

The Collectors Digest.

No. 19

Volume
(2)

July 1900



1. "Wor (ay," murmured Billy, "If me old pal Grace hand Ranji ain't in for a bit of fat!"
But Alf was thinking big thinks. What about? Well, just look at picture No. 2.

Two of the 6 pictures which appeared on the Front Page - "The Big Budget" 24th June, 1900. The Artist was Tom Browne. Test Matches were in the News in those days.



"How they are, lugged up as Grace and Ranji, waddling their way from the railway station.
"Isn't the people fond of 'em, Billy?" suggested Alf. "So they ort to be," warbled Billy.
"Look out we've done for cricket."

For Sale:-

Long consecutive runs
of:-

Boys Friend - first 20 years
Big Budget - several years.
Nuggets - 6 years run.
Young Folks Weekly Budget.
Varieties - - - - -
Boys Realm - - - - -
Etc. etc. - - - - -

JOHN MEDCRAFT,
64, Woodlands Road, Ilford, Essex.



(Vol. 2) No. 19

Price 1s. 1d

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JULY 1948

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

The year is getting on, and its time we started talking about the Annual. With the "Win on the Post" finish of last year - thrilling, but rather too nerve wracking - we want to take time by the forelock if we can this year.

First, then, the "Who's Who". It is evident that was the most popular attraction last year, for we are still receiving tributes to its value in helping Collectors to get to know each other. So popular was it in fact, that it creates problems for the next edition. Since Christmas quite a number of new friends have joined the clan, and only an odd one or two have left, so that if we worked on exactly the same lines as last year the "Who's Who" would take more space than we can afford, for you can have too

much of a good thing. We, therefore, do not propose to give full details of collections this time except for newcomers. (We should like those who were not in last year to give details of collections with questionnaire.) We still, though, want to make it clear what papers each collector is interested in. With this motive in view we are enclosing with copies of this month a questionnaire which we hope you will complete and return to us as soon as possible.

The interests of our subscribers are many and varied, and it is impossible to classify all the hundreds of papers that have been published for boys. However, the majority of you will be able to find yours in one or other of the groups shown. Supposing you collect Aldines, but only, say, Turpins, Duvals, and Robin Hoods, indicate Group 3, and give details in the forty words allowed. Those of you who have occasion to ring 'telephone enquiries' hear a friendly (usually) voice saying "Can I help you?". Well, that's the motive behind the "Who's Who".

There is also something else of importance. Last year you will remember, we fixed a price and size - then increased the size 50% and found ourselves on the brink of Carey Street in consequence. Well, we learn by experience so, as costs of production have certainly not gone down we shall not be able to do it at 6/- this year. We'll go into it carefully, and let you know the price next month. It can't be a great deal more, but whatever it is we feel sure you'll say it's worth it.

And we want your articles, too. Here it's a case of "Many hands make light work" rather than "Too many cooks spoil the broth". So please get your thinking-caps on, and a special plea to the veterans. We do want to give more space to the papers you read when you were young, but why not help by writing something yourselves?

In an interesting letter Mr.R.J.Wareing of Fallings Park, Wolverhampton, suggests we publish lists

of titles of the Nelson Lee, Gem and Magnet stories. Well it's a good idea, for the usefulness of such lists are evident. We could do it if we can get sufficient support. We have discussed the proposal with the agency with the result that we think it would be possible to offer a complete list of the Nelson Lees for 2s.3d, providing we get not less than 25 orders, 50 orders 1s.9d. The Gem and Magnet lists being nearly twice as long would of course cost more. However, lets tackle the Lees first. Will all those interested please advise us quickly? Then, if we do proceed we shall want someone to provide us with the copy, as our list is far from complete. Any volunteers? What with this proposal, Cross-Words, and the Annual, we look like going in for publishing in a big way, don't we? Will someone whisper Paper shortage? Hum, yes! But we'll get over it somehow.

Yours sincerely,

Don't let Summer Time make you forget your "Sub" Time.

COMPLETE SERIES MAGNETS from 1100-1683 for sale. Exchange only, early Blue Gems for early Reg Magnets. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stohebridge Park, London, N.W.10. 'Phone Willesden 4474.

WANTED Ferrers Lord stories from Boys Friend 3d & 4d Library. Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED "Populars" 1924 and 1925 years only. Odd numbers or runs welcomed. Good condition please. L.Packmen, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

40 Blue Cover 1d Gems. Exchange for $\frac{1}{2}$ d or 1d Gems or Magnets. Above 100 Gems, date about 1929 for Sale or Exchange. Boys Friend 3d & 4d Libs. for Sale or Exchange. R.Whorwell, 29 Aspibden Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.16.

Once again we have pleasure in publishing an article from the versatile pen of Mr. Goodyear - the bloods in a new light; but a view with which many old timers will agree. I can hear Mr. Henry Steele saying for one "My sentiments exactly" - H.L.

BLOODS WITH TAUGHT ME HISTORY
by R.A.H. Goodyear.

My nephew's almost passionate desire is to become a Professor of History. His eyes widened in surprise and pity when I told him I could never take in History at school. "Yet you seem to know something - quite a decent lot, in fact - about the history of England" he commented. "Thank you," I humbly answered "perhaps I do know a little of it; if I do, it is because I got almost all I know from penny bloods".

He had obviously never heard of penny bloods so I didn't pursue the subject. Nevertheless there must have been hundreds of thousands (a few of them still living) who obtained their knowledge of history largely from the serial stories which Edwin J. Brett and his Victorian contemporaries published in the Boys of England, the Boys Standard, The Boys Comic Journal, The Boys Popular Weekly, and similar periodicals.

In my schooldays I had had my ears boxed on countless occasions - there was a deal of dangerous ear-boxing in those days, sometimes resulting in perforated ear-drums and lifelong deafness - because I just never could remember in what chronological order the kings and queens of England reigned or who were the foreign monarchs, cardinals and prime ministers closely associated with their good or ill fortunes.

Then came the time when I was made aware by my schoolmates of the popular penny papers of the late Victorian era, and all at once English History, formerly one long, stupefying headache to me, was illuminated with stereoscopic transparency until it resembled a glorious technicolour film of to-day in its clarity and beauty.

Immediately the lives of King Alfred, Richard Lionheart, the Black Prince, Caractacus, and their dauntless kind were imbued with an adventurous and absorbing animation which made me more than ever reluctant to do my home lessons or to go to bed at the appointed time.

The chapters of "Hereward the Unconquered" in The Boys Comic Journal held me enthralled and simultaneously taught me for the first time the immense significance of the Norman Conquest, which had never even dawned on me in the classroom. Reading about Richard Lionheart and his valorous doings filled my young heart with passionate interest in his Crusades, which in school hours had been to me nothing but a crashing bore and a thoroughly tiresome infliction.

My imagination lit up when the golden age of Queen Elizabeth was described by the early boys writers in breath-taking adventure stories on land and sea - more particularly on sea, when Drake and other devil-may-care Mariners of England sailed with their tiny fleets and struck terror into the minds and hearts of the pompous and self-satisfied grandees in their huge galleons.

With feelings of eager exultation I forthwith awaited those questions in the History class which had previously plunged me into dismay and discouragement. I hoped and believed for a while that I should at long last shine in class and cease to have my ears soundly boxed. In fact, it didn't altogether work out that way. I found, to my astonishment, that some of the answers I so glibly made didn't accord with the historical records.

My penny-blood authors had painted their serials too thickly with legendary stories and fabulously fantastic achievements. When I said, for instance, that Hereward the Wake had once encountered single-handed a dozen of William of Normandy's best knights and split the heads of all of them from chin to chine the History Master rapped out, "Who told you that

rubbish, Goodyear?" and then thundered, "Come up to my desk!" He then gave me ten of the juiciest on my tingling fingers. Better and safer than ten boxes on the ear but memorably unpleasant for all that.

It is right I should confess that, in after-years whenever I have re-read these glamorous stories of romantic reigns, I have found good stuff in them mingled with glaring historical inaccuracies and wilfully careless mis-statements. Practically all the stories written around and about Mary Queen of Scots for example, quite ignored that royal young lady's indiscretions and presented her as an angel of light against a dark background of enemy misdeeds and brutal persecutions, being especially hard on John Knox.

None of the authors seemed ever to have a good word for Richard Crookshanks or Henry the Eighth. Few of them saw any faults at all in the Black Prince or condoned the conduct of Cardinal Wolsey. Yet it was to the writers of these serials who entirely changed my depressed and despairing outlook on English History, "black as the pit from Pole to Pole", to one of luminous brightness and warmly throbbing interest, - so that, though I lived to find out that some of them had speciously falsified facts and adorned them with rainbow-coloured fancy for their own glorification as narrators, I owe them in the main a deep debt of gratitude for arousing and sustaining a proud interest in the outstanding affairs of my wonderful country. "This is my own, my native land".

Never put off till to-morrow the "Sub" you can send to-day.

WANTED: Nelson Lee' Library original series No.15 and onwards to No.50.. Boys Own Library 3d, Nuggett Library, Empire and Diamond Library. Particulars to W.H.Clough, 3 Fonthill Grove, Sale, Manchester.

(NOTE: "Nemo" will be remembered for that fine article "The Art of Eric Parker" in an early number of the C.D. There it was indeed evident he knew his subject - the reason was simple - he is an artist himself. In the following article on a controversy which has raged in our columns he shows the same ability to say something without wasting words. Well, he's done a lot of writing too; you may or may not agree with all his views but we are sure you will all admit he can express himself forcefully without giving offence.

H.L

"ARGUMENTUM AD JUDICIUM"
by "Nemo"

Perhaps a few words on the Hamilton-Brooks controversy may be allowed to a reader who owes to both writers unnumbered hours of pleasure, but is without disproportionate adulation of either! Believing himself entirely unbiased, he is convinced that the respective merits of E.S. Brooks and Charles Hamilton are explained by the facts that the former is a craftsman and the latter is an artist.

In writing stories of Public School life, Brooks suffered two obvious handicaps. First, that his own education clearly included few subjects outside an elementary school curriculum - with the result that the infrequent lessons described at St. Frank's were restricted almost exclusively to history, geography and arithmetic. Quite beyond him were academic jests such as one associates with Hamilton - not only would he be incapable of such a double-entendre as "declining the article", but indeed is probably ignorant of the difference between a declension and a conjugation.

His second handicap was the necessity to introduce a detective story plot into school-stories - though in his case this may not have been without compensating advantages, since he was far more at home with crime than with a scholastic atmosphere. Consequently, in his work the mystery element was far more convincing than it was in Hamilton's yarns. To me, at

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least, the stories in which Hamilton introduced crime were unworthy and farcical, detracting from the conviction of the scholastic-atmosphere. Few readers, I imagine, can have been convinced by Hamilton's motorcyclists robbing the Courtfield Bank, and popping up at Greyfriars minus the whiskers. Few readers can have understood why his 'villian' almost invariably owned a 'beak of a nose' (Strangely enough, Shields, who so ably portrayed the Greyfriars boys, was equally unable to portray accurately some of the appurtenances of the crime-stories - a revolver, or a modern car, for instance.)

But even as a crime-author, Brooks, in my humble opinion, is no more than a competent craftsman - just as his school-stories lack the artistry of Hamilton, so his crime stories are incomparably inferior to those such as a 'crime-artist' as Gwyn Evans. In fact and in dialogue, Brooks is capable of even worse howlers than Gerald Verner's recent weird pronunciation ("Monsieur Poy-ro") in a B.B.C. programme! Nevertheless, in his Nelson Lee stories Brooks revealed an imagination of extraordinary fertility - perhaps unusually prolific just because it was primitive and uncultivated. I think it is true to say - it was certainly so in my own experience - that his cruder characterisation palled long before one could grow tired of Hamilton's more subtle depiction of temperaments. Personally, in fact, I found the final Magnet series (the Hacker-Wharton feud) the most interesting Hamilton had ever written, with a masterly portrayal of the relationship between Wharton and Quelch.

In his "Rio Kid" stories, too, Hamilton showed a striking ability to introduce data outside his own personal experience in a way that placed them amongst the best of all juvenile "Westerns" and with a human interest that few other "Western" authors would even have attempted. The Rio Kid dialogue may not have been authentic "American" - any more than that of Fisher T. Fish - but it was vintage Hamilton. Of Brooks' "American" the painfully obvious origin was the local

cinema. It is so many years since I have read a St. Frank's story that it is difficult to judge what its present impact would be - but still memorable are the sinister atmospheres of the Ezra Quirke series, the vitality of the Test-cricket series, and personal school-holidays enhanced in pleasure by the St. Frank's holiday series. All, no doubt, glamourised to some extent by Time's rosy spectacles and Youth's absorbent relish!

Without the flattering and meaningless allegation that either author is a 'genius' - the currency of compliments is already sufficiently inflated! - surely one can pay due credit to both, with deserved thanks for enjoyment derived from their work? Even Shakespeare could not have produced a "Hamlet" every week, and no just reader could reasonable expect a thousand masterpieces from any author. As for repetition of incident in subsequent stories - the point may have been overlooked that particular stories are remembered more vividly by their readers than by their writer. The reader remembers the completed work. To the author the published story represents a selection from all the possible incidents that has passed through his mind - and only a superman could always recall just what incidents had been used in a specific connection and in their precise compilation, as distinct from those reserved for future use.

In the matter of 'style', to me Hamilton and Brooks are respectively comparable with Eric Parker and Arthur Jones. Where even a thumbnail-sketch by Parker exhibits an individual artistry that would be sought in vain in a magnum-opus by Jones, so Hamilton reveals a vein of artistry, conditioned and accentuated by an intimate acquaintance with literature and mythology, that could never be found in the work of Brooks. Yet - as the Ezra Quirke series demonstrated - even Jones had peculiar gifts which suited such publications as the N.L.L. and Thriller - in which the unreality of his draughtsmanship matched the unreality of the text it illustrated. In the same way, Brooks

had his own forte. Hamilton supplied one need of a juvenile reader. Brooks another. There was a time for tea - and a time for lemonade! - To me St. Frank's was to Greyfriars a complementary institution - a more sensational and blatant one, certainly less 'respected' and never a rival. At St. Frank's lessons were incidental to holidays and crime; a Greyfriars crime was an unaccountable lapse on the part of the cultured author.

And, finally, as for the suggestion that 'unreality' in either Hamilton or Brooks is a fault - surely that stigma, too, is unfair? It is the work of a creative artist to give conviction to the most fantastic feats of imagination; and if humdrum 'realism' is the criterion, then Well's "Time Machine", and "Country of the Blind" have no merit, and such plays of Shakespeare as "The Tempest" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" should be scrapped. Opera should be opposed, ballet banned and poetry impounded! Save me, for one from the school-story that reads like an Education Department's report, and from the crime novel that reminds one of a magistrate's routine!

And, without acerbity or adulation - why not give to both Charles Hamilton and E.S. Brooks that mead of appreciation mellowed by moderation in both criticism and idolatry? A soft-pedal in partisanship!

WANTED: Early Issues of Gem, Magnet, Pluck, Dreadnought. A few Magnets and Jems for disposal, and red-covered Magnets for Exchange only. Eric Fayne, 23 Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

WANTED: Aldine Publications, Dick Turpins, Claude Duvals, etc. E.R. Landy, 4 Nuneaton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED: Old series Nelson Lees. Nos. 131 to 146, 466 to 477. Gem No. 1059.

FOR SALE: About 60 Nelson Lees 1929 to 1933, including last complete series, also a few odd Magnets and Popolars. Frank Keeling, 93 Aldridge Avenue, Stanmore Middlesex.

Here is the contribution in our "Why I Collect the Story Papers" which Mr. Smith and I decided was the best of the many excellent efforts sent in. I am sure all will agree that Mr. Allen gives several good reasons in a comparatively small space.

H.L.

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTING HOBBY
by L.M. Allen.

The urge to collect is latent in most of us, many find an outlet in stamps and books. Collectors can be divided into two sections, apart from the commercial side, one group desires to accumulate all known kinds of his subject whilst the other specialises with items of particular appeal to himself. I include myself in the latter group with regard to Story Paper Collecting, although, when at school, I was an avid reader and all was grist to the mill.

Certain of the weekly papers, however, left a lasting impression and even in those days of quick reading and "swopping" a few choice specimens were retained for anticipated future pleasure. A dip into these books would always re-rouse my old enthusiasm and result in another standing order with the news-agent for current copies. Even at this later date nearly all the new issues were given away, the only exception being the re-printed "Nelson Lees" in the Schoolboys Own Library. As the series developed I began to remember quite clearly events that were to come and it was with a certain amount of eagerness that I awaited the next publication day. When the Library came to a sudden stop in 1940 I knew there were many blanks to be filled and an anxiety to do this resulted in my becoming a Story Paper Collector proper. The chance sight of an article in the "Hobbyist" dealing with the Nelson Lee and subsequent correspondence with the author proved invaluable. I was introduced to the Collector's Digest, and from then onwards everything was fairly plain sailing.

I was successful in obtaining from my fellow col-

lectors most of the missing Lee stories that appealed and then I began my search for copies of the companion papers, samples of the Gem, Magnet, Boys Friend, and many other old favourites were added to the growing collection. Difficulty was next experienced with the storage, in common with most collectors, I suppose but from this arose a new interest in the collection. I began to bind the Lees in their various series to form a Library; only a very amateur effort, but I became more adept and absorbed as time went on. The soiled and battered copies necessary to the collection to complete a sequence were trimmed and revived as much as possible before inclusion.

I found, too, an added pleasure in the friendly and informal correspondence that developed with other collectors and a great satisfaction in being able to supply or loan a long sought copy to a fellow enthusiast. Although the distance between most of us is an obstacle in the way of our meeting face to face, this was overcome on two occasions and it was with great pleasure I was actually able to exhibit my collection.

Summing up, I would say that primarily the sight of a faintly remembered "blood" of my schooldays gives me the most satisfaction, closely followed by pen friendships and the restoration of the papers, and I must confess to a certain amount of gratification at now being able to read the yarns openly and not in the "hole and corner" method I had to adopt when a lad in order to avoid parental disapproval and the subsequent destruction of Nelson Lee and Co.

Lastly, I do get that true collector's thrill from having copies of rare numbers so desired by others.

FOR SALE: Long consecutive runs of Boys Friend - 1st 20 years; Big Budget - several years; Nuggets - 6 years run; Young Folks Weekly Budget; Varieties; Boys Realm, etc. etc. John Medcraft, 64, Woodlands Road, Ilford, Essex.

Rio Bound

26.5.48

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Very soon I am going to South America for about three years in connection with my job. Of course I cannot take my collection with me, but I shall maintain my interest in the hobby through the medium of C.D. and the other magazines so you can be quite sure that I shall look forward to receiving the usual monthly ration of C.D.

I hope to keep in touch with several collectors who are trying to get certain Magnet and Boys Friend numbers for me, so you will see that one way or another I shall keep my "eye" on the activities of C.D. and want you to continue to regard me as being one of the circle. Although I shall be some thousands of miles away I shall be with you in spirit and before leaving I should like to take this opportunity of wishing both yourself and all connected with the production of the C.D. all the very best of luck and continued success.

Cheerio for now, but you'll hear from me again.

Kindest regards,
Yours sincerely,
Ronald H. Hunter.

(In another interesting letter Mr. Hunter tells

me he has been in Brazil before and adds "I specially remember noting the accuracy of Frank Richards various descriptions of places, national customs, etc. I have had the pleasure of making the trip to the tip of Sugar Loaf Mountain by cable car. I can confirm that the description of the scene is convincing and very true in detail".

Well, that should add to the interest of the coming Bunter story "Billy Bunter in Brazil".

I am sure all readers of the C.D. will wish Mr. Hunter three happy years in Rio de Janeiro.

H.L.)

* * *

Billy Bunter - A Boon to the Blind

27.5.48.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I am glad you liked the news of W.G.B. getting film-ward. This is now looking very promising, as we are finding a formula for reconciling all interests: and the producer, so far as he is concerned, is very keen to get going.

By the way, "Billy Bunter's Birthday Present" in Braille is out now. And it has been decided to put the first Greyfriars book "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" into Braille. This will be a tremendous business, for, as I daresay you know, Braille print takes up at least ten times the size of an ordinary book. I am told that there are more than 25,000 young people in this country who have lost their sight, or perhaps never had it: which is heart-breaking to think of. It makes me feel as pleased as Punch to think that such of them as may have a fancy for Bunter will be able to read him soon, with their fingers.

I think I told you that I am compiling a list of old Magneeteers who can no longer see, in order to send them free copies of "Bunter's Birthday Present". So if you hear of one, let me know, won't you.

(Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School is now in its
thirs edition, sure proof that he is as popular as
ever he was. H.L.)

* * *

A Salute from Uncle Sam

5.6.48.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I must apologize for this long delay in replying to your nice long letter. I received the copy of the Digest Annual No.1 and the copies of the Digest have been coming regularly ever since. I haven't had too much time for my hobby and so the correspondence has been sadly neglected. I've enjoyed your publication very much, quite entertaining as well as instructive, and most attractive in its bright covers.

I was especially interested in the first two articles in the Annual "Who's Who" and 100 years of Boys Weeklies.

I think you covered the question of prices very well in your comments on page 93. The old law of supply and demand, based on the desire of the Old Boy can best take care of that, but judgement should control the desire and not desire control the judgement. When we reach the place where we want to regulate the business and everyday affairs of the other fellow we're headed for trouble because we're asking for eventual complete regimentation. Sgd. R.L.Caldwell.

Note: So great has been the demand for the early numbers that we have not a single copy. We know, too, that most of our readers wish to keep theirs, but if there is anyone who feels they can part with any from 1 to 9, in order to help Mr.Caldwell, we should be most grateful. H.L.)

* * *

Advertise in the C.D.

No Olive Branch to Mr. Baguley

16.6.48.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Mr. Baguley states that the work of Messrs. Hamilton and Brooks is unimportant outside its own sphere - this is, undoubtedly correct. He also states that the work of such people as Sean O'Casey, Ignazio Silone, Maugham, and Priestly, to name a few from his list, is important outside its own sphere. This I do not believe to be correct.

I wonder how many men in the street have ever heard of O'Casey, Silone, or even T.S. Eliot.

Mr. Baguley may term this another "monstrous assertion" but it is my fixed belief that the work of Messrs. Hamilton and Brooks is at least as important in its own way, as that of Maugham and Priestly.

I think that Mr. Armitage takes rather too serious a view of our letters. The C.D. is intended as a medium where collectors may express their opinions, providing they remain courteous. Perhaps Mr. Armitage means that this particular correspondence has reached the stage of boredom. He is probably right.

Yours sincerely,
Eric Fayne.

(And with this, and the article on "Nemo" on another page, we will bring this controversy to a close. H.L.)

* * *

LATE NEWS:

Messrs. Charles Skilton, announce that the next two Bunter Books will be published in September.

Have you Ordered your Annual?

The Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by: Robert Blythe
 81, Alsen Road, Holloway, London, No 7.

First, I must apologise for a mistake in last month's column. I stated that the Captain of the Fourth was Bob Christine. It should, of course, have been John Busterfield Boots. Bob Christine was Captain at one time but shortly after Boot's arrival, stood down in his favour.

The first queries this month come from Mr. Holland Skinner, of London. The serial in the latter "Gems" "The Black Hand at St. Frank's" was original and not a reprint of any Nelson Lee story, and it was not reprinted in any other form. He also asks for details of the "Handforth at St. Jim's" stories which appeared in the Gem. By a co-incidence this question is also put by Mr. Keeling of Stanmore. The stories themselves are worthy of an article describing them in detail and if, by some miracle I find myself with some time to spare, I'll do it! However, very briefly the story tells how Handforth performs four practically impossible tests, and is made Form Captain. Tiring of St. Jim's he tries to make his father send him back to St. Frank's by attempting to get the "sack"! It's a very amusing yarn and well worth reading. Numbers and story titles are as follows:-

No. 1059 "Handforth at St. Jim's"; (No. 1060 "Playing for the First"; No. 1061 "Handforth's Third Test"; No. 1062 "Handforth's Triumph"; No. 1063 "The Boy they couldn't Sack".

Mr. Keeling wants to know when the St. Frank's Magazine started, and what were the main features. The

St. Frank's Mag. started life as "Nipper's Mag", in O.S. No. 346 and was changed to the "St. Frank's Mag." in O.S. 443. The two combined ran for 167 weeks terminating with O.S. 513. Some of the more notable items that appeared were a portrait gallery and biography of all members of the Remove and Fourth, a series of 26 pen sketches of St. Frank's and its environs by E.E.Briscoe, and 76 pen sketches of various Public Schools by the same artist.

Mr. Keeling would also like to see a list of the characters and their studies. Well, Frank, I haven't enough space in this issue, but I will make a start on them next month.

I have had four series nominated as the best, in the opinion of the writers, Mr.Holland-Skinner plumps for the series introducing Harry Gresham "The Mystery Funk", 1st N.S. Nos.51-54; and Mr.Keeling has three, "The College House Mystery" O.S.Nos.296-304, and the "Bullies League" O.S.Nos.196-204. As the best Holiday series he suggests the "Amazon" series O.S.Nos.264-274.

There is just room for the next ten titles: Nos.11 "The War Factory Mystery"; 12 "British to the Backbone"; 13 "In borrowed Plumes"; 14 "The Kings Bad Bargain"; 15 "The Spendthrift"; 16 "Twenty Fathoms Deep" (E.S.B.'s first story in the N.L.); 17 "The Black Wolf"; 18 "The Case of the Duplicate Key"; 19 "The Secret of the Swamp; 20 "Not Guilty".

THE OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

The 4th Meeting was held at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22, on Sunday, 6th June, at 6 p.m. Those present were Mr. & Mrs.L.Packman, of the above address, Messrs.R.Blythe, F.Keeling, J.Parrott, M.Haswell, C.Holland-Skinner, J.W.Geal, M.Hall, B.G.Whiter, J. Robyns and Mr.& Mrs.R.Whiter.

Mr. Packman acted as Chairman of the meeting. Letters were read from Collectors who were unable to

attend, including one from our friend Mr H. A. Smith of Scole (Norfolk) who had arranged to be present but owing to domestic circumstances had, at the last minute, been compelled to postpone his visit until a subsequent meeting. The meeting expressed a desire that a message of sympathy and condolence be offered to Mr. Smith through the medium of the Digest.

A short discussion on the question of Price Control followed. Although the subject was open to criticism and still held many problems, it was agreed by all that good progress had been made and that the basic idea was working out very satisfactorily. The meeting regretted the number of small typing errors in the Digest, and whilst realising that our worthy editors had many problems to contend with, it was agreed that it was a pity to spoil the Digest with these errors. It is sincerely hoped that they will accept this criticism in the spirit in which it is intended - that is, one of constructive criticism. In view of the flourishing feature of the Exchange which monopolises a large proportion of the meeting's available time, it was decided to hold a short "Book Quiz", comprising two teams, each person asking his opposite number various questions. A system of points was arranged for scoring purposes, and so even were the teams that the result was a draw. After a short interval for refreshments provided by Mrs. Packman, the Exchange Mart opened in full swing. Many satisfactory exchanges and purchases were made. It was arranged that the next meeting which will be held at 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, N.22, on Sunday, 4th July, should take place at 4 o'clock in the afternoon as it was felt by all that this was a more satisfactory time to meet during the summer months. The meeting concluded at approximately 9 p.m.

(Note: As Report was received just as we were going "to press", comment must be held over until the August issue. H.L.).

CROSS WORD COMPETITION No.1

There was an extremely good entry, but rather to our surprise there was just one effort which agreed entirely with the solution in the possession of Mr. Payne. This was sent in by Mr. Reg. 4. Hudson, 5, Throstle Row, Leeds, 10. Every other competitor had gone astray with Clues 1 Across and Down; evidently jumping at the more obvious "Canes" instead of "Lines". This of course gave them "Coker". Mr. Hudson, probably got Loder first, and thus got on the track of Lines. Anyway, we are sure all will admit "Lines" was quite legitimate and a clever catch on the part of Mr. Payne.

Well, it couldn't have worked out better really, for it would have been a pity if the prize had had to be split up into small amounts. Congratulations, Reg.

* * *

Cross-word Competition No.2 is given on a separate sheet enclosed with this number of the C.D. The same amount is again offered as a Prize.

L	O	D	L	R	E	S	N	O	O	P	E
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N	T		D	O	E	R		B	U	L	L
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P	I	N	E	R	E	P	E	R	I		
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Blakiana

All Correspondence to
H.M. Bond, 10, Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

THE ROUND TABLE

It is surprising the number of people to-day who are under the impression that Sexton Blake is (or was) a character of the past. On several occasions recently I have brought his name up to acquaintances who have exclaimed "Good gosh! Is that chap still going strong?", or "Oh, yes! I remember reading of him when I was a youngster. Are they STILL writing about him?" This, in spite of the fact that the Sexton Blake Library is still running and that at least two films about him have been shown throughout the country within the last year or so. I was, therefore, not greatly surprised when I observed that one Gilbert Thomas thought that Blake and Tinker had "survived" up till the outbreak of the second great war. In his new book "How to enjoy Detective Fiction" (Rockliff 6/6 net) Mr. Thomas mentions practically all the famous detectives of fiction and gives no little space to our particular favourite, in fact Sexton Blake is mentioned on Page 1 when the author tells us that a copy of Donald Stuart's "Bells of Doom" finds a place on his bookshelf alongside such volumes as "Forensic Medicine"

and Toxicology" and "The Trial of William Herbert Wallace". In later pages comes the real references of Blake and it is apparent that Mr. Thomas is under the impression that the man from Baker Street died with the advent of the recent war although he DOES use the word temporarily when informing us of the fact. As has often been mentioned in the pages of this and other amateur papers, Mr. Thomas tells us that Blake stories were noted for a high standard of writing, fast moving narrative, imagination and vigour, with a good plot and plenty of incident. I am in full agreement that this statement should be made in the past tense, for although it would have been true twenty years ago it is far from being so at the moment. Some of the modern stories cannot be compared with those of yesteryear and certainly they cannot boast of a "good plot". Be that as it may, however, it is good to note that Blake has had a few bouquets handed out to him and it is worth while anyone picking up Mr. Thomas' new book for it is of a most interesting nature and a certain "bet" for 'tec story fans.

I have had several letters this month expressing pleasure at the re-appearance of John Drummond in the June numbers of the S.B.L. It certainly WAS good to see his name once again for I am one of those who thoroughly enjoyed his previous yarns in the third series and often wondered, during the past two or three years, why he should have suddenly disappeared after giving us a series of brilliant stories on the lines of those by the late Gwyn Evans. Once again he has given us a really good story, and I hope he will keep up the good work in future issues. But as usual I was disappointed in the companion volume for June. When I saw the name "John Hunter" on page one I thought to myself "here it is again - more spivs, drones and un-Blake like plot". And I was right. How I wish John Hunter or Peter Meriton, or whatever his name is, would concentrate on his only success, Captain Dack. One reader informs us that Dack is again to appear in book form ere long and I am sure that the story will be readable, which is more than can be said

for the Blake stories that his creator is turning out for the modern S.B.L. I, like many others, am simply fed up with those same old characters that Hunter keeps dishing up in various guises and I simply cannot digest some of his language. Somebody is always looking at someone else and that someone else is looking at the somebody, or Blake and Tinker are sinking pints at some low down pub or other. Snap out of it John Hunter! You can do better than that as you have so often proved in the past.

REPRINTS IN THE SECOND SERIES
by W. Colcombe

During the last two years of the second series of "The Sexton Blake Library" there were reprinted a large number of the earlier stories of the Library. While most of these were straightforward reprints of the originals, a few were altered and fresh authors ascribed to them.

One of the most glaring of these altered reprints was No. 675 "The Burmese Dagger" by Donald Stuart. It was obvious to anyone who knew this author's style of writing that he was not responsible for this story in fact it was a reprint of Andrew Murray's "The Case of the Burmese Dagger" which was first published in No. 102 of the first series S.B.L. It featured a character named "Trouble" Nantucket, an American enquiry agent who appeared in a number of Mr. Murray's works in the early 1920's.

Another story attributed to Donald Stuart which it is fairly certain he never wrote was No. 732 "Twenty Years of Hate" but unfortunately I cannot trace the original though some readers may know it. A queer piece of re-printing(or should it be called re-hashing) was No. 734 "Dead Man's Bay" by John G. Brandon. This was a slightly re-written version of Mark Osborne's story of the same title, first published as No. 358 of the second series. In the Brandon version Inspector Martin becomes Inspector Coutts, the name

of the chief crook Aubrey Dexter is changed, and the ending altered to allow the leading criminals to be caught instead of escaping as in the original. Otherwise the story is the same, word for word.

Aubrey Dexter features in another reprint, No.711 "Sexton Blake - Special Constable" a story first issued during the first World War as No.28 of the 1st series. Dexter was often in Mark Osborne's stories of the 1918-1920 era, sometimes in partnership with George Marsden Plummer. For a change Osborne IS given the credit for No.711.

Another old favourite to appear in a reprinted story at this time was Leon Kestrel "The Master Mummer". He appeared in No.704 "The Case of the Sacred Ruby" ascribed to Hylton Gregory which is a reprint of one of Lewis Jackson's earliest Mummer stories "The Red Heart of the Incas" which appeared in No.86 of the first series. Why the real author was not given credit for THIS story is hard to understand as others by Mr.Jackson started to appear in the S.B.I. not long afterwards. The name "Hylton Gregory" covers the reprinted work of several authors and I am doubtful if an author of this name ever existed.

(Editor's Note: For some time now it had been thought that the name "Hylton Gregory" was another used by that once popular Blake author, H.Gregory Hill, who was the creator of Gunga Dass the notorious Indian crook. Mr.Colcombes revelations in this article are therefore of great interest and are sure to give much food for thought to the student of Blake lore.)

A very interesting reprint was No.723 "The Case of the Crimson Conjuror by Gwyn Evans (originally No.171 of the same series). This story in which Blake and Tinker fall out and part company for a time is unique in Blake history. In this case however there are no arguments over the authors for on the second occasion Mr.Evans is given credit for his original story.

Well, those I have mentioned are some of the more interesting of the many reprints that appeared in the 2nd series S.B.L. A complete list of them will, I hope, be eventually published.

NEWS OF THE SEXTON BLAKE CLUB
by H.M. Bond

I have purposely made this a special article rather than include it as a part of my usual Round Table feature because I want to impress upon all Blake fans that although the S.B. Club has not had much publicity of recent months it is still as active as when I originated it two years ago with the "deputation letter" to the Editor of the S.B.L. I suppose the lack of publicity has been due to yours truly, and I will admit that I have not concentrated upon the idea as much as I had intended in the first place. When I first had the germ of an idea about such a Club I imagined Blake fans in all parts of the world writing to one another and discussing the various aspects of Blake lore. I imagined myself as the leading light of the Club, answering all queries, etc. etc. and doing all I could to further the enjoyment of my fellow Blake lovers including the possible standardisation of the Baker Street trio (or should I say four - for Mrs. Bardell was ever one of my favourites). Unfortunately owing to other commitments I have not been able to give the attention needed to such a project and consequently many Blake enthusiasts have imagined that I have discarded the idea and contented myself with a few monthly remarks in Blakiana. This is not so. True, owing to heavy business commitments I have not the time at my disposal I would like, but nevertheless it has never occurred to me to abolish my original idea and I am writing this little article to assure you Blake fans of that fact. It cannot be said that the so-called "deputation letter" was a success, for many little un-British items have cropped up in the S.B.L. since I had the short and unsatisfying reply from the Editor, but as you all know, we still have

Blake with us. Even if there are only 64 pages instead of 100 we can still keep in touch with him, thank goodness, although I must confess that I am never really satisfied with a modern Blake story and always have to revert to Allan Blair, Donald Stuart or G.H. Teed if I want to spend a real good time by the fire. And that being so I suggest that we all continue to strive to improve the "Blake scene". Let us shower the Editor of the Library with letters of praise and of criticism according to how the stories appeal to us. Let us not again make the mistake of trying to place an old fashioned Blake into a modern setting (for that is in fact what we did try to do two years ago), but rather to let our hero keep abreast of the times and at the same time keep to the old traditions. For instance, let us grumble at Tinker when he "sinks a pint" or particularly when he is sarcastic to his master. This latter trait, so prevalent in modern stories is to be abhorred. Let Tinker be the "boy assistant" as of old. I think you will see what I mean. And one final word. Let us try and start the Club going in real earnest. I appeal to ALL Blake fans to drop me a line and let me know what they think. I will endeavour to answer all letters promptly and will also welcome any suggestions for a better organised gang of "Blakians".

H. M. Bond.

Don't Forget. We always want Original Articles on Sexton Blake.

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