The Collectors' Digest

(Vol. 5) No. 58. Price 1s. 6d Post Free

October 1951 32 pages again

W. M A R T I N

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FOR SALE:

Boys Friend Libraries, 1st Series: "Boy Without a Name", "Through Thick & Thin", "Rivals & Chums", all by Frank Richards.. .. ..
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OCTOBER 1951

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Sunny Days in the South: Each year on my return from my London holiday I say with a sigh, "It can never happen again." But it does. It certainly has this year - and then some. Each succeeding year I have to steal another day. This year I would fain have taken three or four, if duty hadn't called. How to give an adequate account of my travels, the thrills, the surprises, the wonderful kindness and hospitality extended to me by "The Brotherhood of Happy Hours" in the space available is a problem. However, by recklessly adding four pages so that I shall not encroach too much on other matters, I may be able to give some idea of a wonderful time.

On my arrival at Kings Cross, Len Packman and Charlie Wright, that faithful pair, took me to lunch and then on to the offices of Mandeville Publications where in an enjoyable hour I saw something of the good fare to be served up shortly for the benefit of Hamiltonians.

Tuesday breakfast time came a terrific surprise, for a letter from Frank Richards, addressed to Ben Whiter, was place before me in a state of glee by his brother Bob. At the risk

of being considered swell-headed I'll quote part -

"I shall be very pleased to see Herbert, and Bob too if Bob is his fellow traveller to these remote regions. It is not only because I am busy that I have to cut out visits as a rule, but also because the Oldest Inhabitant tires very easily in these latter days. But a special occasion is a special occasion, and the editor of the C.D. is extra special. As it happily happens on Wednesday afternoon Frank Richards will be free from the claims of Billy Bunter and Tom Merry, so if Herbert will float in about four o'clock all will be calm and bright."

Well, if that didn't assure a happy holiday, I don't know what would. It had been planned all unknown to me by Ben Whiter. That's just typical of the spirit of these London fellows. And quite apart from my own satisfaction, I knew what it meant to Bob Whiter. For years he had dreamt of such an occasion, therefore, if I had done a little to make his dream come true, I was very happy too.

This unexpected treat meant a rearrangement of programme Len had arranged for me, which had included a visit to Mr. Charles Skilton's, but I felt sure that those I had to let down would understand, for such an opportunity might never come again. And there was another pleasant episode on Tuesday, an afternoon well spent at the home of John Shaw.

We were able to kill two birds with one stone on that auspicious Wednesday, for at Margate we had a delightful hour looking over Norton Price's fine collection of Boys' Friend and Sexton Blake Libraries. How I envied that "den" of his!

Prompt at four we were at the home of Frank Richards. Followed two hours which sped like a flash. For a good deal of the time I sat and watched the light in Bob Whiter's eyes. But the story of what happened during those two hours will be told in a special article next month.

Thursday, the 13th, was a day of contrasts, yet another entrancing day. Instead of the quiet room of Frank Richards within sound of the sea, the morning was spent at the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition (a great show this) and the afternoon midst the bustle of London Airport. Here, thanks to Ray Brown, of the Customs, and staunch Magnetite, (whom I was meeting for the first time) Bob Whiter and I were shown over planes just in from Singapore, and about to depart for Copenhagen; through numerous offices, finishing up with tea. Yes, another thrilling day.

Friday found me at Southend, there to be met by Bill Colcombe with whom I had corresponded for years, but was also meeting for the first time. 'Tis difficult to describe the reception he and his hospitable mother gave me. Of a truth, as I dwell on these events, a catch comes to my throat.

Saturday, a lunch time chat with Charles Vennimore, then, thanks to Harry Homer again, the West Stand of the Arsenal ground, sitting in the very seat I occupied last year, my only regret that Rex and Mrs. Dolphin were not in those adjoining as they were then, and that I had not the pleasure of seeing Harry's jovial features and thanking him face to face.

After the match, out to the familiar room at Greenwich were Charlie and Olive Wright made one feel oh so much at home With Len and Ben there too followed another happy evening.

Sunday September 16th down to Brighton for the O.B.B.C. meeting, on a lovely day near 30 of us to the home of the prince and princess of entertainers, John and Kay Robyns, or the "Robbies" as they are usually known. But I'll leave it to Secretary Ben to tell you what happened there. I'll just say "Stupendous".

Monday, the 17th, lunch at Liverpool Street with Jimmy Stewart Hunter and Eric Landy. 3 p.m. found me in Arthur Richardson's room at the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Here, exactly as last year, the time passed so quickly that I only kept my appointment with Roger Jenkins, Marble Arch, at six, by the skin of my teeth. Tea, walk and talk - Hyde Park, Green Park, Piccadilly, the pleasure of which was added to when he handed over one of his inimitable articles for the Annual, this time on Harry Wharton.

Next evening passed happily at Bob Blyth's. Each time I visit Bob I have to admire the way he has his record collection of Nelson Lees arranged, the only complete one in existence. Boxed in tens, and immaculately labelled, they are an impressive sight.

Nearing the end, Wednesday evening a little gathering at Wood Green in the famous room with innumerable reminders of the Magnet looking down from the walls.

Thursday, the 20th, out to Surbiton, where, at the Modern School my London adventures started just three years ago. Now two hours chat with Eric Fayne making a grand finale to my fourth tour down south.

Friday - homeward bound, the ever attendant Len, needless to say, seeing me off. And, as I looked out on the last of the London suburbs I had only one regret - that

it was the end and not the beginning and that the wheels were not turning the other way.

-:-:-

Other Surprises: In the weeks just prior to my holiday I had many welcome visitors to my office, most of them quite unexpected. First Wilfred Darwin; then Frank Case, Ken Humphries, and biggest surprise of all, Wheeler Dryden, from far-off Hollywood. Finally Dom Webster, for a memorable week-end. How I love these episodes. May there be many more.

There was an amusing incident in connection with Ken Humphries' visit. We went to a show in the evening and I'll be hanged if the comedian didn't go and work a gag about Billy Bunter! I can still see the smile on the face of Ken.

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The Annual: When the compliments flowed in after the production of last year's I said to myself, "Grand! Problem will be, however, how to keep it up." But honestly, I'm beginning to think we shall do it again this year, for whilst in London I saw and heard much to justify my confidence. There's just one regretable note, for all who know him will be sorry to hear that John Medcraft has had to go into hospitel owing to heart trouble. It means he will be unable to do his usual article on Victorian papers. A real loss, but Jimmy Stewart Hunter has kindly agreed to step into the breach. Meanwhile, I'm sure all will wish John a speedy return to health.

I'll leave further news about the Annual until next month, for if I don't stop here all this month's C.D. looks like being hogged by

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

FOR SALE, "Populars", "Union-Jacks", "Nelson-Lees", "Green Boys' Friends", "Boys' Realm", "B.O.P.", "Bunter Books", "Tom Merry", etc. S.A.E. for list, state requirements. G. R. Adsley, 17 Abergarw Road, Brynmevyn, Bridgend, Glam.

FOR SALE: "Union Jacks". Various numbers from 699 to 1244. Unbroken series 1246 to 1531. Also Detective Weekly Number 1 to 107. Offers. F. Bourne, 12 Greenstead Road, Mosely, Birmingham.

THE MEN WHO WROTE FOR BOYS

No.2 - Henry St.John

By Herbert Leckenby

Henry St.John (born Nov. 3, 1869, died Nov. 1926) was another of Hamilton Edwards' white-headed boys. So far as periodicals were concerned, I believe he wrote solely for the Harmsworth, afterwards Amalgamated Press papers, but under his real name, Henry St.John Cooper, he had many stories published in book form, some of which can still be found in the libraries. He was brother, or maybe half-brother, to Gladys Cooper, leading actress famous in her day for her beauty as Betty Grable for a different part of her anatomy in these.

In his early days Henry St.John sometimes wrote as Lieut. Paul Lefevre, whether army or naval rank was never stated. I don't think he ever wore the uniform of either (authors were often fond of adopting titles in those days not always as modest ones as lieutenant), but there's no doubt he could write rattling yarns of the King's Navee, in fact, in my opinion he was at his best when so employed. His first serial in the ½d. Boys' Friend, in 1896, was "A Middy of Nelson's Day" followed by "In the Days of Dashing Drake". Others were "In the Service of the King" early on in the 1d. Boys' Friend", one of the best of that paper's hundreds of serials. "Afloat with Nelson" (Boys' Herald), "In Nelson's Day" (Boys' Realm) and "The Scourge of the Seas" (½d. Union Jack).

Hamilton Edwards placed Henry St.John "top of the bill" as his school story author. In my opinion there were better writers of these; still, he wrote some good ones. One followed another in rapid succession; in the later days of the ½d. Boys' Friend. "The Boys of St.Basils", "Bob Redding's Schooldays", in the early stages of the 1d. series, "Charlie Gordon's Schooldays", "Shunned by the School", "Pride of the School", "Defence of Danescliffe" and "The School Against Him". On one occasion, however, that quixotic editor did a curious thing. With much boosting he announced a story by a brilliant new author, Gordon Holme, entitled "Kingswell College". I awaited it with no little curiosity. I hadn't got far into the first instalment before I exclaimed, "Why, it's by Henry St.John! I'll bet my bottom dollar," or words to that effect. Long years afterwards, when Harry Dowler

and I met for the first time, one of the first things he said to me was "Did you know Gordon Holme was Henry St.John?" I looked at him, grinned and said, "Why on earth didn't we meet forty years ago?"

Other school stories, too numerous to mention in full, flowed from his pen as quickly as some people write letters. A few thought of at random were "The Seventh House at St.Basil's" and "True as a Die" (Boys' Herald); "The Shame of St.Basil's" and "The Millionaire Schoolboy" (Boys Friend).

Not content with this, Henry St.John set out to show that he, apparently, knew as much about what went on in girls' dormitories as he did about the places where boys indulged in pillow fights and bullied "cads from the lower classes". If you would like to give your lady friends a laugh try to obtain some "Girls' Friends" of about 1906 vintage so that they can see some of George Gatcombe's illustrations to Mabel St.John's (as Henry was for the nonce) stories such as "Polly Green's Schooldays". They'll shake with mirth at the spectacle of pig-tailed damsels clad in ankle-length nightdresses, for girls wore not pyjamas in those days. Hamilton Edwards would not have allowed them to be portrayed if they had.

As "Mabel" he wrote other stories for the girls' papers, sometimes with theatrical settings. And that reminds me of an incident of my own youth. My mother had a friend, a lady prominent in church circles, one who disapproved of the theatre and even girls' weeklies like the "Girls' Friend". One Christmas my mother showed me a book her friend had given her as a present. It was inscribed "Sunny Ducrow" by Henry St.John Cooper. Thought I, "That sound familiar". I turned the pages, and chuckled, for sure enough it was a one time Mabel St.John "Girls' Friend" serial, but it had then appeared under the more enticing title "The Little Girl in the Revue"! What a difference a change in dressing makes. My mother raised her eyebrows when I gently told her.

However, to return to Henry the man. He was another of those amazingly prolific, versatile fellows, astute Hamilton Edwards had under his banner in the days when the eyes of boys had cause to glow when they gazed at the book-stalls. So lasting an impression had the stories on me that they come to my mind more quickly than I can set them down. Here just a few as an example of his versatility.

"Strongbold the Gladiator" (Jester); "King of the Road", a motor racing story in the "Boys' Realm"; "Harry the Horseman", a circus yarn in the same paper; "Up for the King" (1d. Boys' Friend); "Stand and Deliver" (Jester); "Captain of the Guard" (1d. Union Jack); "Scourge of the Seas" (½d. Union Jack); and "Circus Lad" (Boys Herald).

Harking back to school stories, most of you will have seen or heard the play "The Guinea Pig" in which a boy of the working class was sent to a public school as an experiment. The producers seem to think it was a novel idea, something new. Why, bless my life, the boys' weeklies carried stories galore on those lines forty, fifty years ago, and Henry St.John's "Shunned by the School" in 1902 was probably one of the first. He used the idea frequently in after years.

Busy though he was turning out serials for the boys' and girls' weeklies, it must also be recorded that he was writing with equal industry stories of "love and intrigue" for adult papers like "Family Journal" and "Penny Pictorial". Despite all that he found time to breed bulldogs! No five-day week for chaps like Henry St.John.

When the Boys' Realm was revived in 1919, he wrote for it "Henry St.John's Schooldays" in which we find him a fag at St.Basil's, the school he had been writing about for over twenty years, and in which he occasionally mentioned "his sister Mabel".

He remained faithful to his favourite school almost to the end of his writing career, for "The Outcast of St.Basils" appeared in the first numbers of "The Champion" in 1922, followed quickly by "The Three Mosquitoes", another school story in the same paper. After that I think he passed from the scene, and died some four years later.

By no means a perfect stylist, and if I could have chosen a public school in which to be educated, it would not have been one like those portrayed by Henry St.John, nevertheless, he provided many happy hours for boys and girls when the century was young.

Can ANYONE oblige with Gem number 946, please? I will pay a good price. Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED: "The Pride of the Ring" by Henry T. Johnson. Published by Aldines. Offers to Harold G. Dubb, 40 Park Road, London, N.15.

RESULT OF COLLECTORS' DIGEST VOTING CONTEST. HEAT 3.

The THIRD HEAT, for which there was a very large entry, has perhaps proved to be the most interesting of all so far. The "Wharton Lodge" Series (C) and the "Polpelly" Series (E) ran neck and neck, continually changing places right up to the closing date of the contest. There was, however, never any doubt as to which item was coming last. With very few exceptions, readers marked the Xmas at Sea series (F) as the one they liked least of all.

Here is the final placing of the Series, as determined by the popular vote of readers:-
1st. C. Xmas Mystery of Wharton Lodge (1933). 2nd. E. Xmas at Polpelly (1935). 3rd. B. Xmas at Mauleverer Towers (1931). 4th. A. Xmas at Cavendale Abbey. (1930). 5th. D. Xmas at Hilton Hall (1934). 6th. H. Xmas Cigarette Case series (1938). 7th. G. Xmas at Reynham Castle (1937). 8th. F. Xmas at Sea (1936).

As a result of this heat, the series voted 1st and 2nd will pass into the Finals.

The prize-winners are as follows:-
A postal order for 15/- has been sent to Robert Wilson, 100 Broomfield Road, Glasgow, N. (26 points).
A postal order for 5/- has been sent to G. Allison, 7 Summerfield Gardens, Bramley, Leeds. (18 points).

In this entry, competitors suggested series which shall be included in the 4th and final heat of the contest, and the list on the new coupon has been compiled according to these suggestions.

One or two readers suggested such series as "Judge Jeffries", "Wally Bunter" and the Redwing-Clavering" stories, but, while these were undoubtedly outstanding in their day, they appeared about 35 years ago, and the Editor feels that their inclusion would not be fair to readers whose collections may not include such very old items.

FOR SALE. Blue Gems (½d. and 1d.) Magnets (½d.) and later; Greyfriars Heralds (1915) full set, 1-18. A few comics (1916). Also oddments, Monsters, B.F.L's, S.O.L's, Lees, Specimen copies of many boys' papers. Ernest A. Hubbard, 58 South view Crescent, Sheffield 7.

H A M I L T O N I A

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Whilst in London I had a 'phone chat with Mr. Charles Skilton. He gave me the gratifying news that the "Auto-biography of Frank Richards" will be published at the end of this month, or early in November. I know by my post-bag that this notable event is being eagerly awaited, and I am confident members of our circle will not be disappointed when they see the contents. I had the privelege of reading a few chapters in manuscript a few years ago, chapters concerning the Gem and the Magnet; and I know I found them engrossing reading indeed.

One reason for the delay in publication has been difficulty in obtaining copies of early issues of the two papers for the purpose of reproducing the covers, but some of our London members have come to the rescue, so all's well.

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I have also had the privilege of a pre-publication look at this year's "Tom Merry's Own", published for the third year by Mandeville Publications. It is about the same size as last year, and is clad in an attractive dust jacket. Pride of place goes to "The Ghost of St.Jims", seventy pages in length. Slightly shorter is "Bad Luck for Billy Bunter". Rookwoodites are not forgotten, for there's "A Bargain in Bikes" by Owen Conquest. A fourth school story concerns Carcroft.

In addition there are several interesting articles, including Wicket-keeping "Down Under" by Godfrey Evans; "The First Journey to the Moon" by T. O. Evans, F.R.G.S.; and "The Tenting Circus Goes Out" by Butch Reynolds.

Finally, a number of fine photo plates on art paper depicting F.A. and Rugby League Cup Winners, Sportsmen of the Year, etc.

Altogether it will well stand comparison with any of the Annuals on the bookstalls this year.

It will probably be on sale by the time this is in print. Price is 9/6d.

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Happy Hamiltonians, you are well catered for. What a pity the same cannot be said for the Blake fans, Leeites, and those who are faithful to other old favourites.

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"THAT OTHER TOFF"

By Charles Baker

Note: It should be explained that the following has nothing to do with the arrival of Talbot at St. Jim's, as that famous series of "The Toff" has already been covered in the most able and masterly way by Mrs. Packman, and which all us old Talbot fans so thoroughly enjoyed reading in the C.D. last year.

.. ..

This is about that other "Toff" who made his appearance but once, in Gem No.184, "His Past Against Him" published the 19th August 1911, nearly three years before Talbot had been heard of, and I have often wondered that even so far back as then "Martin Clifford" was considering a character on the lines that "Talbot" was to appear in later; true the other "Toff" was not a pupil at St.Jim's, but he came to the school with the same object as Talbot, to steal the plate.

"His Past Against Him" is the sad story of Blane of the Shell, it is recorded that he has been about two years at St.Jim's, and is regarded as a quiet steady chap, but rather mysterious; he has no people, and it is reported by Levison that his school fees are paid by a certain Mr. Frayne, a governor of a reformatory. Levison the cad of the Fourth in his usual way of course, is very anxious to know more about the matter and one day he gets his chance to accomplish this.

Blane is alone in his study, reading a letter which seems to cause him some worry, when Tom Merry enters the room to ask the reason why Blane is not down on the cricket ground for the House match in which he is to play. He surprises Tom Merry by saying, "How dere you spy on me!" Tom tells him not to be silly and get changed into flannels and come down to the ground.

A few other fellows come along and make Blane change and yank him off, but in the hurry he leaves his letter open on the study table, and of course - Levison enters and reads this and takes it away with him. Blane, down on the cricket ground, suddenly remembers his letter, and to the amazement of Tom Merry & Co., instead of even trying to make an easy catch lets the ball go past him, and runs as hard as he can off the ground, back to the School House and up to his study,

to find of course the letter gone, After a lot of searching he finally tracks it down to Levison. Blane demands it from him, but Levison, who admits he has the letter, will not give it up, but hands it over to Knox the Prefect, who reads it aloud to all present, as follows:-

> Dear B.- Unless you do as I want, I shall show you up to all St.Jim's. I don't think the Head will be likely to allow you to remain, or any of the other fellows to speak to you, if you are allowed to remain, once your past is known. I mean business! If you want to come to terms, meet me at eight, you know where. If you mean to kick over the traces look out for squalls.
>
> "Toffy"

Knox then asks Blane if the letter is his, but Blane denies it, but no one seems to believe him.

Blane later meets the writer of the letter, who he addresses as "Toff"; we are told that he is a youth about a couple of years older than Blane. The Toff demands that Blane shall open a window in the School House for him to enter that night so that he can steal the School plate. Blane pleads to be left alone, but the Toff shows no mercy, and at last Blane agrees to do what he wishes, but his better nature comes out on top, and he seeks the help of Tom Merry; they inform Mr. Railton and Kildare, and await the arrival of the Toff. When he makes his appearance, they overpower him, and he is brought before the Head. The captured thief then in front of all exposes Blane, by informing them that they have both been in a reformatory together. On the Head hearing that it is through Blane that the Toff has been captured and the School plate saved, takes the boy into his study and hears his sad story, of how Mr. Freyne the reformatory governor, seeing good in the lad, had sent him to St.Jim's, Dr.Holmes feels compassion for Blane, and although he cannot allow him to remain at St.Jim's, tells him he will be his friend and arrange for him to enter another school where he can start a new life. The story ends on very similar lines to the last scene between Dr. Holmes and Talbot in the "Parting of the Ways", Gen No. 337.

"His Past Against Him" was not reprinted, no doubt on account of the similarity of the story to the Talbot series, and although the "Other Toff" is quite a different kind of fellow we know Talbot to be, the tale has interest to Talbot fans and was one of the best published in the Gem.

THE PICK OF THE SERIES. No.10.

THE TRAVEL SERIES.

Though it is possible that most readers preferred stories where the chums were located in their respective Schools, the various Travel series in the Magnet and the Gem undoubtedly made a welcome change during holiday periods. Mr.Hamilton has a great genius for obtaining atmosphere and for writing in a convincing manner, and, with his amazing knowledge of the world in general, the reader learned a very great deal about the places which the characters visited.

THE CHINA SERIES

Few will dispute that the China Series was the very finest of all. Published in 1930 (Nos.1175-1185) this series was completely original. Nothing else like it appeared in any of Mr. Hamilton's publications. A reader of those stories really felt that he had been to China via Port Said, and he had learned a lot on the journey. With Ferrers Locke taking part in the unfolding of the thrilling plot, it was the perfect series.

THE SOUTH SEAS

Second, I think one would place the Redwing-South Seas Series, a delightful set of stories in 1927, which first introduced to readers that excellent character Soames. The smooth geographical descriptions and the clever working out of the plot made this series a Magnet classic. It was distinctly reminiscent of the Peter Raff Treasure series which appeared in the Gem in 1912, but with a much wider plot. Both these series were far superior to the South Seas series which appeared in the Magnet in 1937.

HOLLYWOOD

The Hollywood series of 1929 was written in much lighter mood, but it made excellent and instructive reading. Much of it, to readers with large collections, was reminiscent of the Tom Merry in the United States series in the Gem in 1909, but the plot was, of course, completely different.

OTHER SERIES

It is impossible to comment on the dozens of Travel Series which appeared, but it is clear that the Greyfriars boys went travelling far more than Tom Merry & Co. Some

series were first class, like those mentioned above, while others which were chronicles of the heroes escaping from the machinations of some villainous dago did not ring the bell so clearly. Outstanding was the Game Country African series, which featured Vernon-Smith and the Kikuyu, Kikolobo. Tom Merry visited the Wild West in 1909, and again in 1927. The second series was good reading, but more like a re-hash of some of the Cedar Creek tales. In the same class comes a Jimmy Silver series - a long series which ran in the Boys' Friend in the middle twenties, in which Jimmy visited his cousin's ranch. The Greyfriars chums seem only to have gone once to the Wild West in that moderate series of 1937, which introduced that superb character, the Rio Kid. Harry Wharton and Co. went to India in a fine series in 1926. In 1922 they went to Africa, the Congo, with Bunter becoming King of the Cannibals. Harry Wharton brought back a black slave. In 1912, Tom Merry had visited the Congo in a grand little series, and he, too, brought back a black slave.

So these Travel series, even if they lacked the character pictures so notable in other series, played their part in painting the Greyfriars, and St.Jim's stories with the flaming colours of the Orient or the Occident, in contrast with the grey old walls of the Schools.

MAGNET TITLES (Cont'd.)

(S denotes Substitude)

746 (S) The Stolen Diary. 747 (S) For His Father's Name. 748, Bunter the Crook. 749, De Vere of the Remove. 750, The Snob's Secret. 751, In Borrowed Plumes. 752, The Fall of Algernon. 753, Bunter's Raffle. 754 (S) Bravo Bulstrode. 755, Mauly's Pal. 756, The Mysterious Foe. 757, The Schoolboy Yachtsmen. 758, The Mystery of the Silver Scud. 759, The Terror Tracked Down. 760, Coker's Rival. 761, Skinner's Chums. 762 (S) The Schoolboy Divers. 763, The Persecution of Mr. Prout. 764, Fishy the Footballer. 765, The Footballer's Foe. 766, Loder's Long Trail. 767 (S) Bunter's Lawsuit. 768, The Man from the Congo. 769, Bound for Africa. 770, Harry Wharton & Co. in Africa. 771, Lost on the Congo. 772, King Bunter of the Congo. 773, On the Ivory Trail. 774, The Black Man at Greyfriars. 775 (S) The Call of the Air. 775, The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers. 777 (S) Ponsonby's Revenge.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

September 16th.

The Brotherhood of the Happy Hours, London Section, as our New Zealand contemporaries have called us, had the fourth annual trip to Hove for the meeting at friend Robby's most delightful residence. The main party met as usual at Victoria station where chairman Len efficiently had the travel arrangements running smoothly. A good journey down and then the party split up to enjoy the amenities of Brighton as they willed. Fine weather graced the day and it was a happy party who met at the Hove Bandstand prior to going to Robby's for the meeting. Chairman Len opened the proceedings in his very best style and then the vice-president, Herbert Leckenby, addressed the gathering. He told of his wonderful time down south and of the many happy visits he had participated in. Then the usual formalities were quickly dealt with. A hearty welcome was then afforded to W.Jardine and H.Bushby, two new local members, and Mr. and Mrs. C.N.Price, who had made the journey from Margate. The Eliminator Quiz then followed with the key word of Digest, and after a very enjoyable contest it was won by Bob Whiter with Len Packman second and John Geal and Charlie Wright in the third place. Tea was then partaken in the lovely front room to the strains of the many musical boxes. A delightful scene indeed and long to be remembered in the happy memories of the hobby. Then came Robby's triumph and something that he never grows tired of, the showing of two further "Exploits of Elaine". These were greatly appreciated by the gathering of 26 members, incidentally the most ever at this Sussex meeting. Host and Hostess, Robby and Kay are to be congratulated on their wonderfully happy gathering and it was with reluctance that all went their various ways home.

Next meeting at 19 Ruthin Road, Blackheath, London,S.E.3, on Sunday October 21st.

BENJAMIN G. WHITER.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Northern Section Meeting. September 8, 1951.

The meeting opened on a happy note for our popular chairman Reg. Hudson, was back again after many days. Bill Williamson, who had acted so admirably in Reg's absence,

welcomed him back in a few well chosen words. Reg, received with loud applause, testifying to the affection felt for him, spoke with deep feeling of the kindness shown to him during his absence, and of how it had cheered him during the weary days spent in bed. He then extended a warm welcome to Don Webster (Liverpool) and Tom Hopperton (Scarborough) both present for the first time.

Don Webster followed saying how pleased he was to be present and told of some of their hopes and plans for a Liverpool branch.

Minutes and treasurer's report were then disposed of.

Northern Section has the fortune to possess some fine orators, real spell-binders. A few months ago we had that enthralling talk by Breeze Bentley, now one by Tom Hopperton, entitled, "The Enduring Magic". Is it necessary to say that Tom was concentrating on the art of Frank Richards? He expertly analysed the St.Jims and Greyfriars stories and characters, and explained convincingly why men find the stories as readable now as they did in their youth, whereas other stories of one's boyhood cause only a yawn.

The only regret was that Tom had to rush off to catch a train almost before he could be thanked. "The Enduring Magic" will be one of the attractive features in the Annual.

There was an attendance of eighteen.

Next meeting Saturday October 13th.

Postscript: On Sunday September 23rd a party of eight from Leeds and Wakefield came over to York where they were met by Jack Wood and myself. It was a very enjoyable event and included a trip down the Ouse to Bishopthorpe Palace.

HERBERT LOCKENBY.
Northern Section Correspondent.

Report of the Meeting of the Midland Section
OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB.

The fact that we are in the middle of the traditionally English holiday season was undoubtedly one of the reasons why we had our smallest Meeting to date.

However, after considering all relative factors, I drew great comfort from the memory of the very happy evening the sixteen of us had at our Meeting, August 20th, at Birmingham International Centre. Reading of the Minutes and Correspondence was followed by a few auty questions session. The Team of

volunteers were Caroline Scott, Wilfred Davey, Mr. Gregory, Peter Mellor; the question-master was Jack Corbett. The game(which was performed on the same lines as the famous radio programme) proved a happy change from the usual quiz. The Objects chosen were of course connected with Greyfriars, apart from the knowledge the only assistance given to the team was a clap from the audience when we were near the answer. The team succeeded in naming all the Objects within the question limit of each one. Some Objects were early victims to our "Hamiltonian" minds. Miss Scott got Quelch's Cane in seven, and Bob Cherry's "Hallo Hallo Hallo" in three. Wilfred Davey got Claude Hoskins piano playing in the seventeenth question, and Bob Cherry's Big Feet in nine, and Bunter's Spectacles in thirteen; Mr. Gregory named Coker's Bike on the fifth question; the Secretary with the twentieth question got The Shilling that Fishy lent to Bunter.

We all then prevailed upon our Chairman to do a solo and whilst he was out of the room we decided his solo would be "The Blots on Bunter's Lines". Well, Jack Corbett failed on this, but perhaps after all it was rather a tough one. Anyhow, everybody had a lot of fun out of this game and it will no doubt be just as successful next time.

After refreshment had been passed round, there was the usual stampede to be first at the sales table, and again as usual the Magnets were in greatest demand, but Gems and Sexton Blakes showed a steady sale too.

P. L. MELLOR, Secretary.

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Australasian Branch

The first meeting was held at the Victorian Railway Institute, Melbourne, on Friday evening, August 24th, 1951, with Don Wicks acting as chairman. Seven members, three short of the total number in this state, were present.

Formal business of the Club was taken first and was as follows: The above name was taken for the Club, the original constitution of the O.B.B.C. was adopted with suitable amendments. A subscription of 10/- for full members, and 5/- for corresponding members was decided upon, and finally the following officers were elected.

Frank Richards, President.
Don Wicks, Permanent Chairman.
Race Mathews, Secretary.

It was also decided that the Club should issue a news letter to members, and interested persons, prior to each meeting.

Formal business having been concluded, the members settled down to a general get-together. Copies of many Aldine Libraries, early Magnets, and Nelson Lees circulated freely, a particularly interesting exhibit being about a dozen Magnets from volume one.

The meeting closed at 11.15, members voting the evening a great success.

The next meeting is decided for November, the date to be fixed and members informed. Anyone interested is requested to get in touch with Race Mathews, 8 Barrett Street, Hampton, S.7, Victoria. 'Phone XW 4419.

(The best of luck, Victoria! May your numbers quickly grow. - Ed.)

THE REMARKABLE AFFAIR OF THE "NEW ZEALAND LISTENER"

By Herbert Leckenby

Just as the September C.D. was "going to press" I received an air letter from Geoff Hockley, one of our New Zealand stalwarts. Geoff always writes breezy interesting letters; this one was no exception, and one part of it particularly made me sit up and take notice. I'll quote it here, then you'll see I had reason.

> "Now, Herbert, for the big announcement! Little Geoffrey has got no less than a full page in our staid and eminently respectable Government-sponsored "N.Z.LISTENER" ..... the official journal of the N.Z. Broadcasting Service ..... on the subject of old boys' book collecting! Alone I did it! Yes sir, I'm posting you a copy with this letter for your approval! Please address all congratulatory messages to 308 Keyes Road! Seriously though, I'm really tickled about this, as the "N.Z.L." is rather highbrow, but not only did they devote a full page to the subject but they actually had an editorial on it!
>
> Here's how it came about — Some time ago I wrote to the LISTENER editor asking him if he thought that an article on the subject would be of interest to readers,

and he replied very cautiously that if I cared to submit one, he would look it over. I duly concocted one and sent it, but it didn't quite ring the bell (We regret... etc.etc.) So I burnt some more midnight oil and sent another, which interested him, but didn't quite make the grade... my style was not quite suitable for a journal of the LISTENER'S calibre! However, if I would permit the article to be used as a basis for a re-write by one of their literary staff..okay! So I told them to go ahead and you will see the result in the copy of the LISTENER I'm sending you — not a bad effort, but they mutilated my original effort somewhat, and the guy who re-wrote it must have been a Sexton Blake fan in his youth, as he devoted a lot more space to S.B. than I did in the original. Anyway the good old C.D. and its revered editor got some good publicity! Yep, they paid me for it, too!"

Well, needless to say, I waited with keen anticipation. I hadn't to wait long, for it arrived next day by air mail, and my word, didn't I open my eyes! I had been prepared for something good but it exceeded all my expectations. I only wish I could reproduce it all but that's impossible, so I shall have to explain as best I can.

The "New Zealand Listener" is very similar to our "Radio Times" and the greater part of its front page, August 10th, carried facsimiles of a "Boys' Friend", "Chums" "Magnet", "Dreadnought", "Dime Novel Round-Up" and several C.D's, very similar to our Annual 1949 cover.

Inside there was a full page four columns small type, with the heading "The Brotherhood of Happy Hours" (How apt!) First came reproductions of Len and Josie Packman's advert in C.D. "Rally Round!" etc. and two other advertisements. Then quotes referring to our activities from E.S. Turner's "Boys Will Be Boys". Followed extracts from C.D's and last year's Annual, including quite half a column each from articles by Charlie Wright and Harry Homer's Confederation article; also comments by myself Moreover, Wilf Darwin's sketch of Sexton Blake adorned the page. Yes indeed, I could be pardoned for feeling proud.

And even that isn't all, for as Geoff says, there was a leading article. It was "some" leader, too, no less then two columns in length, inspired by our activities, and headed "Hunter and Hamlet".

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

Communications to Robert Blythe,
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N. 7.

As some of you may have guessed, my article last month had to be cut somewhat. Normally, of course, I shouldn't have mentioned it. After all, it's happened before and doubtless will happen again. But this time Herbert suggested to me that as that which was cut contained the whole point of my argument, I should include it in this month's column.

Naturally I am grateful for this, for it gives me the opportunity, which I thought I'd lost, to finish what I wanted to say. It was simply this.

It was not Roger personally I was attacking but his attitude of mind, which I considered to be totally wrong. As may be expected, my article concerned the Nelson Lee, but I would like to make a plea on behalf of all the old papers. Be open-minded about them. Don't forget that some amongst us remember them with affection and collect them for that reason, so why spoil their pleasure? After all, Billy Bunter was not the only character to amuse us in our youth. So forget your prejudices. Have your favourite paper and sing its praises by all means, but try to understand why other people prefer other papers. And for those who belong to the various clubs, don't let the name "Old Boys' Book Club" become a misnomer. They are not "Magnet Clubs", "Nelson Lee Clubs","Sexton Blake Clubs", or any other. After all, it does, or is meant to, embrace all types.

Having got that off my chest at last, let's return to the Nelson Lee once more.

++++++

Some time ago Herbert passed on to me a letter he had received from Henry Stables of Bradford. I would have liked to have included it when I was talking about the Boys' Realm some months ago, but hadn't the space.

It's an excerpt from an Editorial Chat in the Boys'Realm (No.323 2nd Series 1929) and is revealing, inasmuch as it must be the first time on record (Herbert agrees with me here) that an editor has ever admitted that certain stories have not been as good as they could have been. Again, it's a pat on the back for Brooks.

"WELCOME BACK TO ST.FRANK'S!"

"I am quite sure that you will join me this week in giving a hearty welcome to the boys of St.Frank's on their return to the Realm after a long absence.

"More particularly, perhaps, you will be pleased to welcome the work of Edwy Searles Brooks, who has not written for us for years. True it is not so very long since we heard about these St.Franks boys, but it is a considerable time since we heard about them from Mr.Brooks. And that, let me tell you, makes all the difference.

"Edwy Searles Brooks, in other words, is THE author of St.Franks stories. He it is who tells about them as no-one else can. That is why I am so tremendously pleased to have secured his services again for the Realm."

There is a bit more in the same strain, but I have quoted enough to show that here, at least, among A.P. editors was one who appreciated Brooks at his true worth. What a pity it wasn't he who took over the Nelson Lee from Mr. May, instead of Alfred Edgar!

++++++

In these days when a quiz is considered an essential part of any club's proceedings, it has occurred to me that you might care to get your teeth into one or two really sticky questions concerning the Nelson Lee. I'm not offering any prizes for the answers (You'll have to wait until I win a 1st dividend on the pools for that!) but if any of you care to write giving the answers, I'd be only too glad to hear from you. The results, together with the answers, will be given next month. Here we go then.

1) What was Lord Dorriemore's nickname for Nelson Lee?
2) Whose brother was a famous airman?
3) Which Removite first made his appearance in a paper other than the Nelson Lee?
4) What was the name of the capital of Umlosi's native country?
5) Who was Simon Snayle?
6) What was the ultimate fate of "Fort Resolute"?
7) At which school were Handforth, Church and McClure before they came to St.Franks?
8) In which story did Irene & Co. first make their appearance?
9) Which was the first story to introduce Lord Dorriemore and Umlosi?
10) The Triangle at St.Franks has four side. Why is it called "The Triangle"?

Well, there they are. I hope that some of 'em at least will cause a spot of head scratching!

It's some time now since I gave any lists of serials and titles, last July, in fact, so it's time we had some more.

Here we go then:-

O.S. No's 495-490, The Green Triangle's Prisoner. By Brooks?
491-496, The Return of Jim the Penman. By Brooks?
497-502, The Hollowdene Manor Mystery (Eileen Dare).
503-512, The Invisible Grip (Zingrave) By E.S.Brooks.
513-518, The Lost Opal, by William Murray.
537-552, The City of Marks (Sexton Blake & Tinker)
557-567, The Calcroft Case, by Sidney Drew.

1st N.S. No's 1-20, The Rollicking Rovers, by Colin Collins.
26-42, Sons of the Men of Mons, by Roger Fowey, (pen name?)
(Reprinted in Boys' Friend 4d.Lib. 2nd Ser. No. 142 by Alfred Edgar.)
43-61, The Buried World, by Lionel Day.
(Rep. B.F. 4d Lib. 2nd Ser. No.162)

Now the titles:- 1st New Series. No.181, The Whip Hand; 182, The Thief; 183, The Living Guy; 184, By Order of the Tong; 185, Fu Chang the Terrible; 186, The Peril of the Yellow Men; 187, Handforth's Girl Chum; 188, The Ghost of Travis Dene; 189, The Peril of the Haunted Room; 190, The Worst Boy in the School; 191, The "Sports" of St.Franks; 192, His Honour at Stake; 193, Bound by a Promise; 194, The Fellow Who Won.

End of 1st New Series

2nd New Series

1, Rogues of the Green Triangle; 2, The Triangle of Death; 3, The Man Who Vanished; 4, S.O.S.; 5, The House of Pattering Feet; 6, Dacca the Devil Dwarf; 7, The City of Hidden Dread; 8, The Pit of Terror; 9, The Two-headed Viper (By Robert W. Comrade, one of Brooks's pen-names); 10, The Fatal Wager (By Robert W. Comrade; 11, The Night Raiders; 12, Without Trace; 13, The King of Kidnappers; 14, The Riddle of the Mine.
(Note: All these 2nd New Series were detective stories.)

EXCHANGE: Magnets 693, 704, 705, 706, 707, 737, 738, 739. Nelson Lees 229, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236; for Rookwood Schoolboys Own Libraries. Gordon Thompson, 85 Deerpark Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

L E T T E R B O X

The Battle of St.Franks

(1)

"Strathmore, Town Hall Road,
Havant, Hants.

Dear Editor,

Though I should perhaps feel flattered by the minute scrutiny Bob Blythe has given to my article in the SPC, I must correct a few of the inferences he has drawn from it.

First of all, I have read all the St.Frank's stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library (some, however, not since they were first published). Although there were only a few holidays in imaginary foreign countries, they occupied from 7 to 10 Schoolboys' Owns. Secondly I still maintain that most of the other stories had a detective element - for instance, when Singleton, Goodwin, and Levi arrived as new boys, they all immediately became involved with crooks. It was this incessant harping on the criminal element that spoiled the stories for me, even when I read them as a boy.

I'm sorry I can't remember who first made the remark about Handforth minor. But does it matter? I worded the sentence in that manner to avoid seeming to take the credit for an idea which was not my own, though of course I agree with it.

Finally, I must apologise if any collector has taken offence. Nevertheless, I think many people will agree with me that an ounce of adverse criticism enlivens our hobby far more than a pound of undiluted praise.

Yours sincerely, ROGER JENKINS.

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(2)

Grove Road, Surbiton.
15th September, 1951.

Dear Mr. Editor,

My good friend, Bob Blythe, in his Nelson Lee Column of your September issue, refers to one chap who had some scathing remarks to say concerning Nelson Lee and afterwards admitted that he had never read a St.Frank's story.

The cap fits, and I fear I must wear it. But, if Bob really refers to me, he paints me a little worse than I am. It appears as though I condemned the St.Franks' fare without ever sampling any. My actual meaning was that I did not recall ever reading a Nelson Lee story from end to end. I

frequently attempted to read one, but could never get sufficiently interested to carry on to the finish.

I freely admit that this may have been due to my poor taste and not to any lack of quality in the story.

It is no secret that I was no admirer of the work of Mr.E.S.Brooks, but, also, I am not keen on Sir Walter Scott who is a delight to people of far greater intelligence than myself.

Mr.Brooks has a great following, which is an undoubted proof of the excellence of his work. My taste was merely not attuned to it. That's all! It's a good thing that we do not all like and think in the same way. What a dull world it would be if we did!

Yours sincerely, ERIC FAYNE.

The Big Scoop

THE NEW ZEALAND LISTENER,
115 Lambton Quay,
Wellington C.1, N.Z.
4th September, 1951.

Dear Mr. Hockley,

I am very glad to know that the article "Brotherhood of Happy Hours" aroused so much interest. We have had several inquiries ourselves and I had already gained the impression that the feature had been widely noticed.

I am sending you 15 copies of the issue containing the article.

I understand that the serial "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars" is produced in Australia and beyond that I have no information.

Yours faithfully,
M.H.Holcraft, Editor, N.Z.Listener.

Like School House - New House

27 Archdale Road,East Dulwich,
August 22nd.

Dear Editor,

I was vastly tickled by Peter Mellor's claim that Midland was the premier O.B.B.C., and I guess it would cause an amused lifting of eyebrows in Northern, too. It reminded me of Wally D'Arcy's cheekiness towards his elders. Still, there's no hard feelings. Good luck, Birmingham.

Yours,
LEONARD PACKMAN.

Such is Fame!

Ruth Campbell Williams,
470 Walters Road,
Chagrin Falls, Ohio, USA.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

British Information Services in New York suggested that I write you and gave me your address.

I am interested in obtaining both information and photographs of the following:

Dolls which are supposed to be portraits of Queen Victoria, both old and contemporary.

Dolls, both old and new, made of wood.

Can you help me?

Sincerely yours,
RUTH WILLIAMS.
(Mrs. Charles A. Williams)

(To my chagrin I cannot help Mrs. Williams. Can anyone else oblige? - H.L.)

FOR DISPOSAL: 10 S.O.L's (St.Franks) Gems Nos. 1035, 1054. Magnets, 1645, 1650 and 1656. N.L.L's (old series) Nos.226, 234, 235, 387, 388, 403, 421, 433, 434, 438, 478, 483, 501, 510. Please write B. D. Holt, British Legation, Reykjavik, Iceland.

URGENTLY WANTED: Nelson Lee Libraries Old Series 1915-1920, Nos 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 27, 30, 31, 34, 40, 42, 46, 49, 50, 51, 53, 59, 60, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88, 92, 102, 103. I am willing to pay any price for these or will exchange Old Series Nelson Lees at the rate of 3 issues for each one of above Nos. I have some 400 issues for exchange; also am prepared to exchange Union Jacks, before 1925, and first Old Series Sexton Blakes from my own collection for any of above issues. J. R. Murtagh, 509 Selwood Road, Hastings, New Zealand.

LATE NEWS: We deeply regret to announce the death of John Medcraft. He passed away as the result of a heart-attack on 25th September. H.L.

B L A K I A N A. OCTOBER 1951.

THE ROUND TABLE.

The idea of a Sexton Blake Convention does not, as yet, seem to have created a great deal of interest. Up to the time of writing I have only had one comment on the suggestion apart from one in agreement from my co-editor, and that was from Mr. Charles Wright of Greenwich. He says: "I was most interested in the idea of a Blake Convention as set out in BLAKIANA. My wife and I would hope to take part, both being Blake enthusiasts. Arranging the time and venue is the most difficult part as a great many of our members go out to business so I suppose it would be a week-end. In the event of one of the meetings being in London, the above address is always available the same as it is for O.B.B.C. meetings. However, I hope the Blakeites can get together and formulate a programme through the Blakiana section of the C. D."

On behalf of all those interested in the formation of a Blake organisation I would like to thank Mr. Wright for his kind offer to assemble at No. 12 Ashburnham Place in Greenwich. If we succeed in our efforts Mr. and Mrs. Wright will be most welcome to the circle. Now, how about some more correspondence on the subject.

A long and most interesting letter comes from our star writer Walter Webb. He answers a couple of other Blake enthusiasts and says: "It was with some surprise that I read Mr. A. E. Sykes of Southport's letter of indignation regarding Herbert Lomax (pen name "Maxwell") whom I stated as perhaps being of Mexican origin in view of his having such a surname; and whilst agreeing that 'Lomax' is not uncommon up North I think I am correct in stating that in both Mexico and Spain the name is in even more widespread use. I do not pretend to know much about Mexico and it's peoples, apart from what I have read about them, but have observed that various authors, when having occasion to introduce a Mexican or Spanish character into their stories invariably make use of such names as "Gomez", "Lopez" and "Lomax". If the latter is not a familiar name in Mexico it seems odd that writers should choose it as a name for one of their characters. What suggested to me that perhaps

Norbert Lomax was of Mexican origin was the fact that he wentto that country presumably to live, for when he left these shores he never returned; and I cannot imagine any man, unless under very exceptional circumstances, be he of pure English birth, desiring to settle down in a foreign country like Mexico, where the conditions, both social and climatic are at such variance with our own. Mr. Sykes seems to have detected a sort of slur upon the Lomax's of the North in my article, which, I can assure him, was not intended.
To Derek Ford's query to the effect that he is sure I must be 'inside' at Fleetway House, I must give a negative reply, although a lot of my information has come from the inside. For the rest it has been derived from a deep research into the papers which have featured Blake such as the UNION JACK, BOY'S HERALD, BOY'S WEEKLY, etc. I havequite a useful collection of the Sexton Blake papers, brief details of such being: 331 2d U.Js, 457 pink cov red 1d and 1½d issues, 505 coloured covers, all the Detective Weeklies but the last dozen and 487 S.B.Ls. I became a Blake enthusiast on Xmas Eve 1926 when I happened to come in possession of the story entitled "The Mystery ofthe Masked Magician" (U.J. No.1207) and have been saving back numbers ever since. Favourite Blake authors in the order given are G. H. Teed, Lewis Jackson, Robert Murray, Geo. E. Rochester. Favourite series the Leon Kestrel yarns. Recently had a little bit of information which will be of interest to all Blake followers--the answer to the question as to who was the most popular Blake author of all time. In reply to several queries I made, an editor who has published about 800 Sexton Blake stories whilst in office, told me that by popular vote Robert Murray's stories were the most sought after by his readers, with Gwyn Evans in second place. Popular as he was, however, Robert Murray was always a big headache to his editors (and here again Gwyn Evans has a good second) for he very often failed to surrender his copy in time for publication, which is very probably the reason why Gilbert Chester had to finish off the Confederation stories was back in 1926. Best wishes and continued success to Blakiana."

Thank you Walter for a most interesting letter and I hope Derek Ford will be satisfied with the "inside" information on the author of so many fine Blake articles. H.H.B.

SEXTON BLAKE IN IRELAND. by James Deasey.

I have only read two Sexton Blake stories in which Ireland appears. The first "Sexton Blake in Ireland" was published in the Union Jack No. 182 (second series) in 1907. Having arrived to spend a holiday in County Clare, Blake soon apposes Mr. McFadd, the local landlord, because of his tyrannical treatment of his tenants. Blake brings about the other's downfall by his discovery that McFadd has defrauded the Revenue of large sums of money through having whiskey produced at his distillery passed as "proof" whereas it was much above that. In my opinion the story was noteworthy because it treats Ireland and its people seriously. The state described of the tenants, is truer of ten or fifteen years earlier. With the turn of the century andbefore a great improvement began to take place it was just as stated in the yarn. It is the only story which I recollect coming across of British or American authorship, from which that overworked 'stage Irish' is absent. Perhaps it's only defect is that it emphasises the goodness of Sexton Blake and the Irish people a bit too much. In general it is a fine story. The second 'name' was published in the U.J. in 1926. Blake is kidnapped on the orders of Peter the Spider and placed aboard a ship bound for Dublin. Off the Wicklow coast he escapes and swims ashore. Soon after landing he sees two men burying arms. One of them says (in stage Irish) that he would prefer the old Royal Irish Constabulary to the new Civic Guard as they were tougher opponents. Rather indicitive of the author's opinions. Afterwards he encounters the Spider but is unable to capture him. On arrival in Dublin he is received by a not-too-intelligent superintendent. That concludes the Irish part ofthe story. This time Blake is a very different type of man. He is much colder and harder and akin to the detective of to-day. Ireland serves merely as a background to his fight against the Spider, in whom he is alone interested. He does not take any notice of the scenery as in the older story. Many ofthe differences may be attributed to the passage of time but, withal, it is not in the same category as the first.

(SEXTON BLAKE IN THE EDWARDIAN ERA.)
by Walter Webb.

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Chapter Four.

A character who was brought into those early Blake stories in support of the great detective, and who enjoyed a good measure of pppularity for a time, was Detective Will Spearing an ex-Scotland Yard official. Although Mark Darran is believed to have created Spearing such isnot quite the case; for it has been explained to me that the main idea for the character was William Back's, who got Darran to introduce him into his Blake stories. A heavily-built man, with the strength and courage of a lion; yet the times were many when he was of invaluable assistance to Sexton Blake. Economy of speech was an amusing feature of the ex-yard man's make up --- he would never use two or more words when one would suffice. His speech was crisp, his manner terse, and brusque to the point of impolitenoss; in comparison to Blake's quietly authorative air, Spearings was loudly officious. In many respects he was similar in type to the man who, in the not-so-distant future was to supersede him as Blake's closest official friend, namely, Detective Inspector Coutts, of the C.I.D. Scotland Yard.

Rivalling Spearing in popularity were those very attractive characters, Lobangu the Zulu chief abd Sir. Richard Losdy, introduced by Cecil Haytor in "The Slave Market" (U.J. No. 171) published 26th January 1907. There is plenty of evidence to show that Cecil Haytor knocked about the world a bit in his time; yet, according to the editor who published his last literary efforts in the U.J., Haytor knew very little about Africa, and never visited that continent once in his life. Hamilton Edwards who knew Haytor well, published a good deal of the authors work, both in the pages of the B.F. and in the Boy's Herald. There once passed between them, editor and author a very interesting letter in which Haytor describes some thrilling incidents in his adventurous life. Educated at Radley, the author confessed to having spent a lot of his time in rowing, racquets, football, and the device of elaborate booby-traps.

In that breezy, light hearted style which made his stories so attractive to read, Dayton continued:

".....There was a painful incident connected with a soda water bottle and a gas stove. The resulting explosion blew out a stained glass window, set fire to some oak panelling, and sent the master and his desk half way across the classroom. When he landed, it was mostly on his head. As a sequel, two fives-bats were broken, not on my head, but -- well, as I said before, it was a very painful incident. At intervals I studied science. I think they had to rebuild the laboratory after I left. I call this my explosive era".

With his schooldays over Dayton set out on his travels and commenting on some early incidents of his adventurous career had this to say:

".....Later on I was nearly shot by a Florida cracker (cowboy) in mistake for an alligator. That was an accident. Another time I was nearly shot for rashly remarking that a casual acquaintance had nigger blood in him. I meant no harm, but he took it unkindly. This time the shooting was no accident, but he was a bad shot".

Cecil Dayton, on one occasion, paid a visit to the Seminole Indians, a nearly extinct race, in the Everglade Swamps, and whilst there went after panther. To quote the author:

".....Incidentally, the panther went after me, and we met nose to nose on a pitch dark night in a patch of mangrove. We were both mighty badly scared! I dropped my rifle, he dropped his tail, and reported in different directions. Got capsized once or twice in the Mexican Gulf, and once dived bang on top of a shark -- my mistake, but I didn't wait to apologise".

Following several trips which took the author practically all over Europe, he went North with a Polar expedition, and in the company of his friend, C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, of "Captain Kettle" fame, he tramped across Lapland from the Varanger Fjiord to the Bothnian Gulf - a route rarely if ever travelled before in summer time. Commenting on the trip Hayter had this to say:

"....It was a walk of something over a thousand miles and we were mostly starved, a small tin of cocoa, a tin of biscuits and an occasional decoyed fish having to last us both for pretty well half the trip".

In addition to having travelled extensively, Cecil Hayter had many other interests, as witness the following comments from his pen:

"....I've tried my hand at investigating haunted houses, but beyond missing a night's sleep nothing came of it, though I once intercepted half a brick thrown by a chap who was with me & who took me for the ghost. Been mate and fo'c'sle hand on small boats, and always contrived to do the wrong thing at the wrong moment. Partial to shooting, fishing, golf, punting and breeding terriers".

Chapter Five will appear next month.

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NEXT MONTH!

"Who? Why? and When? a brilliant new article from the pen of William Colcombe.

REMEMBER!

We still want articles and features if we are to keep the Blakiana flag flying.