old Taggy corrupt, would you?"

"Taggles is not a schoolmastah, Tom Mewwy."

"Taggles," said Monty Lowther, seriously, "is a keeper of gates, not a keeper of youth."

"Quite so!" remarked Arthur Augustus, unspiciously. "You have put the mattah in a nutshell, Lowthah. Taggles does not count, as he has no influence on the boys whatevah. Mr. Selbay is a hypocwite."

The Terrible Three stared at him.

"How come?" demanded Manners.

"Last week," pursued Arthur Augustus, "Mr. Selbay gave the Third a long lecture on the evils of gambling. He referred to football pools as the pwedominant vice of the mid-twentieth century. I highly approved, when Wallay told me about it."

"You should have told Selby you approved. It would have made his day!" said Lowther.

"Yet now," said Arthur Augustus, "we heah that Selbay has won a fortune on a London pool won by Mistah Cope. It is disgusting and nauseating that a schoolmastah can be such a hypocwite."

Tom Merry ran his fingers through his curly hair.

"Schoolmasters are only human, Gus," he remarked. "Their motto is 'Do as I say, not do as I do!'"

"'ubbish!" Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. "I am now going to see Mr. Selbay."

"Going to ask him to adopt you?" enquired Lowther, humorously. "He'll want an hair, now he's rolling in tin."

"Pway don't be widiculous, Lowthah. I am going to wepwove Mr. Selbay. I am going to ask him to mend his ways, or he will forfeit his pupils' respect. I am going to call him a hypocwite."

"What!" said the Terrible Three in unison.

"A hypocwite!" said Arthur Augustus, firmly. "I wegard gambling as wepwehensible though if millions of people like to do football pools this is a free country. But Mr. Selbay condemns gambling one week and wins a fortune the next. It is a shocking example for my young bwothah. I have come heah to invite you Mannahs, to come with me to wemonstwate with Selbay, as you have a young bwothah, too. I invited Levison to come with me, on account of young Fwank, but he just snigghed."

"You're enough to make the Sphinx snigger," suggested Lowther.

"Wats! Are you coming with me to Selbay Mannahs?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Not so's you'd notice!" answered Manners. "If Selby's won a prize, good luck to him. It was bad form to condemn gambling, while he was doing it on the sly, but it's no business of ours Gussy. My advice to you is to give Selby a wide berth."

"I wefuse to give Selbay a wide berth. I'm going to wemonstwate with him."

"Stick a cushion down your bags before you call on him," suggested Lowther, and Tom Merry and Manners chuckled.

Arthur Augustus sniffed. He rose to his feet, and opened the door.

"Change your mind, Gussy, old man," said Tom Merry. "You'll find yourself up before the Big Beak if you try remonstrating with Selby. Treat him with scorn that he deserves."

"Wats!"

"Gussy!" shouted Tom, as the swell of St. Jim's stepped into the passage.

"Pway do not woah at me, Tom Mewwy, it throws me into quite a fluttah when people woah at me. My mind is made up."

The door slammed, and Arthur Augustus was gone.

.

D'Arcy tapped at the door of Mr. Selby's study in Masters' Corridor, and entered. Mr. Selby, seated at his desk, looked up in surprise.

Mr. Selby was tired. He had just finished supervising evening preparation with his form, and he hoped that the trials of his day were over. The look he gave the aristocratic fourth-former was not one of welcome.

"What is it, D'Arcy?" he snapped. Arthur Augustus carefully closed the door before facing the form-master. Mr. Selby watched him with growing surprise.

"Be brief, boy!" yapped Mr. Selby.

"Yaas, sir, it won't take me long to say what I have come to say." Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye, and gave Mr. Selby a withering stare through it. "I have not come to congratulate you, Mr. Selby."

"What?"

"I have come to wewpove you, sir." Mr. Selby rose to his feet. Never a very good-tempered man, his eyes fairly glittered now.

"Are you insane, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir," said Arthur Augustus, disdainfully. "Last week, sir, you gave yough form a lecture on the evils of gambling."

Mr. Selby's mouth opened in astonishment. He fairly gaped at the hopeful Gussy.

"You stated, only last week, Mr. Selby, that betting on football pools was the greatest vice of the twentieth century."

"Certainly I did!" snapped Mr. Selby. He was almost more surprised than angry now.

"I am disgusted with you, Mr. Selby."

"What?"

"It was uttally wotten and wewpewehensible for you to make such a wemark," rattled on Arthur Augustus.

"Am I dreaming this?" breathed Mr. Selby. He glared at the swell of St. Jim's for a few moments. Then he whisked round his desk, and opened the door of the study.

"Follow me, D'Arcy."

It was Arthur Augustus's turn to be surprised.

"Where do you wish me to follow you, sir?"

"I am taking you to the Headmaster, D'Arcy. I have little doubt but that you will be expelled from this school."

Arthur Augustus's eye-glass dropped to the end of its cord.

Mr. Selby, despite your feahful duplicity I do not wish to expose you to Doctah Holmes. Pway welflect, my deah sir —"

"Follow me at once," boomed Mr. Selby. He strode down the corridor, and Arthur Augustus followed him.

In the Head's study, Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were enjoying a quiet chat when Mr. Selby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy damned upon them. From his comfortable armchair the Head raised his eyebrows slightly as he noted the flushed, angry face of the Third Form master.

"Sir," said Mr. Selby, "I have brought this fourth-form boy to you for an act of insolence — and probably worse."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes. "How has D'Arcy offended, Mr. Selby?"

Mr. Selby breathed deeply. Arthur Augustus stood with silent dignity, a look of determination on his face.

"Last week, sir, I referred to football pools during a lesson with my form. I classed this type of gambling as the predominant vice of the present century. This boy, D'Arcy, has just come to me, and has abused me for condemning these pools."

"Is it possible, Mr. Selby?" The Head's brows knitted.

"Yes, indeed, sir. I can only conclude sir, from D'Arcy's remarks, that he himself takes part in this vicious system of gambling. In doing so he is clearly flouting the rules of this school, and, as a minor, is actually breaking the laws of the country."

"Bless my soull!" said the Head. Arthur Augustus stood with his mouth wide open, an expression of amazement on his boyish countenance.

"What have you to say, D'Arcy?" demanded the Head.

Arthur Augustus found his voice at last.

"Mr. Selby's suggestion is uttally widic, sir. Even if I were old enough, I would

nevah gamble." Gussy's voice rose. "It is Mr. Selbay himself who gambles on the football pools."

"What?" gasped Mr. Selby. "Dr. Holmes this boy dares to suggest —"

"Not only does Mr. Selbay gamble on the football pools, sir, but he has just won a huge prize as a result of so doing. I fesh it will bring evil upon him, sir."

"You untruthful young scoundrel!" roared Mr. Selby. He controlled himself with an effort. "Dr. Holmes, I have never been so insulted in my life."

"Calm yourself, Mr. Selby," said the Head. "This boy will be severely punished for so slanderous and impudent a remark."

Mr. Selby was breathing heavily, his face red with anger as he strove to control his emotions.

"D'Arcy," said the Head, in icy tones, "you will be publicly flogged for this unprecedented act of insolence, and, unless you apologize to Mr. Selby instantly, for your absurd statements, you will be expelled from St. James's this very night."

The colour wavered in Gussy's cheeks, but he did not falter.

"I cannot apologize to Mr. Selbay, sir." His voice was husky now. "Mr. Selbay condemned football pools to his farm and now he has won an enormous sum of money by doing the vewy thing he condemned. I wegard such conduct as wepwehensible and wotten, and I told Mr. Selbay so. It is not his gambling that I abhor, sir — that's his own sowy business — but I think his hypocwisy is shocking in a man in his position."

Dr. Holmes looked puzzled. He darted a quick glance at the master of the Third. Mr. Railton passed a hand across his mouth to hide an involuntary smile.

Mr. Selby panted like a fish out of water. He glared at Gussy as though he could bite him.

"I think this boy has taken leave of his senses, Dr. Holmes. It is obvious that he should be placed in a home for the mentally unstable." Mr. Selby transferred his indignant glare to the Head. "I hope, sir, that it is unnecessary for me to assure you that there is not one word of truth in D'Arcy's wild and malicious suggestions. I have never in my life gambled on the pools, still less have I ever

won a large sum of money as a result of gambling."

"There is no need at all for you to give me such an assurance, Mr. Selby," said the Head, soothingly. The look he turned on the swell of St. Jim's was stern and angry. Arthur Augustus stood speechless.

Mr. Railton interposed, before the Head could speak.

"Sir," said the Housemaster, "there has clearly been a most unfortunate misunderstanding. Nothing can excuse D'Arcy's absurd conduct, of course —"

"Weally, sir —" mumbled Arthur Augustus.

The Head was regarding him fixedly.

"Tell me immediately, D'Arcy, why you have made this impudent and groundless accusation against a member of my staff," he said.

Arthur Augustus pulled himself together. He looked straight at the Head, and spoke with quiet dignity.

"I would like to say, sir, that Mr. Waiton is quite wight. There has been a mistake. I am suah of course, that Mr. Selbay would nevah pwevawicate. I know that. But the whole school is talking about it, sir —"

"About what?" hooted Mr. Selby.

"About yoush winning £50,000 on Soap's Pools, sir," explained Arthur Augustus, innocently.

"I have never even heard of Soap's Pools," shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Of course not — pray keep calm Mr. Selby," said the Head, hastily. "D'Arcy, from whom did you hear this grotesque story?"

"Everybody's talking about it, sir. All the juniahs, at least, sir —"

"D'Arcy," came the quiet voice of Mr. Railton. "From whom did the story originate? You understand, my boy, that in justice to Mr. Selby, this matter must be traced to its source."

"I understand that, sir. I believe that Twimble of the Fourth started the wumour. I think he heard Mr. Selbay telling you about the match, Mr. Waiton."

"Me!" ejaculated the Housemaster. "Preposterous!"

He turned to the Head.

"Have I your permission to fetch Trimble of the Fourth here, sir?"

"Pray do so, Mr. Railton," agreed the Head.

Ten minutes later, Baggy Trimble of the Fourth followed the Housemaster into the Head's study. The fat fourth-former looked nervously from one master to another. Arthur Augustus concentrated an inimical glare on a podgy back.

"Trimble," said Dr. Holmes. "Have you spread a story through the school concerning Mr. Selby?"

"Oh, no sir," gasped Baggy. "I happened to hear Mr. Selby tell Mr. Railton that he had won a divvy on the pools."

"What?"

"We're all glad to hear of it, sir," went on Trimble. "You see, we like Mr. Selby so much."

"Trimble," said Mr. Railton, in a deep voice, "how did you come to hear anything that Mr. Selby said to me?"

"I wasn't listening, sir. Anything like eavesdropping would be repugnant to me, sir. I'm honourable, I hope."

"Answer me, Trimble," said Mr.

Railton, sharply.

"Oh, yes, sir." Baggy Trimble cast a nervous blink at Mr. Selby, "I happened to be under your window, sir, doing up my shoelace, just before lunch. I heard Mr. Selby say that he was in fortune owing to a lucky strike in the London Pool. So I knew he'd won on Cope's, sir. Cope's are the only London pool. The others are at Liverpool."

"That is enough, Trimble," said Mr. Railton. He turned to Mr. Selby. "You see how this preposterous story arose, sir. This obtuse boy heard part of our conversation and misconstrued it. He immediately spread it through Lower School."

"I wouldn't do that sir," bleated Trimble. "I only told Mellish - and Reggie Manners - and - and -"

"Silence Trimble!" Mr. Railton's lips were twitching. "Mr. Selby, if you recollect what was said, you may care to make it clear to Dr. Holmes."

"I remember perfectly well, sir." Mr. Selby was tense and angry as he addressed the Head. "I was speaking to Mr. Railton concerning the cruise in the Mediterranean which I enjoyed during the vacation. I had been staying in Edinburgh, and had to

journey to Tilbury in order to join the cruise ship. Owing to the inefficiency of British Railways, I did not arrive at Tilbury until three hours after the ship was scheduled to depart. Luckily for me, however, there had been a lightning strike of seafaring men. In consequence, the cruise liner did not sail until several hours later than expected. I related this to Mr. Railton, and, if my memory serves me well, I said that I had benefited from a lucky strike in the Pool of London."

Mr. Railton nodded, a glimmer in his eyes.

"Those were your very words, sir. This unscrupulous boy overheard them, and put an absurd construction on them."

"Dear me!" murmured the Head. "How very, very ludicrous!"

He changed a chuckle into a cough.

"With your permission, sir, I will deal with Trimble," said Mr. Railton, grimly.

The Head nodded, and Mr. Railton withdrew, taking the fat fourth-former with him. Trimble was looking far from happy.

After their departure, Arthur Augustus his face a deep crimson waited. He hardly dared to look at Mr. Selby.

"Well, D'Arcy?" said the Head.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"I should like to offah my sinceah apologies to Mr. Selbay, sir. Mr. Selbay, I beg your pardon, sir, for my unworthy suspicion!"

Mr. Selby grunted.

"Do you think boy, that an apology can set right all the strain and anxiety which you have caused me?" he demanded.

Arthus Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, sir, I think so. An apology from one gentleman to another is sushly all that is wequired. If, howevah, you feel that a whopping is essential to welieve your feelings, I do not complain, sir."

Dr. Holmes regarded Mr. Selby through his pince-nez.

"Any punishment that you demand will be administered, Mr. Selby.

This boy's thoughtlessness and stupidity are inexcusable."

Mr. Selby stood in thought. He rubbed a bony nose. Then he said, tersely: "You may go, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, sir, I expected that frcm you,"

he said, innocently. "I should like to add ---"

"Go, D'Arcy!" thundered the Head.

And Arthur Augustus went, with a bound.

Outside the closed door of the study, he stood for a moment, and wiped his brow. Then he walked slowly down the passage. As he went, he heard the sound of laughter proceeding from the study which he had just left. Arthur Augustus wondered at what the Headmaster and Mr. Selby could possibly be

laughing. Obviously they had some private joke which they were sharing.

"Aftah all," murmured Arthur Augustus "as Tom Hewey wemarked, even school-mastahs ain't immaculate."

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 48. DOVETAILING

ROGER JENKINS: I was particularly interested in what you had to say about Magnets 1255 - 1269. When I was having series bound for the London Club Library, I was doubtful about what should be done with these. In the end I made it into two series, the first one ending with No. 1261, but in point of fact everyone borrows the whole set.

I have no objection to dovetailing: I rather like it, especially when Magnet and Gem series co-incided. But the last part of this particular series (or group of series) seemed to me to fizzle out. I have no fault to find with any individual number, but the early part of the story - the Spring Term and Easter holiday - had pace and excitement, whereas the Summer Term was a collection of oddments. Nos. 1262 and 1263 didn't even deal with the Bounder, as he had not returned to school. The following number dealt with his return, and the feud with Wharton ended in harmony with No. 1266. The next two stories again had no connection with the series, and the climax came in No. 1269, when Mr. Quelch removed Vernon-Smith from the captaincy for misbehaviour: Wharton had no hand in this at all.

This inconsequential sequence of events is in fact very much like real life - too much so, I think, to be good fiction. I have great sympathy with the SOL editor and, whilst I should not have ended the story with the Easter holiday, I should have been bewildered by the dissipated tension of the Summer Term. Because this brilliant firework ended like a damp squib, I think it is deservedly less popular than many other Greyfriars series.

BRIAN DOYLE: I agree with you whole-heartedly that this series was brilliantly done. It was one of the first important "Magnet" series I ever read and, to me at any rate, it ranks with other, more talked-about series, such as the "Wharton, Rebel" and the "Stacey" stories. Some of Charles Hamilton's very best writing is to be found in the subtle and perceptive portrayals of the relationship between Harry Wharton and Vernon-Smith. Liking even respecting - one another well enough, these two characters who have played such an important part in the Greyfriars saga, are really as chalk and cheese together (except perhaps on the football and cricket fields). But their various conflicts - never shown better than in the "Wharton, Rebel" first series and the sequence under discussion - certainly make engrossing and rewarding reading.

I should imagine the main reason why it hasn't proved an outstanding success is because it does, unfortunately, tend to "sprawl" a little over too many issues and could have been cut to advantage. Had it been more 'compact' it would have been proportionately more successful. Even the London Branch Library has the series bound up in two volumes..!

I didn't ever read the series in SOL's so can't give an opinion as to how it was presented there. But then what series ever did show up successfully in SOL's when

.....
compared to its original appearance between "Magnet" covers - un-abridged and with all the brilliant illustrations?

BASIL ADAM: I feel I must plead guilty to being one of the people who have never mentioned the dovetailed series, and yet the "Harry Wharton - Swot" series is one of my favourites. In fact, I read it every Easter, because I always enjoy my Easter holiday at Wharton Lodge.

The Smedley dovetailed series is a great favourite of mine, too. I can't remember ever getting around to mentioning it, either. I really don't know why the dovetailed series should not be popular if they are as readable as the two series I have mentioned.

LES ROWLEY: I agree wholeheartedly with your point of view on this much neglected, three-in-one, Bounder, the Captain series.

GEOFFREY WILDE: I read your latest controversial with much pleasure. Continuity is undoubtedly a hallmark of the Magnet stories of the best period. As Roger observes in the 1957 Annual, the stories of the early thirties form a living saga. Stories of this kind are particularly satisfying in presenting an unfolding sequence of inter-connected events which, like life itself, present no very sharply defined beginnings or endings. The result is a greater sense of realism and maturity. On the other hand, it is the function of narrative art to impose some sense of design upon the apparently haphazard nature of real life; what each reader looks for is a balance between the two requirements. Clearly many readers feel that the Magnet's 1932 sequence goes too far in the direction of naturalism; as you say, it is not easy to divide into clearly-marked series. I do hope it is not literally true, however, that "nobody acclaims it. I would certainly place it among the very best, and prefer it in some respects to the more celebrated character studies of Wharton in adversity.

In 1933-4, we again see most convincing continuity. The late arrival of Quelch in January 1934 is important to the Kranz series, and prepares the reader for his absence through ill-health long before the Smedley series begins. As late as 1936 it is again pleasantly in evidence; the treasure of Polpelly finances the trip to Brazil, the Famous Five meet Putnam van Duke whilst on holiday, and it is not till the next term, after we have concluded the Wilmot series, that van Duck appears for a series of his own.

STANLEY SMITH (on an earlier topic): The Penny Popular an ugly duckling? A thousand times no! It was through this paper that I first came in contact with the world of school stories. Date? I don't know. I'd give a lot for a copy of that particular number. I was in hospital at the time. A fellow patient gave me "something to read." It was a Penny Popular and I had never seen anything of the kind before. The cover fascinated me at once. It showed two boys whom I later found to be Wun Lung and Bulstrode on the banks of the river Sark. I opened the paper with interest, and, at the same time, I opened the door into a new world - the world of Greyfriars, Rockwood and St. Jim's. I really do not know how I would have endured the long years that were to follow if I had not found that magic door!

* * * * *

TOM MERRY WAS MY BROTHER!
Related by W. O. G. Lofts

Admirers of the artistry of the late Warwick Reynolds, of 'Gem' fame, would think they were entering Aladdin's Treasure Cave, if they were ever fortunate enough to visit the home of artist Basil Reynolds.

In his studio in Hertfordshire, Basil Reynolds, who is the nephew of our famous Warwick, has a large collection of his uncle's work, in-
.....

cluding many originals. It has been my privilege to see most of this work in recent visits to his home, and there is no doubt that Warwick Reynolds was probably the most talented of all the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' illustrators.

Easily the most interesting painting hanging in a prominent position in his study is a large self-portrait of Warwick Reynolds painted in oils. This was done (as most self-portraits are) with the aid of a mirror in 1900 when Warwick was about 20 years of age. Several beautiful paintings of animals are also to be found hanging in the hall - foremost one of a Polar bear, which I have been told was a great favourite of his, and not far from this is another original painting by another world famous artist - the late Tom Browne, who created those famous characters Weary Willie and Tired Tim in 'Chips'. Our editor gave a very good display of these old favourites in a recent C.D.

In the upstairs studio is a large Windsor and Newton's Display Cabinet, which was so large, when it was brought into the house, that it had to be sawn in half, and then reassembled again. This belonged to Warwick Reynolds, where he stored all his painting materials. Brushes and oil paints are still in its drawers, which Warwick used right up to his sudden death in 1926. I understand that they will soon be brought to good use again, as Basil Reynolds has started to paint in oils.

A keen collector of all types of Warwick's work, Basil Reynolds has many volumes of books in which his Uncle's work appeared.

Quite recently, I obtained for Basil the first issue of the Greyfriars Holiday Annual published in 1920, As most readers know, this contained a lot of Warwick Reynolds' work. In glancing through the pages - and coming to page 110 - a page illustrated by Warwick entitled 'Popular Favourites of St. Jim's' - Basil Reynolds suddenly exclaimed "Why that's my brother Donald" - pointing to the sunny face of Tom Merry - whilst another illustration of Levison Minor he could recognise as another younger brother, Terence Mann Reynolds! Warwick had obviously based these characters on his young nephews, when they were aged about 14 and 11 respectively. Donald and Terry both grew up to be artists, but sad to relate - which seems a characteristic of the Reynolds family, both died at a very young age. Donald at 28 and Terry at 18.

Mr. C. M. Down, editor of the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' for so many years, and who was on the staff of both papers from the first issues, in a recent interview, remembers quite well Warwick Reynolds coming up to the Amalgamated Press for his first commission. A tall, gaunt, swarthy-faced type of man, Warwick to him obviously needed the work badly.

After he had finished his first illustration for the Companion Papers, Mr. Down told me that he could see that here was really a first-class artist, who was eventually to go on to better things; and his work in his opinion was far superior to that of other artists at the time. In leaving the A.P. to go on to better things in the early 20s, Warwick Reynolds was always grateful to Messrs. Hinton and Down for giving him every encouragement and help in his early struggles. Every year up to his death, in 1926, he drew something special for the 'Holiday Annual' although he could have got a far higher fee from other quarters, than the A.P. paid for such commissions.

Warwick Reynolds was the son of another Warwick Reynolds, who was well known as an illustrator of Victorian Boys papers. Born in 1880 our Warwick, was brought up in the atmosphere of art, and I have seen a painting by him of cattle, which he did about 10 - which shows great promise. He had six brothers and four sisters. Two brothers died in youth, whilst three of the other brothers became artists of repute. Warwick first drew for that old Victorian Comic 'Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday,' and later joined the staff of the Scottish 'Glasgow Weekly Record.' He studied at St. John's Wood, London, a place where I attended school, not far from the famous Lords Cricket Ground home of the M.C.C. After settling in Paris for a time, Warwick joined the Amalgamated Press. His work appeared in such boys papers as 'The Empire Library' 'The Dreadnought' 'The Penny Popular' apart from, of course, the already mentioned 'Gem' and 'Holiday Annual'. In the early 20s his work was in great demand by editors of such high class magazines as 'The Strand' 'Tatler' 'Windsor Magazine' 'London Magazine' 'Red Magazine' 'Passing Show' and 'The Illustrated London News' and he could demand (and get) a very high fee for his brilliant work in the animal field. Married, and with a son and two daughters, all were very markedly gifted in art. The son, also another Warwick, showed much brilliant promise, but he too died in his teens, when in all probability he would have been more famous than his father.

Warwick Reynolds died in December, 1926 at Glasgow when only 46 years of age. Exhibitions of his work were held in places as far off as the U.S.A. long after his death. A special Memorial Exhibition was held at the Wellington Art Galleries, Glasgow, shortly after he had passed from this life and his work is still avidly collected today.

Probably the finest memorial that Warwick Reynolds left to us, was the work on the famous St. Jim's Gallery illustrations, which appeared during the first world war. In all probability, when Basil Reynolds looks at drawings of Tom Merry illustrated by Warwick it brings back happy memories of his brother Donald, when he can rightfully state 'Tom Merry was actually My Brother.'

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

Next month the 'spot-light' will be on the Palk-Paterson 'mystery' for I have received some most enlightening information on the subject from Walter Webb. This information will, I am sure, not only be of interest to Derek Adley and Gordon Swan in particular but to readers of Blakiana in general.

Once again I would ask your co-operation in the shape of little articles for Blakiana. At the moment I am emulating Mr. Micawber.....!

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

MARJORIE STANTON - SEXTON BLAKE WRITER!

By W. O. G. Lofts

When Derek Adley and myself compiled the list of Sexton Blake authors which appeared in the 1959 C.D. Annual, we said that the list was as complete as possible, but it was our opinion that should an 'official' list of Blake writers for the UNION JACK ever come to light many new names would be revealed. Of course, no such list has materialised, but I am pleased to say that one more name at least can be added to the record.

After several years of research and many hours of travel, I have succeeded in contacting HORACE PHILLIPS, better known as MARJORIE STANTON, the author of the stories of Morcove School, featuring those famous characters, BETTY BARTON & CO., whose exploits are considered by many to have been even more popular than those of BARBARA REDFERN & CO., at Cliff House School.

Amongst the wealth of information kindly given to me by Mr. Phillips is the fact that round a bout 1912 he wrote stories of Sexton Blake for the U.J.

Horace Phillips is now over 80 and - like Charles Hamilton - keeps remarkably well, but at this great distance of time (nearly 50 years ago) he cannot recall the titles of the Blake stories he wrote. However, I am hoping that when I am down in the West Country shortly, at which time a personal interview has been arranged, I shall obtain details of his work in the Sexton Blake field.

A full report of the interview will appear in the C. Digest, and I am sure that Sexton Blake and Moorcock readers alike will await this report with keen interest.

* * * * *

RESIDENT RASCAL

The following letter has been sent on to me by Eric Fayne. I have already sent Michael Moorcock a copy, for I feel it is only right that he should be given the opportunity to reply - if he so desires. I have also told him that any reply of reasonable length he cares to make will be reproduced in Blakiana. J. P.

The Editor,
COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL.

Dear Sir,

With reference to Michael Moorcock's article "Resident Rascal", in the 1960 C.D. Annual. I take strong exception to some of his remarks. He says: "It was a bleak period for Blake between 1940 and 1956." This is too sweeping an assertion, for it was only during the latter years of that lengthy period that the stories tailed off into mediocrity.

During the war years and immediately after, one of the best of Sexton Blake authors gave us some really splendid stories. I refer to Anthony Parsons, the standard of whose stories was very high at that time. Then we had some excellent contributions from Jack Lewis and John Hunter, and after the war Rex Hardinge returned and wrote in extremely good vein for several years.

Speaking of the New Order, Mr. Moorcock says he does not like the idea of the Syndicate, which seems to him unrealistic. Has he never heard of the crime syndicates of America, or of the Mafia, whose ramifications are certainly world-wide - we have evidence of its activities even here in Australia.

In any case, why must we always be "realistic?" Isn't the writer allowed any scope for imagination? The fiction of today is often the fact of tomorrow. When Verne and Wells wrote their "fantasies" years ago, they were probably considered unrealistic, yet many of them are accepted facts today.

And if the villains and heroes of the 'twenties and 'thirties are out-of-date, how is it that Sax Rohmer, right up to his death two years ago, was still writing about Fu-Manchu, a character originally created about 1914? And why are at least three publishers still printing the works of Edgar Wallace of the nineteen-twenties and thirties fame?

Yours faithfully,
S. GORDON SWAN.

* * * * *

INTERVIEW WITH MR. SEXTON BLAKE

by that seeker after the unusual, JACK COOK of Newcastle.

Shieldfield is a small district in Newcastle upon Tyne which is gradually being demolished. Among the old houses still standing I

searched for Sexton Blake. When at last the house was located Mr. Blake was not at home, but a note left for him brought him to Maria Street. The tall, dark man who knocked wore a pleasant smile. His grey eyes twinkled as I asked him question after question. The interview took place as follows:

Question: How did you come by your name? Is it your real name?

Answer: I have no idea how my parents christened me Sexton Blake - my full name is William Sexton Blake.

Question: Are you a collector of the old papers?

Answer: No, but my wife and I have read many Blakes.

Question: How do people react to your name?

Answer: Many of them look incredulous - I joined the Navy during the war, and they just wouldn't believe me.

Question: If ever you are in London will you visit the London Old Boys' Book Club? You will be assured of a warm welcome.

Answer: My father lives in London. I would be pleased to visit the Club.

Question: Would you co-operate in police cases?

Answer: Yes - I gave the police every assistance in my own recent case in which I was proved innocent. The newspaper reports are not always accurate, but this time most of the facts were right.

Question: Was there ever any curious incident in your schooldays in connection with your name?

Answer: There were always looks of surprise - even disbelief, and I have been to school all over Britain.

Sexton Blake then told me that his son is also named Sexton Blake. An interesting fact escaped when he told me that he was a Freeman of Newcastle. He had been born in Harrogate and registered there. He was quite surprised when I told him that there was no record of him at Somerset House. He could not account for that. He has lived at No. 19 Union Street, Shieldfield for the last three years. Before leaving, he promised to let me know if he remembered any other unusual fact about himself.

* * * * *

DOES ANYONE REMEMBER THAT MYSTERIOUS 'MAN IN BLACK'?

By Brian Doyle

I discovered Sexton Blake pretty late in his career, I'm afraid, but early on in my own. I didn't come to him, perhaps, as late as those who read him first in the new-style Sexton Blake Library.

The very first story I read about Blake was in No. 361 of the "Detective Weekly" dated 20th January, 1940. I wasn't much more than nine

at the time, but must have developed an advanced taste in thuggery as I remember 'lapping up' that first action-packed yarn entitled "The Man in Black."

All the Blake experts reading this will probably snort indignantly and say to themselves: 'The Man in Black'? Why that was just a re-hash of a 'U.J.' story by ..." well, by whoever it was. But I'm afraid I don't know who wrote it. Perhaps someone can enlighten me?

All I know is that I was very grateful to it for introducing me to the famous sleuth of Baker Street.

"The Man in Black" had a memorable Parker cover illustration showing Blake and Tinker bound hand-and-foot in a laboratory watching tensely as a white-smocked, black-hooded 'mystery man' prepared to carry out some devilish experiment on a terrified man tied to a chair, with a sort of transparent 'space helmet' fixed over his head and connected to a fiercesome piece of electrical apparatus. Blake and Tinker were next on the programme of events, but managed to escape in the nick of time.

The story was one of those which revealed that identity of the 'Master Crook' - 'The Man in Black' - on almost the last line. In this case the villain turned out to be a wealthy newspaper magnate (featured in the story as actually helping Blake to track himself down!) who craved even greater power and money than he already had and who aimed to get it by means of organised crime.

Incidental thrills were provided by such novelties as a vast underground (as well as underworld) criminal H.Q. deep under a wood (entrance by means of a grass-covered lift the size of a ten-ton lorry) a specially-made London 'bus full of crooks armed to the teeth with guns and tear-gas bombs (objective: Hatton Garden jeweller's shop), a jet-black luxury sea-plane (which robbed a ship of £300,000 in gold bars), an armed raid on a private operating-theatre in Wimpole Street, and an exciting climax in a remote Scottish castle. Mrs. Bardell made a brief appearance too, to minister to Blake's injuries after he had been shot by an automatic firing-device (operated ingeniously by means of an electro-magnetic ray). No, whatever else it may have lacked, "The Man in Black" didn't lack incident.

After this promising introduction to the adventures of Sexton Blake I lost no time in persuading my indulgent mother to buy me the "Detective Weekly" regularly (she didn't need much persuading - I discovered she had been an enthusiastic "Union Jack" fan years before). For the next few weeks I enjoyed other stories about Blake - ones which featured, I think, Yvonne Cartier, Huxton Rymer, the Council of Eleven, Professor Kew and George Marsden Plummer.

So it was that my rather off-beat reading diet at this period - when I was nine years of age! - included Sexton Blake, Tiger Tim, Chips, Tip-Top, Edgar Wallace (my parents possessed several of his thrillers which I thoroughly enjoyed), Richmal Crompton's "William" and the Hot-spur (how I enjoyed those excellent Red Circle School stories - does anyone know who wrote them, I wonder?)

Strangely enough, I didn't discover "The Magnet" until the following year when I acquired a stack of salmon pink issues from a school friend.

My absorption with the "Detective Weekly" however, was due for a sudden blow. Later in the year it ceased publication. I had to be content with Sexton Blake's adventures in the 4d. monthly S.B.L. and in strip-picture form in "Knockout." Neither were quite the same for me, somehow, and I gradually drifted away from the world of Blake into the world of Greyfriars.

Later, of course, I renewed my acquaintance with Blake and was able to enjoy the best of both worlds. I have since read many Blake stories. But it would be interesting to know more about that mysterious "Man in Black"

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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (2nd series)

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

This month we carry on with Herbert's fascinating survey of the Nelson Lee story, as re-told by Len Packman. It is all the more topical in view of Film Fun's revival of "The Silver Dwarf", even if, for no valid reason, Nelson Lee has been altered to Jaxon. No author is named for the "new" serial, but the illustrations are by the one and only E. R. Parker.

So we come full circle once again. But here is what Herbert has to say.

* * *

THE CAREER OF NELSON LEE

(Concluding MEMORIES OF OLD BOYS' PAPERS, written by the late Herbert Leckenby in 1943.)

Whereas Scott never failed to make his detective the central figure, his successor oft-times gave him only a minor role, Nipper, too, was often in the background - at any rate, in the later days. Judging by the covers and the titles it would appear that one Edward Oswald Handforth was the most prominent character, just as Billy Bunter was the most familiar figure on the cover of the MAGNET. In the second series (first large) especially he is the subject of the title on numerous occasions, whereas Nelson Lee and Nipper, might as well have been non-existent.

These school stories were similar in many ways to those published in the GEM and the MAGNET. There were feuds between the Houses, floods, barring-outs, fights for the captaincy, expulsions of bad characters, and near expulsions of the finer ones. There were the fat boys, the

Laughable Character introduces in this Week's Story

THE NELSON LEE 24

No 352

LIBRARY
Every Wednesday

March 1921



THE COMING OF ARCHIE

(Re-drawn by Keith Godsave)

the titled boys, the eccentric boys, the boys who gambled, and the boys who were marvels on the cricket and football field. Handforth had a younger brother just as had D'Arcy of St. Jim's, and in each instance the minor was vastly different from the major. There were popular masters and masters who were tyrants, bullying prefects and all the other characters which go to make up the world of school.

But Mr. Brooks had to plan a story every week for a great many years, and in the planning thereof he must have burnt much midnight oil. The stories had never to be humdrum, necessity demanded action, excitement, fun, a change of scene. And the author served the ingredients up in no half measure. Many of the yarns were fantastic, exaggerated, extreme. The boys of St. Jim's and Greyfriars saw something of the world, but they were mere stay-at-homes compared with the lads of St. Frank's. Nipper and his chums, together with Nelson Lee and, usually, Lord Dorrimore journeyed the Seven Seas. They went through amazing experiences in China, they were lost in the Australian Bush, they saw something of New Zealand, they were almost eaten by cannibals in the Congo. Not satisfied with this they set off to the Arctic by airship, where, amidst frozen waters, they found a hitherto undiscovered country, a country peopled by a long-lost race of Anglo-Saxon origin. Here they went through adventures weird and wonderful. They were transported back to the days of Richard Coeur de Lion, or earlier. They fought like those knights of old in armour for the kingdom of North-estria against the Gothlanders. They became schoolboy slaves and were sent to the galleys. All this during one school holiday, apparently. And in this series of adventures too, they had girls from the Moor House School with them, just to give Handforth and Co. more opportunity for gallant rescues I suppose. They must have enjoyed themselves in this strange land, for they returned there at a later period: but on this occasion they made the journey by submarine.

Then, in a further series, another party, a smaller one, had some stirring times in what was picturesquely termed "The Island Above the Clouds." Judging by the titles of some of the stories, Nelson Lee and Nipper and Co. had the time of their lives. Here are some of them: "The Plateau of Peril," "The Land of the Lost," "The Scarlet Death" and "The Cavern of Doom."

Nearer home, too, they saw something of life; they went to the Flanders battlefields, they toured the British Isles in the School Train and they played cricket at Lords. These are just a few of the places some of the characters visited in their varied careers.

As for St. Frank's itself, was there ever such a school in all the history of schoolboy fiction. St. Jim's and Greyfriars had their excite-

ments, but I think they were monasteries compared to St. Frank's. Floods, fires, sinister Chinese secret societies, gangsters from the U.S.A., Atlantic flyers, all came to relieve life's humdrum existence. Even Professor Zingrave, the world's greatest criminal, was revived by E.S. Brooks, to stir up trouble with his League of the Green Triangle, and he brought Jim the Penman with him. More tempestuous than ever were Nelson Lee's battles with his old enemies.

Then there were the barring-out series. I believe there were at least seven of these. Those venerable gentlemen Drs. Locke and Holmes reigned at Greyfriars and St. Jim's with dignity throughout the written histories of the two schools, but at St. Frank's things were very different. Heads came and went, good, bad, indifferent, extraordinary and incredible. Hence many of the barring-outs. But seven or more! I think here it proved that E.S. Brooks was rather put to it to find something new.

I seem to remember a time, too, when the school with its two houses, the Ancient and the Modern, was entirely destroyed by fire, and how in a miraculously short time the boys returned to find a new school had arisen from the ashes, with several additional houses!

One thing I find I have forgotten to mention is, that from the first St. Frank's story until No. 484 the stories were written in the first person by Nipper. It is a long time since I read any of these, but I have an idea that E.S. Brooks, who of course was the writer, forgot he was writing in this manner and seemed to lapse into the more usual style.

Well, I cannot pretend that I can set down all that happened at St. Frank's, that would require a book in itself. For twelve years or more E.S. Brooks never failed to deliver the goods, apparently for the greater part of that time with success. Then it would appear that his star began to grow dim, for soon after the start of the third series (the second large) we find a significant change. For a time the stories were still written by him but under one of his pen-names, Robert W. Comrade. This was rather a curious thing to do, and certainly seemed to prove that his name was not the draw it had been, else why disguise it; for the great majority of the readers would not have the slightest idea that Robert W. Comrade and the old familiar E.S. Brooks were one and the same. In this first series of new yarns Nelson Lee came into his own again as the central figure, for he was back at Grays Inn Road together with some of the boys acting as his assistants. Here again one got some exciting titles, to wit: "The House of Pattering Feet" "Dacca the Devil Dwarf" "The City of Hidden Dread" "The Pit of Terror" and "The Two-headed Viper." An attempt was then made to get back to St. Frank's

again, but apparently without much success, for there came a time when the main story was not written by E.S. Brooks at all, although a short story of St. Frank's by him did occupy secondary position. It was evident here that the old NELSON LEE LIBRARY had run into stormy waters, for we actually find that they must have shaken the dust from the files in the depths of Fleetway House and brought out those famous stories from the dead past written by Maxwell Scott, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, "Birds of Prey" "The Silver Dwarf" "The Missing Heir" and "The Great Unknown." These were dished up under such titles as "Plunder Ltd." "The Peril Trail" "The Trail of Fortune" and so on, but poor old Maxwell Scott's name was not mentioned. I have expressed opinion upon this idea in my chapter on the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY for these stories were used there again, too.

Still another idea that was tried in an attempt to revive the fortunes of the paper was to take some stories which had been written round Sexton Blake in the library of that name, turn the names of Sexton Blake and Tinker to Nelson Lee and Nipper and those of their adventures, Carlac and Kew, to Otho and Zenn, and run them as new stories in the pages of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

And so it went on, one week St. Frank's to the fore, the next week relegated to the background. When this series came to an end with No. 161, a St. Frank's series entitled "The Fellowship of Fear" had been running for some weeks. The last story was entitled "The Castle of Doom" and written by E.S. Brooks, of course. Other authors who contributed S.B. Halstead* and John Brearley. (*Another pen name of E.S. Brooks)

On February 25th, 1933 appeared the first of the fourth series (third large); but this was to be a short-lived one, for it only ran to twenty-five numbers. This time the policy was tried of going right back to the beginning of the St. Frank's stories, for this No. 1 was a reprint of No. 112, first series, "Nipper at St. Frank's" on this occasion called "Nipper - New Boy." Rather good, that. And once more it was written in the first person by Nipper, as were the seventeen following numbers. But no longer could the names of Nelson Lee, Nipper, Edward Oswald Handforth and all the rest of the boys of St. Frank's hold the interest of the lads of the period, for with No. 25, August 8th, 1933, the NELSON LEE LIBRARY ceased as a separate publication and was amalgamated with the GEM, which meant it soon passed into oblivion.

And now the name of Nelson Lee, the famous detective has grown dim except to a few old-timers who cherish the few copies still available telling of his many adventures. No longer do the errand boys of London say as they pass along Grays Inn Road 'Nelson Lee lives somewhere about here' for the chances are they have never heard of him.

FOR SALE: Gems 1912 No. 245; 1918 529, 530, 534, 539, 545, 546, 551, 654, 560, 566, 567; 1919 569, 574, 575, 577, 580, 583, 584, 588, 589, 591, 592, 594, 606, 607, 609, 613, 615 to 620. 1920 621 to 656, 662 to 667, 669 to 671. 1921 673, 675 to 682, 686 to 689, 691, 692, 696 to 698, 700, 701, 703, 707, 712, 716, 717, 725. 1928 "Handforth series" 1059 to 1065. 1933 1317. Best offers please. Write first. Cash when order confirmed. ERIC COPEMAN, 50 RUBY STREET, MARRICKVILLE, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA.

OFFERS: exchange or sell. S.B.L. 1st series 89, 119, 132, 146, 150. No covers 118, 190, 193, 206. 2nd series 22 copies. B.F.L. 199, 698, 582, 408; D.W. 15 copies; U.J. 40 copies. Suspense Vol. 1 Nos. 1 - 5; Vol. 2 Nos. 1 - 6. Vol. 3 No. 1. Also Film Annuals. M. HERBERT, 8 WILLOW ROAD, BLABY, LEICESTERSHIRE.

FOR SALE: Union Jack Detective Supplements, the complete run in 4 bound vols. (Minus Stiff covers) 60 Nelson Lee's between 1926 - 31. (mainly 1928) also 2 bound volumes Young Britain, having 1 - 70 complete with covers on.
Offers to: JOHN KING, 7 WHITE HART LANE, WOOD GREEN, LONDON, N.22.

WANTED to BUY or HIRE: Gem No. 1309 "The Schoolboy Inventor." Please write to: L. F. HAYDEN, 194 HAMSTEAD ROAD, HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM, 20.

FOR SALE: Schoolgirls Own Annual 1926. "Girls Own Paper Annual" 1910. Exchange Chums Annual for any other Chums Annual 1930 - 1939.
S. PERRY, 13 LYNDBURST ROAD, WOOD GREEN, LONDON, N.22.

WANTED: Modern Boy Nos. 115, 161, 183, 239, 240, 244.
DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW N.1.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s 42, 258. Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid plus postage.. The advertiser has some S.O.L.'s, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

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 Nos. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 704, 711, 721, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.
MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: GEMS 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 493, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129; MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 144, 185, 295, 238, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 400, 417, 469, 719, 752, 773, 809, 812, 813, 819, 831, 835, 836, 838, 841, 842, 843, 850, 867, 869, 872, 874, 878, 879, 881, 883, 885, 886, 888, 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 940, 942, 946, 948, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996, POPULARS 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474.
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

GOLDEN HOURS MAGAZINE: The latest issue of the popular Australia magazine is now ready. 4/- including postage. The surface mail overseas from Australia seems to take a long time to arrive. One copy of the Golden Hours took 7 weeks to arrive in Ireland. This is exceptional, but if any collector is keen enough (and rich enough) to receive his copy in 5 or 6 days, the airmail cost is 6/-. Apply, with remittance to: SYD SMYTH, 1 BRANDON STREET, CLOVELLY, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN: If we could kick the person responsible for most of our troubles, we shouldn't sit down for months.

SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

WALTER WEBB reviews the March novels in SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

SUDDENLY IT'S MURDER (No. 473)

JACK TREVOR STORY

On April Fools' Day anything is likely to happen. What is not likely is that Blake of all people, should fall a victim to one of those irresponsible jokers who seem to have decided that that particular day has been invented for their especial benefit. Not that Mr. Spinoroso, an eccentric Greek oil-king, could be regarded as such; but in order to gain Blake's sympathy and active assistance in freeing his kidnapped and equally eccentric daughter from the hands of a kidnapper, he goes to the extraordinary length of kidnapping Paula Dane - just to bring home to Blake how he - Spinoroso - feels in losing one so near and so dear to him. Since Mr. Spinoroso's "joke" nearly costs Blake his life and Tinker a murder rap, Blake, not unnaturally is not amused, particularly as, in his view, a permanently lost daughter Bella would be an occasion for much rejoicing than otherwise.

Although Mr. Story can be much more amusing, lovers of the particular kind of novel of which he is so adept will find this comedy-drama quite interesting.

Rating Good.

STATE OF FEAR (No. 474)

DESMOND REID

Dr. Huxton Rymer - one of the few remaining links in the slender chain connecting the new Blake with the old - returns to one of his not altogether so happy hunting grounds here. When the President of the little republic of Costa Barria, in Central America, finds himself in the dilemma of having to put his hands on a substantial amount of ready cash to satisfy all the demands of a much depleted treasury within forty-eight hours, Rymer offers his assistance. Not from reasons of sympathy, for he is still the old Rymer and still has his price. Terms are agreed and then appears the inevitable fly in Rymer's ointment. A human fly. Sexton Blake.

From then on it's melodrama sheer and simple, the most exciting bit being a free-for-all between Blake and Tinker on the one side and Rymer and two of his confederates on the other on an unmanned locomotive as it thunders over the bridge crossing the Capanaporo River.

A story which has its moments, it is, generally speaking, all very naive and artless. Recommended for teenagers only.

Rating Moderate.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

COVERS: Two quite attractive covers this month with new artist, Miralles, upholding the high standard set by his colleagues. His presentation of Tinker is exceptionally good, though Paula's face lacks the character shown by the artist whose drawing of her is shown on the inside front cover of the companion volume. And whilst on the subject of covers, it may be said that it is improbable that the name of "Hank Janson" will be seen on an S.B.L. jacket, although the man who originated the pen-name will certainly be writing a few Blakes in the future.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW? Although they are not writing for the S.B.L. any more, it is interesting to look back over our shoulders and see what some of the ex-S.B.L. authors are doing these days. It's good to see our old favourite EDMY SEARLES BROOKS busy after writing his first Blake 49 years ago! And this month, under his own name, DONALD STUART, is back on the bookstalls again after a somewhat lengthy absence. That old boys' writer

STANTON HOPE, was occasionally contributing to WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE up to a few months ago, and I see that the three John's of the war period all have books to be published in May. JOHN CREASEY will be ushering in his latest effort, JOHN DRUMMOND under his real name, will be doing likewise, whilst the daddy of them, JOHN HUNTER, has one of his characteristically tough thrillers impending. A seventh old Blake writer, GERALD BOWMAN, has recently written a serial version of the M.G.M. film 'Ben-Hur' for the BIRMINGHAM MAIL, a newspaper to which he has contributed other articles in the past.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held 28th March, 1961

Eleven members met in the "Henby" room at the Arden Hotel to give a special welcome to Eric Payne, editor of the C.D. We had never met Eric before and all had been looking forward to this joyful occasion. It was a great pity Beryl Porter could not manage to be present, but we had some satisfaction in seeing her husband there. Eric and everyone present were glad to hear of the steady improvement in her health. The faithful eleven who did turn up, augmented by the Rev. A. G. Pound just before the end, enjoyed Eric's visit and at the same time, a very enjoyable programme. This included a two team quiz organised by our visitor. The winning team included myself, Tom Porter, Ted Davey, Jack Bond and Jack Bellfield. Our opposite numbers were Jack and Midge Corbett, Win Partridge, John Tomlinson and Joe Marston. Eric had thoughtfully and generously provided prizes. An interesting item and more lively than the usual quiz. Jack Corbett had a quiz for us too - some items easy, some tricky. Tom Porter managed to get 10 right out of 18. Win Partridge gave a nice talk along with her eight selections for the Desert Island interlude. First choice would be a C.D. - a token that she still belonged to a worldwide Club of book lovers. 2. Wharton the Rebel series in the Magnet. 3. The School Friend when Barbara Redfern & Co. spent the holidays at Wharton Lodge when they met the chums of Greyfriars. As Win put it, two sets of favourites for the price of one. 4. "Portrait of Eton" by Bernard Ferguson, all about the famous public school and its environments. 5. Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopedia. Special mention was made here that Arthur Mee was a Birmingham man. 6. A Frances Gay Friendship Book "Favourite Operas" by Cuthbert Hadden. To wind up on an excellent note, final section was a Bonnie Prince Charlie Testament - this being a family keepsake, backed in plaid and bound in gold. In all a very excellent choice of eight books and worth the applause this talk received.

Then followed a talk by myself on the subject of Frank Richards' famous "Oak Trees" to wit the one on Poppers Island and that in the Friardale Woods - the famous Friars Oak. Hiding places for dubious characters, hollow trunks, caves beneath the roots, underground passages from these oaks to Greyfriars School, time and time again these famous oaks have featured in Magnet stories and the last Bunter Book connects the lost treasure of Greyfriars (which amounted to one gold coin which Bunter lost as usual) to the mighty tree on Poppers Island. Hastily prepared, this talk, but I think it went down well. Summing up, this was a successful evening though we would have liked to see more of the well-known faces - Eric would, too, no doubt, but he enjoyed it and so did we. We hope he will come again.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERN

Annual Meeting held on 8th April, 1961

Jack Wood opened this, the 11th Annual General Meeting of the Old Boys' Book Club, Northern Section, in the unavoidable absence of our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, owing to a

prior engagement. In his opening remarks Jack pointed out that four founder-members, Gerry Allison, Harry Berlow, Bill Williamson and Cliff Beardsall, were present. Thirteen others made up a good attendance. The Minutes and Correspondence were soon disposed of, among the latter being a letter from Harry Broster confirming that the Greyfriars Cup had been safely received by the Midland Section, the last winners. It was also announced that our summer programme starts next month with the first reading of 'Rivals and Chums' Frank Richards' sequel to 'The Boy without a Name' which will be given by Geoffrey Wilde.

Gerry Allison, our treasurer-librarian, then made his monthly report, after which the accounts for the year were passed round and discussed. These were very satisfactory indeed, and showed that the Club is in a flourishing condition with interest well maintained. Several members paid tribute to Gerry's sterling work for the Club, so freely given over the years.

The retiring officers were Geoffrey Wilde, Chairman; Gerald Allison, Treasurer-Librarian and Frank Hancock, Secretary. A motion by Cliff Beardsall that they be re-elected en bloc met with general approval. Ron Hodgson was elected auditor in place of Eric Humphreys, who had resigned.

The article on J. N. Pentelov by G. R. Samways, in the October 1960 edition of the S.P.C. had excited considerable interest among members, and some correspondence was read regarding his relations with Frank Richards. A very interesting discussion on this subject followed.

After an interval for refreshments we had a quiz, prepared by Frank Hancock. This was won by Gerry Allison with Breeze Bentley second.

The meeting closed at 9.15 p.m. Thus another year was completed and a new year begun during this very enjoyable evening.

Next meeting, Saturday, May 13th.

FRANK HANCOCK - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

A particularly enjoyable evening was spent by members when they gathered at their new rendezvous, The Book Bargain Bazaar, on Thursday, April 13th at 6 p.m. As the name suggests, this is the ideal meeting place for a book collectors' club and members are deeply indebted to Mr. Stan Nicholls for his generosity in permitting the use of his premises to provide the perfect atmosphere for our hobby evenings.

Chairman, Syd Smyth, arrived in a jubilant mood with his arms full of copies of the Club magazine, issue No. 3, just published. The first part of the evening was spent perusing and discussing this production and the opinion, unanimously expressed, was that this Christmas issue was even better, both technically and in a literary sense, than the previous issues. From the letters already received from our friends overseas, the first two issues have been very well received (extra copies have been printed and are now available from the editor, Mr. Smyth, so these may be ordered with No. 3). Even better things are being planned for the next issue, complete copy for which is in hand, with a change of format to pocket book style.

Letters from overseas were then passed around and members were pleased to hear from Bill Hubbard - we hope your leave in London will exceed expectations Bill with many pleasant memories of the club meetings to take back with you. A sad note however was struck when members learned that the Merseyside folk have given up their meetings - hope its only a temporary matter and that in a few months we will be receiving the usual cheery news from our good friend Frank Urwin and his incomparable little paper which has been greatly enjoyed out here.

The latter half of the meeting was spent in discussion and many interesting facts emerged from the recent meeting of members with Mr. Snow, formerly of the Amalgamated Press. Various items of interest had been displayed whilst personalities and places connected with the hobby in the past were discussed. Altogether a very stimulating meeting and the first hand news gave members the feeling of even closer unity with the folk overseas. Owing to illness of the treasurer, Ernie Carter, the financial business was held

over until the next meeting, scheduled for May 11th, when the yearly election of officers will take place.

The meeting closed at 9 p.m. with a vote of appreciation expressed by Victor Colby to Syd Smyth for his sterling work as editor of the club magazine.

B. PATE - Secretary.

LONDON

For the first time in the history of the London Club, the meeting was held on a Saturday - 15th April, 1961 - at Goodrich Road School, East Dulwich, S.E.22.

It was rather unfortunate that a number of local Elections clashed with this date as a result of which the attendance suffered. Nevertheless, the thirteen members present thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Our host, Horace Roberts, had everything 'laid on' in his usual efficient manner, the spotlight being the scrumptious sit-down feed that would have made Billy Bunter's eyes glisten. Our grateful thanks are extended to the two ladies, Miss Blackman and Miss Beecham, for all their hard work in preparing the meal and the assiduous way in which they looked after us.

In the absence of both the Secretary and Treasurer, Len Packman acted 'ex-officio' in these capacities. The Chairman, Josie Packman, opened the meeting by welcoming one of our postal members, Leslie Todd, who was able to come along. Brian Doyle gave us an amusing reading from "Billy Bunter's Fearful Affliction" this being an extract from a story in the 1939 Holiday Annual. Bill Lofts' quiz was won by Bill Hubbard, with Charlie Wright second and Len Spicer third. Bill Hubbard then gave us his selection of Desert Island Books, in which the "Gem" figured prominently. Horace Roberts, our new Nelson Lee librarian, now has the books in his possession, Frank Lay having passed them on via Len Packman.

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, May 14th, at 40 Ellersmere Road, Dollis Hill, the new home of Bob and Laura Blythe. Will members please let Bob know if intending to be present - and be sure to remember to bring your own cup with you!

p.p. UNCLE BENJAMIN - L.P.

Yours Sincerely
(Interesting Items from the Editor's Postbag)

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton on Trent): Some lovers of St. Frank's argue about the respective merits of Nipper and Handforth as if only these two were worth considering. Personally, my own favourite is the reformed Ralph Leslie Fullwood, whom I consider one of the most interesting characters. Other readers have other favourites. It doesn't look as if any more Tom Merry books are on the tapis, does it? It must be about three years since the last two appeared.

MRS. M. JARRETT (Bridlington): The recent article and sketches of CHIPS brought back memories. I remember my father never failed to bring me home my comics. I don't think I've remembered that in years until I saw it again in the C.D. I wish I'd kept them. I've never yet seen a Gem or Magnet so the photos of covers have been most interesting. I was loaned some old U.J.'s with stories about Nirvana - "see next week's fascinating sequel" which I haven't got, of course. Nobody seems to know what happened to Nirvana. I've written to several people without success. Maddening, isn't it? I feel like poor Mr. Biddle.

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): I note a couple of readers hold certificates as members of

the St. Frank's League. I also have one - No. 8621, dated April, 1928, which gives an indication of the growth of membership from No. 134 - Mr. Elliott, dated July 1925. Not really a big increase in a little over three years. An article, much needed by overseas members, is a full listing of all Charles Hamilton's work since the Magnet finished. Do you think some English collector could handle it?

H. J. McGOVERN (York): What a grand competition! I may be hopelessly out, but what a thrill when the results come through! How interesting to see what the assessment of the favourite is!

N. LINFORD (Walsall): I read with great interest the article "Why the School Friend Failed" by W. O. G. Lofts. Equally well I liked the Ray Hopkins article on the Cliff House girls. He is not correct when he says Mr. Whewy's stories of Cliff House commenced in The Schoolgirl with "Babs' Fight for Stella" as that particular story was published in September, 1932 and Mr. Whewy's stories began in early April, 1932. In Mr. Ransome's letter, the writer says Mr. Whewy commenced writing the new Cliff House series in 1931, and I have seen this mentioned before in other articles on the Cliff House stories. Do you happen to know if this is correct as I have always believed that when Mr. Ransome's stories ceased about 1929 or 1930, no more Cliff House stories appeared until April, 1932. I agree with your comment about Dodshon's illustrations in School Friend. Personally, I think Laidler portrayed the Cliff House girls more realistically.

BILL LOFTS (London): The competition is excellent, and gives every reader a chance. Far better than asking readers to write a story or something, when those who can write would be on a good thing. I would not be surprised to find a really unexpected popular vote. I always remember a collector telling me that his favourite character was Stott in the Magnet. After that I am prepared for anything.

WILLIAM LISTER (Blackpool): My thanks to Christopher Lowder for bringing Dixon Hawke back to our memory. So many things get crowded out with the passage of the years, then suddenly someone drops the seed that produces exciting memories. I wonder if anybody else has the names of other characters of others years that could be brought to mind.

GEORGE BURGESS (Salisbury): I wonder how many readers remember, in Puck, a picture serial called "Rob, the Rover" with Rob, Capt. May, and his daughter Dorothy fighting against one called Black Jack. How I wish some of those pictures could be reprinted in the Digest.

STANLEY SMITH (Ipswich): One of the main topics of conversation at the February meeting in Leeds was the new competition which had just been announced. Everybody was wondering what it was going to be. A monster quiz, some said. No, a piece of research, said others. One member thought that it would be a story competition on the lines of the Proud Tram series. All sorts of ideas were mooted and I know that everybody was looking forward to it with great interest. When I received the April issue I could hardly wait to get it out of the envelope. What was it going to be? At first sight, I must confess to a feeling of disappointment. Just another voting competition, I thought. But, when I read on, I completely altered my views. It is very clever, it is interesting, and - besides giving many happy hours to the entrants - should reveal some illuminating information. Whoever thought it out and worked on it in such a meticulous way deserves a prize themselves. Congratulations, again, and thanks.

S. PERRY (Wood Green): Could you tell me if the original Toff series was ever published in the S.O.L.?

(So far as we can trace, it was not. - ED.)

20 BIG PAGES FOR ½d.



Vol. 1, No. 1.

Week Ending February 25th, 1914.

ONE HALFPENNY.

THE GIRL WITHOUT A NAME.

The Most Startling
Sensational Serial
of the Century.



The copyright in this serial was purchased and brought into the hands of the author, who has the right to do with it as he pleases. All rights reserved. No part of this serial may be reproduced without the author's consent. The author would be gratified to hear from his readers.

POT- POURRI

HOW THEY BEGAN

No. 6. THE FIREFLY. Commenced as a fascinating little story paper for the family at the end of February, 1914. After a time became a rather charming comic paper of the same size as the Butterfly, and, in March 1917, was amalgamated with the Butterfly. Saw 161 issues.

MUSINGS ON PROGRESS

By Peter Walker

As so many readers remark, the arrival on the mat of the Digest each month evokes the same old thrill of years ago, when Monday brought the Magnet and Boy's Friend, Wednesday the Gem, and Friday The Penny Popular. In those days I kept all my copies in a completely unincreased condition, and I can recall in the early 1920's I had, by various means, collected every Magnet and Gem from No. 1 onwards.

In those days, on one memorable occasion, I bought in London at an old second-hand bookshop, upwards of 300 Magnets and Gems dating back to 1908, for 4d. each. On another occasion, in the days when Nottingham

boasted an open-air market in the City centre, there was a stall where one could pick up all the old papers. Alas, those days are gone. Whilst we know that each decade is bound to bring changes, there are so many things which we know and cherish which just go by the board. Here in Nottingham, for instance, lovely old buildings are often razed to the ground to make way for some office monstrosity, or street widening for more cars. The whole character of a town can change and the result is a uniformity of a type that one could be in Sheffield, Bristol, Newcastle or London, and not know one from the other.

One amazing thing is that thousands of pounds will be spent on an old master, and yet someone will cheerfully pull down beautiful architecture in the interests of "progress."

I feel somehow that the era of the Gem and Magnet, now apparently gone for ever, is the result of a similar type of outlook. As a correspondent in Yours Sincerely remarks, what is there today for boys? Unfortunately, how many boys really want papers like the Gem? Had it continued or been revived, we should not have had a generation who know nothing about the delights and charm of St. Jim's.

At my place of work we have four boys whose ages are between 17 and 20. They are apprentices, nice lads and intelligent. They have, of course, never heard of the Gem and Magnet, and don't want to. They don't know what they are missing. I'm certainly pleased that my daughter is a Tom Merry fan. At the moment her hero-worship is torn between Talbot and Cliff Richards.

"HA, HA, HA I"

We are all familiar with the ever-recurring "Ha, Ha, Ha!" in Charles Hamilton's stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, Rookwood, etc. But has anyone ever wondered just why - or how - he hit on that unique way of expressing laughter in print?

Is it, in fact, really unique?

Read this short extract from James Boswell's "Life of Johnson" and see what you think:

"I have known him (Dr. Johnson) at times exceedingly diverted at what seemed to others a very small sport. He now laughed immoderately, without any reason that we could perceive, at our friend's making his will; called him the 'testator' and added, 'I dare not say he thinks he has done a mighty thing ... He believes he has made his will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more consension than to make him say, 'being of sound understanding'; ha, ha, ha! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad."

In this playful manner did he run on, exulting in his own pleasantry which certainly was not such as might be expected from the author of "The Rambler" ...

Apart from the words of the song "Little Brown Jug" (Ha, ha, ha, he, he, he; Little Brown Jug, how I love thee") this is the only time upon which I can recall having seen this phrase in print, apart from Charles Hamilton's work.

Could it be that, as the Master was penning his first school stories, that famous passage by Boswell came into his head? Could be!

BRIAN DOYLE

ARE COMICS GOOD OR BAD?

By Jack Hughes

Writing in the Australian national magazine "Woman's Day" of September, 1960, Mr. Donald McLean, a senior official in the Information Service of the South Wales Child Welfare Department, and a former Headmaster asks "Are comics good or bad?"

Some paragraphs from this article will be of interest to readers of Collectors' Digest.

"When I was a child, my father used to buy me every week "Puck" "Lot o Fun" "Chips" and "Comic Cuts". I had no doubt then that this was a good thing. I am still convinced that my reading habits were developed by the long-winded explanations which were printed in small type under each picture.

"The worst crimes perpetrated by Weary Willie and Tired Tim were associated with custard pies and stolen strings of sausages; the only erotic scenes were tender exchange between cooks and policemen, and the most vicious assaults were made by throwing jam tart at the face of a 'hated rival for the hand of Gloria Goldinplenty."

"The comics of those days were funny, harmless and sufficiently interesting to make children want to read. So are some of the comics of today. "Robin" "Eagle" and some other English comics are used in some schools these comics are undoubtedly good.