

THE COLLECTORS DIGEST





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THE COLLECTORS DIGEST

APRIL 1947
Next Issue
May 1947

Editor:

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR:

This issue has been published almost a month earlier than originally intended, and for this there are two reasons. First, the further revelations of swindling that is going on. These are so serious that we decided to sent out No.4 at the earliest possible moment. The details of the cases which have come to light since our emergency issue will be found in later pages. Secondly, we have a large number of interesting articles on all aspects of the hobby in hand. One or two of these scheduled for this issue have had to be held over owing to the space taken by the less happy subject, but we hope to get over this by publishing No.5 earlier also, probably at the beginning of May. Thus, with our emergency issue in addition, we think we can claim the C.D. is going ahead with a vengeance.

To make this speed-up successful it is necessary for us to appeal to intending advertisers to send along their copy as quickly as possible after receiving this issue. We require a fair number of adverts. to enable us to balance our budget, and, with the frauds in mind, we think there is an opportunity to adopt a slogan - "Crooks Don't see the C.D!"

Following the issue of No.3, many tributes for the effort of that clever young artist, Mr. Noel Whiter came along. We have a new sketch of

his in hand but this may not appear until No.5. Compliments too are flowing in for what is termed our enterprise in sending out our emergency edition. One which pleased us immensely was when an old collector friend said "In your introduction to No.1 you promised to do all you could to help collectors. You are indeed carrying out your promise." Well, we have certainly had an exciting time lately, but if it has meant we have done something to expose a scandal, it has all been worth while. And here we must not forget to express our sincere thanks to those who helped so handsomely towards the expenses of the emergency issue.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Leckenby

THE COLLECTOR'S DIGEST SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Single copies 1s.1d post free. Three copies 3s.3d post free. Six copies 6s.6d post free. Postal Orders to be made payable to H. Leckenby, at York, uncrossed.

ADVERTISEMENT RATES:

Small advertisements 1d per word (name and address inserted free of charge).

CONTRIBUTIONS intended for publication are, if possible, to be typewritten on sheets the same size as this page.

AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE!

A good deal of this issue has been written twice! Here's the reason. I had all the copy for No.4 prepared and on the morning of 25th March, set off to the office of the duplicating agency. As most subscribers know, the ancient City of York

has for several days been like another Venice - there's even been water, water everywhere. I had to make a long detour through narrow streets, struggling crowds, held up by traffic, and along the edges of brimming lakes. I had nearly reached my destination when I found to my consternation that somehow I had lost the greater part of the copy from the file in which I felt sure it was secure, and which in ordinary circumstances it would have been. I was in despair for in our endeavours to get the issue out earlier than originally intended I had no duplicates of a good deal of it, as is usually the case when my co-editor has time to type it out.

I made a frantic search but of course it was no use. Later in the day I called at the Police Office in the hope that someone had taken the copy there; but no such luck.

It may turn up later, but there was no time to spare. There was nothing for it but to start again. It meant an almost all night session but now near dawn on the 26th, the task is nearly complete.

If the story of the frauds seems a little ragged, if some of the advertisers find their copy not quite as they had submitted it, or omitted altogether, I feel sure they will bear with me and blame the aftermath of the worst winter in living memory.

To some contributors I shall have to write personally and crave their indulgence.

Sincerely,

Herbert Leckenby.

WANTED: Aldine Publications - Turpins, Duvals, etc. Landy, 4, Nunneaton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED: The Gem "Arthur Castleton" Series, Nos. 1022-25 inclusive. Leslie Vosper, 13, Kinlet Road, Woolwich, S.E.18.

MAXWELL SCOTT(Continued.)

This was the year that saw the birth of the "Boys Realm" and No.26, the first Xmas number, contained the opening of "Nelson Lee's Rival". A typical Maxwell Scott tale, which was pictured by Fred Bennett, a rather erratic artist, capable of producing the best but who often didn't. Nevertheless, he deserved more praise than he received; for he was really a clever artist, and drew some excellent pictures for this story. The first few months of 1903 were over before it ended, and in the "Boys' Realm" No.64, 29th August, came the opening chapters of the "Hidden Will". Here a millionaire's Will concealed in the back of a picture which had gone on its travels formed the theme of one of the author's most exciting tales. Again Fred Bennett supplied the pictures. There were five Nelson Lee serials altogether in the B.R., the remaining three being: "Out to Win", the "New Bowler", and "Bowled Out".

Well on its way now, 1903 proved an important year, for in it both the "Boys' Herald" and "Boys' Leader" were launched on their inky voyages. In No.12 of the latter paper Maxwell Scott presented his third detective Vernon Read. One wonders why a new detective instead of the already famous Kenyon Ford, but so it was, and despite the change of name Vernon Read seemed to take to himself the character and fame of the up-to-date detective. No doubt the magic name of the author was responsible for this. The "Iron Skull" was one of his longest and greatest stories. Here is Maxwell Scott's own introduction:-

"Fate weaves some subtle webs at times, but she never wove a subtler web than that in which she entangled Harry Asquith. It was only a web of circumstantial evidence woven round an innocent man, yet its fibres were so tough, its meshes so close, its grip so deadly, that

ere its victim could be rescued, he was sentenced to death for another's crime and was led to the scaffold in Armley Gaol. Of the weaving of this web, and of the herculean efforts of Vernon Read to rend its strands asunder, the following story tells."

And in the telling the detective circled the world in quest of the secret of the Iron Scull; but by different route to that taken by Nelson Lee in his chase after the Silver Dwarf, except that the trails crossed at Harvey Howards Tea Plantation at Ulapane. A fine story, marred only by the fact that the artists changed three times. R.Strange, Val Reading and G.M.Dodshon, each taking a turn.

In the course of time, three serials of Vernon Read followed, the "Red Hand" in the "Boys' Leader" and "Hidden Gold" and "Lorimers Legacy" in the "Big Budget". So the brilliant but all too short chronicles of another great detective ended.

Now we must go back to the 15th August, 1903, and the "Boys' Herald" No.2, which was chosen to contain the first chapters of "Nelson Lee's Pupil" in which Maxwell Scott introduced Nipper (Richard Hamilton). An epoch making event, for this character became almost as popular as his famous master, and was the forerunner of all detectives' boy assistants. He was educated at St. Ninians in Sussex, where he had some very exciting adventures, which were told in a number of fine school serials. The best being "Nipper's Schooldays". Afterwards, Nipper appeared with Nelson Lee in all serials except six. He might have been called the fifth detective for he figured alone in two stories "Detective Nipper" - "Boys' Realm", and as he figured in the "Heralds" start so also he did at its finish, and "Nipper's First Case" began in the last issue, being continued in "Cheer Boys Cheer".

Here is a list of the "Boys' Herald" serials written by Maxwell Scott, additional to those already mentioned. "Football Detective", "Nelson Lee in the Navy", "Winged Terror", and "The Iron Hand".

Meanwhile, Maxwell Scott had not neglected the "Boys' Friend" and in No.157, 11th June, 1904, the "Great Unknown" began, being followed by the "Black House," No.221, 2nd September, 1905, "Detective - Warder Nelson Lee" No.237, 6th July, 1905. "Britain Beyond the Seas" started in No. 353, 14th March, 1908.

On the 8th January, 1908, in "Chums" No.800, Maxwell Scott's fourth detective Martin Dale, made his appearance in "On the Watch", a serial in the author's best style and form. A will written on the inside of a watch-case. This author had a magic kind of way with a theme like this that just baffles description. Fred Bennett again, but this time he produced some atrocious pictures. The 31st May, 1911, saw the coming of Martin Dale's assistant, Jimmy Readman, in "A Perilous Quest", a story well up to the author's standard. This commenced in "Chums" No.977. It was followed by the "Secret of the Ring". Then, with intervals of varying length between came the "Double Six", the "Silver Key", "A Scrap of Paper", "On His Own" (a short series of complete stories of Jimmy) and finally, the "Lost Will".

The record requires mention of the fact that Maxwell Scott also wrote of Sexton Blake. In the "Jester" No.174, 11th March, 1905, came "Sexton Blake, Detective", which had everything typical of this author. He wrote many complete stories of this great character for the "Union Jack", including the "Scorpion" series.

Back to Nelson Lee, and in the "Jester" No. 233, 21st April, 1906, we find the "Soldier Detective", as usual a good story and illustrated by R.J.Macdonald. This serial ended in No.253. The "Boys' Friend" No.459, 26th March, 1910, contained

the first chapters of the "Golden Quest", and in the same paper in 1911 was published "Long Live the King". Nelson Lee was missing from the "Friend" after that ended, until 1914, when he re-appeared in the "Film Detective". The end of this story was followed by "On His Majesty's Service". This was the last serial of Nelson Lee, and probably the last story. In 1919-1920 there were some complete stories of Nelson Lee published in the "Detective Library". They were authentic Maxwell Scott's, but whether new or reprints is doubtful.

I have endeavoured to make this record as complete as possible, but limitation of space has compelled me to cut out much detail of both stories and artists, leaving it, I'm afraid, rather bare. Even so, I have far exceeded the bounds set by the Editor and I dare not further incur his wrath in including the non-detective serials, or the complete detective tales of which there were many.

I make no apology for any gaps: the lengthening corridors of memory grow dim; time and the ravages of two great wars have blocked many avenues of research both human and material. I am indebted to Mr. Herbert Leckenby and Mr. Harry Dowler for much information, facts and dates. And so together we pay tribute to the famous author of four great detectives.

In these bleak and austere days our thoughts go back to the bookstalls piled with brightly covered story papers, and as we think with affection of the many fine writers who contributed so ably to them, we see, forming before our eyes in letters of heavy type, the name of one who was greatest of all - MAXWELL SCOTT.

WANTED: Certain early Magnets, Gems, Plucks, especially Gems No.16,22,389 and 392. Would gladly buy or exchange. Shew, 4 Brunswick Park, Camberwell, London, S.E.5. (Late of Colney Hatch Lane).

ITS YOUR MONEY THEY 'RE AFTER
More Swindle Revelations

Immediately following the despatch of our emergency edition, further accounts of swindling were brought to our notice.*

First in the field was Mr. Leslie Jasper, who told us that as long ago as 1941 he had advertised in "Exchange and Mart" for a few particular copies of the "Nelson Lee Library". He was particularly anxious to get hold of these. He received a letter from the now familiar address, 70 Knighton Fields East, Welford Road, Leicester, in which the writer signed Miss E. Pearson, said she could supply him with the very numbers and the price was five shillings. The money was sent, but the papers were not. Leslie eventually realised he had been done. In his own particular case he admits the amount was trifling, but he remembers the bitter disappointment at not getting the papers on which he was so keen, to this day.

Next came Mr. Alfred Horsey, who has advertised in "E. & M." for many years. He heard from the indefatigable twister of Leicester even before Leslie did, for a letter reached him one day prior to the war. At the time the lady was evidently in low water for the letter was unstamped. All Alfred was out of pocket was the surcharge and the cost of a letter to Leicester (with surcharge envelope included) pointing out that there was a strong urge to do business. There the acquaintance ceased.

Then on 13th March came a letter from Mr. W. H. Neate of Burnham, Bucks, with a real story of woe. He had heard from Miss Pearson.

* NOTE: We might explain to our overseas subscribers and one or two others who may not have received a copy, that we issued a special C.D. circular giving details of a series of frauds.

She wrote him first on 2nd February, telling him she had 2,000 "Magnets", "Gems", etc. to offer which had been left to her by her late brother. Note, that in the space of a few days her benefactor had changed from the uncle mentioned to those whom she defrauded to one more closely related. Thieves as well as liars should have good memories. Anyhow, Mr. Neate sent her £6. Quickly came not the books, but another letter saying 5,000 books were now available, a further £15 entered her exchequer and then followed another story - £3. £24 in all. Whilst this latter amount was on the way. Miss Pearson was industriously packing all the books into 20 parcels. We venture to say it would not take her long to pack all the books ever in her possession. Nevertheless flushed with success she was as late as an envelope post-marked 18th March, like Oliver Twist, asking for more. We have this envelope before us and note that she scrawls her name and address on the back and with bare-faced impudence the words, "Books packed for despatch". She does not state whether they are those already paid for by Mr. Colcombe and Mr. Satchell or those sold to a Leicester dealer as told to Mr. Jenkins! Well, Mr. Neate did write to Leicester again, but on this occasion to the police of that City.

For convenience we have assumed that these letters came from a member of the 'gentle' sex, though it is quite possible a man was the prime swindler.

And now let us turn to that other individual operating in the South, whom we mentioned briefly in our emergency number. Roger Anthony Garstairs, a more romantic figure than the drab Pearson, but just as big a twister as we'll show.

In the emergency edition we told how Garstairs wrote to Mr. Jenkins from a Southern address, telling a plausible story of a huge collection of "Gems", "Magnets", and "S.B. Libraries" being stored

in an old chest, how much pleasure he had derived from them in his youth, and how he wished to pass them on to a genuine collector. The terms were prompt cash. Southsea being not far from Mr. Jenkins home, he went over but found no Garstairs. The proprietor of the boarding house said he had received a letter from a man of that name, saying he was on his way to Bristol and contemplated visiting Southsea for a few days - would the proprietor sign for any registered letters that came for him? His Leicester experience in mind, Mr. Jenkins informed the police.

Mr. Neate now comes into the picture again. Whilst letters were being showered upon him from Leicester one came along from Bristol. This too, to Mr. Neate's surprise, offered a glorious collection of those popular old papers the "Gen", the "Magnet" and "S.O. Libraries". There was a story of how they had rested in an old chest for years treasured by the owner. The letter was signed oh no - not Roger Anthony Garstairs - but Lancelot Percival Merrivale! Strange coincidence wasn't it or was it?

But that wasn't all. Hot on the heels of Mr. Neate's letter came one from Mr. Eric Payne. He too had heard from Mr. Merrivale telling the same story of the old chest, an ultimatum that it must be cash as he (Mr. Merrivale) had been swindled with dud cheques in the past.

We have now the letter to Mr. Neate before us. We reproduce it in full - the errors in English are Mr. Merrivale's own.

"15 St. Pauls Road,
Bristol 8.
March 17, 1947.

Sir,

Glancing through an old Exchange and Mart, I perceived your advertisement for boys magazines.

It is sometime ago, and you may have

all you require, however, perhaps I can interest you.

I have Schoolboys' Owns, from 1 to 388 consecutive. "Magnets" from Number 800 to 1308 in all 480 "Magnets".

"Gems" from No. 517 to 1495, consecutive except for one. In all 978 "Gems".

I price them at 4d each, which is I think reasonable.

	£.	s.	d.
388 Schoolboys Owns at 4d each	6.	9.	0
480 Magnets at 4d each	8.	0.	0
978 Gems at 4d each	16.	6.	0
	<u>£30.15.0</u>		

If you desire to purchase then all, of course the price will be lower, namely £20.0.0 and postage.

I have no desire to make a large profit out of my books, having already profited by many happy hours through them, in my younger days.

I do however make one stipulation.

I will not under any circumstances, despatch books unless I receive CASH first. I've had these books many years and they are of too great value to me, to let them go without receiving their value first.

A few years ago I sold my collection of Greyfriars Annuals through the post. I received in exchange a crossed cheque which was absolutely worthless. Needless to say, I was the loser.

So if you desire to purchase my books, Please send a open cheque, money order or cash. I in turn will fulfil my part of the bargain and despatch immediately, on receipt of cash.

I have a very strong tea-chest with plenty of packing, which will make an ideal container for the magazines, and ensure their safe arrival.

I enclose a "Magnet" and "Gem" to give

you some idea of the condition of the earlier ones. There are only a few like this, the rest are in new and excellent condition having been kept for years in a large trunk.

If you desire the books on my terms, please let me know by return, as I am travelling to Harrogate to take the waters on Thursday. I will then have time to pack magazines properly and at my leisure, so that you can receive them by Thursday or Friday according to the quickness of the railway.

If however you do not relish parting with your money first, I shall not blame you but will consider the matter closed.

Under no circumstances will I sell at any cheaper rate. Fourpence each, is my final, and rock bottom price.

Yours faithfully,

Lancelot Percival Merrivale."

The cool audacity of Mr. Merrivale! We will just say this for him though. He was a little more generous than Miss Pearson for he did send to each recipient of his letter a sample copy and so far has had nothing in return.

Well, as Mr. Payne commented in a 'phone chat, it does not require the brain of a Sexton Blake to deduce that Roger Anthony Carstairs and Lancelot Percival Merrivale are one and the same, and as honest men do not use one name in Southsea and another in Bristol we suggest Mr. Carstairs-Merrivale is a roving racketeer. We don't believe a bit in the existence of that chest full of "Magnets", etc. If it does, is it parked in his car, or on the handle-bars of his bike as he wends his way from Bristol to Southsea and on to Harrogate "to take the waters"? Perhaps ere now he realises that Messrs. Jenkins, Neate and Payne have taken his story with a pinch of salt, and he has lost the few papers he did possess.

We are hoping to hear more of Mr. Carstairs-Mer-

rivale and his real name when he stands at the bar of justice.

Look to No.5 for further news and remember "Its your money they're after"!

STOP PRESS: A Dramatic Development! Whilst this issue was being typed, we learned on the authority of Mr. John Medcroft, that Mr. Leslie Pearson served three months for fraud in 1933. See No.5.

LAST MINUTE FLASHES:

The Leicester Case: Retribution coming. Police take action. C.I.D. see "C.D" special number and pay tribute. Look out for No.5 with more details.

27th March. We regret to announce that a well-known collector not mentioned above sent Merrivale (alias Garstairs) £25 over a week ago and has heard nothing since.

LETTER BOX

As we thought, Roger, Mr Jenkins' attack on St. Franks in our No.3, has brought a shower of protests from Nelson Lee Library Fans. Our regular contributor Tom Armitage is one of these and he replies to Roger as follows:-

In reply to Mr. Jenkins critical letter "St. Franks v. The Rest" I have one or two remarks I would like to put upon record. To begin with, although I have a great respect for Mr. Jenkins' undoubted knowledge of Greyfriars, St. Jins and Rookwood, I think he is a little hard upon the "Nelson Lee Library". With some of his criticisms I am in agreement, notably that the everlasting crook plots, etc. were overdone, but regarding the stories as a whole I would like to say (a) for a long time the St. Franks stories were original. Only in the very last years were there re-

prints. (b) I don't know of anyone who prefers the work of E.S. Brooks to that of Charles Hamilton. Rather do they re-act to both authors with appreciation and the wish for more and more school stories. (c) I would certainly not agree that St. Franks was based on Greyfriars and St. Jims. St. Franks had quite a distinctive atmosphere of its own, quite different from Mr. Hamilton's famous schools. (d) Handforth was most certainly NOT a weak imitation of Coker. He had absolutely nothing in common with Coker at all. Anyone who has studied the characters of Coker, Grundy, Cummer, etc., will know that they were simply a humorous butt to write around. Not so Hardy. He was never a duffer at games or much else either when it came to the pinch. I don't know whether or not Mr. Brooks refuses to answer questions about St. Franks, nor can I affix criticism of the story "Handforth at St. Jims", not having the copy, but I don't think that the saturation point was reached as regards St. Franks if, and providing the stories had kept to what they were in the 20's. After the policy of the N.L.L. changed with the last two series, well than, Mr. Jenkins is correct. Before that, No.

(Signed) Tom Armitage.

More replies in No.5.

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A Reply to a Reply to Pat!

Dear Sir,

Although there is much good sense in John Shaw's reply to 'Pat' whose remarks were, however, not completely without foundation, I feel that some answer should be made to the former's sweeping generalisations. Much as I love our hobby I feel that it should not be treated with quite the reverent awe shown in Mr. Shaw's letter; there are other things of interest and value including a balanced criticism of all forms of art, perhaps especially of that literary art in which our well-

loved papers fill only a small corner.

Passing over the phrase "a connoisseur of good literature" which is fairly open to argument, we come to the fulsome praise of Charles Hamilton. Modest himself, he would blush to be described as a genius, but, to be spoken of as "the only true great writer", etc., well all I can wish is that Mr. Shaw may in feverish dreams be visited by the shades of Henty, Ballantyne, Fenn, Lewis Carroll, Beatrix Potter, and a host of others.

The rest of the letter is well said, though I would hardly call the repetition of plot or theme merely 'occasional', but to develop this would need some factual research and an article. Finally I must say that I was completely shattered by the (sadly mis-printed) Shakespearean comparisons. Need I say more than that I recently had the pleasure of seeing Donald Wolfitt in the part of Iago, that double-dyed and dammed villain. I would say Pistol, rather than Sir John, better still let us not compare mice with lions. That Mr. Hamilton's characters owe something of this conception to an acquaintance with some of "the great" is I think, undoubted, in conclusion let me direct the interest and intelligence of Mr. Shaw and others to this theme which affords a ground for much fascinating speculation.

Yours, etc.

(Signed) Clive Simpson.

FOR SALE: Magnets (odd Nos. 1350-1580); Gems; Populars; Hotspurs; Rovers; Sexton Blakes (New Series); Holiday Annuals 1924, 1927, 1937, 1939, 1940, etc. WANTED: Schoolboys Own Libraries; Calcroft Marvels. F. Bottomley, 48 Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, London, N.17.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, 1st Series (new), particularly "Doomed Schoolboy" Series: L. Vosper, 13, Kinlet Road, Shooter's Hill, London, S.E.18.

WANTED: Gems and Magnets before 1930; Populars; Sexton Blake Libraries of Granite Grant and Kestrel; Girls' Friends, Homes and Readers; Butterfly, Merry and Bright. Eric Fayne, 23 Grove Road, Surbiton.

BOXING: Wanted Marvels containing Tom Sayers stories; boxing stories by Capt. Malcolm Arnold, and any other boys' books of boxing interest. G. Neville Weston, Holmwood, Short Heath, Comberton Road, Kidderminster.

WANTED: Magnet No. 1624 and others near it; Schoolboys' Owns No. 185 (The Phantom of the Highlands), 321 (Ghost of Bennington Grange) and others. Good prices paid. Wm. L. Bawden, 7 Penryn Street, Redruth, Cornwall.

WANTED: Magnets between 1925 and 1933; list supplied on application; also Gems and Holiday Annuals 1920, 1930 and 1931. FOR DISPOSAL: Weekly Flyings; War Weeklys and War Illustrated's. Lists supplied on application. Robert Whiter, 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London, N.22.

WANTED: Magnets; Schoolboys Owns; Nelson Lees. FOR SALE: Childrens' Bound Books, etc; Childrens' Model Farm (120 toys) £3. J. Baguley, Middle Hill, Pensilva, S.E. Cornwall.

WANTED: Lists early Dreadnoughts; Boys Friend; and any COMPLETE old Boys' Books. Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED: Boys Cinema; Buffalo Bill; Picture Show; Picturegoer; Rainbow Comic; Playbox Annual; Boys' Realm; Young Brittain; Railroad Magazine (American) Boys Friend Library. W.H. Thompson, 144 Handley Road, New Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

WANTED: Top price paid for Red-covered Magnets, also blue-covered Gems. T. Satchell, 84 Ankendine Crescent, Shooters Hill, Woolwich, London.

WANTED: Magnets 1910-1915. Any condition so long as readable, even without covers. Price and particulars to J. Shepherd, 3 Priory Place, Sheffield 7.

COLLECTORS' MISCELLANY: A Journal for lovers of old boys' books. 16 printed pages, profusely illustrated. No.8 now ready. Specimen 1s.3d. Parks, Printer, Saltburn-by-Sea.

FOR SALE: B.O.P.Vol.1, 1879; Vols.19 & 25; The Captain 1908, 1911; 52 Chums, 1910-11 bound.

WANTED: Magnets, pre-1929. W.H.Neate, Wenlock, Burnham, Bucks.

WANTED: Chums after 1920; Triumphs; Champion Libraries; Football & Sports Libraries. Good condition, essential. State price. John W.Gocher, Jnr., Victoria Cottage, Constitution Hill, Sudbury, Suffolk.

MATTERS OF MOMENT

A New School Story Paper:

Have you seen School Yarn Magazine? If not, get a copy for it contains stories reminiscent of Greyfriars and St.Jims. The school is Rippingham in Suffolk, some of the characters - Fatty Briggs, Dick Doran, and Jack Merton. The author is Kenneth E.Newman, an experienced writer of stories for boys. It is well printed on good paper and copies can be obtained from 93 Brownspring Drive, New Eltham, London, S.E.9. Subscription 2s.6d for 6 issues.

Latest about the "Bunter" Book:

The publishers of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School have informed one of our circle that they hope to give it to the world in May. They add, however, that owing to the rising costs of production the price, including postage must of necessity be 8s.6d.

We advise all those who are eagerly awaiting the return of the world's most famous schoolboy to send their remittances to Charles Skilton & Co.Ltd. 50 Alexandra Road, S.W.19, and get a place in the queue.

Publicity for "G.D."

We are grateful to note a kindly reference to the G.D. in the bulletin of the B.A.P.A. of which your co-editors are members.

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

A Few Words on Sweeney Todd - by F.N.Wearing.
 Sentiment in Schoolboy Fiction - by Tom Armitage.
 The Shylock of Greyfriars - by Roger Jenkins.
 The Boys Standard - by Henry Steele.
 Authors and Artists I Disliked - by R.H.A.Goodyear.
 Those Were the Days - by F.W.Webb.
 I Unearthed a Genius (Frank Richards) by Jack Corbett.
 Off the Beaten Track - by Roger Jenkins.

AUTHORS AND THEIR PEN NAMES

by
Herbert Leckenby
 (Continued)

Max Hamilton: Masculine name but concealed the identity of a woman writer, the only one I am aware of penning stories for the boys' papers. Had other pen names, too. T.G.Dowling-Maitland and Tristram K.Monok. Wrote many complete and at least two serials, "A Pit Hero" (Boys Herald) and "The Bully of St.Simons", the second school serial in the "Boys Realm" (1903). Could tell a good story well up to the standard of her male colleagues. Pulled the long bow sometimes however. A front page of a "Boys Realm" showed a remarkable incident in the school story mentioned. A boy fighting on the edge of a cliff had been knocked over, but instead of being dashed to death on rocks below, picture showed him dangling in mid-air, his fall having been broken by the solitary stump of a tree hooking his belt! Reading that as a boy I well remember exclaiming, "Goo! That takes some believing". Could never discover real identity of the lady.

Charles Hamilton: Well, is this really necessary? However, pen names, Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest, Ralph Redway, Hilda Richards, and another which is perhaps not so well known, Harry Dorrian. Under this the S.P.C. readers' favourite wrote some circus stories for "Pluck" in the long ago. The author himself had almost forgotten he was ever Harry!

Known to fame as the man who invented Billy Bunter. Made him even better known than the Fat Boy of Pickwick, or in real life, the fat-boy of Peckham. Probably has written more words for boys than any other author, alive or dead. Though the "Magnet" has been dead for six years he still gets numerous letters from old boys from all parts of the world, and quite a lot of complimentary Press publicity. At 70 he has taken on a new lease of life and is as busy as ever. Probably before these lines appear in print he will have added new pen names to his list.

Sidney Drew: Real name Edgar Joyce Murray. Another of Hamilton Edwards' star writers. For years was seldom absent from the pages of "The Boys' Friend", "Realm" and "Herald". Also prominent in "Big Budget" and "Boys Leader". Was certainly kept busy and I have been told often gave editors headaches owing to late arrival of the next instalment. Wrote in a microscopic hand. First serial appeared in $\frac{1}{2}$ d "Boys Friend" - "Wolves of the Deep"; sequel "Lion against Bear". These concerned Ferrers Lord, Ching Lung & Co. Several others about same characters followed over many years. These later stories were a mixture of world wide adventure and slap-stick humour. The thrills were better than the humour. He created a similar set of characters for the "Big Budget" and "Boys Leader", Graydon Garth, Lord Leckburn & Co., but here the slap-stick was less in evidence. "The Vanished Fleet", "The Mysterious Army" and "Peril Island" were three of them. Fine stories these.

Sidney Drew also wrote quite a lot of school stories, many of them about Calcroft. One, which appeared in the "Boys Realm" was "Charlie Chaplins Schooldays" but I don't suppose that temperamental artist would recollect the incidents. Also wrote, anonymously, an invasion story for the "Boys Friend" - "The Peril to Come".

William Murray Graydon: (Born 1861). Pen name Alfred Armitage. For output, Edgar Wallace was a novice in comparison. Graydon also, like Wallace, used a dictaphone in his later years. Writing busily for Hendersons' in the 80's and later for Aldines and the Amalgamated Press, continuing for the latter until well after the first Great War. Seemed to know every country in the world, and wrote stories laid in most of them. Adventure was his forte. Wrote in rather serious vein though introducing a little rather laboured humour occasionally. "A Fight with Fate" in the "Boys Herald" was an example. Wrote scores of Sexton Blakes, including at least two serials. Had his own special 'Yard' man, Inspector Widgeon. Also two private detectives of his own, Abel Link and Gordon Fox.

Was fond of the word 'vowed' - "vowed Sexton Blake". Invariably you would find in an instalment of his story that some character "choked with emotion" or "a lump rose in his throat". A remarkably versatile writer though I cannot remember him penning a school story. Usually used "Alfred Armitage" for his historical stories.

Robert Murray. Son, of the above. Probably his full name was Robert Murray Graydon for he wrote occasionally as Robert Graydon. Also with another twist in his name, Murray Roberts. The mantle of the father fell worthily on the son, in fact, in the opinion of many he was the finer writer of the two. Undoubtedly his best work was his Confederation series in the "Union Jack". Had a capital style, his plots worked out smoothly and convincingly.

(Continued)

BLAKIANA

A section of the "Collectors' Digest" devoted to the Man from Baker Street - Sexton Blake. All communications relating to Blake matters, including letters from members of The Sexton Blake Correspondence Club to be addressed to H.M.Bond, 10, Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff. (Please note change of address).

EDITORIAL NOTES:

I wish to thank all those readers who have written to me praising the first instalment of "I Visit Baker Street". I had some doubts as to whether this feature would prove popular, seeing that it was of rather a different nature to previous items, but apparently my fears were unfounded, so, as long as you wish it the series will continue, and this number contains episode two.

Apologies for two rather startling errors in "The Traveller Detective" (No.3). I wrongly stated that Coutts Brisbane was the creator of Gunga Dass the authors name was actually Gregory Hill and the character of Dass was only taken over by Brisbane in later years. Error No.2 concerned the G.H.Teed story "The Great Canal Plot". I referred to the Panama Canal whereas it should have been the Suez Canal. A full review of the Gunga Dass series by Wm.Colcombe will appear soon.

The second Blake Crossword will soon be ready for you to solve! Mr.Rex Dolphin is working on the puzzle.

More apologies! This time to Mr.Wilfred Darwin for the very short instalment of his splendid article on George Marsden Plummer in No.3. We trust he will not be disappointed with the space allotted to him in this issue.

Welcome to yet another new member for the S.B.C.

Club (25) John Herman, 51, Burleigh Gardens, Southgate, London, N.14.

Can you write an original article on some aspect of Blake lore? We still want more contributors, so get those writing instruments out please.

We have pleasure in presenting an extremely informative article from the pen of Mr. Eric Payne of Surbiton, Surrey. This member of the Blake circle has made a study of the stories written by Pierre Quiroule who was responsible for the splendid Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie series, and his article on "the rolling stone" of Blake fiction should please all our readers. As a kind of prologue to this article I should like to quote a few passages from a letter received from the author of the stories by Mr. Payne ending with my own personal views on his remarks.

Firstly, 'Pierre Quiroule' says:

"That you should at last have obtained a copy of my first Granite Grant story "The Case of the King's Spy" rather dismays me. I remember it only as a very poor effort, deliberately 'written down to the youthful mentality' of my readers - so it was then urged upon me. Afterwards I was allowed more latitude. I married Grant off with the thought that that was the end of him, but was requested to re-introduce the character and so had discreetly to dissolve his early matrimonial adventure - hoping that none would remember it".

In his article which you are soon to read, Mr. Payne is puzzled as to what happened to Grant's wife after that first story and the above is P.Q.'s explanation. Later in the letter he says:

"No, I do not think the spirit will ever move me again to resuscitate Grant and Julie. It may be just as well, for the creatures of one's imagination must also go the way of all flesh together with the mortality of human hopes and the fugacity

of human achievement. Besides, the S.B.L. no longer offers adequate scope for my creative instincts which these riper years of my life with their more matured philosophy demand".

Mr. Quiroule also made reference to the Sexton Blake film adapted from one of his stories. This picture "Sexton Blake, and the Hooded Terror" had, he says, its premiere at the Ritz Cinema in Leicester Square and was a money maker for the film company, but not so much for the humble author.

The illustrated brochure describing this film was included with Mr. Quiroule's letter and is most interesting to peruse. George Gurzon played Blake and the chief rogue by eminent Ted Slaughter. Julie was played by Greta Gynt, and it is most interesting to note that Grant was portrayed by David Farrar, who, in later years, was to act the part of Blake himself! I was particularly interested to see that Pedro was played by 'himself', this indicating that a real Pedro did once exist.

All this information is very interesting, particularly in the light of our forthcoming article, but I must confess that as a follower of Blake stories for over 20 years and a great lover of the Grant/Julie series, I was a little perturbed at the attitude taken by Pierre Quiroule. Regrettably he has followed the example of the once popular Edwy Searles Brookes, in desiring that his characters of earlier days should best be forgotten, this despite the increasing demand for old copies of the S.B.L. containing his works and the requests from readers for a return of their favourite characters. Under his real name, W.W. Sayer, this author has recently published a book called "The Nemises Club" (Wright & Brown 7/6) and having read this I cannot say that I noticed any change in the 'creative instincts' of his work. To my mind the new book was merely a poor copy of those excellent Blake stories he once penned and in no way was it an improvement on innumerable other Blake

stories I have read. Personally I should think that it would please Mr. Quiroule to try and retrieve Sexton Blake from the rut in which some of the modern authors have placed him rather than leave the character who helped him to fame, to a very uncertain future. The S.B.L. offers unlimited scope for it features a detective who, if he had proper treatment would probably regain his past popularity and banish for good some of those newly created sleuths who are but very poor copies of himself.

H.M. Bond.

Make sure of your copy of No.5 of the "C.D." and read the splendid articles included therein.

PIERRE QUIROULE

Pierre Quiroule - the "Rolling Stone" - a very appropriate pen-name for a writer whose stories carried his readers, in imagination, all over the world, from the Frozen North to the South Seas, from the Wild West to the Mystic Orient. A fine author, in my opinion no other writer of Sexton Blake ever equalled the high standard of Pierre Quiroule. His work can be placed in the same class as that of Agatha Christie and Freeman Willis Crofts, the accepted leading crime-writers of the day.

His choice of English was always beyond criticism - a fact which no doubt accounted for the fact that his stories appealed to the more intelligent readers of the S.B.L. He never used sensation for sensation's sake, nor did he ever make use of slang, Americanisms, or bad language - facts which may have lessened the appeal of his stories to the errand boy fraternity. His plots were clear-out, with mystery, intrigue, and romance cleverly interwoven. The process of Blake's reasoning was given minutely - built up step by step, and holding the reader enthralled until the mystery was solved several chapters before the end of the

yarn. So intense was the interest until the solution was explained, that the closing chapters, where the criminals were brought to justice; often seemed something like an anticlimax. And if coincidence often assisted Blake in his reasoning, the build-up was so cleverly done, that few would criticise it.

Maybe Pierre Quiroule's style was a trifle flamboyant at times, but never outrageously so. He often used the "flashback" method of writing - for instance, at the end of one chapter Blake would find a body, and the following chapter would wind back the hours and follow the victim of the crime until he came by his death. Another mannerism, rather infuriating at times, I must admit, was to give one chapter on Blake, the next on Granite Grant, the third on Tinker, the next on Julie, and so on, leaving each in turn at a particularly dramatic moment. This episode style of writing a chapter on each character in succession, is rather carried to excess by Dr. Gronin in some of his books.

Some readers may criticise Pierre Quiroule as being unduly descriptive. So was Sir Walter Scott. But these descriptions were always pleasantly written, and full of vivid interest and only the most shallow of readers would be tempted to skip portions. How clearly Quiroule made us see the Rue de Ravenne, with the unpretentious No.10, the stuccoed front giving no indication of the unostentatious opulence within. His many descriptions of the "Damask Room" were unsurpassed. Magnificent pen-pictures! His character studies were as perfect as his descriptions of places. His was the ideal Sexton Blake, quiet, dignified, well-educated, and sound of reasoning, with a deep sense of humour which was never in bad taste. His Tinker was little more than a lad - a lovable lad - eager, plucky, and very devoted to his famous master for whom he carried a profound admiration, very different from the "pub-crawling little horror" or "cocky young man-about-town" of more recent stories,

by less capable writers.

Granite Grant, big-boned, loose-limbed, with "queer blue eyes" a superb character study. Mlle. Julie, still in her early twenties, but a woman of the world. "Who she was, from where she had come, the secret of her immense wealth - all these things were matters for mere speculation and idle curiosity". Few would gainsay that Mlle. Julie, of the red-gold hair, was the very greatest feminine character in the whole history of Sexton Blake.

The sure, master touch of the genius was just as apparent in the secondary characters of Pierre Quiroule. Bertrand Charon, whose appearance suggested that he might be folded up and used as a ping-pong ball; Sir Vrymer Fane, pompous, but grimly efficient; Dr. Bailey, the dry little scientific medico; Inspectors Bramley and Frenton, both types of Scotland Yard officers who did not "pull" with the private detective; even Mrs. Bardell was the dear old lady of our ideals.

Pierre Quiroule wrote every one of the Grant-Julie stories, with one exception, of which more anon.

The first of these Secret Service stories appeared about 1919. It was entitled "The Case of the King's Spy". I read it for the first time, only recently, and I received a shock. For at the end of it, Granite Grant married a beautiful actress. She never appeared in any subsequent story. What happened to Mrs. Grant - whether she died, or whether she ran away with the milkman, cannot be said. For ever after, Grant was the perfect bachelor, there was more than a suggestion of remorse between him and the beautiful French girl spy, and in one story he proposed marriage to her. So even the big-boned Englishman had a skeleton in his cupboard.

Mademoiselle Julie made her initial appearance in the second story of the series - "The Mysterious Wireless Message". For many years I have adverti-

sed without result, for this story which I have never read. In my opinion, the finest yarn of the entire series was "The Mystery Box", one of the few in which the action did not move out of Britain. It was twice published in the S.B.L. Originally it told of the search for the "Bismarck Memoirs". When it was re-printed in the middle thirties, the name of Bismarck was omitted and the reference was to the Memoirs of a "certain German Chancellor". Probably this was due to the Rasputin case, when a film company was sued for, and had to pay, huge damages to the relatives of the Russian Monk, who was supposed to have been maligned in the film.

A particular charm of the Quiroule stories was that they told about actual places and countries. I remember only once the use of a Ruritanian country - Gothnia - in one of the writer's last tales for the Library. In one story, "The Case of the Six Black Dots", Julie appeared solo, incidentally one of the best stories of the series, and re-published later under the title of "The Missing Aviator".

After "The Black Limousine" which appeared in the middle twenties, and featured Bertrand Charon (neither Grant nor Julie was in this story), the Secret Service stories ceased to appear.

Years passed by, and after continual pressure, the Editor wrote me that he had arranged for Grant and Julie to appear again, and that the first story would be "The Man from Tokio". In the years which had passed since "The Black Limousine" a new feature in the S.B.L. was the publication of the author's names to each story, an act of justice long overdue. So, when "The Man from Tokio", by Warwick Jardine appeared, it was naturally assumed that he was the writer of all the Granite Grant yarns. That is, one assumed it, until halfway through the first chapter. But to anyone who knew the original series well, it was soon clear that

"The Man from Tokio" was a "sub" story. The style was completely different, the beloved characters were entirely false to type.

In justice to Mr. Jardine, who is no doubt excellent in his own field, it must be mentioned that he used the Secret Service characters at the request of the Editor, and with full permission from the creator of the characters.

This "sub" story evoked a storm of protest, and the Editor commenced to re-publish the early stories. The first of these was "Dead Man's Diary", by Pierre Quiroule". It was a re-print of "The Secret of the Frozen North", which had appeared some twelve years before. Thereafter, with the exception of a few of the very early stories, every one of the original series was re-published, usually under its original title. One exception in the matter of titles, was "The Mystery of the Lost Battleship", which for some unknown reason was renamed "The Havana Mystery". It was always a mystery to me why "The Case of the Turkish Agreement" was omitted from the re-prints. It was one of P.Q.'s best.

In 1938-39, Pierre Quiroule wrote a number of new stories introducing the famous characters, though two, at least, had originally appeared in shorter form, in the Union Jack. P.Q. took the old U.J. stories, extended the plots, added dialogues, and new situations, introduced Julie, and the lengthened stories resulting were published in the S.B.L.

Incidentally, though Pierre Quiroule wrote all the Grant yarns in the U.J., Julie never appeared in that paper. A pity!

About 1937, one of these Secret Service stories was made as a film, and distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer, under the title of "Sexton Blake and the Bearded Doctor". Pierre Quiroule adapted his story, and wrote the scenario, and Greta Gynt made a splendid Mlle. Julie.

The last P.Q. story appeared in the S.B.L. soon after the outbreak of war. The return of Grant and Julie to the Library is long overdue. Let us hope that Mr. Pierre Quiroule may soon find time to write another of these entrancing stories for our edification. What a pity that he did not give us one of Mlle. Julie, working in the Rue de Ravenne, for the Free French movement, and trying her feminine wiles and her breath-taking beauty on Himmler or Goering, in the Damask Room.

I VISIT BAKER STREET

by H.M.B.

No.1. Part 2.

"Why" asked the detective, "are you from Yorkshire?"

"No" I replied, "I come from Gardiff, but I have certain amount of interest up North seeing that my co-editor of the paper I represent lives in York."

"Indeed" remarked Blake, "so you are not merely a representative but an editor as well. What is this mysterious paper called, anyway, and who is your friend?"

"Well," I answered, perhaps a trifle timidly, "my friend's name is Leckenby and our paper, which was started as a substitute for the S.P.C. is called "The Collector's Digest". Sexton Blake puffed at his pipe.

"I should like to see a copy of that paper of yours" he said. "I used to be very interested in the articles dealing with myself in the S.P.C. Incidentally I am not without knowledge of Mr. Leckenby, quite apart from the fact of my having read some of his articles".

While Blake had been speaking I had been drawing a copy of our No.1 from my pocket and at his last remark I looked up with astonishment.

"You surprise me, Sir" I exclaimed, "my friend has never hinted that"

"Oh, I don't mean that we have met" returned Blake swiftly, "it just happens that his name cropped up in connection with a certain suicide case while I happened to be in York on my way to the village in which the crime I mentioned just now took place."

"I remember," I said, "he did teel me something about it, in fact he rather fancied himself as an amateur Sexton Blake at the time and did say that the experience he had reminded him of some of your own".

The detective smiled and applied another match to his briar. "I wonder why MY work should remind anyone of anything" he said, "believe me, young man, detective work is not half so glamorous in actual fact".

"Don't tell me that your cases haven't been recorded truthfully" I said regretfully, "I should hate to have my illusions shattered".

"Well, some of them have been bolstered up quite a bit for the sake of extra thrills for the reader" Blake replied, "but most of those I have read have been basically true".

He held out his hand for the copy of the "C.D." "H'm," he turned over the pages slowly, "a special section devoted to myself, eh?" As the Man from Baker Street read through "Blakiana" a slow smile spread over his face. Finally he turned over to the last page and having perused it, looked up. "Quite a creditable little effort" he remarked, "is this the only copy out so far?"

"Oh, no," I hurried to explain, "we've got our No.2 just off the press, or should I say the duplicator".

"And what do you wish from me?"

"Well," I said, "I had contemplated publishing

some first hand information regarding some of your opponents and friends, those of whom we have read so much in the past."

"Well" replied the detective, "go ahead and ask me some questions and I'll see if I can grant your wishes with some measure of success".

A thrill of excitement ran through me and a hundred and one questions reared themselves in my mind. Should I ask him about Yvonne? Or Roxane? Dare I mention Nigel Blake? Or should I question him about those criminals we all know so well?

After a pause I took the plunge.

"Whom do you consider your most formidable opponent" I ventured, at the same time hazarding a guess as to whom the criminologist would name. Blake rested his head on the back of his saddlebag chair and a few smoke rings drifted ceilingwards.

"I wonder of whom you are thinking" he said, as though reading my mind "maybe I shall disappoint you young man". "Possibly" I replied, "but your opinion is naturally of the greatest importance even so."

Blake seemed to think hard and his eyes closed. In that minute or so that he remained silent I could picture a long line of evil characters ranging themselves before his mind's eye. Finally he spoke again.

"Well," he said, "taking all things into consideration I think that Dr. Satira has the greatest claim to the distinction of being my most dangerous foe".

Now I must be candid. I had almost been certain in my mind that the reply would be so, and maybe I allowed this fact to convey itself to my face for Blake then said "Ah, I see that I have fulfilled Your belief".

(Continued).

GEORGE MARSDEN PLUMMER

by W. Darwin.

(Continued.)

By this high sounding name was Plummer known in the savage Riff country of Morocco, where he adopted the Mahomedan religion and became a trusted ally of the desert chieftain. For many years he lived in this wild spot, a fugitive from Justice, but an important man in Abdel Krims army.

In most of his criminal enterprises Plummer was accompanied by a feminine accomplice. Two names spring to my mind at the moment. Those of Vali Mata-Vali who was I think his most frequent partner and Muriel Marl, better known as the Gang Girl. Muriel, once a film star and as tough a lady as ever bossed a crook gang, entered the stories in somewhat more recent times. There may have been other women in Plummer's life, for this handsome looking criminal seemed to favour feminine companionship.

At some time in his eventful life George Marsden Plummer had been of all things a Detective Inspector at Scotland Yard, a rather strange, one-time occupation for this daring criminal adventurer. I should imagine he found the routine work of a police officer very dull. In fact it is difficult to reconcile Plummer the criminal with Plummer the policeman.

I see G.M.P. as the world wandered and criminal adventurer as described by G.H. Teed, not the Scotland Yard man of earlier days. The renegade Englishman of countless thrilling adventures and hairbreadth escapes from the law, who had the whole world as his hunting ground, will always be my favourite character.

We have read of George Marsden Plummer in many queer corners and in diverse circumstances, but up in the world or down, he never seemed to lose his old self-assurance or his ability to put over some smart piece of villainy. His conflicts with

the Baker Street Detective have been numerous and have filled a good many pages of the good old Union Jack, as well as countless numbers of the Sexton Blake Library.

Though G.H. Teed who put George Marsden Plummer in the forefront of star characters, has passed on, leaving us with many regrets, he has left behind these memories. All masterpieces of story telling and some of the finest yarns ever printed in a story paper.

It might be of interest at this point to mention a certain Union Jack reader who having passed a difficult school examination attributed his success to his reading of Sexton Blake stories. What I am trying to point out in re-calling this little item which actually appeared in the form of a letter to the Editor in Union Jack's correspondence column is the educational value of Teed's work. These yarns are indeed a Geography Lesson in themselves. Almost every country in the world has been visited by this author's pen. China, Morocco, the East Indies and many others have formed a background for these stirring detective stories.

It is not easy to forget such a brilliant author or the character he made famous. These were indeed stories to remember.

Answers to Sexton Blake Quis No.1

1. Dr. Satira.
2. Smith. Lewis Jackson.
3. Barry Perowne.
4. Lobangu.
5. The Case of the Crinson
Conjuror. Gwyn Evans.
6. The Zenith series.

