

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol.
24

THE SEXTON BLAKE 4th
LIBRARY

No.
285



2/6

THE TWIST IN THE TRAIL

OR, THE IRISH CONSTABULARY MYSTERY

A Splendid Tale of Detective Adventure in Ireland
Mountains of Kerry and the Beautiful Lakes of Killarney

SEPTEMBER 1910

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

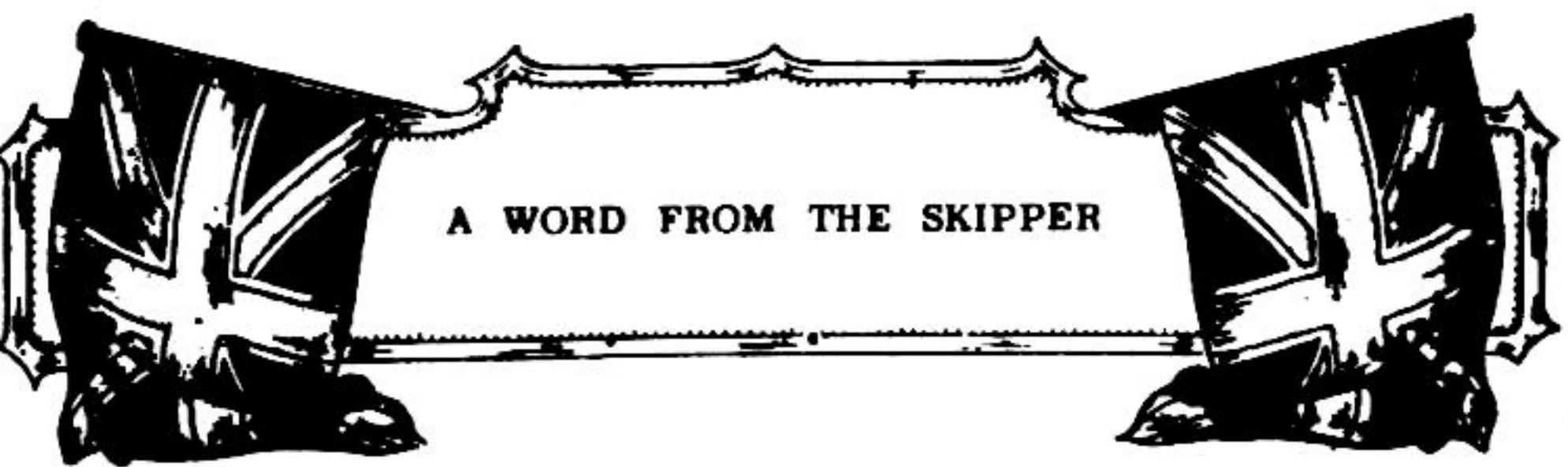
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 24

No. 285

SEPTEMBER 1970

Price 2s.6d.



A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

SEXTON BLAKE — and Decimals

Two things happened last month, and, in my mind, they seem to be linked. An Australian reader was commenting on our own forthcoming change over to decimal currency. He wrote: "In Australia we went over to decimal money some years ago, but I have never really got accustomed to it. I find myself always thinking in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence. Of course, the youngsters took it in their stride, and there might well never have been anything but dollars for them."

Also, last month, we reviewed the newest Sexton Blake Omnibus which contains the first story ever to introduce Paula Dane. Our reviewer saw Miss Dane as "one of the most controversial characters in Blake history," and added: "All these years later, ripples of that old, old argument crop up occasionally."

And, of course, they do, as my letter-bag shows. There are

plenty of older readers who have never accepted Miss Dane and the changes she stood for. For them, the real saga consists of the time when Tinker was something under twenty, and Sexton Blake and Baker Street were synonymous. But the youngsters took it all "in their stride." For plenty of them, the earlier Blake might never have existed.

Perhaps it is only right, in this new world, that only the youngsters count, for they have a big future - or, at least, we hope they do. There is an analogy between Sexton Blake and decimalisation.

TIN-TYPES

A reader, whose letter appeared in last month's "The Postman Called," mentioned that he sent his photograph to Edwy Searles Brooks. "It was only a tin-type which had been taken by a beach photographer on the sands at Skegness," said our reader.

It is probably a good many years since beach photographers took tin-type photographs of us when we went to the seaside. Yet the printing of photographs on metal has come back in the past year, and it is offered to the public as something startlingly new. A picture which appeared on our own C.D. cover was done on metal by my photographer a few months ago, and it was extremely effective. But, as older people know, it is far from new, though the process has probably been improved.

The most famous tin-type in history was that taken at the turn of the century of the mysterious "Mrs. Hood" who spent the last few days of her life in Yarmouth. When the Yarmouth photographer made the tin-type of "Mrs. Hood," he little knew that he was carving a niche for himself in the annals of crime. Later, Herbert Bennett, the husband of "Mrs. Hood," was to hang for her murder. If he was not guilty, and students of the crime feel instinctively that he was not, then he had only himself to blame for his fate. And that famous tin-type featured largely at the trial.

A few years ago Paul Capon made an exhaustive study of the affair in his book "The Great Yarmouth Mystery." It is a fascinating real-life mystery story which captures the atmosphere of the early nineteen-hundreds, and surpasses any detective fiction. If you haven't read the book, I recommend it.

THE ANNUAL

With this issue we send you the order form for the 1970 edition of Collectors' Digest Annual. Already this great Year Book is taking shape, preparing to bring you some of the finest articles we have ever published. You can also utilise your order form for the purpose of your advertisement if you wish to announce your "wants" or items for sale, or merely to use the medium for your greetings to old friends. Your advertisements help to keep us on an even keel.

The Annual is due out in mid-December, so there is plenty of time left, but you will aid our planning if you order early. Last year quite a number of readers left their ordering too late, and disappointment was the result. Make sure of your copy by ordering early.

GEORGE INNS

George Inns, who died while on holiday in mid-July, was a gentle, kindly, and quiet man, beloved by all who knew him. He was a friend of mine over a great many years, and his son, David, now a film producer, was a pupil of mine for a very long time.

George will always be remembered as deviser and producer of the incomparable Black and White Minstrel Show, as well as many other famous radio and television programmes. Years back, he invited me to fill the "celebrity spot" on one of his programmes. Certainly I never had any reason to consider myself celebrated at any stage of my career, but I greatly enjoyed the experience which enabled me to meet many people who could, indeed, claim to be celebrities. All his life George Inns loved the Nelson Lee Library, which he maintained was second to none.

WALTER WEBB

The death of Walter Webb, one of the real authorities on the Sexton Blake saga, is a great blow to the hobby and a heavy loss to this magazine. It is remarkable that, though he wrote prolifically and enthusiastically for Collectors' Digest for so long, and probably had scores of readers who corresponded with him, he died in May, of a sudden haemorrhage while in his garden, yet the news of his death did not trickle through to us until late July.

It would seem from this that Walter, a bachelor who lived with his sister, was a shy man who kept himself very much to himself. The only hobby man I know who once met him was Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, though there may have been others. Even his few near relatives did not seem to know much of his hobby activities. His great collection of Sexton Blake stories was disposed of to a dealer, and his enormous files, the result of a lifetime of research into Blakian lore, were burned. Walter Webb's well-informed and pleasantly-written articles in C.D. and the Annual will be greatly missed, as will his kindly and thoughtful letters to those who had the privilege of corresponding with him.

MAURICE McLOUGHLIN

Maurice McLoughlin, writer of all the Bunter stage plays, has died in his sleep in hospital where he was thought to be recovering from a mild heart attack. A man of quiet, kindly temperament, with a lively sense of humour, he was a dear friend of mine over a goodly number of recent years. Always a keen Hamiltonian, he enjoyed writing the Bunter plays. This was no easy task, for he had to include plenty of pantomime effects to please the children who form the main audiences for Christmas shows, and also to entertain the Greyfriars fans who went along to the theatres in great numbers to see the plays.

Maurice was a successful and famous playwright in other fields. His best play was perhaps "A Letter from the General" which was premiered at the Edinburgh Festival and then presented on T.V. Another excellent T.V. play from his pen was "Shadow in the Sun" which starred Anna Neagle.

In no McLoughlin play was there ever the slightest sign of smut, and no character ever swore. The theatre, in these days, can ill afford to lose a writer of his talent and high moral code.

REVERIE

The sun has shone warmly for much of this summer, and we have had no lack of blue skies. But it has been a cloudy summer for the hobby as the Moving Finger has extinguished so many of the brightest stars in the hobby firmament.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 1920

Middlesex are the cricket champions this year, right at the top of the table. It has been a wonderful season for P. F. Warner, to whom Middlesex owes much of its success. It is sad that he has decided to retire from first-class cricket now.

The best news I have to put in my diary this month is that the Gem has come into its own again with a grand new series by the original writer of the tales. The opening story, "Spoofing the School" was about rivalry with the Grammar School, and was not by the real Martin Clifford. In this issue there appeared "Blind Justice" which was the last of the St. Katie's stories by Michael Poole. I haven't liked them much.

Then the Gem started to give away a free Football Annual. It is a good one, and it is given in five separate parts, one each week. There are also two new serials: "Renton of the Rovers" by Paul Masters, and "Slave Island" by Matthew Ironside. I never read serials, and two of them is at least one too many. The St. Jim's stories appear between the two serials. The opening story of the fine new series was "The Shadow of the Past," in which a man named Dirk Power is mad with the urge to be revenged on Mr. Levison, so the two Levison brothers flee from St. Jim's and have some hair-raising adventures. Great stuff.

Next week "Fleeing from Fate" in which Tom Merry and some of his friends join Mr. Levison and his sons, and they flee across the world to Panama and San Francisco, where Power sets fire to the hotel where the party is staying. Then the series carried on with "For His Father's Sake" in which the scene shifted to the Yukon, where Power sold Mr. Levison and his sons to the Indians who put them to the stake. They were rescued just in time. I hope this series goes on for a long time.

I had the comic Merry & Bright this week - one of my favourites. It has a new serial "Houdini's Schooldays."

There has been a bad earthquake in Italy, and in the Morgan

Buildings in New York there was a fearful explosion in which 30 people were killed and 200 injured. At Hayes, in Middlesex, an aeroplane crashed and 5 people were killed.

Though I am kind-hearted I can only say that this month's Magnet tales have been rather grim. First Greyfriars tale was "In Borrowed Plumes" in which Gosling became a Bolshevick, and Bunter disguised himself as Miss Gosling. In "A False Hero" a new bootboy at Highcliffe rescued Mr. Quelch from a runaway horse and trap. (In this issue started a new serial "By Nero's Command" by Victor Nelson.)

Next month in "Loder's Luck" Bunter came by Loder's I.O.U's which the prefect had given to Banks, the bookie - and Bunter blackmailed Loder. Last of the month was the silliest of the century - called "The Council of Action," it told how Mr. Quelch and 3 other Greyfriars masters had to go to Oxford to sit for a classics exam, so 4 masters came from Highcliffe to replace them at Greyfriars temporarily. The 4 Highcliffe masters were very unpopular. Real tripe.

Owing to the possibility of a coal strike, the government has decided that summer time, which was to have ended this month, will go on for the time being. Fares have gone up on the Underground, buses and trams.

All this month, in the Boys' Friend, a series has been running about the misfortunes of Lovell. It is excellent. In the opening tale, "The Man In Black," a number of Rookwood fellows fall foul of the new occupant of the lonely bungalow on the heath.

Then, in "Fallen Fortunes," Mr. Lovell lost all his money owing to his solicitor, Mr. Pilkington, absconding with it. In "Parted Chums," Mr. Lovell told Arthur Edward that he would have to leave Rookwood, but that his brother, Teddy, would be able to stay on. He could only afford to keep one son on at school. Final of the month was "The Mysterious Tenant," in which Jimmy began to have suspicions about the sinister man in the bungalow on the heath. It is an excellent series.

All the Cedar Creek tales have been very light. "The Cedar Creek Artist" and "Chunky Todgers's Masterpiece" told of Chunky hoping to make a fortune as a painter. And "Rival Thesbians" and "Frank Richards' Triumph" were about rivalry with Hillcrest School in

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN
 27, Archdale Road, London, S.E. 22

SEXTON BLAKE OF SURBITON

by Frank Vernon Lay

Further to my recent notes on Sexton Blake in the Penny Pictorial I have just been given the privilege of reading the first dozen or so stories which are exceedingly scarce and certainly collectors' items.

The first story appeared in Penny Pictorial No. 428 dated August 10th, 1907, and was entitled "Missing!" The foreword to the story states 'that Sexton Blake, the famous detective, having been ordered to rest by his doctors (note the plural, like most famous people Blake had more than one doctor!) had temporarily forsaken Baker Street, and was living during the period of these episodes in a quiet little house at Surbiton, amusing himself by flower culture, the cottage having been lent to him by an old friend, a Mr. Dove, a retired official from Scotland Yard, who was absent on the Continent.' Unless the unknown author of these efforts had a peculiar sense of humour one can only imagine he had no knowledge of football as the name of the quiet little cottage was Aston Villa and at that date the Aston Villa Football Club was very much to the fore and destined to be runners-up in the League Championship of the First Division for the season 1907-8! For the first few stories Blake appears to be living alone but later a gardener and then a maid make their appearance.

The character of Blake in these stories is quite different from that which has been built up in the other papers. He is, at times, curt irritable and even rude, but withal he is still susceptible to the charm of a pretty face. Throughout the years these stories appeared he is constantly either on holiday or enjoying enforced rests under doctors' orders. Which, however, does not prevent Scotland Yard ringing him up when in difficulties.

In this first story the pretty face charms Blake into taking up

the case of her missing fiancé who has disappeared and is suspected of embezzlement. The case is solved not so much by any brilliance on the part of Blake, but by the sheer stupidity of the real criminals, his employers, who positively insist on giving themselves away. If our author knew little of football he certainly knew little of motoring as he talks of the young lady steering her car through the traffic single-handed. Later Blake hears four sharp clicks and she tells him she has broken the sparking plugs of the criminals' car with a spanner and burnt her wrist against a cylinder. Later Blake calls an accomplice by name although the man's name had not hitherto been mentioned.

The following week's story is entitled "Mark X," and opens with Blake smoking a pipe in the garden of Aston Villa and blowing the smoke into a crimson rambler and watching the green fly drop off! His doctor (only one this time) had forbidden him to smoke but although it was still early morning he was already coming to the end of his third pipe. He has two unopened telegrams in his pocket and a third then arrives which he opens. It states the writer has already wired Aston Villa twice and is signed Chase. Blake then opens the other two telegrams and finds one of them is signed Rawdon! Blake makes an impatient gesture. He was resting. It was unbearably hot for travelling and it meant a cross-country journey. However, he deduces the person Chase is a woman and with a reluctant sigh he wires back 'Arrive by first train available.' One wonders where his own car is. In a later story we find him accepting a case from an unsavoury character because the fee is £500 which will enable him to buy a much-needed new car.

The cover of this issue shows Blake at the telephone demanding 'Put me on to Scotland Yard QUICK!!' and this Blake bears no resemblance to Sexton Blake as portrayed elsewhere.

In the third story, entitled "The Triangle," The Triangle was a nefarious organisation specialising in blackmail and we now read that it was partly in order to lie low and put them off their guard that Blake had retired to the suburbs, and taken to horticultural pursuits. As usual with the stories of this era the three members of The Triangle were unknown to their subordinates and when two of them, one in this episode and one in the next, entitled "Mark II," are unmasked by Blake they commit suicide by taking poison. The author seems to have

tired of this series as after concluding story number four with the threat that the unknown third member of The Triangle will 'get' Blake we hear no more, at least in the stories I've read.

As will be seen from the above the literary quality of these stories is nil and they bear no evidence of sub-editing. As we go on through the first twelve they do not improve and they bear all the hallmarks of being by the same hand. Blake's revolver is a Derringer throughout. Tinker is mentioned and occasionally plays very small parts and the author is evidently a man of strong opinions as witness 'ugly, as most Essex houses are' and 'Blake ate as a matter of necessity, otherwise he always maintained that it was a waste of time, and dulled the intellect.'

For the record here are the titles of the first 12 stories:-

No. 428	August 10th,	1907	-	Missing
" 429	August 17th,	"	-	Mark X
" 430	August 24th,	"	-	The Triangle
" 431	August 31st,	"	-	Mark II
" 432	September 7th,	"	-	Blackmail
" 433	September 14th,	"	-	The Dorset Jewels
" 434	September 21st,	"	-	The Missing Picture
" 435	September 28th,	"	-	The Pretty Princess
" 436	October 5th,	"	-	The Trunk Mystery
" 437	October 12th,	"	-	The Spy
" 438	October 19th,	"	-	The Safe-Breaker
" 439	October 26th,	"	-	Within An Ace

It is surprising in view of the general low quality of these stories that they appeared week after week and one can only assume that they were popular. At some unknown date Cecil Hayter started to write them and there was a marked improvement. His stories were better worked out and much greater care was taken with the plots. When the Sexton Blake stories ceased Hayter continued to write stories of Derwent Duff the immaculate detective for almost every week for a very long period and then followed Addington Symonds with stories of Marcus Bland, Jefferson Farjeon with Crook X Detective, and George Goodchild with Inch of the Yard, a forerunner of his later

famous Maclean of the Yard. Until its demise the Penny Pictorial (later named the Pictorial Weekly) was seldom without its short detective story and the paper deserves a place in the history of detective story fiction for the masses.

THE ALBINO WAS BRILLIANT

says S. Gordon Swan

I am belated in my comments on the contribution by "Anon."

Your contributor was very hopeful if he imagined that all Sexton Blake stories were by the one author. It would have been a stupendous (and impossible) undertaking for one man to put out the prodigious amount of material that has been published about the Baker Street detective since 1893. In any case, when the stories were anonymous, it was possible to detect many different styles of writing.

People's tastes differ, but I cannot class Arthur Paterson as "unreadable." In his brief period of writing for the U.J. this author gave us some unusual tales, such as the Talking Ape and the Terror of Goringhurst. As for his western tales, the background and atmosphere were authentic, for Paterson spent much of his earlier life in New Mexico.

Regarding Anthony Skene, the statement that his style does not flow smoothly is contradictory to the truth. I have not had time to re-read *The Humber Woodyard Mystery* - it may possibly not be one of his best efforts - but I always found his style very fluent and he had a graceful turn of phraseology. I could quote many instances of this, but here is one extract from U.J. 1276, *The Case of the Grey Envelope*:

His peculiar abnormality was rather terrifying to women; and even his extraordinary poise and elusive attractiveness could not enable them to forget that he was an albino; yet this lady, young, beautiful, and apparently an aristocrat, criminal though she might be, unmistakably desired better acquaintance with him.

She offered for his inspection a considerable length of silk stocking; and her glance, when again their eyes met, was full of coquetry.

The albino was cynical enough to suppose that there might be

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 150. FINGO

This year South Africa, with the unpleasant system of Apartheid, has been very much in the news. Those of us who love cricket and those who love Rugby football have experienced divided loyalties. Most of us, probably, breathed a sigh of vexed relief when the cricket tour was cancelled, in spite of irritation at the antics of those who flouted law and order.

Probably each one of us in this country detests a system which makes a human being a second-class citizen on account of the colour of his or her skin, but it is easy for us to be critical from a distance of thousands of miles of a problem which is not ours. And it is just possible that we are residents of a glasshouse, throwing stones.

As I see it, the problem in both South Africa and Rhodesia is fear. And fear, through history, has led to fearful things.

Fifty years ago South Africa had its problems - rather different problems from those which exist today, though yesterday's uneasy dreams become today's nightmares. It is interesting to look at a story entitled "Fingo of the Fourth" which appeared in the Gem just fifty years ago. The noteworthy factor of this obscure little tale is that it was written by Julius Herman, who was himself a South African and a master in a South African school.

Clive, the South African junior, was asked by Mr. Linton to go to Wayland station to meet a new boy named John Fingo, who was also from South Africa. It seems a little odd that Mr. Linton did not give Clive a few further particulars about Fingo, especially as the Shell master intended to place the new boy in study No. 9 which belonged to Levison, Cardew and Clive of the Fourth Form. Perhaps sub-writers could not be expected to think of everything.

Clive went to Wayland. A train came in. Fingo was not on it, but Cousin Ethel was. She said there would be another train in 15 minutes, so perhaps the train service was more frequent than it is now. Also on the station was "dainty little Doris Levison" who had come, with a horse and trap, to meet Ethel.

Ethel suggested that they should all wait for Fingo, and then take him to St. Jim's in Doris's trap.

The next train comes in, and Fingo alights.

"Goodness!" gasped Doris. "He's a nigger!"

"A Kaffir!" corrected Clive. "You had better drive off now....."

Cousin Ethel opened her eyes wide.

"Why shouldn't we take him in the trap as we arranged?"

"What? A Kaffir? You've never been in South Africa, so you don't know what they are. Give them an inch and they'll take an ell. If you ask him into the trap, he'll be thinking he's our equal soon."

.....Clive sighed. It seemed useless to try to explain. Only someone who had actually been in the midst of a large black population could appreciate the difficulties of maintaining the white supremacy.

Clive and Ethel quarrel over his attitude to the new boy. Clive insists on taking Fingo on the back of his bicycle. Fingo asks the way, and Clive points out where St. Jim's lies. The new boy sets off at a trot through the gorse. (Presumably he was travelling without luggage.)

"What a pace!" muttered Clive, staring in unwilling admiration after him.

Fingo, who spoke a quaint English, seemed to settle without difficulty at St. Jim's. Such problems as faced him were not due to any question of colour, except with Clive. Fingo clashed with Racke & Co. who tried to get him gambling, and with Grundy he had trouble because he walked the corridor in his shirt sleeves with a case on his head.

"Clive, do I understand that you have some ridiculous colour-prejudice against Fingo?" snapped Mr. Linton.

"He's a Kaffir," flashed out Clive. "I'd make any white chap welcome with pleasure."

"I'm ready to treat him decently if you send him to this study," said Cardew. "But we're a big crowd as it is."

"And you, Levison?"

"...A fellow ought to be judged on his merits, not his colour."

"I am glad that you hold such sensible views, Levison. It is this broadmindedness that has made Great Britain an empire of free peoples."

"You've never been in South Africa, sir," murmured Clive.

To wind up the tale, Fingo rescued Ethel and Doris when their horse and trap ran away with them and seemed likely to deposit them in the river. St. Jim's and the village cheered Fingo, Clive apologised handsomely, and told Fingo he would be proud to be his pal. It was a contrived and unsatisfactory solution, but one often employed by writers

in those days.

So Fingo settled down happily in No. 9. And that, I feel sure, was the last we ever heard of Fingo.

In some ways, the tale is not badly written. Mr. Herman had obviously been a reader for a fair time of the Hamilton stories. There are loose ends, dialogue is stilted, and the constant use of christian names is irritating. But, with some polishing up, it could have been made a reasonably competent tale to take its place in the saga.

Could Charles Hamilton have handled this plot? Certainly he could have done, had the idea been presented to him. But the colour problems of South Africa, as they were then, were probably unknown to him, though Julius Herman could see them from first-hand experience.

Undoubtedly, Hamilton would have made it into a much better story. He would have made Fingo a more credible character as a coloured boy, of that time, likely to be accepted into a good English school. The boy's colour did not matter. His background and early training did. Hamilton would have realised that, though it did not occur to Herman, or, maybe, he chose to ignore it.

But Herman was right in making Fingo's colour of importance only to the white South African boy. Hamilton might, I think, have made his English rotters show colour prejudice, ignoring the fact that prejudice is by no means the prerogative of bad characters in the general sense. The rotters have no monopoly of the vices.

Herman erred in making the demure Doris Levison refer to Fingo as a "nigger." It is possible that there is hyper-sensitivity these days over the use of certain words; after all, English people get called "pommies" and "limeys" without being perturbed over it. Even so, it seems unlikely that the sweet and demure Doris Levison would have called anyone a nigger, though the fatuous Bunter might have done so.

"Fingo of the Fourth" is a "loose end" in itself, for he remained at St. Jim's at the close of the tale. There should have been a ruling against sub-writers introducing new characters and leaving them behind as dead wood.

HOME IS THE BUNTER

by John Trovell

Early in March, 1930, a certain lawless character known as the Courtfield Cracksman, who had been operating very successfully in the vicinity of Greyfriars, had been apprehended and removed to custody.

"All's well that ends well," said Bob Cherry. "There's only one fly in the ointment my beloved hearers."

"And what's that?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Bunter will be coming back."

Dr. Locke, who had as a precaution sent William George Bunter home after the fat junior had accidentally discovered enough to endanger plans to capture the Cracksman, decides that Bunter may now return to the school.

Meanwhile, Bunter, for whom the joys of home life had no appeal whatsoever, decides to return secretly to Greyfriars and enlist the help of Harry Wharton & Co. to smuggle him into the school, unaware that official permission for his return had now been granted, and Magnet No. 1151 entitled "Billy Bunter's Comeback," describes the trials and tribulations of the fat junior before he eventually returns to Greyfriars.

One can well imagine that as a fitting climax to a great series, Charles Hamilton revels in the opportunity to exploit to the full an episode in which humorous situations abound, and his handling of this issue is Hamilton at his brilliant best, pace and quality being maintained throughout. This quality may be judged from the following extracts, each, in the opinion of the writer, worthy of a place in Gems of Hamiltonia.

From Chapter 2 — In the Remove passage fellows declared that life was worth living, since Bunter had been sent home. Bunter at home was fixed in the belief that the fellows missed him sorely. He wondered indeed, how the Remove was getting on without him. But this was only one of Billy Bunter's many little errors. While Bunter was away a fellow could leave his study unlocked, and still find his cake where he had left it. When Bunter was present, matters were quite different. And a form master was not likely to miss, unduly, the laziest, densest, and most troublesome member of his form.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES
CHEER BOYS CHEER

(continued)

by Robert Blythe

A telegram further complicates matters.

TELE.

July 2nd, 1912.

Fleet Street.

Brooks Bures House Bures. Please telephone me before three Holborn 2947.

Hinton.

July 3rd, 1912.

Horace Phillips, Esqre.,

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I enclose the Clive Derring story herewith. I very much regret that I was unable to send it yesterday, but I was prevented from doing so. I was writing the commencement of it when I received a wire from Mr. Hinton, asking me to telephone him. To do this I had to go to Sudbury, as there is no telephone in Bures. Of course, considerable time was lost, and I was unable to finish the enclosed story. Mr. Hinton wishes me to let him have some copy in very urgently, so I am rather rushed.

The next Clive Derring story will be sent in to reach you on Tuesday morning next. I trust you will like the one I enclose.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,

Brooks was then asked to submit a school story. At this time E.S.B.'s only efforts in this line were an odd story or so and "Oswald Raymonds' Peril" later printed as "Curtis of the Fifth" and so it is interesting, in view of his later career, to read Mr. Phillips' comments.

Bures, SUFFOLK.
July 12th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I hope you do not think I am going to fail with the new school serial, which I am calling "Finnemore's First Term," because I am not. I positively intended sending off the first instalment, complete, by this post. But to-day I have had an "off-work" spell. Somehow I couldn't write the stuff I had in my mind, so I gave it up for the time being. I am quite certain that I shall be all right again to-morrow, and you can absolutely rely upon getting the stuff on Sunday morning. I enclose the opening chapter herewith - although I fear it is not sufficient for you to gain an insight into the story.

If you like the first instalment, and tell me to get ahead with the yarn, I shall turn in one or two instalments well in advance, so as to be prepared for time of this sort.

Apologising for the delay,

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips, Yours sincerely,

Bures, SUFFOLK.
July 14th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I hope you have read the first instalment of the school serial, "FINNEMORE'S FIRST TERM," and that you think it will be suitable. If this is the case, I will immediately send you a full synopsis of Instalment 2 and a general out line of the rest of the plot. But perhaps you would like to see me? We could then talk over the second instalment, and, if necessary, make some alterations to the first. However, I will wait until I hear from you, and do whatever you wish.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,

Fleet Street.
July 16th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I have given very careful consideration to your first instalment of the suggested school serial, and I am sorry to say it is rather disappointing. It is not nearly sufficiently lively and boisterous, and I do not think you have done justice to the dramatic side. I will explain better when I see you. In the meantime I am not returning the MS., but I am sorry to say I shall have to get somebody to do the school serial I require at once.

Your style seems to be more suited to the detective stories.

Yours sincerely,
HORACE PHILLIPS
CHEER BOYS CHEER.

Nothing daunted he next started on a series of war stories.

July 24th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I very much regret not being able to send you the ideas for the series of war stories last night, as I promised. Had matters gone as I planned out, I should have sent you the synopses. Circumstances, however, prevented me doing so; I told you I came up by motor-cycle; when I was ready to start back for Bures with my brother we found that our two-speed gear had smashed, and we were unable to make the journey. A new two-speed was fitted as quickly as possible, but I was kept hanging about in London, when I wanted to be here. I will let you have several suggestions by to-morrow's post, and if you like any of them I will write the first of the series up and let you have it early next week.

Again apologising for the delay,

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,
EDWY S. BROOKS

July 25th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

How would one of the following suggestions do for the main incident in number one of the series of war stories?

- (1) The two chums - after being introduced to the reader, and after the

situation has been explained - find that England is being invaded by Germans. They are alone, in the Fen district, and learn somehow that a big gun is being taken across a long bridge by the Germans in order to blow up a company of Territorials who are holding a town until help arrives from the Regular forces. If the gun gets across the bridge the Territorials will be blown to pieces. So the chums, at great risk to themselves, swim under the bridge - there are enemies all around them - and blow it up just before the gun gets to the other side. The gun is destroyed, and the Territorials saved.

(2) The Germans, just landed in England, stop an express train, pile on to it, engine, roofs, and every available inch of space, and start for the next station, which they intend to seize. The two chums, of course, by a neat ruse, and much excitement, manage to foil the Germans' plans.

(3) Perhaps an aeroplane could play an important part in the main incident. The story could open by the boys spotting a German aerial scout. When a big fleet of German warships could come in sight, and land their thousands of soldiers. An aviator could live close by, and an exciting adventure would be worked in by the airman taking up the chums. The aviator could be shot, the elder boy takes control of the aeroplane, but, being inexperienced, comes down in the enemy's lines.

Of course, the above are but bare suggestions, but I am positive I shall be able to make a thoroughly exciting and full-of-incident story out of either. The yarn would abound with minor incidents, and the two chums would hold the stage the whole time, from the commencement to the curtain. It would be as well, I think, to make them Boy Scouts. On hearing from you I will at once get to work, and turn you in the first of the series.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,
E.S.B.

July 31st, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I am addressing this letter to your private address as I understood you to say you would not be at the office this week. I have been expecting to hear from you with regard to the first of the series of war stories. When you let me know if one of the suggestions I sent you is suitable I will immediately write up the yarn and send it in. I am quite sure I can work up some really exciting stuff on the subject of war, and I am anxious to get on with the first story. Of course, the suggestions I sent were mere outlines, but I can assure you the stories will not be tame and unexciting.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,

August 11th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I am sending you the first of the series of war stories in the morning, and will, if I do not get it back, get on with number two and let you have it later on in the week. I have been reading up some instructive matter this last day or two, but I do not think it will be a waste of time. For I am not taking all the trouble for the one story - the same information will serve for the whole series. If you like the first yarn you can confidently rely upon my sending in the stuff to time every week.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,

However, a telegram and letter brings our author back to earth.

TELE.

August 15th, 1912.

TO: Brooks Bures House Bures Suffolk. Please stop works on war story writing.
PHILLIPS

—
Fleet Street.

August 15th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am very sorry I had to telegraph you last night telling you not to proceed with the war series.

After giving very careful consideration to your first story, which one naturally expects to be particularly good, I do not feel justified in letting you go on with the series. The story does not contain the real spirit of war in this country. After making allowance for a proper amount of high spirited courage on the part of the heroes, your tale reads too much like a half holiday adventure. I will explain better when I see you next.

I am not returning the story, and I shall hope to use it in the course of a few weeks. But it will have to be touched up a good deal, and in any case I could not have led off with it.

Yours faithfully,
HORACE PHILLIPS
CHEER BOYS CHEER.

E. S. Brooks, Esq.

He had another go, but must have found, in spite of the confidence with which he expresses himself, the going rather difficult.

October 16th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I enclose the war story herewith. I promised it for Wednesday, and I trust you will receive it before you leave the office this evening. I have worked a good lot of incident in, I think, and I trust you will like it. I may be up to-morrow or Friday, and if so I will call upon you.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,
Yours sincerely,

—
The Hut,
South Norwood, S.E.
November 8th, 1912.

Horace Phillips.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I am very sorry that I could not let you have the whole war story this afternoon, but it has been rather difficult to write. I enclose the remainder herewith, and hope you will like it. I find that I shall be up in town on Monday, so I will give you a call then if it will be convenient.

Yours sincerely,

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

Nearing the end. Our old, old serial.

STAUNCH CHUMS AT ST. JIM'S

It was Saturday evening. Sleath was sitting alone in his study. He had avoided his friends a good deal of late, and Monteith had noticed how worried he looked, and asked him about it. Sleath had given short replies, and a suspicion had deepened in the prefect's mind that the accusation against Blake had been trumped up by the treasurer of the clubs. He did not say anything of that, however, to anyone. Whether Blake was guilty or not, Monteith was content that he should be expelled, and if he had known anything for certain, he would have hesitated to show up his own friend.

Sleath was thinking, as he sat there, of the hour when he had to face Joliffe, and tell him that he could give him nothing. He looked up savagely as his fag came into the room.

"I say, Sleath," began Fatty Wynn.

"Get out!"

"But --"

"I don't want you. I sha'n't want you any more to-night. Clear!"

"But I want to ask you" - Sleath rose threateningly to his feet - "if you can change ten pounds in notes, Sleath," went on Fatty glibly.

Sleath stared at him.

"What do you mean? Have you ten pounds?"

"Figgy has. It was his birthday yesterday, you know."

This statement was strictly true, though the inference Sleath drew from it was not quite correct.

"Figgins has ten pounds?" said Sleath, with a strange gleam in his eyes.

"Yes. Can you change the notes?"

"No. Do you think I keep a bank in my study?"

"Well, you're treasurer of the clubs, and --"

"Blake has collared all the tin, as you know," replied Sleath. "There will be a subscription to make it up, but it hasn't been done yet. The fellows still think the money may turn up."

"All right. I suppose Figgy had better go to the doctor."

"Wait a minute," said Sleath, "he can't go to the doctor to-night. It's too late. I could, I dare say, get the notes changed for him in the morning."

"All right; that will do for Figgy. The tuck shop's closed now."

"Mind you tell him to put the notes in a safe place," said Sleath. "You know that money has a way of vanishing. Does Blake know anything about it?"

"Oh, yes; he knows!"

"Well, if Figgins doesn't take care, then, his ten pounds will follow the football money," said Sleath. "You'd better warn him."

"Oh, that's all right," said Fatty Wynn. "He's taking care of the money. It isn't in his desk, you know. When we go to bed we're going to shove it under the loose board in the corner of the study."

"Yes; I dare say it will be safe there."

"I'll tell Figgy he can bring the notes to you in the morning, then," said Fatty. "Don't you want me to toast your cheese, Sleath?"

"No."

"Nor to make you any coffee?"

"No, no. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Sleath!"

And Fatty Wynn quitted the senior's study. Fatty Wynn was a member of the New House Amateur Dramatic Society, and he greatly fancied himself as an actor, but he was really surprised at the way in which he had carried out Figgins's instructions.

Sleath remained alone. He did not sit down, but began to pace the room restlessly, his face very pale, and his eyes burning. Disturbing thoughts were working in his brain; thoughts which seemed to bring him a strange mingling of relief and terror. For a long time he paced the room and he was still restlessly moving when the clock struck from the tower, and he started.

It was time for him to see the Fourth

to their dormitory, that duty being his for the week. He left his study, trying to compose his face. The juniors trooped up to bed; Figgins & Co. with the rest. Sleath saw that they were all in, and turned out the light. The door closed, the usual chatter died away, and the boys one by one dropped asleep. But there was one who did not allow slumber to creep upon him. It was Figgins.

As soon as he was sure that the others slept, Figgy rose, quietly dressed himself, and slipped out of the dormitory. The Upper Form boys were not yet gone to bed, but they were in their studies or the common room, and the corridors were deserted. Figgins easily left the house unobserved, and hurried through the darkness of the quadrangle to the School House. Straight to Kildare's room he went. He had noted the light in the window, and knew that the captain of St. Jim's was there. Kildare stared at him in amazement.

"Figgins! What does this mean? What are you doing out of your house at this hour?"

Figgins closed the door.

"Hush!" he said mysteriously. "Hush!"

Kildare looked still more astounded.

"Are you mad, Figgins?"

"No. I'm on the track."

"On the - the what?"

"The track of the giddy criminal."

Kildare reached out for a cane.

"I give you two seconds to explain yourself, Figgins."

"Don't be hasty! Don't you want Blake to be cleared?"

"What! Do you mean that you have discovered something?"

"Yes."

"Then why haven't you gone to your own prefect?" asked Kildare sharply.

"Because I'm not at all sure he'd take the matter up properly. You see, Monteith is a chum of the chap who boned the tin."

"Figgins! You have no right to suppose ---"

"Look here, Kildare, I've come to you as captain of the school. Blow Monteith! You know he hates Blake, and can't be depended on."

"Very well," said Kildare, who knew

that well enough. "Tell me what you have discovered."

He listened with amazement mingled with incredulity as Figgins unfolded his tale.

"Can all this be true?" he exclaimed, looking dumbfoundedly at Figgins.

"Every word!"

"But it is useless to tell it to me. Even if it is true, the way you learned it throws too much discredit upon it. I don't say I exactly blame you, under the circumstances, but you cannot expect the evidence of a secret listener to be accepted."

Figgy flushed painfully.

"I don't," he said shortly. "I shouldn't have told you a word if I hadn't got proof to back it up, Kildare. I've got more to tell you. I've laid a trap, and caught the giddy criminal in it. That's why I'm here."

"I don't understand. What have you done?"

"Sleath had to get ten pounds for that shark to-night or be shown up. If you find him making for the Rylcombe Arms with ten pounds in his pocket, which can be proved to be stolen, will that convince you, you doubting Thomas?"

"It would convince anybody, but --"

"Then come with me. I tell you Sleath knows there's ten pounds under the loose board in my study, and he's certain to take it. He'll get up to some trick to throw the blame on somebody else if we give him time. But we're not going to. Come with me, and if we see a light come in my study window, it will prove to you I'm right. Then we shall only have to wait and nab him."

Kildare rose, and put on his coat and cap.

"I will come, Figgins. I think you are in earnest, and for Blake's sake I can leave no chance untried of discovering the truth."

"Come on, then!"

Kildare turned out his light and quitted the School House with Figgins. As they passed under the elms, a light gleamed from a previously dark window in the New House. Figgins clutched Kildare's arm and pointed excitedly.

"My window," he muttered; "my study window! What do you think now?"

Kildare looked steadily at the light. It glimmered there for about a minute, and then disappeared. Figgy's grip tightened upon his arm.

"What do you think now, Kildare?"

"I think," replied the captain quietly, "that you are right, Figgins. I shall call Mr. Kidd; it will be better to have the evidence of a master when the matter comes out. Wait here for me."

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH)

THE SMALLER FIRMS

by W. O. G. Lofts

It is logic to assume that the big publishing firms of juvenile publications are obviously the most successful, whilst the majority of smaller firms soon fall by the wayside. But some of the smaller companies were so successful that they caused the mighty Amalgamated Press some concern. So much so, that the A.P. finally bought them out for large sums of money.

Probably the best known case was Target Publications/Provincial Comics, run by Louis Diamond in the West of England. He produced such comic papers as Rattler, Dazzler, Sparkler, Rocket, Merry Midget and Sunshine, as well as other juvenile type of libraries with a detective flavour. Although priced a penny each, they were often sold for less at the rate of 3 or 4 for that amount. They were usually sold in market places, and vendors visited the public-houses, and other places of entertainment where the general public would gather. They were aimed at the mass of working class population with large families of young children. With wages what they were in the middle thirties and unemployment - they were a blessing to the Mums and Dads who could get quantity, and who cared more about this than quality. Certainly as a boy without any appreciation of comic art and literary value I enjoyed them in my time.

Of course it would be foolish to say that the artistic value and literary content was as high as the A.P. counterparts. On the contrary, it was very poor indeed, and whilst Louis Diamond was a fairly good artist when he took care with his work, in drawing and writing nearly all the contents himself at an obvious great speed, he did not better his own image as an illustrator. Diamond who died some years ago, so I am told, was refused an editor's job at the A.P. on a comic for this reason.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 28th July, 1970.

The attendance was small, no doubt due to holidays, only nine members were present.

The meeting was informal and the opportunity was taken by the Chairman, Ian Bennett, to discuss at some length the club finances which have given some concern of late. Even a club designed for pleasure cannot run at a loss for long for the simple reason people expect the bills to be paid. A number of generous donations had kept us going, but the Chairman pointed out we must take a long hard look at all the items of income and expenditure appertaining to the club. The conclusion reached was that about £7 in the red on a year's working simply would not do. Various ideas were put forward by members, but the Chairman did not feel inclined to call for any resolutions at this particular meeting as the attendance was small, but the members could give the matters discussed due consideration.

After the coffee break Ray Bennett gave an interesting talk on his favourite subject, comparing the old papers with to-day's publications. He read out to us a number of criticisms of the old papers amongst which was the extraordinary statement that Charles Hamilton, though a bad writer, nevertheless had a way of capturing the attention of the reader. It is typical of the fatuous nonsense of many people who criticise Hamilton and have not read enough of him to know what they are talking about. Ray was warmly applauded for his enjoyable little talk.

All members agreed that the Old Boys' Book world would be all the poorer for the loss of these two grand people, Len Packman and Norman Pragnell.

The next meeting will be on 25th August at 7.30 p.m.

J. F. BELLFIELD

Correspondent.

#

NORTHERNSaturday, 8th August, 1970.

Though our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde was away up the Rhine on a camping holiday, and Molly Allison was also an absentee, it was good to welcome back to the fold Gerry and Myra Allison, of whom we hope to see more in future whenever they feel inclined, and the weather is as warm and pleasant as it was for them to come out on this occasion, our 245th monthly meeting. Harry Barlow was voted temporary Chairman for the meeting at which a dozen members were present, and read a letter from Geoffrey Wilde wishing the meeting and members well, and telling us of the joys of his trip to Europe. Gerry Allison gave the treasurer's report, and noted that his home had been visited by Canadian member, Ian Menzies, who had spent a happy time talking about the hobby and viewing the library.

References to the old books had been heard in recent T.V. programmes, notably A Family At War, in which a refugee had been shown some of the old papers at the family's home. Our "school chaplain," the Rev. Geoffrey Good, presented copies he has had duplicated of information regarding reprints and originals in the Holiday Annuals; a welcome addition to our records, and obviously the product of a great deal of time and thought. Jack Allison then read Gerry's continuation of The Hidden Hand, in which Hacker was forced by a Quelch inquiry to admit that Wharton may not have been his attacker. Wharton threatens to take matters to higher level if Hacker persists in his ill-founded accusations, and there are suggestions of the revival of The Secret Seven to protect Wharton from his possible actions. We shall await with interest our Chairman's concluding instalment next month. A names' quiz by Ron Rhodes took us up to the refreshment break, with Bill Williamson, Ron Hodgson and Jack Wood each scoring seven out of a possible 14 points. After refreshments and the usual general chatter, the evening ended with another of Jack Allison's ingenious crossword puzzles, in which Ron Hodgson's Green team, with the 'down' clues, scored 93 points, including a bonus five, to beat Ron Rhodes' Red 'across' team.

JACK WOOD

LONDON

Cricklewood with Marjorie and Bill, the scene of a very happy gathering even if the summer afternoon was windy. However, the great outdoors was fully described when Roger Jenkins read his paper on Sir Hylton Popper, the 'famous' landowner of the Greyfriars saga, complete with the various adventures about the disputed island. Generous applause at the conclusion of the reading which will probably appear in the C.D. Annual, so do not forget to order your copy next month.

Don Webster read the article by George Mell which appeared in a recent issue of "Reveille" and Ray Hopkins did likewise from an issue of the "Kentish Mercury." Charlie Wright read extracts from club newsletter No. 15, circa 1953. Two potted personalities that appeared in the newsletter were Ron Crollie and Ray Bennett.

Don Webster conducted a quiz, winner Charlie Wright, second Roger Jenkins and third Millicent Lyle.

Frank Vernon-Lay in attendance with a good supply of the "Flip" series facsimile Magnet reprint and from Maidstone, our worthy President, John Wernham, who spoke of his next opus, well into production, the same format as "The Strange Secret." A long discussion on the proposed Charles Hamilton Companion, many points on its future production were explained and cleared up.

Sunday, 18th October, was the date fixed for the Rembrandt Hotel luncheon party. Kindly let secretary know if intending to be present. Sunday, 20th September, is the date of the Leytonstone meeting. Kindly let the hosts, Reuben and Gladys Godsave, know in good time if attending. Phone Maryland 1737.

Finally an impromptu discussion was enjoyed ere we thanked the hosts for a very enjoyable evening.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

G.H.A's: Vol. 1 Strand; Vol. 23 "Idler;" Whittaker's Book Lists; Four parts Wells's Outlines of History. S.a.e.

92 CLONKEEN ROAD, BLACKROCK,

DUBLIN, IRELAND.

The Postman Called

(Interesting items from the
Editor's letter-bag)

H. MACHIN (Preston): What a happy inspiration that was of yours to reprint two of the very earliest St. Jim's tales. I wonder if you could consider reprinting one of the earliest Gem stories - "The St. Jim's Curate" - a charming story that, unfortunately, never saw the light of day in the reprinted pieces of the thirties. Another story that comes to mind is one of the early ½d. Magnets - I forget the title - dealing with the idea of Summer Time - clocks put forward or backward one hour and the poor opinion Frank Richards had of this new-fangled idea. (I agree with his view entirely.)

RON BECK (Lewes): Very interested to read your comments on "Comin' Through the Rye" and the illustrations in the book. This novel was made into a film in 1916 starring Alma Taylor and Stewart Rome, and re-made in 1924, again with Alma Taylor, but this time with James Carew. Both versions were directed by Cecil Hepworth.

(Thanks to numerous readers who wrote in on this subject. — ED.)

M. HALL (Penryn): A unique series of tales concerning Robin Hood has commenced in "Rover." The series is entitled "The Seeing Eye of Sherwood." Also featuring is the reprint "The Truth About Wilson." Incidentally, the price of the paper has risen to sixpence. It is worth anybody's "tanner."

MISS I. M. LEES (Canterbury): "Do You Remember?" (a good series) is written by Roger Jenkins - it says so. "Let's Be Controversial" (another enjoyable series) must be written by the editor, I think. Is it? I liked No. 148 "Miss Priscilla" (and all those written about the Gem - my favourite). "The Prefect's Plot" was mentioned by the writer as one of his favourite blue Gems - and mine, too. I have a copy of this blue Gem - very worn, but still readable. I'm always intrigued by Danny, that "sunny-natured schoolboy, fifty years ago."

(Yes, Let's Be Controversial is an editorial feature. — ED.)

LEN WORMULL (Romford): I think we all agree that patience, perseverance, and luck play an important part in collecting, and no doubt

most of us have had more than our fair share of disappointment. But how frustrating it can be to know that you have suddenly uncovered an unwanted collection of old boys' papers, only to be thwarted in taking home the prize! Such is my present dilemma, and all because I forgot the golden rule of discretion - or silence. A few months ago I chanced to see a new work colleague with a current copy of the Wizard, which sparked off a conversation something like this

"Don't tell me you still read it?" I asked jokingly.

"No, it's for my nephew," he laughed back. "My papers were the Magnet, Gem and Nelson Lee."

"We both had the same tastes," I remarked, and went on to relate the wide interest in the old papers today, and that it was a hobby of mine. He seemed surprised and said:

"A few years ago I had every copy of the Thriller right from No. 1. I always was a hoarder, and saved them from boyhood. One day I went to look them over and found them missing. My wife had put them all out for the dustman, thinking I had no further use for them. We had a big row over it."

Inaudible groan and silent curses to these wicked women from yours truly.

"Do you realise they would have fetched a tidy sum today?" I answered. Then, not being a mind-reader, I revealed that some collectors would pay exceptional prices for their old favourites. And then came the bombshell - and boomerang!

"But I still have a lot of Nelson Lees packed away in a trunk somewhere," he went on. "I started to have them bound at one time."

'Corn in Egypt' flashed through my mind as I feverishly asked for particulars. He was prepared to sell, and after several delays handed me his list of books.

"Too many for you, old man," he said, grinning.

The collection comprised the complete 1st & 2nd New Series, six partly bound vols. Old Series (1922-23), odd copies (1920-26), and a few S.O.L's.

Next day I made him a top offer for the lot comparable with today's prices, assuming them already 'in the bag.' But no. My remarks and eagerness to obtain them had made him cautious. He thanked

