

STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 28 N° 330

JUNE 1974

**SPORTS LIBRARY**  
FOOTBALL DOUBLE NUMBER

**CONTENTS:**  
**The Blue Grounds.**  
A new sporting novel  
By J. J. HENRY  
**The White Hoops.**  
A great sporting novel  
By GORDON G. WOODHULL  
**Jim Wedgwood's Try.**  
A superb English tale  
By T. J. HENRIKSEN  
**Scoring & Scoring.**  
By a great sporting writer  
**For The Professionals.**  
A suspenseful and exciting story  
By HENRY J. JAMESON  
SPECIAL FOOTBALL QUOTE AND  
OTHER FOOTBALL STORIES

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

UNION JACK. 2 bound volumes, Jan. - June, 1909, July - Dec., 1912. Very scarce issues, in exceptional condition. Binding covers good, but faded on spines. £40 per volume. Later bound volumes and loose copies.

GEMS. Complete years 1924 and 1925, bound, 104 issues. V.G.C. in 2 volumes. £42 per yearly volume. Others. Large stock of loose copies. Still some Populars (bound) left. NELSON LEES in quantity. Who wants HOLIDAY ANNUALS? Over 200 in stock. 1929-41, £3.25 each. 1922-28, £3.50 each. Several sets U.J. Supplements. Only just a few items from the largest stock of Old Boys' Books. Visitors very welcome almost any time, but please ring first! If in doubt see for yourself!

All wants carefully executed. Satisfaction always!

STOP PRESS!

Original Chapman Illustrations. Some in colour. Details on request. Collections urgently required. Top prices paid.

**Norman Shaw**

84 BELVEDERE ROAD

UPPER NORWOOD

LONDON, SE19 2HZ

Tel. 01-771-9857

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 28

No. 330

JUNE 1974

Price 16p

(This magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from the Editor, is strictly forbidden.)



## CHUCKLES

Early in the fateful year 1914 the Amalgamated Press launched a new coloured comic paper which they named Chuckles. In the view of the late Leonard Packman, this was the finest halfpenny coloured comic of them all.

Be that as it may, though the paper ran on placidly for ten years

or so, it never seems to have caught completely the affection of the young idea. Perhaps it slipped between two stools. It was a trifle too advanced for the younger reader and possibly a trifle too unimaginative for the older reader. Today it is seldom mentioned. Copies are scarce but it seems that few people worry over the scarcity.

It is a question whether Charles Hamilton ever had much to do with contributing to its contents. I incline to the view that he didn't. At the beginning, for a few months, there were stories of Greyfriars, mainly starring Dick Trumper and his friends. It is long since I saw an early copy so I cannot pass an opinion as to whether Hamilton sired them or not.

After the war there was a long series of stories of Belminster School by Harry Clifton. Though the series ran for a long time, each individual yarn was very short indeed - just one page, including heading and illustration. That these tales are based on the Hamilton plan goes without question. I am told that, in one of the valuable books devoted to the work of the authors for the old papers, "Harry Clifton" is given as a pen-name of Charles Hamilton. If so, it's a new one to me. I feel fairly sure that he did not write the forty or so "Harry Clifton" tales in my collection.

Most remarkable of all, they were illustrated by Chapman, and Tubby Barrell of the series is a facsimile of Billy Bunter. In fact, the illustrations could all have been lifted willy-nilly out of the Magnet, though I am not suggesting that they were.

Down the years I have come on an early copy or two of Chuckles, but somehow they never lingered with me, though goodness knows what became of them. I have happy memories of Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy. These two characters, to the astonishment of the browser, turned up years later in full-page adventures in the Boys' Friend, of all places, in that paper's dying months, though whether they were newly drawn (as is unlikely) or reprints from the old Chuckles, I am not in a position to say with authority.

#### THE MEDWAY QUEEN

It is really quite a coincidence that last month I mentioned that lovely old paddle-steamer, the Medway Queen, for Mr. Ben Whiter has

---

sent me a new newspaper cutting which gives the following information: "The Medway Queen, 50-year old paddle steamer, which ferried 7,000 British troops from Dunkirk, is returning to the Thames as a museum and floating inn after nearly nine years' service in the Isle of Wight as a night club."

### THE TOLL OF TIME

Following our announcement last month of the death of Eric Parker, the Sexton Blake artist, we have received a number of tributes to his memory. We thank all who wrote, though pressure of space makes it impossible for us to publish these letters. On another page we present a tribute from one of our contributors who speaks for us all.

We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of Norman Gregory of our Midland Club. A bulwark of the club from its outset, and a keen supporter of this magazine from very early days, Mr. Gregory will be sorely missed.

THE EDITOR

\* \* \* \* \*

## DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1924

It has been an unusually wet month, with too many cool breezes. The Severn rose 22 ft. near Worcester, and there has been much flooding.

But the Boys' Friend, with Rookwood, has helped to bring a warm pleasure. In the month's first story, "Shown Up", Carthew did a spate of spying on the Fistical Four, trying to find them out in wrongdoing. Eventually he hid himself in a packing-case so that he could listen to what they said - but they knew he was there, and took steps to make him look a fool before everyone.

Then an excellent new serious series. In "Under False Colours" a new French master named M. Gaston was engaged at Rookwood, and Mr. Greely denounced the new man as Felix Lecroix, a bank robber. In "The Mystery Master", Peele, who hates the new master, hides in his study, and sees him unpacking burglar's tools. In "Put to the Test", Mr. Greely continues with his accusation against M. Gaston, so that the

new man's study is searched, but nothing incriminating is found. (Mr. Gaston has thrown his tools in the river.) Finally, Mr. Greely is sacked for refusing to withdraw his accusations. The series continues.

Sansovino, ridden by Tommy Weston, won the Derby. There were twenty-nine horses in the race, and two false starts.

The programmes at the cinemas often include a Felix the Cat cartoon these days. There is a toe-tapping new song just out called "Felix kept on walking, kept on walking still." While on the subject of new songs there is also another very nice new one entitled "Pasadena".

And while on the subject of the cinemas, the films we have seen this month have been George Arliss in "The Green Goddess", Hoot Gibson in "Blinky", Jack Holt in "Making a Man", and Anna Q. Nilsson in "Ponjola". There has also been a big production called "Hollywood" which featured thirty stars and fifty notables. It was interesting picking out all the different ones I knew, though the story really didn't amount to much. Finally we have seen Douglas Fairbanks' fifteen year-old son (he is called Douglas Fairbanks Junior) in "Stephen Steps Out" which I liked a lot.

A half-and-half month in the Magnet. In "Peter the Plotter" Major Thresher closes a footpath through his property, a path much used by Greyfriars fellows. But a burglary is foiled by Harry and Bob, so all is well and the path is open again. Passable.

"Standing by their Pals" really took a lot of swallowing. The fees at Greyfriars are raised by 50%. This is very hard on poorer boys like Redwing and Penfold, though I don't see why it should affect scholarship boys. Colonel Wharton is blamed as a governor, but the real culprit is Mr. Ponsonby who provides Greyfriars with its loans. So the Greyfriars chums deal with Ponsonby of Highcliffe, who causes his old man to alter his mind. All very dim and silly.

The final two tales were by the real Frank Richards, and were fairish. "The Man Who Came Back" was Philip Blagden, a new cricket coach, who had once been expelled from Greyfriars. But he was really searching for a treasure in the vaults. He gets the boot, but, in the next tale "Treasure Trove", all the boys seek the treasure, and Harry Wharton & Co. find a secret vault, complete with skeletons at a table - and the treasure is on the table.

---

A marvellous searchlight tattoo has been going on at Aldershot, and one performance was attended by the King and Queen. The Prince of Wales has opened the Southern Railway's new floating dock at Southampton.

The opening story in the Nelson Lee this month was the final story in the series about the boy circus-owners. Simon Snayle, once manager of the circus, plotted against his old employers, and the plot recoiled on himself. This was called "Trapped on the Trapeze".

Then a new series opened with "The Schoolboy Headmaster". Dr. Stafford has gone exploring in Africa, and his place is taken by Dr. Beverley Stokes. He is very popular indeed with the boys. In fact he arrived as a boy himself. Then, in "One of the Boys", his wife arrives, young and attractive, and the boys like her very much. But a rumour gets around, which may have originated with Teddy Long, that the new Head ill-treats his wife.

Finally, "The Mystery of the Head's Wife" in which things get so mysterious that the reader feels it is time that Nelson Lee took a hand.

It has been a good month in the Gem, but the St. Jim's tales get shorter than ever. The illustrations are very large and include a full-page one plus others of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -page. But the first tale "Under Trimble's Thumb" was tip-top. Trimble gets the whip hand over Cutts, and, for a while, makes life very difficult for the fifth-former.

Another great little yarn - so short - was "Cardew, the Cricketer", in which Racke thought he could blackmail Cardew into losing a match. But the third tale was a silly affair, "Glyn's Colour Ray" - it turns Mr. Ratcliff's face a brilliant blue.

Finally, back into a better world with another Cardew and cricket story "The Deserter". Cardew is down to play against Rookwood, but, through no fault of his own, he fails to appear for the match. At the end of the tale Cardew is scorching on his bike for St. Jim's, hoping that he may still be in time to play.

One Saturday Mum and I went by river from Richmond to the Karsino on the island in the river off Hampton Court, where we had a meal. I noticed, when we were in Richmond, that the Richmond Hippodrome, which has been closed for a month or two, has now been

reopened and is named Richmond Theatre. There was a variety bill headed by "The Two Bobs", said to be Britain's favourite Americans, and also the singers, Muriel George and Ernest Butcher.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Fred Karno, who gave their first opportunities to Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel among others, put all his fortune into building the Kasino on the island in the river at Hampton Court. It was a sumptuous place of great splendour, according to reports, and it was intended to be a theatre, dance hall, hotel, restaurant, and the like. Many famous names featured among its attractions. Opened, I think, in 1923, it failed. Karno reopened it in 1924, and it bankrupted him, and, so it is said, broke his heart. The marvellous structure stood derelict for many years, a wonder for the light-hearted river-users punting past, hardly appreciating the tragedy. It was only fairly recently demolished.)

\* \* \* \* \*

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

## O, IMMORTAL BAND OF SLEUTHS

Murder Foulter than Most. Part 3

by Ken Bailey

Between the wars the book counters of Woolworths and other stores for that matter, abounded with back numbers of various American pulp magazines, selling at 3d. each. Among the Dime Westerns, Real Romances, Wings, Argosies, could be found books devoted to crime at its basest. These included Phantom Detective, The Shadow and Black Mask, the last named being notable for having as one of its contributors one Raymond Chandler, whose tough brash detective was to set a style in postwar years, a style which was to banish the academic sleuth into the shadows. The stories in these magazines spared nothing in providing suitably grisly homicides, hatchets and ice-picks being much in vogue as methods of despatch. The English reader searched in vain for a nice standard shooting, strangling or poisoning as then current in the domestic novel. The blunt instrument was definitely out! I mention the foregoing because among these shockers was the Nick Carter magazine, slightly less violent than its contemporaries. Possibly Carter was America's nearest approach to Sexton Blake, for his adventures have been chronicled over many years and now appear between the spicy covers of many a paperback. He has also achieved some distinction in the form of Walter Pidgeon in at least one film of the 1940's. How long

the character has been in circulation I do not know, but I venture to guess he is not a lot younger than Blake. (According to an expert on the Nick Carter stories he appeared before Sexton Blake - in September, 1886, to be exact, in the pages of the New York Weekly. J. P.) Compared with the English detective story of the time the pulp magazines were indeed primitive. For the reader brought up in the Baker Street school the non-stop slaughter could be more than trying.

To be continued

SEXTON BLAKE v MARSTON HUME continued

by Cyril Rowe

In "The Louis Quinze Snuff Box" Blake is poisoned at Lady Molly Maxwell's by an infected needle point in the box and is able to expose Hume's villainy to his host but cannot prosecute. Gradually Blake is cutting away the ground from under Hume's feet.

In 'Abducted' the detective frustrates Hume, rescues the victim, but cannot quite bring home the charge. The final tale in the long first batch "Blake Scores" relates not how Blake proves criminal charges against him, but by studying his movements on the Stock Exchange, where he has been buying shares against a bogus report and hopes to clean up when the truth is known, he is kidnapped by Blake and kept a prisoner until the market has recovered, his chance has gone, and Hume is pauperized in the process.

"You clearly understand" said Blake coldly, "I could have had you sent to prison. I prefer to leave you at liberty a beggared broken man. You will be less dangerous so". Hume goes and Blake's companion says "There was murder in that man's eyes". Blake looked at him and smiled. "Yes" he said quietly, "I noticed it myself."

In numbers 604, 606 and 607 the adventures are completed with Hume's death. In "Trapped" Blake, held up on the steps of the Boddely Club, notices a figure in a taxi lighting a cigarette. In that blaze of light, he realised that "the one man in the world who had persistently defied and eluded him was within his reach at last." Altered, lined aged and curiously unfamiliar, the face was beyond doubt that of the greatest criminal of the age, Marston Hume.

Blake trails him in a following taxi and confronts him in an apartment where Hume is sitting at supper. "One day" he said, "I knew you would make a mistake. Once before when in the hollow of my hand

I let you go, but this time - " "Very theatrical" said Hume. "Please explain while I eat my disgracefully late meal." Blake then recounts many criminal acts - the murder of Emile Sheringham - the murder of old Lady Lyne - the theft of the Lahore Ruby - an attempt on his, Blake's, life - the purloining from Blake's rooms of evidence that he had accumulated against Hume - "More than enough to hang you Hume" he ends.

Hume denies it all in icy tones, saying "When did all this happen? I've read no papers for a year, you accuse me of all the crimes in the calendar." Blake elaborates the crimes from a neat little note-book he opens, angered at the crook's poised assurance.

Hume cuts the ground from under Blake's feet by announcing that he has been blind for over a year, stone blind. "Quite melodramatic isn't it" he said and fumbles for a glass to take a drink. Blake's immediate tests for light reflection on the retina, and response, all fail and Hume rams home his condition with a Certificate from Sir Duncan Wyllie, which reports that Hume is suffering from a rare disease of the optic nerve, the only case he had ever known, but none the less genuine, absolute, total permanent blindness. Frustrated, Blake turns to go away, but Hume pulls a lever and Blake is dropped through a trap and into the river, is just creased by a revolver bullet, but happily rescued in time by the River Police just in time. They raid the room, but Hume has gone leaving a note which runs - Dear Mr. Blake, It gave me great pleasure to watch you from my window here taking your midnight dip. What a curious hour to select for a swim on a cold night like this. I would have saved you the trouble if I could, but my recent eye trouble seems to have affected me. I fear my aim was none too good. Pray accept my apologies - Marston Hume.

Here I might interpolate, what tales if any, have gone missing in the crimes Blake enumerated. Have any been lost or were they merely incidental to cover the lapse of a year?

The penultimate tale "The Great Bridge Mystery" shows Blake deducing from a tooth-marked briar pipe, a clean poker, where the rest of the fire irons are dusty, and past knowledge of Hume's earlier residences and therefore possible acquaintances, his responsibility for a murder and robbery, where the major crime had been assumed suicide,

---

and trails Hume down to Newhaven Quay. The last tale has Hume arrested in his hotel and Blake, resolutely detailing the clues and evidence against him, including bloodstains in his car. Hume passes this contemptuously saying he had picked up an injured cyclist and if the cottage hospital was rung the accident patient would be found there. "I know you well enough, Marston Hume to be able to reconstruct that part of the story" answered Blake grimly. "In order to account for those stains you would think nothing of running down a cyclist on a lonely road, even killing him if necessary, to support your tale, but I have found half a collar stud in your car stained with blood. The other half is on the railway victim and proves the case." Hume falls in a fit and against his better judgment Blake is forced to accept the fact, produce a doctor to attend him, and leave him in his care. Of course it is a trick and Hume escapes, but Blake chases him and after a cliff top fight, Blake is just saved, but Hume is drowned and the contest of years is over.

So ends one of the most dramatic and characterful episodes of Blake's career. No more to be said, but I just wonder was the way left open for Hume's re-appearance?

Concurrent with these tales were the Rupert Forbes, Marsden Plummer series in the Union Jack and maybe Storm was overextended, but this was certainly one of his most remarkable delineations and a pleasure to read.

The End

\* \* \* \* \*

ERIC PARKER: A TRIBUTE

by J. E. M.

I have been involved all my working life in the graphic arts and so my interest in old boys' papers has inevitably had a strong pictorial emphasis, but I know that I am far from alone in being first attracted to the Serton Blake saga by its most distinguished illustrator. It was in my first year as a pupil at the local grammar school, over forty years ago, that I came across a pile of second-hand copies of the UJ and DW and, there and then at the tender age of twelve, was immediately captivated by their exciting and evocative illustrations. My own training in the arts was still a long way off. I knew precious little about graphic techniques; next to nothing about the history of art. I

had yet to learn the difference between a Piranesi and a Brancusi and probably thought than an Impressionist was a man who did comic imitations. In 1933, the biggest artistic name in my life was Eric Parker, so I feel a very special affection for this talented man whom I never met.

Parker's brilliant work had the impact and immediacy of a film, a vigour supported by fine draughtsmanship, a flair for brilliant characterisation - for me his Blake was the only Blake - and a gift for essential but uncluttered detail. Whatever the setting, whatever the action, Parker always achieved the authentic. From his depiction of a door one could conjure the picture of a whole house, from his impression of a street a whole district. With a Parker illustration one could always see what was round the corner, as it were. And what a range he covered! In front of me as I write are a handful of drawings and cover illustrations which make my point and I can only urge readers to go back to these, or to a thousand similar ones, to re-discover the magic for themselves:

Two unshaven figures in shabby tropical clothes tensely face each other in a drab East Indies saloon, a squat, cheroot-chewing proprietor in a singlet watching warily across the bar (UJ 1465); a derelict English country pub at night, its sign leaning sinisterly, two small and at first scarcely noticeable figures in the middle distance carrying the inert form of another (UJ 1488); a threadbare working-class living room, kettle on the hob, cheese dish on the table ... a murdered woman lying on the hearth-rug (UJ 1489); an immaculate, top-hatted and cloaked figure - Zenith, who else? - fighting off with his swordstick a bunch of scabrous-looking villains (UJ 1510); a mob of frightened, ravaged-looking refugees fleeing from the Nazis (DW 22); opulently dressed gamblers of both sexes, witnessing a dramatic confrontation in a French casino, a calm and slightly sardonic Blake seated at the gaming table, (DW 46).

Blakians will quickly notice that these examples come from a comparatively brief period of the saga and I make no apology for this.

I still find the last two or three years of the UJ and the first year or so of the DW the golden age of Parker's art. Perhaps nostalgia plays its part in all this and other readers no doubt will prefer different periods of his work. Certainly his talent evolved over the years and

---

there were a number of influences which touched it from time to time. But, by and large, change was always in the direction of a freer, more open and, amazingly, more vigorous style. Apart from his indelible contribution to the long-running story of Sexton Blake, where he was always the readers' first favourite, Eric Parker worked for many periodicals, including national newspapers, yet perhaps never quite achieved the full recognition he deserved. Now that he is dead, however, he might easily become a cult figure, with enthusiasts searching for genuine Parker originals (I have always dearly wished to possess one myself!). Beyond all doubt, E. R. P. will be missed by many admirers and his work will be doubly treasured because now, sadly, there will be no more.

W. O. G. LOFTS writes: As was reported long ago in an issue of the Boys' Own Paper, Eric Parker was a Londoner, and was the first L. C. C. pupil to win a scholarship to an Art School. He first drew Blake in the early twenties, and, in the opinion of Union Jack editor, H. W. Twyman, he was the finest of all the Blake artists. Shy, until one got to know him, courteous, and friendly, he will always be remembered by the old Blake devotees and his many acquaintances.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**WANTED:** Early copies of Champion; Union Jack's before year 1926; SBL's just 2nd series and up to No. 65, 3rd series; NLL's up to No. 142 o/s. C.D. Annual for year 1948. Bullseye. For Exchange Only: Union Jacks, SBL's, Magnet, Gem, Popular, Dixon Hawke, Nugget Lib. 2nd series; Nick Carter.

H. W. VERNON

5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

=====

**WANTED:** Good loose copies or volumes containing some of BOYS' FRIEND - issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256. Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

=====

**WANT:** Film Funs, contg. serial "Tiger Heart" (1930/1) and No. 5/8/33; Bullseye; Surprise (1-35); Gems 713/715, 235. Offer Magnet, N. Lee (between 178-293), Nugget complete 1-34, F. Fun, Rover, etc. SUTTON, 41 SWALECLIFF AVE., MANCHESTER 23.

# Nelson Lee Column

THE MIND OF E. S. BROOKS

by William Lister

There is a saying "It's all in the mind" often quoted and sometimes true. When it applies to the writers of fiction it is true. There is a sense in which everyone carries out their work according to the way they think; even the famous detectives of fiction. Edgar Wallace bases a book title on this - namely "The Mind of J. G. Reeder".

So we come to the mind of E. S. Brooks. Collectors, no doubt, have many copies of the "Nelson Lee" covering scenes, escapades, hauntings and adventures, as recorded week by week of the St. Frank's boys to say nothing of Sexton Blake and Waldo tales featured in the "Union Jack". Some, too, have later hard-backed copies of the "Norman Conquest" and "Ironsides" tales, the plots and themes of which stagger the imagination.

As in the case of every writer some of the characters are borrowed. Could you possibly read of Archie Glenthorne and Phipps, his valet, without thinking of P. G. Wodehouse with his Percy Wooster and my man Jeeves? Can you follow the adventures of the St. Frank's boys, through strange lands peopled by stranger people and prehistoric animals without thinking of Conan-Doyle and his "The Lost World"? or travel with Handforth and Co. on those strange flying machines and not call to mind Jules Verne.

A recent article in "Collectors' Digest" by R. J. Godsave, pointed out that young readers of the Boys' papers, picked up much useful information on geography and kindred subjects in days when they had no television; which led me to think that this fact could also apply to literature.

Conan-Doyle, P. G. Wodehouse and Jules Verne we were to read later in life, yet similar characters and plots we had become familiar with through the Boys' papers.

I wish to follow the mind of Edwy Searles Brooks in the developing of his "plots" and "themes". To read books on the writing of fiction is to realise that the art of plot and theme is half the battle and E. S. Brooks had that art.

---

---

By way of illustration take a copy of the "Schoolboys' Own" of October 1939, based on reprints from the "Nelson Lee" entitled "The Secret World". Immediately we are plunged into the world of Wodehouse in a delightful dialogue between Archie Glenthorne and Phipps, worthy of Bertie Wooster and Jeeves. Yet in the same chapter and with a stroke of the same pen we are transported to passages and scenes reminiscent of Verne and Conan Doyle.

For the purpose of character "traits" in fiction you can borrow from others as in the case already mentioned, or you can develop your own characters with their very own traits to wit, Handforth, Ezra Quirke and the boys of St. Frank's.

In this story we see that Mr. Brooks was no anti-racialist or colour-bar writer. He introduces a coloured man by name of "Snowball". Snowball is the cook on this trip. A kind of happy-go-lucky black man that we used to know. I remember one such working as a porter on the railway. Always a broad smile, showing gleaming white teeth, always ready to give a willing hand, none of your black-power, raised fist, modern productions. All the St. Frank's boys loved him.

Now to the question of "plot" and perhaps here we trace more fully the working of the mind of E. S. Brooks. He takes a typical English village of the thirties. Cottages, farmhouse and charming little thatched pub, fields complete with farm stock. You name it and its there. Now people it with typical village folk.

That might do for "The Archers" of wireless fame or for "Emmerdale Farm" of T. V. fame, but not for the readers of the "Nelson Lee". So what to do? People this village, say, with men and women dressed in the style of 17th century Quakers, complete with leather coats and breeches. Furthermore cause them to speak in the Quaker language of that age, "Thee and Thou". Unusual, but still not enough to tickle our palate, so to speak. What to do now? Wait and see the working of the mind of E. S. Brooks.

He now takes the whole village with its English speaking Quakers complete with their leather coats and breeches of the 17th century style, the sheep and cattle, cottages, farms and old fashioned thatched pub and dumps it down at the South Pole.

By now I can read my readers' mind - "But the poor things will

---

all freeze to death" - to which I reply "Not on your Brooks". You see he now creates an underground tunnel or cavern, through which flows a warm gulf stream. Emerge at the far end of that cavern and you will make exclamations of amazement, such as "By Jimminy Cricket", "Odds Bodkins", "Well! I never" or else: just remain speechless, for there, before your very eyes and right at the heart of the South Pole, there are green fields - trees and birds, flowers, cattle and sheep, to say nothing of the Quakers. They have all been transported there by the fertile imagination of our author.

Now that does make a difference! That does transform our English village and its contents (however hum-drum) into something to write home about. So Mr. Brooks wrote home about it. If not home, at least to the editor of the "Nelson Lee" and he must have thought it was really something too. He paid for the information. All of which leaves me chewing the end of my pencil and wondering why I can't think of things like this. Maybe I'm dull of mind, or just plain stupid. Of course, some may say "How did all this gear arrive at the South Pole? It's not feasible."

Yes! it is friends, if Mr. Brooks has a say in it, and just to show any doubtful friends how feasible it is, let's dig a little into 17th century history. Shades of George Fox and of Pendle-Hill. The first time I crossed Pendle-Hill from Sabden over to Clitheroe, I was thrilled as I stood by the plaque marking the spot where the founder of the Quakers, had a vision of the many people in that district that would follow the Lord. A vision that became a fact under Fox and his God.

Now it appears (according to the mind of E. S. Brooks) that when the pilgrim fathers left English shores for America, one ship filled with goodly Quakers, during a violent storm, was caught up in a Southern current and carried into the ice region. So the village you have just seen at the end of the cavern was built and now peopled by Quaker descendants.

Satisfied? It's all so simple when you know how. The trouble is some of us aspiring writers don't know how.

Now to add spice to any story you need villains, and where will you get villains from a boatload of goodly Quakers? Mr. Brooks' mind is ticking again. What about the crew of sailors that manned the ship?

---

From where else indeed?

I don't like villains, but where in the world would an author be without the poor dears? And after all they always "cop it" in the end. Have you ever thought how dull your stories would be without them?

There are many more tales from the mind of E. S. Brooks. This is only one of them.

SEXTON BLAKE ALIAS NELSON LEE?

by R. J. Godsave

No. 132 of the 4d. Sexton Blake Library "The Man from Kura-Kura," is an extremely interesting and well written story of adventure in England and Central Africa, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker and the Hon. John Lawless. Taking advantage of Josie Packman's library I am gradually getting to know some of the leading characters other than Blake and Tinker.

At the end of this particular Sexton Blake is a short story of an earlier adventure of Sexton Blake entitled "The Case of the Carrier Pigeons". This same story under the title of "The Case of the Cabinet Secrets" described as an early adventure of Nelson Lee, appears at the end of "The Boy from Bermondsey", No. 4 of the Monster Library, with some slight alterations and the name of Nelson Lee substituted for that of Sexton Blake.

It is rather strange that of the whole Sexton Blake Library I should have chosen one that has a connection with the Nelson Lee Library through a reprint in the Monster Library.

\* \* \* \* \*  
WANTED: Floreat Greyfriars Record; S.P.C. No. 1; Title Page, Contents, Index and List of Contributors for S.P.C., Volume 4; Howard Baker, Vol. 18 - The Greyfriars Double (Stacy Series); Double Numbers, Christmas Numbers, of the Gem and Magnet; Early "C.D.'s". ANY of the above would be most welcome. HIGH PRICES PAID.

M. SHREEVE

25 WILLOW DRIVE, RAYLEIGH, ESSEX SS6 9LD.

+++++  
SEXTON BLAKE'S third series, 50 copies, run 269-318, £7.50. 2 Volumes of Young Folks Paper, containing Tim Pippin in Grantland, very rare, £4.50 per volume.

LITVAK, 58 STANWELL RD., ASHFORD, MIDDX., MX53609.

No. 119 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 60 - "The Scapegrace  
of Rookwood"

When the Schoolboys' Own Library was first planned, it was conceived that each volume should be complete in itself, and in the beginning this was quite a feasible proposition, since the early stories that were initially chosen for reprinting tended to be single stories or short series. As time went on, however, it became clear that the sixty-four pages of the early Schoolboys' Owns would not hold some of the longer series, and as the editor was still reluctant to give up the idea of the self-contained volume, various abridgements were resorted to, some of them extremely unsatisfactory. No. 104, for example, ended with Mornington having been expelled for trying to get Jimmy Silver suspected of theft - the end of the original series was never reprinted. Schoolboys' Own, No. 60, "The Scapegrace of Rookwood", was more happily edited, in that the initial events were omitted; the story began with Mornington having been expelled for absenting himself from school without permission and then refusing to be flogged; in the opening chapter he was about to leave Rookwood.

After Mornington's fortune was transferred to 'Erbert, the true heir, Mornington himself was dependent upon the charity of his uncle, Sir Rupert Stacpoole. The baronet's sons, who had endured Mornington's irritating ways while he was still wealthy, had no inclination to submit to them now that he was impoverished, and Mornington had no desire to return home with his uncle. Accordingly he jumped out of the station hack and dodged away from Sir Rupert, to find employment with a seedy grocer of Socialistic tendencies in Coombe, Mr. Bandy. It is doubtful whether Charles Hamilton ever depicted a more dishonest mean-minded tradesman, and it was not long before Dr. Chisholm bribed Mr. Bandy to dismiss his new assistant.

Charles Hamilton had a very ambivalent attitude towards Rookwood. On the one hand, he considered that the Rookwood juniors were more subtly presented than their counterparts at St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and I think there is a good deal of force in this argument. On the other hand, however, he considered that the Boys' Friend weekly paper appealed to a

---

lower class of readership than that of the Magnet and Gem, and consequently he often used Rookwood as a testing ground for a new theme, on the basis that it wouldn't hurt to try it out on the dog. Some of the themes were later used at Greyfriars with considerable success and became famous series of the Golden Age of the Magnet, but other themes were so outrageous or bizarre that they could never have been adapted for use at any other Hamiltonian school. One such theme was the episode of Mornington and the hurdy-gurdy.

After being dismissed by Mr. Bandy, Mornington hired a barrel-organ and affixed a placard announcing that he was a public schoolboy reduced to that method of earning his living, and the public were requested to spare a copper. He played this outside the gates and in the quadrangle at Rookwood, and although it added to the hilarity of the situation it also added to the unreality of it. What it did succeed in doing was to enrage Dr. Chisholm even more, and the situation seemed incapable of being resolved until Mornington saved the headmaster's life in a manner that was a little different from the usual form of heroics.

Mornington played a far larger part at Rookwood than Vernon-Smith or Cardew did at their respective schools, simply because the cast at Rookwood was more limited. "The Scapegrace of Rookwood" certainly provided the author with a fine opportunity for displaying the resilience and perverseness of Mornington's character, and there can be little doubt that the readers of the time were suitably entertained. What is more uncertain is whether they saw the political and social implications of a story that contained some of the most biting satire that Charles Hamilton ever produced.

\* \* \* \* \*  
WANTED - Schoolboys' Own Library, 202, 206, 220, 226, 268, 272, 278, 284, 317, 347, 362.

Magnets, 1365, 1369, 1373, 1374, 1376, 1378, 1390, 1392, 1394, 1395, 1396, 1397, 1455.

GEORGE LONGMAN

8 PATHFINDER TERRACE, BRIDGWATER, SOMERSET.

=====

WANTED URGENTLY: S.O.L. No. 27, will pay £3. Also "Jack of All Trades" (hardback by Frank Richards) £2. W. SETFORD, 155 BURTON RD., DERBY.

THROUGH OTHER EYES

by Les Rowley

Greyfriars, its Staff and Scholars, as seen by persons in every day life.

Inspector Grimes, Courtfield Police Station

The Inspector pushed back his chair, settled himself comfortably, and gazed at me across a desk that was littered with teleprint cables, wanted notices and lost and found advertisements. He spoke in clipped, curt phrases from which an undertone of suspicion never quite disappeared.

"When I first came to Courtfield I looked forward to the quiet country life in such a pleasant corner of Kent, with nothing more serious in the way of crime than the occasional case of poaching or riding a cycle without a light. A routine day's work and then home to a bit of gardening at the end of the day. It sounded too good to be true and so it was.

"As the pilgrim turns to Mecca so it seems the criminal fraternity turns its eyes to Courtfield, Friardale and Greyfriars School. There have been raids on the Courtfield and County Bank to such an extent that its vaults were considered no longer a safe repository for the School Silver Plate. There have been the kidnapping - from time to time - of boys like Vernon-Smith, Fish, Coker and Wharton, for purposes of financial gain or because the victim knew too much and of the boy, Bunter, for neither of those reasons.

"Under cover of being a master or a scholar rogues of all descriptions have found positions at the School. Forgers like Jim the Penman; Cracksmen like Lancaster "The Wizard" or "Slim Jim" who passed as a temporary master by the name of Lamb and who should not be confused with "Jimmy the One" another temporary master by the name of Lagden. Lesser lights of the criminal firmament like "Dandy" Sanders, "Jerry the Rat" and "The Ferret".

"At times it seemed that not only the native criminal found his way to the district, but those from farther afield. "Chick" Chew and "Tiger" Bronx, both from the States and Kalizelos from Greece are examples that come to mind.

"Old Boys of the School, like Randolph Crocker, often return as though to prove to their former tutors that they have furthered their

---

education since being expelled. Escaped convicts are no strangers to the School, seeking shelter in the vaults or some secret place.

"We have been favoured with assistance in solving these mysteries if it is true. Ferrers Locke and his assistant Drake, have proved invaluable if unofficial help to us in our enquiries, but I would like to seize the opportunity of paying tribute to the boys themselves. They have a fine sense of public duty and youngsters like Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull and Huree Singh, have rendered inestimable service to the community in helping us bring rogues to justice.

"I wish to say a word about Police Constable Tozer, our resident officer at Friardale. Writers have often been inclined to portray the village bobby as a figure of fun. That, I suppose, is author's license, but in the case of Tozer he has enjoyed less than justice. Tozer is a long serving, and by reason of the present argument, long suffering. Yet he is an officer well respected in the community that has been his beat so long. The panda patrols are rapidly succeeding the resident policeman and it will not be long before Tozer himself is replaced. I think his going will be regretted by many - among whom I expect to find those who have smiled just that little bit more because of him."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

MAURICE KUTNER: I was interested in "Let's be Controversial" concerning the Greyfriars Herald. May I remind you of a significant remark in your Editorial in the March issue: - "Some of the writers, churning out their efforts for youngsters, did not reach the standard which will stand up to adult criticism." Very true, and the same applies to lay-out and format of our juvenalia. The history of our old boys' books contains many instances of Editors and publishing houses not accurately divining the tastes of the youngsters for whom they catered, and the long road is scattered with the debris of failures.

I knew nothing of the original Herald of 1915-16, and have never seen a copy. All I knew of the Greyfriars Herald and Tom Merry's Weekly were the "extracts" printed occasionally in the Magnet and Gem towards the latter part of the first World War.

When the Greyfriars Herald was revived in 1919, I was at my

happiest. Right from the 24th January, 1919, which saw the resurrection of the Penny Popular, life was one grand parade of old favourites being reborn and new ones making their appearance, including the 5/- Holiday Annual.

As I remember, the stories of the Benbow was a worthwhile reason for my continued custom. The Editorial page was full of nothingness, and I never believed that Mr. Prout was the author of The Red Man's Trail. Pages were wasted on Tuck Hamper prizes, photographs of readers, the Greyfriars Police Court, short stories by the boys of Greyfriars and St. Jim's (all of "sub-writer" standard) and some jokes. If the Benbow stories had not been compressed into about five pages the Herald may have had a longer life. The drawings of McDonald and Wakefield did bring a little life into it.

It is easy to find faults now, but to a boy of eleven years of age (as I was then) 1919 was a year of wondrous charm, and the world a very happy place with no room for criticism.

BILL LOFTS: "Hedley Owen" who penned the series of tales based on Will Hay's film "Oh, Mr. Porter:" was actually Hedley O'Mant. I checked this with official records some time ago, and it was confirmed by Charles Boff, editor of Modern Boy. Charles Hamilton, of course, wrote the Will Hay at Bendover School in the Pilot, later carried on by other writers. The use of many pen-names could be due to the fact that he wanted to disguise the fact that he was contributing for other publishers at the same time.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: In his Autobiography, Charles Hamilton stated that his Will Hay series was published in the Ranger, edited by Montague Haydon, and added that the series lasted a long time and was a pleasant episode in his memory. I especially asked him whether he also wrote the Will Hay tales in Modern Boy, and he replied that he did. One could not accept every item from his long memory as gospel, but I examined the tales and found nothing definite to disprove the claim, and for this reason they were touched upon in last month's Controversial article.)

W. THURBON: Isn't it curious how St. Jim's set a pattern that gradually dominated the main A. P. papers. Before Martin Clifford, adventure and detective tales were popular. Then came St. Jim's - and the new pattern. In fact Hamilton repeated the dominant S. Clarke Hook's Jack, Sam, and Pete of the Marvel, but, while J. S. & P. were in one paper only,

C. H.'s influence spread over an enormous range. I cannot easily recall any other author providing so dominant a style.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: We get your meaning, Sir, and agree with you, but be fair. J. S. & P. are to be found in a lot more than the Marvel in the decade before the first world war. In fact the Boys' Friend 3d. Library was originally named the Jack, Sam & Pete Library.)

\*\*\*\*\*

## REVIEWS

### "TOM MERRY'S HOLIDAY"

Martin Clifford  
(Howard Baker Ltd: £2. 75)

This is the famous Old Bus series of the summer of far-off 1923. And some inspired person had the delicious thought to include a snatch of the very English Eton Boating Song on the front cover.

There is really no need for us to say much about this famous Old Bus series - no need to gild the lily, as it were. The fairly lengthy "blurb" on the back of the dust-jacket is written by the editor of Collectors' Digest, and we are conceited enough to hope that it may add to the many attractions of this delightful book. Another "Let's Be Controversial" as it were, though there is really nothing controversial about this one.

So just a quote from the blurb: "Like the Thames on which the Old Bus is towed or rowed, the tale sparkles from beginning to end. Witty, sometimes screamingly funny, often exciting, it is nevertheless the inconsequential charm of The Old Bus story which has made it, possibly, the best-loved and most warmly remembered of all holiday adventures.

"A holiday on The Old Bus, with Tom Merry & Co. , is one that will never be forgotten while the Thames flows on. And is yours for the taking."

### "THE KIDNAPPED SCHOOLBOYS"

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker Ltd: £2. 75)

This is the 5-story Kranz series of the Magnet of 1934. For some obscure reason - (just why is it that some series constantly receive mention while others are neglected?) - this series has never seemed to be popular or to have been given much attention as the years have slipped

by. For that very reason it may be exceptionally welcome now, coming along with a freshness which some others lack.

It starts off in rather bizarre fashion with Bob Cherry being kidnapped and carried off in an aeroplane. But, after this rather lurid beginning, the story is told with a restraint which is particularly refreshing for the adult reader. Though, in a way, it develops down well-trodden trails, there are many original sequences, and with Mauly and the Bounder in starring parts, it should ring the bell clearly. I predict a more resounding success now than the yarn apparently enjoyed forty years ago. A well worth while tale.

Also in this generous volume are the three opening stories of the China series. And they alone are well worth the price of admission.

"BILLY BUNTER IN CHINA"

Frank Richards

(Howard Baker Ltd: £2.75)

In the 44 years since the Magnet's China Series was published, I think there has never been a dissentient voice to the claim that this is Hamilton's finest series of foreign travel. As the reader smacks his lips and goes via Singapore and Hong Kong to the heart of mystic China, there is never a dull moment, and never does the interest flag. There are eight stories from the series here, and, as one of our critics once observed, the series does not really come alive until the party leaves England. So it is a question whether it matters that the opening three tales of the series appear in another volume.

Whatever your view, there is no doubt that you have great value for money in this superb adventure story. It was an inspired act of the author to put the party under the charge of Ferrers Locke, rather than under a parent of retired military background, even though one is impressed that Mr. Locke, apart from his other qualifications, also carried a "Master's ticket" at sea.

A great, great tale; a Magnet masterpiece with a vengeance; a date with Billy Bunter in China is a day to remember. Even the titles - for instance, "The Beggar of Shantung" - trip affectionately off the tongue and bring a light of joy to the eye. Even your tough old critic is getting lyrical this month.

The quality of this long, remarkable story of China can be judged by the affection which readers have accorded it in the 44 years since it

---

was written. The Magnet presented many splendid tales; it presented a few which earned a glow of everlasting affection. This is one of the few.

\* \* \* \* \*

## BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

### No. 3. HARRY LANGDON

There was considerable similarity between Charlie Chaplin and Harry Langdon. Both came from the music halls, and both started their film careers with Mack Sennett. Both were small figures of frustrated good will on the screen. Both played waifs. But there was one marked difference. Chaplin was very much an adult waif, with an eye on the pretty girls and the main chance. He thumbed his nose at everything. Langdon was a child waif, bland as milk, forgiving, obedient, exasperating, the baby-faced boy who never grew up.

Both, like the majority of Sennett's great comedians, deserted him when money and greater fame beckoned them.

Langdon was Sennett's chief comedian in the early twenties. Under the gentle guidance of the great director, Frank Capra, he leaped to fame in two-reelers, and he earned big money. Langdon decided that if his pictures could make a lot of money for Mack Sennett, they could also make a lot of money for Harry Langdon.

Other companies were always ready to grab the Sennett stars. In the later twenties, First National offered Langdon 6,000 dollars a week plus 25% of the net profits if he would make six full-length productions for them with a limit of 150,000 dollars production cost per picture.

So Langdon went to First National, and took Capra with him. But Langdon was

no business man, and he forgot that the money he was throwing around was really his own, advanced to him against the cost of the films.

In our second cinema term we played two of these full-length Langdon features: "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp", in which Joan Crawford was leading lady, and "The Strong Man". These were first-class of their type, but the standard of the later ones slipped a little. As time went by we played "Long Pants", "Heart Trouble", and "Three's a Crowd", making five in all. So it would appear that Langdon only made five of the six films with which he had been contracted to First National.

Poor Langdon failed as a producer on his own account, and lived in near poverty for many years, bankrupt and neglected, forlorn and forgotten. His shy charm and his gentle humour have yet to be matched on the screen.

Other features we played in our second term were Richard Barthelmess in a new release "Ranson's Folly" and in an older one "Golden Youth". Colleen Moore was in "Ella Cinders" and Milton Sills was in "Puppets". That term also brought us the first of a good many first-class western films which Ken Maynard made for First National. This was "Senor Daredevil". First National did not make many westerns, but these of Ken Maynard were all high

quality productions, well above the normal western quickie of the day.

Playing much longer programmes as we were now, with a big feature supported by various shorter subjects in each programme, our hand-operated Ford machine, with its 1000-ft. spool boxes, was obviously inadequate. Soon we installed Kamm projection, professional, with 2000-ft. spool boxes.

It was a curious factor of the film world that films were all sent out, until after the end of the second world war, in something under 1000 ft. reels. In every operating box in the country, two reels were joined together to fill the 2000-ft. spool boxes and avoid unnecessary "changeovers" from one machine to the other. This meant "topping and tailing" throughout every feature film. For instance, the run-out of reel one was cut off and the run-in of reel two was similarly treated, after which the two reels were joined together on one 2000-ft. spool. After the final show, the reels had to be split again, and the conscientious operator carefully joined up the tops and tails to their appropriate reels.

The result of this happening in every cinema was considerable film mutilation and scratching where the joints occurred. It did not matter so much in silent days,

but with the coming of sound on film, though the renters tried to make a reel end where no dialogue was occurring, the result was often that incongruous few moments of non-synchronisation which has offended all of us at times in the cinemas. It was not until the later forties that renters started packing films in 2000-ft. cans.

A word about our illuminants. We never used arcs, of course. Our comparatively short picture "throw" made them unnecessary. We used what were known as "cold lamps" though they could prove very hot indeed if one happened to touch them when they were burning.

Officially they were guaranteed for 100 hours burning time. But owing to the extreme inconvenience and annoyance if a lamp should conk out in the middle of a picture, we replaced all lamps with new ones every term. This was normally after about 70 hours burning time, so we had a growing collection of projector lamps with plenty of life left in them. Some of my older boys (and one in particular, whose name is often seen now credited for electrical work in television films) turned them into spotlights for use in connection with our school stage shows put on by our own amateur dramatic society.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1920, 1921, 1922. Monster Libs., S.O.L's, Magnets.

FOR SALE: Several P. G. Wodehouse Books - Billy Bunter's Own, £1.50; B.B's. Holiday Annual, £1.25; Tom Merry's Annual, £1.75; Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Bunter Books.

JAMES GALL

49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

Tel: ABERDEEN 491716

# The Postman Called

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

BEN WHITER (London): In 1949 I had a holiday at Ventnor, I. O. W. From Shanklin Pier a steamer trip went round the island. The paddler was named the Solent Queen. Somehow, while on board, I thought I had seen the ship somewhere before. I went and looked at the Board of Trade certificate. It was the old Queen of Thanet.

(Old ships, like the old stories, never die. They turn up, under new names, in the most unexpected places: - ED.)

BERT HOLMES (Barrow-in-Furness): I remember Violet Hopson well. Often she was leading lady to Stewart Rome who was a fine actor, and actually my favourite of the twenties. Among his fine films I recall "The Ware Case", "The Stirrup Cup Sensation", and "The White Hope".

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I am very interested in the "School Cinema" recollections. As I have mentioned in the past, I did quite a lot of Silent Cinema Pit orchestra playing in days gone by, so I find these articles fascinating. In view on the many illustrations you have given us in the "C. D." of the grand old papers, would it be possible to produce a booklet of these illustrations so that one could enjoy them at "one sitting" rather than having to go through the separate issues? Just an idea; although I realise there may be difficulties in such a project.

One small part of my collection consists of books by "S. B." authors (other than Blake) such as "The Silent House" and "The Hand of Seeta", by John G. Brandon. "The Problem in Ciphers" - Rex Hardinge, and one I picked up yesterday - "Beyond the Blue" - Stacey Blake and "Lost in the Slave Land" by W. Murray Graydon, and of course, many by E. S. B. as Victor Gunn, and Berkeley Gray.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): I read with interest the well-deserved letter of censure, written by Miss Penelope Primrose, Headmistress of Cliff House School, concerning the recent correspondence on Marjorie Hazeldene and Harry Wharton.

However, I feel that the good lady is becoming rather absent-minded of late - due, no doubt, to a combination of advancing years, and the challenge posed to the old school by the insidious advance of

comprehensive education. Is she not aware that Marcia Loftus, who is said to have been in possession of the infamous issue of "Collectors' Digest", has not been a pupil at Cliff House for many years? She was, in fact, expelled by Miss Primrose herself, early in 1935, after forming a secret society whose disgraceful purpose was forcing the resignation of the captain of the Fourth Form, Barbara Redfern. Needless to say, the plot failed. The events are recounted in breath-taking detail in contemporary issues of "The Schoolgirl".

Someone is obviously failing in her duty by not informing "Primmy" of Marcia's departure from Cliff House. As this would appear to be Barbara Redfern's responsibility, should not - dare I say it? - she be replaced by Marjorie, Clara, or Mabel, as captain of the Junior School? (Clearly the great-great niece of the original Marcia, I would think. Unless the date on Miss Primrose's letter may provide a key to the mystery. - ED)

R. H. RHODES (Dewsbury): Like many others I too have been very interested in your items on travel to Southend via what was the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway and the Great Eastern Section of the London and North Eastern Railway.

It may seem somewhat strange that a resident of the West Riding should express such an interest, but in those far off days in the 1920's I lived at Chadwell Heath and the items revived happy and pleasant memories of Sunday School Outings and Cub and Scout trips to West Horndon, Laindon Hills and Benfleet for Cavey Island. We used to travel to Romford by 'bus or train' and thence take the Romford-Southend train via Hornchurch and Upminster. In an attempt to answer your query on the North Woolwich line, I am fairly sure this was part of the old Great Eastern Section of the L. N. E. R. and that the most direct line into the City was through Custom House into Fenchurch Street, but it was possible to go up to Stratford Junction and into Liverpool Street that way. It seems to me that an excursion to Southend from North Woolwich would have gone up to Stratford Junction and then on the main line up to Shenfield & Hutton and thence down to Southend via Billericay, Rayleigh and Hockley. I believe the North Woolwich - Fenchurch Street service ceased after the air raids of 1940.

J. W. COOK (Auckland): It was refreshing to read J. Wallen's article

---

in C.D. for March 1974, in which he is intrigued with Brooks' character W. N. Browne. I would advise J. Wallen to get to know a few more St. Frank's characters who are just as intriguing as Browne. However, I wouldn't say Browne is laconic; far from it.

It was a great pity (Mr.) Wallen did not comment on another episode in the Ezra Quirke series where professor 'Tucker' slashes his hand with a knife and, after bandaging, places the hand in a mysterious box.

Very shortly afterwards the hand is withdrawn with no trace of the severe cut. If (Mr.) Wallen had classified this incident as 'superior to the explanation given' he would have been wrong for today, it is known as psychic surgery. It is a very real operation and is widely practiced in the Philippines.

ROGER SANSOM (London): I was interested in Mr. Ernest Holman's recollections of his several visits to the play "Sexton Blake".

When he mentions Wilfred Babbage in connection with Dr. Dale, I think that what he is thinking of is, in fact, another long-running role on radio - Mr. Wilkins in Anthony Buckeridge's "Jennings", which Mr. Babbage played for many years.

Interestingly, he was also one of the three actors to play Inspector Coutts in the 1967 Sexton Blake series on B. B. C. radio, which starred William Franklyn and was also written by Donald Stuart.

\* \* \* \* \*

## News from the Clubs

### MIDLAND

A successful meeting was held at the usual venue, Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham, on 30 April. Twelve members attended. The evening was tinged with sadness from the passing of Norman Gregory. One of the founder members of the Midland OBBC in the far-off days of 1950, Norman soon took over the post of treasurer, a position he retained until recently. He rarely missed a meeting and his wise husbandry succeeded in keeping the club active through some difficult times.

The programme of the April meeting included a further opportunity

for dipping and browsing into the remarkable scrapbooks of Francis Lowe. Warwick Setford gave another reading from one of his own Greyfriars compositions followed by nostalgic recordings of Al Jolson and the Ink Spots. Tom Porter provided and passed around the anniversary number (Magnet 1576 - 36 years old) and collectors item - a bound volume of BFL's and SOL's featuring Nelson Lee, Nipper and St. Frank's.

### CAMBRIDGE

Meeting on 12 May, at 3 Long Road, the theme being Adventure Stories.

Harold Forecast, a Thomson writer, gave an enlightening talk on writing adventure stories. Neville Woods spoke about Talbot Minsky's stories, giving a resume of Minsky's career and a list of his stories. He illustrated his talk with copies of the early American Magazine "Adventure".

Danny Posner talked on Victorian writers of adventure tales, from Robert Louis Stevenson and Rider Haggard, through Ballantyne and Mayne Reid to the "bloods", illustrating his talk with examples from his collection.

Bob and Mrs. Blythe were welcome visitors, and Bob gave an entertaining talk on Lord Dorriemore and Umlozi from E. S. Brooks' St. Frank's holiday adventure series, illustrating his talk with quotations and examples of the Nelson Lee Library.

Danny entertained the Company with a recording made from an American Broadcast of "Little Orphan Annie", used as an Ovaltine advertisement.

Much pleasure greeted the news that as a result of Danny's efforts a wealthy Collector had purchased a collection of No. 1's of various papers, thus ensuring they would remain in the Country and be put in exhibition.

Deryck Harvey gave his usual list of new records, publications, and films.

The meeting closed with thanks to Danny and Mrs. Posner for their hospitality.

NORTHERNSaturday, 11th May, 1974

After the Library Session, Vice-Chairman Harry Barlow, opened the Meeting and Mollie read items from her correspondence.

Mollie provided the first item in a new series, 'A Voice from the Past'. In this case it was the voice of Herbert Leckenby. It was his writings, said Mollie, which had created the Hobby.

Each September Herbert would visit London and then he would present a write-up for the CD. Mollie read to us first from CD 34 (1949), then from CD 94 (1954) on the death of Harry Stables and Herbert's minutes for the September meeting in that edition. Finally from Herbert's article 'There Were Other Schools' in the CD Annual for 1952.

There followed a quiz by Jack Allison, entitled 'Odd Man Out'. Merit was given according to the speed with which correct solutions were submitted and the first in order were presented by Ron Hodgson, Mollie, Myra and Ron Rhodes.

With still time left before close of play, as it were, Harry Blowers was able to continue his question-time of last month. Top came Ron Rhodes with 24 points, second Ron Hodgson and tying in third place with 20 each were Bill Williamson and Elizabeth Taylor.

LONDON

The May meeting was held at the hospitable Twickenham home of Sam and Mrs. Thurbon, and once again the ladies were predominant in the first half. Mildred Lyle started things going with an exciting Paper-chase Quiz, dealing with twelve local locations. The juniors dropped out, and Roger Jenkins emerged as winner.

Mary Cadogan obliged with a fascinating reading and talk on the Sexton Blake character, Nirvana. Winnie Morss read three amusing chapters from the new reprint volume "Tom Merry's Holiday".

After tea the whole company took part in Sam Thurbon's Treasure Hunt. Norman Wright was the winner, and marked the occasion with a talk on Biggles. Tom Wright had us all laughing with "Dr. Bichemall's Romance". Josie Packman and Mary Cadogan discussed the Sherlock

Holmes play at the Aldwych Theatre, and displayed a programme. There followed a discussion on the various portrayals of Holmes in the cinema and on TV.

The meeting ended with votes of thanks to our Host and Hostess for their warm hospitality in such a pleasant venue. The next meeting is on 16th June, at "Greyfriars", Hollybush Ride, Wokingham; hosts Mr. and Mrs. Eric Lawrence. Telephone: 0344 - 64626.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

\*\*\*\*\*

FOR SALE: Volume of varied Gems containing blue cover United Kingdom Series of "Kildare for St. Jim's", "A Son of Scotland", "A Hero of Wales" and "Tom Merry for England", plus Winter Number 1914 of "Talbot's Christmas", plus blue covers "The Fighting Prefect" and "Master Marie", plus Christmas Double Number for 1917 "The Shadow of the Past" plus two white covers "Raising the Wind" and "The St. Jim's Pacifist" - nice volume: £12. Paperback edition of Autobiography of Frank Richards" (good copy) 50p; B.F.L. No. 132 "Well Cleared" by Maxwell Scott (excellent copy) 50p; B.F.L. No. 122 "Pete's School" (nice copy) 30p; 2 Christmas Magnets 1244 & 1245 (on the rough side) 50p for the two; Magnets 1257 & 1300, 60p each. Hardbacks: "The Sporting House" by Richard Bird, 12½p; "Carry On, Rippleton" by A. Harcourt Burrage, 10p; "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" by Talbot Baines Reed, 20p; 2 volumes of Strand Magazine (1896) 25p each. Red Magnet No. 164 "The Greyfriars Clown" (fair copy) £1.

Postage extra on all items.

S. a. e. to ERIC FAYNE

=====

FOR SALE: Hobby Annual 1937, 75p; "Boys will be Boys" 60p; S.B.L's No. 223, 249, 253, 265, 349, 364, 416, 419, 422, 426, 12½p each, Jack's The Lad, 45p; Cardew's Catch, 25p; "William The Bold", William and The Moon Rocket (mint hardbacks), 45p each. "William", "William and The Monster", 10p each. Postage extra.

STAN JENKS, THE LODGE, NORTHBROOK, NR. FARNHAM, SURREY

=====

NOW IN ACTIVE PREPARATION:

"THE LETTERS OF FRANK RICHARDS"