

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST



THE  
EMPTY CHAIR.

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# Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 16

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## IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.



### CHUMS IN COUNCIL

#### GERTCHER, ED!

"Where did you get all that business about sun-drenched beaches? You must have been reading a Hamilton holiday series. It was the only flaw in the September number."

So wrote a northern reader. Alas for heavy irony! In future your editor won't try to be funny.

#### A LOST ART?

Reading this month's Danny's Diary, I was impressed by Danny's enthusiasm for the paper PUCK. I wondered, in fact, whether the paper deserved such praise, or whether his enthusiasm was merely the natural exuberance of immaturity in an age which lacked so many of the marvels of the world in which we live today.

I managed to obtain a copy of Puck of roughly the same vintage as that extolled by Danny. I was greatly impressed by the colour, the illustrations, and the wealth of first-class reading matter for children. A feast of enjoyment, in the best of taste, for all youngsters.

I asked the opinion of a man on the staff of one of our great

weekly illustrated magazines. He said: "It would be impossible to produce a paper like that today!"

"You mean," I queried, "that it would cost too much to produce? That there would be no market for it?"

"I mean," he replied tersely, "that it couldn't be done! It's a lost art!"

It makes you think!

### THE PEDRO STORY

History is made this month in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. Pedro, the famous bloodhound, has come back in No. 507, entitled "KILLER PACK." It is an issue which most Digest readers will wish to include among their treasures. If you do not have a standing order for S.B.L., your newsagent will get you a copy within a day or two.

It is a fast-moving, exciting, well-written story which should please all lovers of detective drama. But KILLER PACK will be judged by our readers, not so much on its quality as a story, as on the manner that the return of the grand bloodhound has been handled. We hope that readers will write in to us and let us have their views. We shall hope to publish a selection of readers' views in an early issue of the Digest.

If any overseas reader finds difficulty in obtaining the story, we shall be happy to send it out from this office. The S.B.L. costs only one shilling.

### THE 1962 ANNUAL

We promised last month to let you know of further treasures which you will find in our immense Year Book to be published in December. BRIAN DOYLE follows up his great work on CHUMS last year with a splendid detailed contribution entitled "Through the Years with the Boy's Own Paper." It is a great treat for all who know one of the most famous boys' magazines in the world. And who doesn't?

ROSS STORY has contributed a warm and completely delightful article entitled "The Magic of Brooks." It will be unalloyed joy for all St. Frank's fans - and for everyone who loves a charming, well-written article.

### SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

P. G. Wodehouse, President of the Northern Section, will be 81 on October 15th. We wish this veteran author, who has delighted us with his school stories and other books, very many happy returns of the day.

THE EDITOR.

# HAMILTONIANA

## RETURN TO ROSE LAWN

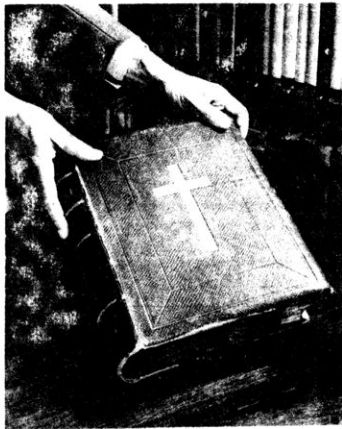
By Roger M. Jenkins

"I distinctly remember your visit to Mr. Hamilton some years ago," wrote Miss Hood, just before I accompanied John Wernham on another visit to that well-remembered house in Percy Avenue. Kingsgate is somewhat apart from Broadstairs, and really consists of two long parallel avenues, each sloping gently down to the sea. Percy Avenue contains houses

of various periods all intermingled: some like "Rose Lawn" were built before the first World War; others went up between the wars, and some are almost new.

As all collectors know, before the first World War, Charles Hamilton lived something of a peripatetic existence all over Western Europe. When he returned to England on the outbreak of war, he landed at Hastings and spent the night at Hawkinge, a village which was the home of Miss Hood: this was his first contact with the lady who was to look after him so devotedly for nearly half a century. He bought a bungalow and lived at Hawkinge, and used to return there at times even after he removed to Kingsgate. Collectors will recall Bunter's stay at a holiday bungalow near Hastings in the Smedley series.

"Rose Lawn" was purchased in 1925, and was Charles Hamilton's principal home from that time onwards. His travels were over by this time, and two trips a week to his publishers in London were his only outings. A busy author could not neglect his work, even when he had guests staying with him, and in order to accommodate friends and relatives without too much disturbance at "Rose Lawn" he bought



FRANK RICHARDS' FAMILY BIBLE

a bungalow opposite a year or so later. Yet he was not a complete recluse: he did entertain his guests between periods of writing and he fitted up the western part of his lounge with a curtain so that his niece could act plays in the lounge. The stage door was later blocked up by the father of the present Lord Privy Seal. Charles Hamilton was also an amateur cinephotographer, and there are 16mm films of himself and his guests: we were shown the cine-camera with a film that had been in it since 1935, a date which marks the conclusion of his own filming activities, though he did possess a silent copy of the Pathe interest film which was taken in 1946. I well remember making a pilgrimage to a Muswell Hill cinema and sitting through three hours of tedium just to see Charles Hamilton for two or three minutes.

A number of collectors must have visited the lounge at "Rose Lawn". They will remember that it seems to be in two parts, the eastern end having a large window and being furnished with desk, gramophone and piano (complete with music of operas with Latin words), while the western end has three small circular windows like port-holes fitted with opaque coloured glass. At this end are the easy chairs, settee, book-shelves and fireplace, and it was a secluded spot for Charles Hamilton to sit in, containing numerous light fittings and flexible reading lamps. In his later years his sight was so bad that he preferred artificial light to daylight.

At the back of the house is a dining-room (with more book-shelves) and french windows leading out to a pleasant garden. He and Miss Hood often used to do a little gardening together, and Charles Hamilton's main interests were watering and lighting bonfires - two of Mible's main occupations at Greyfriars, it would seem.

Upstairs are four main rooms. Charles Hamilton's bedroom was a small, simply furnished room in the front of the house with divan bed and of course a bedside table and reading lamp. The room of greatest interest in the house is his den, upstairs at the back. Ours was only the second visit ever made by visitors to this particular room, for it was jealously guarded in the author's lifetime, and Miss Hood was allowed in, on sufferance, for only a very brief dusting and cleaning. In this room were most of his stories written



A corner of the famous author's lounge, showing his typewriter, tobacco jar, pipe, and a selection of his stories.

from 1925 onwards; the assiduous collector will note that the golden age of the Magnet has its origins in this Kentish retreat.

On the left of the window, by the fireside, is another cabinet gramophone and small armchair. By the window stands a low table with the old-fashioned typewriter on it, and a very low stool with a cushion constituted his only repose during this period of intense creative writing. To the right of the window, the long wall opposite the door is nothing but bookshelves, and in front of them is another desk, a higher one, with another old typewriter. The only modern touch is a metal filing-cabinet, but it does not contain notes about his characters and school - it is just a stationery store, for a very methodical person. A smaller bookcase lines the remaining wall.

The books in the den are intensely interesting. There are of course, dictionaries and works of reference, a few Latin authors that seemed to have strayed from the lounge, and on the right are all the Bunter books. But the fascinating books are works on foreign travel - China and California being two of great significance - and school stories by other authors in editions published between the two wars. Here can be seen Alec Waugh, P. G. Wodehouse, Desmond Coke, Rudyard Kipling, H. A. Vachell, Hugh Walpole, Talbot Baines Reed and G. F. Bradley, to name a few. All had been read, and parts which had particularly interested Charles Hamilton were marked in pencil. It is clear that his stories owe nothing to these authors (except perhaps Mr. Quelch's refusal to leave Greyfriars when dismissed by Mr. Brander, which bears a close resemblance to a similar incident in Bradley's "Lanchester Tradition"), but it is also interesting to note that he was not unaware of what his rivals had to offer.

In a cupboard in this room can be found Charles Hamilton's own collection - but it is in a state to make collectors weep. Miss Hood said that Charles Hamilton never worried about possessions, and of course he would not treasure his own works as a collector would. The Magnets and Gems are all opened at the beginning of the story (often the covers have been torn off) and are roughly tied in series by means of string. The Schoolboy's Owns are in much better condition, and it is interesting to note that he had a copy of "School and Sport", a work he thoroughly detested, but certainly it was not condemned unread. The Magnets are nearly all of the golden age - between Nos. 1000 and 1300. There are a few red Magnets and blue Gems, but, apart from these, the only other Gems are the new stories of 1939. The Schoolboy's Owns fill some of the gaps in the collection of Magnets and Gems, and there are some Rio Kid stories in the monthly Boys' Friends, but not a trace of Rookwood, except in some Holiday Annuals. It is, quite clearly, a very selective assortment of his best work, and I was pleased to see that it seemed to confirm some of the judgements I had ventured to make in C.D. Annuals in the past.

Miss Hood allowed us to pay two visits, and on the second occasion John Wernham took a professional photographer as well as taking some photographs of his own, whilst I was filming outside. Miss Hood is clearly devoted to the memory of her former employer, and nothing was too much trouble for her during our visits: we were allowed to turn the whole place inside out for the purposes of photography. We could not help feeling as we drove away that she was a little lonely and forlorn in that quiet house of memories.

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**EDITORS' NOTE:** The photographs which accompany this article appear by courtesy of John Wernham, who arranged for the pictures to be taken. Our front cover, "The Empty Chair" shows a corner of Frank Richards' lounge, well-known to visitors at Rose Lawn.

John Wernham is collecting material with the aim in view of starting a Charles Hamilton Museum in Maidstone, Kent. The project has received a good deal of publicity. The Evening Standard carried a lengthy report on the matter, and this report was copied by several other national papers, and also appeared in newspapers overseas. Mr. Wernham was due to appear on television on Friday, 14th September, to explain his plan, and he is also expected to feature in the Light radio programme very shortly. He appeals to anyone who has anything concerning Charles Hamilton which might be useful in the museum to send it to him. His address is 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 61. "X" MARKS THE SPOT!

Down the years, Charles Hamilton explored almost every possible facet of the school yarn for boys; every conceivable mood of the schoolboy in fiction. It has been suggested that he repeated himself. So he did. The surprising thing is that he repeated himself so little.

High in favour with most readers would be his suspense stories. One could, perhaps, call them mystery stories, though there was not much mystery for the reader. We may wonder that he never gave us a real mystery story - a mystery that was not explained till the end of the series, after the style of Agatha Christie. A tale of this type would have been easy for Charles Hamilton, for he had his network of characters all ready, over which to spread the threads of the mystery. It can only be assumed that the idea never occurred to him, which was a pity.

The Hamilton suspense stories fell into a pattern. As a rule the reader was given the key of the mystery quite early, when a newcomer was introduced into the tale. Captain Mellish arrived for the Mysterious "X" stories; we learned in the Courtfield Cracksman series that the Head had a new chauffeur named Barnes; in the Rookwood kidnapping series a sinister "old boy" arrived under the name of Lagden; in the St. Jim's kidnapping series a jovial miller put in an appearance in the mill on the moor; in the Mr. Lamb series a new art master arrived at Greyfriars. We had the infallible pointer.

Such was the pattern of the Hamilton mysteries. There was method in such madness. The reader was allowed to smell a rat, but nobody in the story suspected the criminal for a time. The author threw out a few red herrings which never deceived the reader, and were never intended to. The reader, like Mr. Buddle in our 1960 Annual story, felt clever, and he was compelled to go on buying the paper to see whether he was really as clever as he thought. At the end, the reader could say with satisfaction: "I told you so!"

Crime, of course, played its part in many of Charles Hamilton's greatest series - robbery, blackmail, kidnapping, arson, even murder.

Particularly in earlier times, Charles Hamilton had a real gift for the eerie, a quality which was rather lost in the longer series of later years. The classic of the robbery stories, and to some extent, of the eerie, was the Gem's Mysterious "X" stories. It is doubtful whether it was ever surpassed of its type, though the Courtful Cracksman series was a greater literary achievement. In the Magnet's "Hidden Horror" of the same period as "X" we saw the same gift of eerie atmosphere.

Of the kidnapping stories, the Gem's "Mystery of the Painted Room" was another classic of its type. Read today, when the basic theme has been repeated on several occasions, this old story still retains much of its eerie magic.

Another story "Nobody's Study" has lived in the memory of countless readers, not because it was a particularly good story, but because of the weird, eerie atmosphere which the author managed to implant in the tale.

It does, in fact, take genius to put atmosphere into a story in this way. Plenty of anthologies of horror stories are published today - stories intended to give one the creeps when read late at night. But most of these horror stories are horrifying simply because they are horrible. There is a vast difference between stories which give one a spine-chilling tension and those which, through sadism or distorted imagination, give one a sense of revulsion.

I recall one remarkable story in the Sexton Blake Library which was calculated to give one the jitters if read late at night or by a reader who was alone in the house. This was "The Living Shadow" by Pierre Quiroule. For eeriness it knocks spots off any so-called horror story ever written. Any author can horrify by horrible episodes, but it takes a writer of unusual ability to give his reader the jumps, starting at every sound, and looking now and then over his shoulder. Pierre Quiroule had that gift, and he also told a fine story.

Murder was not totally absent from the Magnet stories, though it was very rare. My friend and colleague, Roger Jenkins, is of the opinion that the Ravenspur Grange series was totally out of place in the Magnet. I cannot agree with this view, for I enjoyed the series so much when it was first published, and have equally enjoyed re-reading it many times since. It had no light relief. But the brooding, sinister atmosphere was written into the stories in a way that makes Ravenspur Grange memorable.

Violence played its ignoble part in many of the great foreign travel series. The most bloodthirsty of the lot was the China series which was the greatest of the lot. If violence and murder had caused a series to be thrown out of the Magnet we should have lost Charles Hamilton's greatest travel opus. In this series, once again, the author proved himself the master of atmosphere.

As the years passed after Ravenspur Grange and the China series, the golden gift of attaining atmosphere rarely peeped through. One saw it again briefly in the Turret Room sequences of the Bertie Vernon series, which though it is not a series I cared for a lot, had its moments. It's just my point of view! What's yours?



CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 59. SECOND TO NONE

JOHN WERNHAM. There can be no doubt that many of us fondly imagine that Charles Hamilton was writing at his best when we were spending out particular pennies or tuppences at that particular time when we were young. For instance, I have never read the Lancaster series, and I wonder if I would think these better than the Talbot series since the latter were published in "my" period, and the former were too late to capture the boy. Certainly I have always considered "The Housemaster's Homecoming" to be the best thing that Martin Clifford ever did, and I was intrigued to find that Martin Clifford was of the same opinion. The atmosphere of that story was and is quite wonderful; the returning hero, the cricket field and the lonely boy.

BILL GANDER. My Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary provides several definitions of the word "simple." The second one reads "Not complex or complicated." I did not know in exactly what manner E.B.F. thought of Charles Hamilton's style as "More simple", but when I used the item the second Funk Wagnall's meaning is the one I assumed to be meant.

The Pentelow Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories have not been included in my reading for many years, but when I was reading them the feeling I had was that they were not as easy reading as were the stories by Charles Hamilton. Perhaps J.N.P. did not find them as easy writing as did Mr. Hamilton? I seem to remember it being stated that a story which the author finds hard to write will not read easily. Might not youthful readers have found the J.N.P. stories less easy to read than C.H. stories? The latter being written in a "more simple" style" in the F. & W's second meaning? Less complex or complicated?

BASIL ADAM. I, like yourself, am left wondering who wrote better school stories than Frank Richards. If these critics cannot produce the names of better school story writers, then their remarks are meaningless as well as stupid. All authors are judged by their best works - even Dickens, Maugham, and Wodehouse wrote some poor stuff.

If anyone can give me the same of a school story to equal the first Harry Wharton's Downfall series I would be delighted to read it. Until then, this series alone makes Frank Richards "Second to None."

GEORGE SELLARS. What a wealth of truth you wrote in "Second to None." Frank Richards was second to none of all school story writers, past or present.

BOB WRITER. I am sure you are right when you speak of many critics being restrained from uninformed and often spiteful remarks while Frank was alive. He put them well and truly in their places. To me, he was, is, and always will be the supreme school story writer. I haven't read all the authors you list, but most characters in school stories are colourless. Frank Richards' characters really came alive. As for the person who spoke of Frank having a "more simple style" - has he ever tried to write in a "simple style" I wonder. I never had the feeling that Frank took me for an idiot and had to go all round the mulberry bush to explain every sequence for me.

BILL HUBBARD. I see that I come under the lash in "Let's Be Controversial" No. 59. How you Hamilton enthusiasts do bristle when your idol is criticised, as you think, in any way! You have either misconstrued my remarks in some way - or am I being butchered to make a Roman Holiday?

I have never hidden my admiration for C.H.'s work. He wrote, however, hundreds of pot-boilers, and the number of his really outstanding stories was small compared to his total output. The list I gave in my letter and which you reproduced in No. 59 is, I admit, rather small, but that was because of lack of space, and I included mainly Gem stories

because that was my favourite Hamilton paper. I am NOT suggesting that the only outstanding school stories in the Gem appeared between 1911-1918 and that nothing outstanding appeared in the Magnet after early 1925. I will include in my list, if you like, the Loder Captaincy series, the Lancaster series and the Victor Cleeve series, and, of course, there are others. But not the Bunter Court series, the Whiffles Circus series, the Wharton Lodge series, or the China series, for they were not school stories. I am trying to compare the outstanding school series of C.H. with those of other writers. C.H. comes out of such a comparison extremely well, and you will agree it is only fair that he should be represented by what is thought to be his best work.

I have read at least one series from every year that the Gem and Magnet were published. I have also been a reader of both C.D. and the S.P.C. for over ten years. My knowledge of C.H.'s work, therefore, is hardly quite as contemptible as you rather seem to indicate.

ERIC FAYNE adds: When No. 59 was written I could hardly know what Mr. Hubbard meant. I only knew what he said. And he said: "I think the number of really outstanding school stories Charles Hamilton wrote could be counted on the fingers of one hand." But in querying so sweeping a statement I had no intention of butchering Mr. Hubbard for a Roman Holiday.

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#### OUR OCTOBER CONTEST

Can you make SQUIGGLE RHYMES? This is how you do it. Choose your own clue. Then make a Squiggle Rhyme.

Here are a few examples to guide you -

- "A Schoolboy's Double" - MERRY CHERRY.
- "Gates Closed" - TAGGLES HAGGLES.
- "The last Magnet story" - Shadow of the SACK puts reader on the RACK.
- "Where redheads are concerned" - TINKER WINKER.

Remember, you compose your own clue, from any of the Old Boys' Books, and then make your own Squiggle Rhyme.

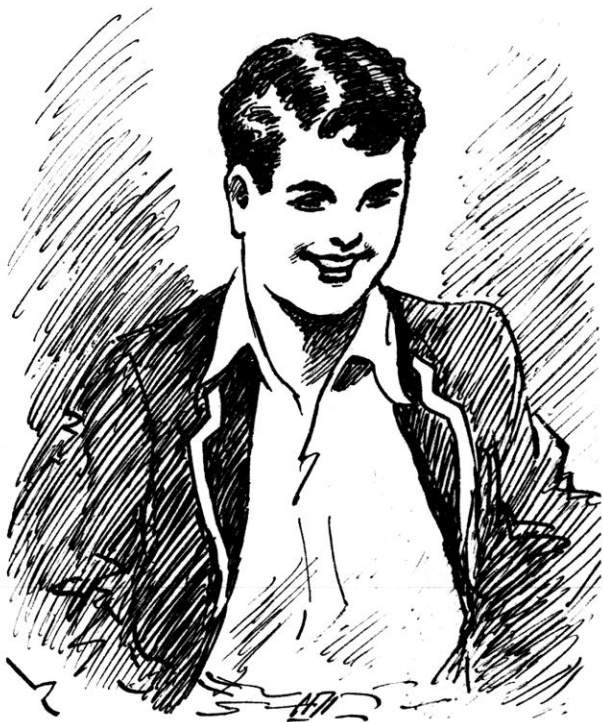
Write your effort on a postcard or a sheet of paper, with your name and address, and post it to the editor before October 18th. A book prize will be sent to each of the TWO readers who send in what the Editor considers the most ingenious attempts. You may send in as many attempts as you wish. Get all the family squiggling.

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#### OUR NEW PORTRAIT GALLERY

HARRY WHARTON was the leading character of the Greyfriars stories. He was voted the most popular character in O.B. fiction, in our recent Popularity Contest.

Fine character pictures of him were painted in the two opening stories in the Magnet, in the two Rebel series of 1925 and 1932, and in the Stacey Series of 1935.



— HARRY WHARTON —

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN, 27 Archdale Road, East  
Dulwich, LONDON, S. E. 22.

It is very strange how one can search for a certain copy of a paper for years and years without ever getting it. In my own case, however, something even stranger happened quite recently, for one of my Union Jack "wants" No. 800, "The Affair of the Bronze Monkey" came to me from three different sources! So, all of you who despair of ever getting your much wanted stories, take a note of this and never give up hope!

JOSIE PACKMAN

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"WARWICK JARDINE"

By W. O. G. Lofts

(continued)

It has been generally believed that Francis Warwick also used the pen-name of 'Roland Spencer' for many of his stories. This is not correct, although there is some slight connection. 'Roland Spencer' was in fact the pen-name of Geoffrey Prout, a great friend of Francis Warwick. Many readers of THE SCOUT will remember that Geoffrey Prout wrote a considerable amount for that paper. He also wrote a number of articles and bound books on boat-building, yacht cruising and boating generally, on which subject he was an expert, and had his own boat business at Canvey Island, Essex. Geoffrey Prout died a few years ago, Francis Warwick wrote at least two serials in collaboration with him under the 'Roland Spencer' pen-name. These appeared in the GEM in the 'twenties', the titles being "Chums of the Iron Way", about a young railwayman; and "Tom of the Ajax" a story about a naval training-ship.

Mr. C. M. Down was so impressed with the style of writing and the reaction from readers about these two fine serials that, about late 1928, he asked Francis Warwick if he would like to tackle writing a Tom Merry story. This he did, and his effort was accepted by the editor as up to standard. From then on, until the A. Press started reprinting the old St. Jim's stories, Francis Warwick wrote far more tales of Tom Merry and Co. than any other writer. Mr. Warwick feels quite proud of

his efforts in this field, and claims that there certainly was no adverse criticism of the stories by readers at that time, although many were written under great difficulties. He relates, that whilst in America in 1930 he received an urgent cable from England for 'copy' of a St. Jim's story - one of a series, and it had to be written by the following morning! He began writing it at eight in the evening, and by eight o'clock the next morning he had completed the 25,000 words required - with the help of lots of strong coffee in the meantime. He is still proud of that effort, and Charlie Wright in particular, who always liked the Lady Peggy stories, will be interested to know that this was one of the series.

Mr. Warwick is somewhat puzzled as to why some series of stories in that period of the GEM have been attributed to Edwy Searles Brooks, for Mr. Warwick wrote them himself and has his own file copies in his library at his home. All stories featuring Lady Peggy, Spalding Hall, Bully Burkett and Cyrus P. Hancock came from Mr. Warwick's pen. Keen readers will also find that he could not resist his old love for Greyfriars in several of the stories - such as Nos. 1132 and 1217.

Here then, is a full list of GEM stories he wrote: 1092, 1095/6, 1105/7, 1117/8, 1120/3, 1130, 1132, 1142/7, 1151/4, 1157, 1168, 1171/5, 1180/2, 1187/91, 1195/6, 1217.

In closing my information about Mr. Warwick's St. Jim's stories, I feel that in all fairness to him I should quote his statement about them, particularly in view of criticisms about these stories by some collectors.

"I think it should be clearly understood that these tales were written for the juvenile market only, and for boys and girls to read. It is so easy to criticise them today for an adult point of view, and most certainly they satisfied the editors concerned - and readers for that matter. It should be also remembered that they kept the GEM going during a difficult period - when no Charles Hamilton stories were available."

With the starting of the reprinting of the old stories in the GEM, Francis Warwick commenced writing for - to him - an entirely new field of boys stories, the Sexton Blake Library. His first tale, entitled "The Great Dumping Mystery" (second series No. 325) was, of course, published under the now well-known pen-name of "Warwick Jardine". Later stories by him in the S.B.L. featured Dearth Tallon and Sandra Sylvester.

Somehow or other, I have always gained the impression that 'Warwick Jardine' was very fond of introducing the medical profession into

his stories, and in answer to my question about this he replied: 'I had not realised that I had introduced medical men into my stories to any greater extent than other people; though, now you mention it, I must confess to a liking for the sinister doctor characters in fiction. I have heard it said that no play with a medical man as leading character can fail.'

Late 1933 brought a fresh challenge to Francis Warwick. Readers of stories by that brilliant writer W. W. Sayer had been bombarding Mr. Len Pratt, the editor of the S.B.L. for some time for more stories of Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie. Unfortunately, however, with Mr. Sayer now writing in other fields he could not be commissioned to write fresh Blake yarns. Thus it was that Francis Warwick was approached by the editor with a view to substitution, to which he agreed. The first story written by Mr. Warwick featuring those two famous characters of W. W. Sayer's appeared in No. 403 of the S.B.L., dated October, 1933 and entitled "The Crime in Park Lane." It is no secret that this and the following tale, "The Man from Tokio" were a complete flop. A first-class writer in his own right, Mr. Warwick found it impossible to write about the characters as did W. W. Sayer, and with readers now complaining about the stories it was hastily decided to reprint the old W.W. Sayer yarns under his non-de-plume of 'Pierre Quiroule (although the editor still made a bloomer by mis-spelling the surname on the first few issues!)

During this particular period Francis Warwick was an extremely busy man, writing stories for the weekly "Thriller" and "Detective Weekly" and also for the women's market.

The year 1939, saw his last story in the Sexton Blake Library for six years, during which time he served in the Army. His war-time service is shrouded in secrecy, but it is a fact that his "Cliff Gordon" stories of M.I.5., written in the post-war period, were based on his own experiences, although fact and fiction at times became mixed up - with fiction naturally predominating.

With the coming of the New Order in the S.B.L. in 1955, and with old authors dropping out, it seemed we had seen the last of 'Warwick Jardine' in his thirty-first story in the Library entitled "The Riddle of the Green Cylinder" dated March, 1955. But one of the September, 1961 issues of the 'modern' Blake Library came from his pen ("Death Her Destination") and was given an excellent review by myself, so perhaps we have not seen the last of 'Warwick Jardine' in the S.B. field.

In closing this article, I know I speak for all of us in saying that we owe a debt to Francis Warwick for his work in the field of juvenile literature in general, and his Sexton Blake stories in particu-

lar. Let us hope that he continues to bring pleasure to readers for many years to come.

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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (3rd series) (continued)

No. 379	Flashpoint for Treason.....	(*Editorial Name)	"D. Reid"
No. 380	Deadline for Danger.....		A. Maclean
No. 381	Special Edition - Murder.....		A. Kent
No. 382	Vacation With Fear.....		J. T. Story
No. 383	Shoot when Ready.....		W. H. Baker
No. 384	Victim Unknown.....		"D. Reid"
	{Story by L. Roberts, rewritten by A. Maclean}		
No. 385	Corpse for Copenhagen.....		J. Burke
No. 386	Roadhouse Girl.....		"D. Reid"
	{Story by A. L. Martin, rewritten by A. Maclean}		
No. 387	Murder with Variety.....		W. H. Baker
No. 388	Act of Violence.....		W. H. Baker
No. 389	Stand-in for Murder.....		"D. Reid"
	{Story by Frank Lambe, rewritten by A. Maclean}		
No. 390	Find me a Killer.....		A. Maclean
No. 391	Passport to Danger.....		J. Stagg
No. 392	The Copy-Cat Killings.....		T. Martin
No. 393	The Violent Hours.....		W. H. Baker
No. 394	The Blonde and the Boodle.....		J. T. Story
No. 395	The Last Days of Berlin.....		W. H. Baker
No. 396	Walk in Fear.....		W. H. Baker
No. 397	Murder Down Below.....		J. Stagg
No. 398	Redhead for Danger.....		A. Maclean
No. 399	Stairway to Murder.....		A. Kent
No. 400	The Sea Tigers.....		W. H. Baker
No. 401	Collapse of Stout Party.....		J. T. Story
No. 402	Murder Most Intimate.....		W. H. Baker
No. 403	Crime of Violence.....		J. Stagg
No. 404	Lady in Distress.....		T. Martin
No. 405	High Heels and Homicide.....		"D. Reid"
	{Story by J. F. Burke, rewritten by A. Maclean}		
No. 406	The Fatal Hour.....		E. A. Ballard
No. 407	Nine o'clock Shadow.....		J. T. Story
No. 408	Crime is my Business.....		W. H. Baker
No. 409	The Naked Blade.....		W. H. Baker
No. 410	Wake Up Screaming.....		A. Kent
No. 411	Final Curtain.....		A. Maclean
No. 412	Murder in the Sun.....		J. T. Story
No. 413	No Time to Live.....		W. H. Baker
No. 414	Diamonds can be Trouble.....		E. A. Ballard
No. 415	The Evil Eye.....		T. Martin
No. 416	She Ain't Got No Body.....		J. T. Story
No. 417	The Voodoo Drum.....		W. H. Baker
No. 418	The Frightened People.....		J. T. Story
No. 419	The House on the Bay.....		A. Maclean
No. 420	Appointment with Danger.....		W. H. Baker
No. 421	A cry in the Night.....		W. H. Baker
No. 422	Consider Your Verdict.....		R. Hardinge
	{Rewrite of S.B.L. 3rd series No. 192}		

October, 1912.

The big event in the world of literature this month has been the publishing of a new paper called "The Penny Popular." It contains stories of Tom Merry (the world's most popular schoolboy), Sexton Blake (the world's most popular detective), and Jack, Sam & Pete (the world's most popular adventurers). What a lot of worlds, and what a lot of populars! And all for a penny!

In No. 1 of this paper, which is all green, there was "Tom Merry - New Boy." I had been looking forward to this for weeks, and it was, of course, the first Tom Merry tale to appear in the Gem. I was surprised to find that the Terrible Three were not at St. Jim's but at a school called Clavering. The Sexton Blake story was called "The Case of the Treasure Hunter" and Mr. Lindsay, the father of one of my school pals, was very excited about it. He said that the story originally appeared in Union Jack No. 100 about seven years ago, and he remembered it so well because it was the very first story to introduce Pedro, Sexton Blake's wonderful bloodhound. I found that very interesting. The third story in "The Penny Popular" was "Volcano Island" about Jack, Sam and Pete. I expect this came from an old Marvel.

Early this month there was a dreadful submarine disaster. The British sub B.2 was in collision with the Hamburg-America Liner "Amerika", about four miles from Dover. She sank immediately with her crew of 16 men. Only one man, Lieutenant Pulleyne was saved after he had been floating for a long time.

Doug bought the latest Boy's Friend 3d Library called "The Fifth Form at Haygarth" by Jack North. Doug is very fond of Jack North's stories, and he says I can have it when he has finished with it.

One week I had Comic Cuts, and Tom, the Ticket-of-Leave Man, broke into the house owned by Professor Radium. Now this was a very clever bit of business, for Professor Radium appears in Puck. This made me buy Puck. It is really a beautiful paper. The colours are lovely, the paper it is printed on is good quality, and the printing itself is so clear. The illustrations are very good indeed. I particularly like the stories about Val Fox, detective and ventriloquist, and his monkey, Micky. There is also a good fairy tale serial called "Prince Silverstar" and a fine school serial entitled "Tom-All-Alone's Schooldays." It is truly a marvellous paper, and I wish I could afford to buy it every week.

The Prince of Wales has become an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford. He will study history, geography, French, German, English Literature, Political Science and Political Economy. Crumbs! What a lot to study! One thing, he doesn't seem to have maths, which I detest - but fancy all that lot!

The Magnet has been pretty good this month, though nothing really rememberable.

D A N N Y ' S





...SOME MORE SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE STORIES  
...SE OF THE  
...E HUNTERS VOLCANO ISLAND!

**PULAR** No. 1 Vol. 1



...ST ON HIS FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL!



...THE FINEST AND MOST...



Tom Merry

"The Schoolboy Sleepwalker" was Lord Mauleverer. In his sleep, he hid his valuables in other boys' boxes, which caused quite a to-do for a time.

The following week there was a comedy called "The Schoolboy Policeman," all about the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society, and introducing P.C. Tozer. Then came some real mellow drama, worthy of the Lyceum. This was "For His Mother's Sake." Mr. and Mrs. Nugent quarrelled, and Mrs. Nugent ran away and wanted to take Dicky with her as Dicky was her favourite son. Frank was upset, and got hurt in a train smash. So Mr. and Mrs. Nugent made it up round his bed, and Harry Wharton spent his convalescence with him. It was very mellow drama, but Mum read it and said it was a nice story. She said that parents should never have favourites among their sons and Doug said that she treats him and me both alike but she treats me more.

The fourth story in the Magnet was "The Terror of Greyfriars" and it was illustrated by Arthur Clarke. He used to draw for the Magnet a lot. In the story a new boy called Theophilus Flippo went to Greyfriars, and his father ran a paper called "The Young Health Seeker." Flippo tried to make everyone healthy, and put medicine in their food. This gave them stomach ache, and was annoying. But when Mr. Welch started getting stomach aches too, he thought it was a bit too much, so Flippo had to leave.

Speaking of the Lyceum, Mum took me there to see "The Open Door." The stars were Halliwell Hobbs, Albert Ward and Lillian Hallows. But it was very mellow drama and I didn't like it much.

Cousin Robin, who lives at Aldershot, opened his heart during the month, and sent me the Union Jack. It was an exciting tale called "The Opium Smugglers" and it had a villain named Count Ivor Carlac. He has been

in the Union Jack quite a bit lately..

I had a day's holiday from school on Trafalgar Day, October 21st; It was the 107th anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, and the occasion was celebrated in London and at Portsmouth on board the "Victory." The yardarms and masts were hung with bunches of evergreens and wreaths, and Nelson's signal "England Expects --" was flown as well. Doug and I went to Trafalgar Square in the morning, and in the afternoon we went to the matinee of "Doormats" at Wyndham's Theatre. It was called a light comedy, and Doug laughed, but I didn't. The stars were Gerald De Maurier and Marie Lohr. In the evening we went to see the fireworks at the Crystal Palace, and I enjoyed them very much.

Next morning I didn't feel much like school, and I had a good mind to feel sick, but I thought better of it.

A marvellous month in the Gem. The first tale was grand. Called "The Wrong Team,"

it told of a challenge Tom Merry had from the famous Thebans football team. Kildare, Darrell and Monteith were so pleased to play against the Thebans that they agreed to play for Tom Merry's team, but it turned out that Tom had received the challenge by mistake. Kildare felt mortified, but the Thebans were good sports, so they agreed to play the game after all - and Tom Merry's team beat them. I daresay it was a bit indelible, but it was a ripping story.

Martin Clifford keeps his tales very up to date, and I expect that he remembered all those terrible floods at Norwich in August and it gave him the perspiration to write "The Flooded School." It was a grand story, and Mr. Selby was nearly drowned in the quadrangle.

That week a new serial started in the Gem, called "Birds of Prey" by Maxwell Scott, all about the famous detective Nelson Lee. I have now read the first two instalments, and it is very good.

Mr. Lindsay, who is a well-read man, says that "Birds of Prey" was the serial which started in the very first issue of "The Boy's Friend", donkey's years ago, and he is sure they used the same pictures that they now have in the Gem.

Then came a scouting story called "The Schoolboy Scouts" - Tom Merry & Co belong to the Curlew Patrol - and a Scotland Yard man called Inspector Fix arrested a bogus scout-master. I rather think I shall join the scouts.

The last Gem of the month was "One Against the School," and it was grand. Lumley-Lumley, who is one of my favourites now, featured in it, and so did his pal, Grimes, the grocer's boy. Levison gave Lumley-Lumley a pass from Knox, but it was written in invisible ink and Levison imitated Knox's signature. It all came right in the end.

The new Shops' Act passed by Parliament makes nearly every shop close for one half day during the week, and our shops are closing on Wednesday afternoons. With the Gem coming out on Wednesdays now, I have to make sure to get my copy in the morning.

In return for his Union Jack, I sent Robin Doug's Marvel which contained a Fighting Parson - Tom Sayers story called "The Bully of the Thames." All the Tom Sayers tales are illustrated by R. J. Macdonald, but I don't think he is so good at drawing adults as schoolboys.

A statue of Captain Cook has just been unveiled at Whitby, where all of his ships - The Endeavour, the Resolution, the Adventure, and the Discovery - were built. And a war has just started between Turkey and the Balkan countries of Montenegro, Servia, Bulgaria and Greece. Dad says he hopes it won't spread.

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S.B.L. Titles continued from page 15

No. 423	Witness to Murder	E. A. Ballard
No. 424	Dressed to Kill	D. Chambers
No. 425	Shadow of a Gun	T. Martin
No. 426	Stop Press - Homicide	R. Dolphin
No. 427	The Violent Ones	W. H. Baker
No. 428	Time for Murder	J. Stagg
No. 429	Invitation to a Murder	J. T. Story
No. 430	Safari with Fear	R. Hardinge
No. 431	Passport Into Fear	W. H. Baker
No. 432	Courier for Crime	J. T. Story
No. 433	Catch a Tiger	T. Martin
No. 434	Showdown in Sydney	"D. Reid"
No. 435	Espresso Jungle	W. H. Baker
No. 436	Home Sweet Homicide	J. T. Story
No. 437	Walk in the Shadows	R. Dolphin
No. 438	Touch of Evil	A. Maclean
No. 439	Killers Playground	E. A. Ballard

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

IN RETROSPECT

By R. J. Godsave

The freedom enjoyed by an author of a story is great. There are so few restrictions that he can shape his story to his heart's desire. It gives a generous chance for narrative, description and conversation. This freedom is best realised by comparison with the theatre where the number of acts may vary, but the action can be advanced only by means of conversation between the actors. The author of a play cannot explain the characters' remarks or express his private opinion of their actions.

The most natural and simplest way of telling a story is by narration. The reader listens while the author relates what happens. This is the method used by E. S. Brooks when he introduced St. Frank's College to the readers of the Nelson Lee Library.

Up to No. 112, o.s. the stories were of the detective adventures of Nelson Lee and Nipper by various authors, although the lion's share was contributed by Brooks. The change over from detective to school stories was neatly done. In "Nipper at St. Frank's" No. 112 o.s. the whole story was narrated by Nipper. This method of relating the St. Frank's stories was continued for the next seven years.

The reader naturally identified himself with Nipper and shared all his adventures, seeing everything from his viewpoint only. Thus, a close link was forged between the reader at St. Frank's College.

In 1923 E.S. Brooks was announced as the author of the stories and shortly after the narration by Nipper ceased. The effect of this change was to place the reader at a distance; the scene now being viewed on a broad front.

From my own point of view St. Frank's and its scholars became less clearly defined when the stories were no longer narrated by Nipper.

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ANOTHER VIEW.

By James W. Cook

I agree wholeheartedly with R.J. Godsave in his article "A

Jaundiced View?" about the humour found in the Nelson Lee Library, but surely this is a hazard you can apply to any book or paper. I consider the periodical PUNCH a very humorous paper. but I know plenty who do not share by view. For some strange reason I cannot even raise a smile at Thurber, but again, many consider his work very laughable. I don't think we can standardize a comic situation and bring a smile to everybody's countenance, that is, with certainty, but Edwy Searles Brooks' brand of humorous incidents was well worth the confidence he placed in them. Later on his confidence was to be sorely tried and by the time the third New Series came round it collapsed.

Mr. Godsave's reference to Brooks's application to his readers for suggestions on the type of story for the paper was, I think, more of an editorial adjustment than Edwy's own plan for he possessed a severity not worthy of the patience necessary to cope with the doubtful requirements of his readers. But it was left to him to change the order and in No. 539, Old Series, dated October 3rd, 1925, entitled THE PRISONER OF THE PRIORY, he made this announcement in "Between ourselves" .....

"During the week I've come to a decision. Or to be more exact, the Editor and I have come to a decision. From now onwards we're going to plan stories and arrange such items as the Portrait Gallery, General Map, League Magazine, etc., entirely ourselves. In other words, all you readers are left out in the cold - you won't have any voice at all!"

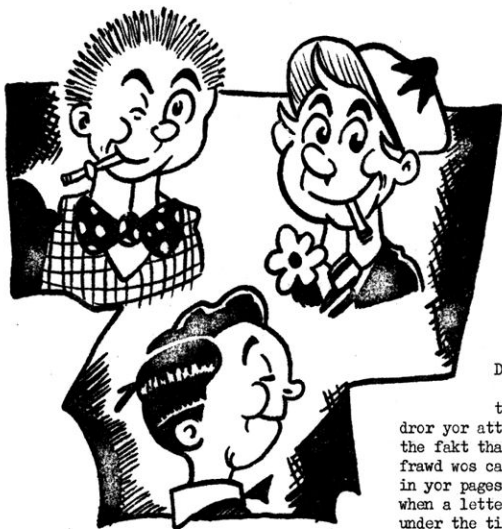
Now there is no denying the fact that from then on the Nelson Lee Library really did make a bigger appeal to the reader and continued to do so until the second New Series, but even in this period there were some really fine stories.

The reformation of Fullwood was, I think, a mistake, since, as Mr. Godsave remarks, a genuine reform is impossible, especially after so long a reign, but we somehow got over Reggie Pitt's change of character quite easily. I don't know exactly why.

Edwy reformed him very early and it may be that the transition period didn't take so long as it did in the case of Ralph Leslie. For Fullwood was for a long time the cad of Study A, whereas Reginald Pitt changed his behaviour not very long after his arrival.

THE BOTTLES MYSTERY

(We have received two letters from Mr. Philbot Bottles. There is a mystery about them. In one he challenges the identity of a Mr. Bottles who apparently attended a Merseyside Club Meeting. In the second, it seems that a Mr. Bottles actually was present there. We leave our readers to draw their own conclusions. ED.)



Dear Editor,  
I am sorry  
to have to  
dror yor attentshun to  
the fakt that a terrible  
frawd was carried owt  
in yor pages last mnth  
when a letter appeared  
under the title "A  
Ectic Nite Out with  
Horatio Bottle." This

"Horatio Bottle," whoever he is, is nothing but a low-down skowndrel.  
He tried to pass himself orf as the "Chips" offis boy. Wot nerve!  
Wot check! In spite of his boste that he was the offis boy of that

noble jernal for donkeys yeers, the publik must know that I, and no other, am the celebrated holder of that offis and my name is Philpot Bottles.

It okurred to me that the joker responsible for this cheeky frawd was that chump Sebastian Ginger, the "Comic Cuts" offis boy, because the letter was full of evidence of his terrible nonshuns of how the English langwidge should be ritten. This fakt alone was enough to show the diserning reader that the letter was not the werk of one who has so polished a stile as myself.

Whoever rote it seemed to be getting me mixed up with Horatio Pimple, who is, as everybody shud know, the offis boy of the "Funny Wender." Until my frend Ivor Klue, using Homeless Hector as a bludhound, tracks down the skowndrel, I am sending a piktire of myself, so that there is no further confushun. I have also put in one of that nitwit Ginger (in the cap) and Horatio Pimple.

I am the handsum one at the top left (as if you didn't know!)

Yors in disgust,

PHILPOT BOTTLES.

Dear mister fain an orl yore reeders,

If mi old gunver Corny Chips was 2 reed that bit in last mums See Dee abowt mi nite out 'ed do 'is nutt!

First of awl, u c, mi naim is Philpot Bottles, and wen i left mi resydense in Whitechapel i didn't go bi mi self, becaws i add sevrvl uthers wiv me.

i add orlreddy bin arsked 2 taik sum pals allong wiv me, and so i arranged 2 meat orl of 'em in Mrs Sally Slapcabbage's 'ot drink saloon. They was their orl rite - Horatio Pimple (the Funny Wender offis boy), Sebastian Ginger (Comic Cuts offis boy) and mi gal Sharlot Skroggins. We add a nyce jerney reely, except that the last lorry was full of old iron and a bit 'ard for Sharlot 2 sit on. Butt we did 'ave a good time orl rite, espeshully wen that bloke crate or case told us 'ow 'e used 2 reed abowt us evry weak. Sharlot took kwite a fansy 2 'im, and i can tell u i was rarver gladd 'e was orlreddy 'appily marryd!' The drinks wot that bloke winser brort wernt 2 bad, butt knot like wot they serve up at Mrs. Slapcabbage's. 'Ow ever, it was orl buk shee, so we carnt grumbul. Wen sum of 'em torked orl eye brow Horatio sed 'e thort they was bonkers, butt they new orl abowt morly verrer and the terribal 3 orl rite, and it was nyce 2 c they remmemerd us.

We did go 2 the Middle And meat in on the way back, and we 'ad annuver rite roil wellkum from a cove naimed 'Arry Roster or Coster.

Sebastian says 'e will rite 2 u abowt it - butt i doant fink 'e will  
cos 'e carnt spell!

Orlways yore old pal,  
PHILPOT BOTTLES.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: S.O.L.'s Nos. 60 and 68. Magnets Nos. 829, 862-865, 867, 868, 874, 869, 879, 884, 886, 897, 900. 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.

MEMORIAL EDITION OF "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANK RICHARDS" - 25/-. Packed with interesting reading and many fascinating pictures, with a long supplement on Charles Hamilton's work by Eric Payne. Obtainable from any bookshop or direct from Collectors' Digest Office. The Editor of C.D. will mail the Autobiography to any address in the world.

WANTED: Union Jacks - year 1917. Nos. 691, 693, 695, 702-4, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 733, 736, 740. Year 1919 - 800, 820. Year 1920 - 851-856, 858, 861-863, 865, 870, 872, 874, 877, 885. MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E. 22.

WANTED: Populars 1919 - 22; Nelson Lees. 38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

WANTED: GEMS most issues between 400 and 500. Most issues between 772 and 879. Also Nos. 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 933, 998, 1129, 1150. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 751, 752, 762, 763, 764, 809, most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

WANTED: MAGNETS to purchase or exchange. Advertiser has some Magnets chiefly in the 1500-1600 range for exchange. Write: J. YAFFE, 13 CEDRIC ROAD, HIGHER CRUMPSALL, MANCHESTER, 8.

THE "MAGNUM OPUS" of the London Club, viz. The GEM CATALOGUE of Titles which contains full list of stories, who wrote them, and in what other papers they were reprinted. Now available at Three Shillings and Ninepence. Also copies of Magnet Catalogue at 2/9 post free. BEN WHITER, 36 NEWCOURT HOUSE, POTT STREET, BETHNAL GREEN, LONDON, E.2.

WANTED: to complete binding runs: Gem 1223, 1307, 1308, 1309. For sale of exchange, Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, B.F.L., S.O.L., S.B.L., Union Jacks, Boys' Cinemas, Scoops, Red Arrow, Pioneer, etc. Send your wants lists. Wanted - Magnets 700 to 1100, Film Fun, Kinema Comic, Rockets. VERNON LAY, 52 OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20.

EXCHANGE: Gem volume containing Nos. 324 - 344. ex. cond., no blue covers, for later Magnet volume, 1927/40 period. R. KELLY, 13 SUNNYDEN AVENUE, LONDON, E.4.

SALE/EXCHANGE: 1923 Holiday Annual 30/-; Magnets 1319, 1320 (coupons out out) 2/6; 14 Hotspurs (1937-39) 10/-; 9 Modern Boys (1932-36) 6/-. Postage extra or w.h.y. HANGER, 72 GLASGOW STREET, NORTHAMPTON.

# Old Boys' Book Club

## MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 2nd September.

As forecast in our last report, this was another splendid meeting, and it was a pity that our only two absentees, John Farrell and Walter Pritchard, were for once unable to be present. We feel sure they would have enjoyed the evening as much as we all did.

We had the pleasure of extending a welcome to our former chairman, Don Webster; it was just like old times to see him sitting amongst us and contributing no small share to the entertainment. He can't visit us too often, that's sure.

Naturally, a lot of time was taken up in chatting to Don, nevertheless we found time for a number of items, comprising a quiz by Don, two ditto by Frank Case, a discussion on another of Eric's controversial issues, and considerable library business. The latter due to some additions to the library stock brought along by Don, which went like hot cakes.

Don's quiz was won by Frank Unwin, and Frank Case's by Don and - yes, Frank Unwin, who is obviously making his return to the section notable. He has promised us a quiz next month, as has Norman and in addition we shall have a long-deferred reading from John Farrell, plus another debating point from Jack Morgan, so we are in for a good time once again.

Date - October 14th at Bill Windsor's.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

## MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th August, 1962.

As is usual at this period of the year, holidays were the main reason for the low attendance at this very enjoyable meeting. Madge and Jack Corbett and Norman Gregory were away in Devon and we all hope they had a good time - despite the indifferent weather. Joe Marston was prevented from coming due to his wife's illness but we were glad to see John Tomlinson who gave us one of his specially interesting talks, unique in the fact that he never uses notes. His subject was the Cads of the Hamilton and Brooks schools. Why were they not made more of? He had a special leaning towards Loder and Skinner though he was inclined to think there was too much Ponsonby. Ponsonby was thoroughly rotten, but in Skinner and Loder and also Peele of Rookwood there was some glimmering of the right stuff. So too with Levison of St. Jim's. He managed to get in a word regarding substitute writers and how they treated these "cads."

For my own contribution to the programme I chose a much neglected school of Frank Richards creation "Courtfield County Council School." After a short description of this school, its known personnel and whereabouts, I put these two questions for discussion. Why did not Courtfield County Council School figure equally with Higheliff as a rival school to Greyfriars? Did Frank Richards really write the 37 consecutive stories of Courtfield Council featuring Dick Trumper and Co. which appeared in "Chuckles" in 1914? If so, it was the only instance of Frank Richards writing of any other but a public school. If he did really write those 37 yarns, why neglect the Council School in after years?



There were some very interesting responses to these arguments. The "Guess the Number" game was won by John T and Joe Marston's quiz of eighteen items (a stiff lot this) was best negotiated by Tom Porter (eleven right) with myself next (nine and a half).

The Library raffle was won by John Tomlinson (his lucky night!) and the prize was very acceptable - "Secret of the Study" - a Tom Merry book. Tom Porter had brought along as a "Collectors' Item" No. 1 of the Greyfriars Herald (new series).

The night finished with a reading from the same periodical. The eight members present were Jack Bellfield, Tom Porter, myself, George Chatham, John Tomlinson, Ted Davey, and the two Winifreds (Mrs. Brown and Miss Partridge).

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary,

#### LONDON

A happy meeting at Dollis Hill on Sunday, September 9th. Both Nelson Lee and Hamiltonia to the fore.

An excellent reading about Handforth by the host, Bob Blythe, was much enjoyed. Also enjoyed was the game in which 25 covers of Nelson Lees and Magnets were displayed, the initial letters eventually spelling out the name Christopher Clarence Carboy. This competition was won by Len Packman.

Evelyn Flinders' "Desert Island Companions" proved a good selection. Bill Norris' Hamiltonian quiz, although fairly easy, stumped nearly all present, especially the St. Sam's questions. Roger Jenkins won after being busy with his Hamiltonian library.

Frank Lay opened his debate on "Bunter and Handforth" and nearly all present aired their views. Laura Blythe, assisted by the other ladies present, provided a very good feed. Thanks to Bob and Laura Blythe for a very happy meeting.

Next meeting at the home of R. J. Godsave, 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, E.11. Let host know if attending, and note only bus 58 for Leyton Station runs past Woodhouse Road.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

#### AUSTRALIA

After a two months break the members gathered at The Book Bargain Bazaar club-room on Thursday, September 13th with even more enthusiasm than usual. The delightful Spring weather of course, could have contributed also but whatever the cause the meeting got away to a good start at 6.30 p.m. when Chairman, Syd Smyth, opened proceedings.

The Secretary gave a report on the travels of the tape recording received from the London Club and played at the July meeting - it has aroused considerable interest here and will soon be on its way to Jack Murtagh who is waiting expectantly across the Tasman to hear this greeting from London.

Colour photos of the Easter re-union at Matlock were passed around and members expressed their appreciation of the generosity shown by Ron Hodgson who had supplied these very attractive photos.

A huge stack of correspondence was then read out by the Secretary - from old and new friends, all with interesting news of club activities in other parts of the world. Each letter provoked comment and considerable time was spent in the very pleasant pastime of discussing sundry topics prevalent to the hobby. Our thanks to Arthur Holland of Wellington, N.S.W. for two particularly stimulating letters; to Jack Hughes of Queensland, for his interesting comments on the tape; to our newest postal members Mr. Harry Curtis of Ipswich, Q'ld, whom we are glad to welcome to the ranks; old friend Tom Dobson of Victoria whom we had hoped to welcome to this meeting - hope you are feeling better now, Tom - good to hear from Bill Gander, Frank Unwin, Harry Broster and Don Webster with an extra long newswy letter from Ron Hodgson to complete our world-wide coverage of news. Pleasing also to have a greeting from across the Continent -

Blake enthusiast Gordon Swan saying cheerio... and from home territory, letters from absent collectors, Bruce Fowler, Bill Hall and Eric Copeman sharing the meeting in spirit.

The Hamilton enthusiasts then took the floor and the remainder of the evening was spent in verbal fisticuffs as members discussed a most provocative article recently published in the New Strand "The Man Who Made Bunter," by Frank Shaw. Second round of the bout featured the newly published Autobiography when one member posed the question "Did this book reveal the real Charles Hamilton?" Even the staunch Blake supporters found themselves taking part in this most stimulating exchange of views and it was with regret that the meeting ended at 9 o'clock.

Members took the Hamilton discussion along to the local coffee shop when it was continued under most enjoyable circumstances.

Next round to be staged on October 11th, same place, same time, all contestants welcome.

B. PATE - Secretary.

#### NORTHERN

Meeting held 8th September, 1962

Geoffrey Wilde, our Chairman, was unable to be with us this month, so the meeting was opened at the usual time by Jack Wood, who, as he put it, was temporary headmaster for the occasion. There were thirteen of us present, and an apology was received from Harry Lavender. We were sorry to hear that Harold Busby is ill, and wish him a speedy recovery and return to the fold. It was a great pleasure to see Gerry Allison back once more, looking fit after his recent illness. We were also glad to have with us Tony Potts, an old stalwart whom we seldom see nowadays as he is resident in London.

Last month's competition was discussed, and it appears that Greyfriars is a firm favourite among members of this club. Of the nine names involved, no less than seven were Greyfriars characters, Bob Cherry being the most popular choice. The other two were detectives, Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee.

After formal business had been dealt with, we proceeded with our feature 'My favourite chapter,' this month's reader being Ernest Whitehead and Ron Hodgson. Ernest read Chapter 1 of the first hard-cover Bunter book, 'Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School,' which had us in a continual chuckle. Ron's choice was in more serious vein, being an extract from the GEM Christmas Number of 1955, which featured that outstanding yarn of St. Jim's, 'Nobody's Study.' Then Ron read us part of a NELSON LEE story in the Ezra Quirke series which described how one of his tricks with a mirror gave the redoubtable Edward Oswald Handforth a considerable shock.

After a break for refreshments, we had a competition devised by Gerry Allison in which we had to supply the missing Christian names or surnames of various Greyfriars characters.

Next month's meeting will include a film show, these to be supplied by Molly Allison and Tom Roach, and some of us are looking forward to seeing ourselves on the screen.

Next meeting, 13th October.

F. HANCOCK - Hon. Secretary.

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#### YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Frank Case can't resist a holiday at our famous hostelry. He says it is a grand spot in early Autumn. Here, this time, is what he wrote in the Visitor's Book -

"It is easy to be beyond criticism: just say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing."

**"THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS"**By W. J. A. Hubbard**No. 8. "THE FIFTH FORM AT ST. DOMINICS"** (Talbot Baines Reed)

It is obvious that "The Fifth Form at St. Dominics" could not be left out of a list of Hard Cover Classics, not just because of its success as a story of school life pure and simple, but because of the important place it has attained over the years in the history of such literature.

It is unnecessary to give an outline of this fine school story because it is too well known to most of my readers for a resume of its plot, however short, to be supplied here. First published in 1881 as a serial in the Boys' Own Paper, its success was so great that it soon appeared in hard cover form. Many editions have been printed; how many I cannot say but it must be a very considerable number. The story has been made into a film and has appeared as a serial on B.B.C. T.V. Despite certain references of time and place it still reads very well, even today.

"The Fifth Form at St. Dominics" holds an important place in the history of the school story because it came on the scene at just the right time. The first school story ever written, at least to all practical intents and purposes, is undoubtedly "Tom Brown's Schooldays," which first appeared in 1857. Its success was considerable and it was closely followed by that rather derided tale, "Eric, or Little by Little," which also went into many editions. Both these school stories, however, were of the "realistic" type and it is very doubtful whether they were actually written entirely for boys. Indeed, I doubt whether at the time any author had seriously considered writing stories in hard cover form solely for youthful consumption for the reason that such readers hardly existed in sufficient numbers to make such a production worthwhile.

The Hard Cover Stories which followed "Tom Brown" and "Eric" however, were poor efforts, mostly written by heavy handed moralists, in a pseudo-Eric style. When the weekly serialists came to realise the potentialities of the school story in the late 60s, therefore, they introduced sensational effects which not only put paid to the pseudo-Eric style of yarn but brought about a split between the Hard Cover writers and the contributors to the weekly type of paper which has persisted down to the present day.

By the 80s of the last century it was obvious that the youthful type of reader, and particularly the better educated ones, were tiring of both the sensational school story of the weeklies and the continual moralizing of the few Hard Cover stories written during this period. The time was ripe for the re-emergence of the "realistic" school yarn and it came as "The Fifth Form at St. Dominics."

Mr. Reed's story, however, was of a slightly different form to both "Tom Brown" and "Eric". It was not of such an extreme "realistic" type as its two predecessors and this was mainly due to the fact that not only was it written almost entirely for boys, but it was written for the Religious Tract Society, the publishers of the B.O.P. A more moderate tone was therefore needed for very obvious reasons.

Despite the latter disability, schoolboy readers found the story irresistible. Here was a yarn which corresponded to something like their own experiences at school. The sales of the B.O.P., founded in 1879 to cater for the ever-growing youthful reading public among the middle and upper classes climbed steadily in a most impressive fashion. Mr. Reed rose to the demands of the occasion with a number of other fine school yarns and other school story writers began to appear on the scene whose work probably reached its peak in the pages of that outstanding boys' paper "The Captain" in the period before the 1914/18 war.

"The Fifth Form at St. Dominics" has come to be accepted as a "classic" for so many years and it comes almost as a shock to read an adverse criticism of it in an Introduction to another "classic" reviewed in this series as "one of the falsities of Talbot Baines Reed." The person who wrote that Introduction had much in common with many present day critics for in his preface he endeavoured to praise that particular

yarn by merely disparaging the efforts of others. The difficulties that Reed had to contend with in writing his story - he was writing for a Religious Society who demanded a certain tone and standard, and that he was writing almost exclusively for schoolboy readers, were just not considered worthy of mention or consideration. Yet despite such criticism Mr. Reed's story will always be remembered with affection.

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. "The Fifth Form at St. Dominics" set a standard for school stories that other writer slavishly copied not only in books and weekly papers but actually in the pages of the B.O.P. itself. Reading through an old bound volume of the paper some years ago I came across a story called "Under the Harrow" by John Lea, and lo and behold the whole of the fishing rod incident concerning Loman and the pub-keeper, Cripps in Mr. Reed's story was more or less reproduced in this yarn. Mr. Reed, was, I think dead, when "Under the Harrow" was published but I am wondering whether John Lea was a real person - or was the story a post-humous one of Mr. Reed's written under a pseudonym? Perhaps some admirer of Mr. Reed's can enlighten me?

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#### LIVERPOOL'S TOM MERRY

Mr. W. O. G. Lofts' article in the September issue of Collectors' Digest has caused a stir on Merseyside. The northern paper, "The Liverpool Echo" gave quite an amount of space to the subject under a large heading "The Fame of Liverpool's Tom Merry." Mr. George Harrison, the columnist of the Echo, stated that the poet's real name was George Frederick Robinson, who died in 1946 at the age of 75. Mr. Harrison writes: "My guess is that Frank Richards probably took the name from our poet, for the Liverpool Tom Merry was a well-known entertainer before Frank Richards began his school stories."

It's an interesting possibility, but Collectors' Digest thinks it rather unlikely.

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**FOR SALE:** Schoolgirls' Own Annuals for 1925 and 1930. 6/- each plus postage. S.A.E. First please. ERIC PAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

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#### REVIEWS

#### WILLIAM'S TREASURE TROVE

Richmal Crompton  
(Newnes 10/6)

Richmal Crompton is back in sparkling form in this latest collection of stories of the most lovable scamp in fiction. There are only six separate stories in this new book, but most of them are longer than the average William short story. Violet Elizabeth Bott is her adorable, lispng self in the story concerning the treasure, which treasure, as it emanates from the brain of Hubert Lane, is not of high value to the Outlaws. The funniest yarn in the new book is perhaps "William and Detective Journalism" in which William, by the author's brilliant use of coincidence and contrivance, is landed in one of the most hilarious situations of his hectic career.

Brother Robert is, as usual, up in the clouds with the most beautiful girl in the world - several of them - and Archie Mannister puts in appearances to add to the fun. "William's Treasure Trove" is a fine gift for your favourite young nephew - but read it yourself first. As if you wouldn't.

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THE GEM CATALOGUEO.B.B.C. London Section or  
C.D. Office, 3/9)

A welcome companion to the list of Magnet Titles, we have here a massive piece of research work, which gives the title of every Gem ever published, particulars of where scores of stories were reprinted, and the names of many of the writers of the substitute stories which appeared in the Gem. It is indispensable for anyone who is even slightly interested in St. Jim's and the Gem.

The only criticism one can make is that substitute stories might have been indicated as such, even when the name of the actual writer was not known. As it is, one gets the overall impression that Charles Hamilton wrote even more stories for the Gem than he actually did. However, that is a minor detail. An extremely useful book, highly recommended to every Digest reader.

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**YOURS SINCERELY**

LEONARD PACKMAN (East Dulwich): The Magnet, referred to by your Hornchurch reader, is No. 100, entitled "The Sunday Crusaders." The words "Skinner's Supreme Sacrifice" were the caption on the front cover. The story was written by George Richmond Samways.

(Mr. Packman gave us the above information within an hour or two of the publication of the September Collectors' Digest. We passed on the details to our Hornchurch reader. Several dozen other readers wrote to us in similar terms, and we thank everybody who did so. - ED.)

ALAN STEWART (Bermuda): I love "Danny's Diary" - and how about another Buddie story in the near future? Great fun!

RONNIE HUNTER (Brazil): I am one of the genuine "Old Boys" as far as the Companion Papers are concerned, although I don't go much for the Billy Bunter slapstick stuff. I go more for the stuff you can really get your teeth in. Harry Wharton, Monty Newland, Dick Penfold, Tom Redwing, and Smithy - even the occasional glimpses of the better self of Snoop. Where, for instance, could one find more pathos and drama than in the single story "Coward's Courage" of 1929 or in the two-story series "The Mystery of Mark Linley" and "Under Suspicion?"

TOM PORTER (Old Hill): What a beautiful front cover you gave us for the July Digest! Have you noticed its similarity to the picture at the beginning of "The Housemaster's Homecoming" (Gem 393)? I had to fetch my Gem to make sure it wasn't a reproduction.

CYRIL FARROW (Boston): Could we please have an article on the Monster Library. How long did it run? Why did it pack up?

(Over to you, Lee fans! ED.)

MRS. ROSS STORY (Worthing): Without wishing to criticise the truly marvellous work done in editing, don't you think the Nelson Leesites are getting a bit of a raw deal? I mean - half a page! On looking back through some of the older Digests I find they were much more

interesting - there were so many articles, etc., sometimes running into two or three pages. Is Jack Wood short of material? If he is, I think he ought to chase up some of his belated correspondents.

(Only the Leesites themselves can make up for the deficiency. We appealed for Lee material only a month or two ago. - ED.)

DAVID HOBBS (Seattle): In 1925 my family emigrated to Canada, and I had to find work. At that time the boys' papers were on the news-stands in Vancouver, and I bought them regularly, and they met a need for me, assuaging my gnawing homesickness. In 1929, I had the opportunity to come to the U.S.A. and though the golden dreams faded at once in the depression, it has on the whole, I suppose, been a good thing. I haven't become wealthy, but have good health and my share of satisfactions, together with a deep, lingering nostalgia for England, and a world I know has passed beyond recall, except in print and memory. Charles Hamilton's work filled a need at that period - and ever since.

BOB WHITER (California): The contents of the August Digest were full of interest and widely varied. I should think it would need to be a very awkward cuss who couldn't find something of interest in his particular field. How true was "Chums in Council"! With so many people, if you took away their TV's, they just wouldn't know how to amuse themselves.

S. PERRY (Wood Green): On the BBC some weeks ago someone recited the first lines of a poem I would love to see published in C.D. - "There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night." I remember it from years ago, and would very much like to know the whole poem, as I am sure lots of other readers would. Also, I wonder if someone could oblige with Kipling's "If."

(Space is too tight, I fear, for us to publish these two charming poems in the Digest. However, both "Vital Lampada" by Newport, and Kipling's "If", as well as a large number of other favourite poems can be found in "Verse Worth Remembering" published by Macmillan, This school textbook only costs a few shillings. - ED.)

RAY BENNETT (Tipton): The September cover of C.D. is excellent. It must be over 30 years since I last purchased a Jester, but I could recognize nearly all the illustrations although their names were beyond my memory. Our monthly mag has gone from strength to strength - to my surprise. I thought it would fizzle out after Herbert passed on. My favourite items today are 1. Chums in Council ( a good editorial makes a fine start.) 2. "Let's Be Controversial". 3. Yours sincerely. 4. Club reports. 5. Everything else EXCEPT 1. Danny's Diary. This feature irritates me. Danny seems a smug specimen and I wish his diary would be lost. 2. Ye Olde Cynique Inn - out of place in C.D. I'm most enthusiastic about Mr. Chapman's Greyfriars Gallery. This should be the best new feature for several years.

GERALD PRICE (Birmingham): I can no longer consider myself an expert against people whose recollections go back to the early part of the century, but a world I thought was gone for ever has been rediscovered and if my taste for what some people clearly regard as juvenile literature is a sign of eccentricity, then at least I am in very good company.

PAT CREIGHAN (Monaghan): I find that there was a "Monster" comic. It was published in 1922 by the Fleetway Press (no connection with the Fleetway House). It was blue-green in colour, and contained some fine stories illustrated by Eric Parker. Some of the cartoon characters were Wireless Willie and Bertie Broadcast, Ferdinand the firefighter, Clara the cleaner. Stories - "Ned and Ted Twain, the Twin Tees"; "The Sleuth of the

Seas" (Harvey Drayton, detective). Unfortunately, like its companion paper, "The Olden Penny" (not to be confused with an A.P. comic of similar name) it did not catch on.

TOM HOPPERTON (Scarborough): Some years ago I parted with a number of copies of a penny library published about 1893, MALCOLM'S FAMOUS TALES OF ADVENTURE, and unfortunately can't remember to whom. This Malcolm stuff must be quite rare. I have not been able to obtain anything else and there is nothing of his in the British Museum. As I now have some reason to believe that Charles Hamilton's earliest work appeared in either this or a sister series, I should be grateful if the buyer, and anyone else who may happen to have anything at all published by Malcolm, would get in touch with me.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton): I think your Hornchurch reader may be referring to a substitute story "The Sunday Crusaders." One of the very few occasions the editor boasted of the high moral and religious tone to be found in the Magnet.

J. A. WARK (Duncon): I must confess to being a Frank Richards' man every time, but I thought that I would examine, from my stock on hand, and from memory, some of the "hard cover" works I read down the years. I think the Finmore books were my favourites, but one yarn by Cleaver, "The Honour of the Game," will for ever remain in my memory. I also rated Wodehouse's yarns highly. Another author who wrote a rattling good school yarn was Anton Lind. His Altonbury series were competently penned. A yarn entitled "The Reasedale School Mystery" by a Scot named Smith, was another of my treasures. Alas, I loaned it - and never saw it again. I would give a lot to have a copy of this work on my shelves again.

(By a coincidence, there was originally a reference to the Reasedale School story in this month's Let's Be Controversial. Our Controversial writer described it as a rare and extremely good mystery story of school life. For reasons of space the paragraph was deleted by the editorial blue pencil. - ED.)

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): I think the Hornchurch reader had got hold of a chapter heading out of "The Sunday Crusaders." I always place this story in the same category as "A Very Gallant Gentleman." I was stirred profoundly by Courtney's death but felt the theme had no place in the Magnet. All very well for the editor to say that death was something we should all think about sometimes - but not through reading the Magnet. I was deeply touched over Courtney's love affair with Vi Valence. I still remember a chapter in the story, called "Springtime of Youth." It lingered and I used it as a chapter heading in my first published novel "Romantic Youth" in 1933. Forty-six years ago. And it's a fact that I haven't seen either of these Magnets since I read them when I was 13.

PEDRO'S BACK! (concluded from page 32)..

to correction but, in the main, the 'background' material and the settings for the various incidents give an impression of authenticity unequalled in any S.B.L., old or new.

COMMENT:

Both books carry notes 'about the author', potted histories which make interesting reading. Philip Chambers comments on the Blake Saga have special interest for old readers.

The lay-out for the cover design for No. 507 Killer Pack was excellent but no-one familiar with the virile sketches of Blake, Tinker and Paula used for advertisement purposes could recognise them in these three drooping, untidy creatures were it not for their association with the dog.

# PEDRO'S BACK



(MARGARET COOKE reviews the latest novels in the world-famous  
SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY)

KILLER PACK No: 507

Wilfred  
McNeilly

A book which will please some readers and irritate others, by its unusual presentation.

Pedro makes a welcome return to the pages of the S.B.L. accompanied by his son, Manuel, result of a "spectacular misalliance," and a potentially great character.

This is a story of the Hunt and Huntsmen; of murder, arson and trade rivalry; of a child blackmailer; and of Pedro's superiority in intellect over Sexton Blake - "a really well-trained reliable man, regrettably liable to be misled by surface appearances, but not without a rudimentary acumen of his own" (Pedro's lecture to the Canine Council, Limbo-Living Dreams Section).

Well-written, with an interesting plot, and plenty of excitement, the book shows us Mr. McNeilly in lighter vein. It also carries last month's suggestion that things are not well financially at Berkeley Square one stage further.

MOSCOW MANHUNT  
S.B.L. No: 508

Philip  
Chambers

A book to delight all lovers of Secret Service yarns. The high standard of writing alone makes this novel a must for all collectors' book-shelves.

It deals with Blake's efforts to rescue a Russian girl from her own country at great risk to his own life, since "Moscow's file on him was ten feet thick" as Tinker said, in order to end Russian blackmail of her husband - a British nuclear physicist working on the application of Newton's secondary law to space-ship propulsion. The young man, ordered to hand over all documents relating to the new reactor to communist agents, took his problem to security - and Craille sent for Sexton Blake.

Despite rigorous precautions and a carefully planned disguise Blake was suspected by Russian officials as soon as he arrived but he managed to stay one jump ahead of the enemy through a series of harrowing adventures; to seize opportunity by its one remaining hair when he was betrayed by an associate, and to make a daring escape, accompanied by the young wife, to complete his mission.

Writing, dialogue, characterization, plot and story are all excellent. A most enjoyable book. The new reactor sounds so feasible that one wonders why two great nations bother with heavy rockets instead of using Mr. Chamber's way to the stars. Craille's comments on Russian Intelligence and achievements are possibly open (concluded on page 31)