

Collectors'

Digest

2'

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JUNE 1966



Bob White

Collectors' Digest

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VOL. 20

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A WORD WITH THE SKIPPER

THE CLAIMS OF TIME

From one of our Australian readers comes an interesting suggestion. He is worried over the future of our hobby as the passing years gradually but inexorably claim our stalwarts and take them from our midst. Even in the past twelvemonth we have lost a few of our most loyal and most valued enthusiasts as they were snatched away by the man with the scythe. They live on in our memories of them.

Our Australian reader wonders what will happen to our hobby, as we know it to-day, when the rest of us follow that inevitable path to the other side. He has

noticed the young people who produce amateur "comic papers," and he suggests that I invite some of them to contribute to Collectors' Digest, thereby initiating them into the joys of Hamiltonia, Blakiana, Brooksiana, and the like, and forming a nucleus who will carry on when we are gone.

Candidly, I think that my friend takes too sombre a view on the

one hand and too optimistic a view on the other. I have seen a few of these amateur comics, devoted to such characters as Superman and Batman. Almost all produced overseas, these little "fanzines" as they call them, show initiative and talent, but the basic ideas are really an entire antithesis of the old papers which interest us. I do not feel that Digest readers would really welcome pictures of Super Men in our pages, nor do I believe that the followers of those fanzines would be likely to sustain an interest in Greyfriars or St. Jim's.

In fact, in my view it would be useless on our part to make such moves in the hope that we could perpetuate our hobby as we know it. Inevitably, the interest in the Hamiltonian papers and their contemporaries will fade away one day, just as the interest in Victorian papers is dying.

But those days are a long way distant. The vast majority of C.D. readers are men and women in their prime. Apart from a nuclear war, when nothing would bother any of us any more, it will take a very long while for our loyal band to be seriously weakened by the natural course of the passing of time. In spite of the occasional unhappy loss of an old or not-so-old stalwart, the readership of this magazine is stronger now than it has ever been. I see no reason to suppose that it will be any different for many years to come, but, in any case, we are ploughing the sands if we try to halt progress - or what passes for progress.

Let's enjoy ourselves and be thankful for a flourishing, healthy state of affairs, and not bother unduly about what may happen in a very, very distant future.

ANNIVERSARIES:

This month Collectors' Digest reaches two milestones. Josie Packman has started on her fourteenth year as commander-in-chief of our Blakiana Column. Running a column of this type is no sinecure. Josie, down the years, has shown a selfless devotion, has overcome many difficulties, and achieved much. Our thanks go in a flood to her. May we find her at the helm of Blakiana for many, many years to come.

This month also, our Let's Be Controversial Column reaches its one-hundredth edition.

THAT BISMARCK STORY:

As announced last month, the famous Sexton Blake classic "The Mystery Box" is to be re-published in July under the title of "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs." In announcing this pleasant news we made a slip, quickly noted by our experts Mr. and Mrs. Packman, in

stating that a Union Jack tale, published earlier, was written into the 1920 version of "The Mystery Box." Actually, the Union Jack tale, "The Clayton Moat Mystery," though it was partially written into "The Mystery Box," did not appear until some time later. That, in itself, was something of a mystery.

We hoped last month to reproduce the cover of the forthcoming "Case of the Bismarck Memoirs," but, as the picture was unsuitable, we could only show you a part of that cover. It is, perhaps, an uninspired cover, comprising a posed photograph to illustrate an episode in the story.

But if the cover is uninspired, the story itself is quite the reverse. Once again we recommend it highly to all our readers.

DO YOU LIKE JIGSAW PUZZLES?

A big jigsaw puzzle just issued is a delightful view of that famous thoroughfare, The Shambles of York. York Duplicating Services, that first-class firm which has been in charge of the welfare of the production side of this magazine for so many years, can clearly be seen. Our box came from Gamage's, and cost 8/11. You might be able to get hold of one. It makes a worthy souvenir.

THE EDITOR.

A F O R G O T T E N M A G A Z I N E

by Gerry Allison

COLLECTORS' DIGEST will soon have been running for twenty years, and there are not many old boys' papers which have not been featured in its pages. I can however, mention two, both of which I bought at infrequent intervals during World War I.

It must be fully ten years ago when I wrote to Bill Lofts and asked him if he could tell me anything about ST. GEORGE'S MAGAZINE. The only clues I could give him were - (1) that it had a dark red cover, and (2) that at one time the contents included a serial which mentioned the press gang, and some sets of verses with a frequent refrain:-

"With Johnny Jones, and Charlie Stones, and Alec Elginbrod."

My appeal did not fall on deaf ears, and Bill spent hours in the British Museum trying to locate copies of the above paper, but finally he had to admit failure. "I will try again, when I have more time" he wrote, but even this great investigator has never found

any trace of St. George's Magazine. Herbert Leckenby himself had never heard of it, and I began to think I was imagining things. And yet, I distinctly recalled buying it at the same shop where I got my copies of "Young Folk's Tales," "The Scout," and other boyhood papers.

Well, now I have obtained a bound volume of St. George's Magazine, from January 1914 to February 1915 - 14 monthly numbers, and a weird paper it turns out to be. Goodness knows why I bought it!

The publishers were Horace Marshall & Son, 125 Fleet Street, London - for the proprietors - Nestle & Anglo Swiss Condensed Milk Company! The editor was Martin Merrythought - which surely was not his real name. The book is Volume IX - from March 1914 to February 1915, so it must have run at least for nine years.

In size it measures 5" x 8" - something less than the Nelson Lee Library, 1st New Series, and each monthly issue contains 48 pages. On the frontispiece is the statement: "Our aim has not been, and is not, to instruct, but to amuse." I can only say that their aim was a poor one.

The contents include series of articles on authors such as Thomas Hughes, Lewis Carroll and G.F. Watts! Also on The Boy Scouts, The British Empire (what was that, again?), Natural History, etc. But to give my memory a pat on the back, there is a serial by Herbert Strang, "In Trafalgar's Bay," with the press-gang episode I remembered, and a monthly poem about Wee Willie Winkie whose friends were - yes, that's right - Johnnie Jones, Charlie Stones, and Alec Elginbrod. The author was A. B. Cooper.

As to the other forgotten paper I mentioned, well here is a clue: No. 1 came out on November 30th, 1916. It was a penny monthly, and the publishers were C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd.

 OFFERS INVITED for NELSON LEES OLD SERIES 122, 124, 126, 130 - 132, 134 - 138, 140 - 157. Would separate.

20, CAMBRAY ROAD, BLACKPOOL N.S., LANCS.

 WANTED - Copies of THE RAINBOW or TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY, any period; also, ALDINE, ROBIN HOOD LIBRARY.

HOBSON, ST. MARY'S SCHOOL, CHART LANE, REIGATE, SURREY.

 WANTED: Magnets 1660 to 1682; 1277; 1283. Many between 1935 and 1939. Populars 1922. C.D. Annual 1948.

38, ST. THOMAS' RD., PRESTON.

DANNY'S DIARY

June 1916:

This has been a tragic month. On June 5th. H.M.S. Hampshire struck a mine and sank. Lord Kitchener, who was on board, was drowned. We first heard the dreadful news on a Saturday, and it made us very gloomy. On Sunday morning, while we were at breakfast, we heard a passing newsboy shouting out what sounded like "Lord Kitchener saved," and Doug rushed out to buy a paper. But we had heard wrong. Lord Kitchener was not saved, though all through the month there have been rumours that he may have been picked up by some boat.

And the Gem has lost its blue cover. The editor says that, in the good days after the war, it may come back again - but I feel very sad. But the Gem stories have been very good indeed this month.

"The Man from the Front" was a Mr. Selwyn who replaced Mr. Railton temporarily as housemaster. Langton and Cutts played big parts in this very full story, Tom Merry played cricket for the first eleven, and in the end Mr. Selwyn turned out to be Frank Holmes, the scapegrace nephew of the Head.

"Skimpole the Sportsman" was amusing. Skimpole started backing horses with the object of giving his winnings to the poor. But the poor didn't benefit, and Skimpole got into a load of trouble.

Then came two stories which must be among the very finest which Martin Clifford has ever written. In "Under Gussy's Protection," which was the last blue-cover Gem, a new boy named Valentine Outram came to St. Jim's. He seemed to be a bit of a coward, and Gussy set out to protect him, but Levison claimed to recognize him as George Purkiss, who had been in Hillstall Reformatory for brutally fighting a grown man. Nobody believed Levison.

The next story was "A Strange Secret," a beautiful yarn, in which Outram betrayed himself by two gallant deeds, and finally had to leave St. Jim's.

Rookwood has been going strong in the Boys' Friend. The first tale "The Revolt Against the Head" carried on with Mr. Scroop as the new Headmaster. Mr. Scroop bagged the juniors' match with Rylcombe Grammar School and ordered Mornington to form an eleven to play it. However, Jimmy Silver & Co stepped in, foiled Mornington, and played the match themselves.

Next week, in "The Rookwood Barring-In," Jimmy and his pals had

to pay the piper for disobeying Mr. Scroop. However, they revolted, and locked him up in the School Hall. In the end, the old Head, Dr. Chisholm, came back, Scroop was booted out, and Mornington left Rookwood for the time being. This Scroop series was quite an exciting little affair and I enjoyed it.

Next week, in "The Shadowed Schoolboys," Flynn received a £5 note from his uncle in Cork. The note disappeared. Jimmy Silver & Co suspected Leggett of stealing it, because he was a Modern. Tommy Dodd & Co suspected Smythe because he was a Classical. In the end, Flynn had only mislaid the note. Quite funny.

Lastly, in "A Tough Handful," a bullying new boy named Higgs arrived at Rookwood. He was a shocker, and even defeated Jimmy Silver. I think high old times are in store at Rookwood.

Not a bad month in the Magnet, though one of the stories was the most idiotic I have ever read. The first story "Frank Nugent's Folly" was quite good. Snoop owed money, and Frank Nugent, who has a soft heart, lent him the cricket funds. Then Snoop refused to pay what he owed. It was the Bounder, who did good anonymously, and solved Nugent's difficulties.

"Fighting to the Finish" was a good cricket tale. The First Eleven was to play an army eleven, captained by Wingate's cousin. Loder bet £50 against his school, and then plotted so that some of the school eleven could not get to the game. Wharton, Cherry, Field, and Inky played for the First, won the game, and Loder lost his bet.

The idiotic tale was "Called to the Colours." Wingate bullied Mr. Prout, who walked in front of the sight screen while a practice match was on. So Mr. Prout persuaded the Head to cancel all games and form instead the Greyfriars Cadet Corps, with Mr. Prout as colonel-in-chief. A real comic cuts affair.

"Run to Earth" was fairly exciting, though a bit hackneyed. The Greyfriars scouts caught a German spy, Max Pfalz, who was signalling to zepps. He had a hiding place in an old priory which was surrounded by a moat. He had a secret entrance under the water of the moat.

There is a new star at the cinemas, and her name is Theda Bara. She plays wicked parts, and to look at she is rather like Judith Hate who was in a serial in a paper called Fun & Fiction which I bought from the stall in the market. We have seen two Theda Bara pictures: "The Galley Slave" and "Secrets of Society." I rather like her. We also saw two William Farnum pictures: "The Plunderer" and "The Gilded Fool." William Farnum is in pictures of the wild west.

A new serial has started at our Gem cinema. It is called "The Red Circle" and stars Ruth Roland and Frank Mayo. There is also

BLAKIANA

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

It does not seem possible that I have just completed my thirteenth year as Conductress of Blakiana. When I took over from my predecessor in June 1953 I had no idea I should still be doing this little 'labour of love' thirteen years later; indeed, I do not think I even envisaged Collectors' Digest still being published in the year 1966! (We should ALL remember how much we have to thank our Editor and Producer, Eric Fayne, for having made this possible).

It was only upon looking back through the Digests comprising this period that I realised just how much had been written about Sexton Blake during that time.... taking an average of five pages per issue would be 780 pages! Really remarkable, don't you think?

And now perhaps I may say a word or two about the good friends who have supported me, especially those who helped fill the early pages....

The very first article I received, and which was published in June 1953, came from Ronald Rouse. (I have never heard from you once since then, Ronald, but I shall always be grateful to you for that fine start!) The following month brought two articles, one from Derek Smith and the other from Charlie Wright. At that time the "Round Table" was still conducted by my predecessor, Maurice Bond. Maurice promised me his full support, but after July of that year the "Round Table" ceased, and I have never heard from him again from that day to this!

In August we had the first of Walter Webb's articles (under my conducting of Blakiana). Walter has been one of my most faithful supporters throughout the whole of this long time. I will confess that many times during those thirteen years I have been on the point of retiring from the scene, and would have done so had it not been for Walter sending me some material when I needed it most. Thank you, Walter!

In April 1954 another good friend, W. T. Thurbon, appeared on the scene, and here again I have had his support all through the years. It was in June of this year that the first article from the pen of Bill Lofts appeared. Bill is another of my truly real friends. The "scoops" he has produced time and time again for Blakiana are quite

remarkable! Like Walter Webb, he has always come to my rescue when he has known me to be 'up against it' for material. I have never had the pleasure of meeting Walter, but maybe I shall one day. Bill, of course, I see each month at the meeting of the O.B.B.C. (He was elected Chairman for this year, and I would like to say how admirably he is carrying out his duties.)

Herbert Leckenby was another who, in spite of all the midnight oil he burned in keeping the Digest going (single-handed!), often used to send me a little "something" for Blakiana. Bless you, dear Herbert!

In March 1955 the first article from my Australian chum Victor Colby appeared. There have been times in the years that followed when I have sent out an S.O.S. for material for Blakiana, and on several occasions I have received articles from Victor - by registered Air Mail costing him quite a packet - within a few days. If that isn't real support I should like to know what is!

Others who have kindly contributed to Blakiana through these years, and to whom I express my gratitude are: Derek Ford, Gerry Allison, Eric Fayne, Graham Davies, Derek Smith, J. W. Cook, Derek Adley, W. H. Goodhead, E. V. Copeman, Frank Lay, H. W. Twyman, Margaret Cooke, Bette Pate, Keith Chapman, Ben Whiter, S. Gordon Swan, L. S. Elliott, Reuben Godsave, Brian Doyle, Julius Lennard, Syd Perry, Stanley Smith, C. Lowder, Ernie Carter, O. W. Wadham, John East and Geoffrey Wilde.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

BLAKE'S OTHER SIDE

By WALTER WEBB

The stronger side of Blake's character is well known. His authors have long emphasised those qualities which have made him the man of iron he is today. To such an extent, perhaps, that it is not apparent that he possesses any weaknesses at all. It may be, of course, that his chroniclers although well aware of them, have been reluctant to expose them for fear of destroying his image, thus bringing upon some poor editor's receding locks the wrath of his readers.

But, besides having fought some pretty stiff battles with the denizens of the underworld, Blake has also fought several with himself. That green-eyed monster which all of us have at some time in our lives had to put up some sort of resistance against, has sometimes proved too much even for him. Was Blake capable of jealousy of another? Loyalty wages a battle with honesty here, for, however strong the urge may be to answer in the negative, we must admit to

the affirmative. One does not need to probe deep to diagnose the reason. Cherchez la femme. Is she ever far away when the green eye glares derisively from the shadows?

When a man who is not normally attracted to women falls for a particular one he is apt to fall very hard. Certainly, Blake fell heavily when he met Yvonne Cartier, and it upset his equilibrium to the extent that his usual sang-froid sometimes deserted him. Not many of our authors dared portray Blake in an unfavourable light; but G. H. Teed, in one of the finest and most sensitively drawn character studies he ever drew of the Baker Street detective, did so in a story entitled "Sexton Blake's Blunder," which appeared in the U.J. in 1922.

Blake has arranged to take Yvonne to dinner. At the last minute the girl rings up to tell him that she cannot keep the engagement because of a promise made to a writer named Paul Brabazon some time before. Brabazon had asked for priority of her company on his return to England from abroad, and Yvonne had given her word to share his first dinner engagement in London. In a cold rage, Blake swings from the telephone. His pride has been hurt as seldom before. The satisfaction of hurting someone else's feelings is as an unquenchable thirst, and poor Tinker is there to receive all the venom of which Blake's nature is capable. What he says leaves the lad deeply hurt and humiliated. When Yvonne meets Blake later on she receives a wordless, cold grey stare, which leaves her with similar feelings of dismay and mortification.

Of course, Blake would have laughed to scorn the suggestion that he was jealous. But that is what he was, and the price he paid was a heavy one, for the departure of his cool reasoning led him into one of the biggest blunders he ever made in his career. He fell victim to one of the crudest examples of seduction ever perpetrated, the instigator being an ex-convict of such low intellectual status that a novice would not have fallen for the trick. Blake did, and found himself a prisoner of Dr. Huxton Rymer, shanghaied aboard a Greek tramp. Yet, never did a sea voyage do man more good than did that impromptu trip to Blake, for he became completely cured, and with the restoration of his cool reasoning, the tables were turned on Rymer and his former friendly relations with Tinker and Yvonne restored.

It is the human angle in stories like this one which brings home so forcibly to the Blake fan just what he is missing in the chronicles of today.

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BLOOD AND THUNDER(Reprinted from John O' London's Weekly, 16 August 1919)ARE PENNY DREADFULS' MISCHIEVOUS?

"I believe my son's unlawful escapades are a spontaneous psychological phenomenon caused by reading cheap spurious literature such as DEADWOOD DICK, SEXTON BLAKE, and penny dreadfuls." Thus pleaded a father in the courts recently for his errant child, and how many fathers are there who would not endorse his statement? The harm effected by the penny "blood" is supposed to be on a par with that caused by the "movies," which feature kindred subjects.

Only paper covers are "trashy"

On enquiring of a fond parent the type of literature he would ban as mischievous, it will be found that in the majority of cases only paper covers are "trashy;" books in boards pass without comment, which is indeed but a sorry compliment to many of our present-day authors. The aim of the writer of the school story, the detective yarn, and the exciting adventure is identical, whether he is published in a six-shilling edition de luxe, or in a paper cover; he attempts to evolve a plot which will grip from the first sentence of the first page to the last sentence on the final page, to stimulate the imagination by exciting episodes vividly depicted in telling language so that the reader is lost to his surroundings, and acts alternately the part of the villain or hero, his mind responding to the hopes and fears they undergo. To say that SEXTON BLAKE produced a greater effect on the youthful reader than "Sherlock Holmes" is to say that the creator of "Sexton Blake" is a better artist than Conan Doyle.

"Blood" books precede the classics

The evolution of the reader's mind follows that of the artist's, and faculties which later respond to the fine feelings, which appreciate the sublime in Milton or Shakespeare, Shelley or Keats, at first demand the incidents of the "Sexton Blake" and "Sherlock Holmes" type of literature. To deny the intellect the mental food particular to one stage retards, if not postpones indefinitely, future progress. The mind follows a definite and fore-known course of development - of which one stage is that of blood-and-thunder literature. As surely as penny dreadfuls follow books for the bairns, so surely will they precede the entrance to English literature. Where SEXTON BLAKE and BUFFALO BILL play their parts under different names, the way is not

long to Henty, Dumas, Ainsworth, Stevenson, Scott, Poe, Kipling, Dickens, etc. Who dares to say that there is to be found more blood and thunder, crime and murder, than in Kipling, Scott, or Dickens? Or more horror than in Poe? To attempt, for no more than an attempt will it ever prove, to prohibit the reading of "bloods" by the children merely adds zest to the print.

* * * * *

THE TIME BETWEEN

By S. Gordon Swan

Sexton Blake's adventures as recorded in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d Union Jack ceased on 6 December 1902 with the story "The Convict Hunt," by Paul Herring. His exploits were not resumed in that paper until 1 October 1904, and by that time the Union Jack had been enlarged and the price increased to one penny. The story that marked his return was "Sexton Blake's Triumph," by Arnold Davis, in No. 51 of the new series.

But the time between was not a Blakeless period, as might be supposed. In No. 420 of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d Marvel - a Christmas Double Number dated 30 November 1901 - appeared the opening instalment of a serial "The Real Adventures of Sexton Blake," and when that concluded, a second serial "The King of Detectives" took its place. The concluding instalment of this yarn can be found in No. 501, so that Sexton Blake was featured in this paper continuously from 30 November 1901 to 13 June 1903.

No author's name was appended to the stories, but from the fact that Blake had an assistant named Wallace Lorrimer, and that this character was also featured in $\frac{1}{2}$ d U.J. No. 396, "Sexton Blake's Lost Clue," written by Percival Cooke, it is a reasonable assumption that the writer was the same.

Another odd point is that, besides Wallace Lorrimer, one of the serials brings in Jefferson Hart, an American detective. But this character is shown in the list of $\frac{1}{2}$ d U.J. stories (given in Collectors' Digest No. 175) as appearing in No. 400 "£10,000 Reward," by C. Stevens!

Why Blake was dropped from the Union Jack and restored to the Marvel, the periodical in which he made his debut, is something of a mystery. I am not aware that he ever featured again in the Marvel after the termination of the two serials.

* * * * *

The "Fifth" Series of the S.B.L.

A number of people have written to me asking why the current Sexton Blake Library is called the Fifth series.

To be technically correct, the S.B. Library now published by Mayflower-Dell, and edited by W. Howard Baker, is the FOURTH series. The reason Mr. Baker calls it the fifth is that he feels that from the date he "took over" the Third series during its run, it should thus be considered as a "new" series. In effect, Mr. Baker may perhaps be correct, but seeing that the series did not start again at No. 1. when he took over but went right on to the end with No. 526 ("The Last Tiger") he is not, strictly speaking, right in calling the current series the "Fifth."

Josie Packman

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PLEASE BE KIND TO POOR PAULA

So, in effect, spake Mr. Walter Webb in the May edition of Blakiana. He is puzzled that a nice girl like Miss Dane has never really been received with warm heart and open arms by the older Sexton Blake fan.

Was there any reason why Blake should not have a glamorous female assistant? After all, Martin Steel had twelve of them long ago, and presumably they met with general approval. Certainly, the creator of the fair Paula is unlikely to have been acquainted with Martin Steel, but he may have been impressed by the popularity a few years ago of the American "private eye" who was considered ill-equipped unless he had a glamour girl in tow.

Possibly those readers who did not fall for poor Paula's charms did not like to see the English detective transformed into a shadow of an American "private eye."

Mr. Webb is on firm ground when he points out the soundness of Paula's character, her loyalty to Blake, and her desire to do her duty for him. Perhaps her only fault is that she arrived on the scene about fifty years too late. Readers had become too much accustomed to the old set-up.

But whatever may be said in favour of Paula, Mr. Webb seems to be a bit off target when he compares her with Yvonne, who featured in the Union Jack a very, very long time ago. Probably most of those who were heavily biased in favour of the old set-up were quite unacquainted

with Yvonne. It would seem she was featured in only a few Sexton Blake Library stories.** No doubt she was a favourite character in the Union Jack for a number of years, but apparently she only featured at intervals. I have no doubt that the novelettish style of those very old stories would be no more welcome than Paula to those readers who today prefer the old set-up.

It is pointless to tell older readers that they are unreasonable to reject Paula while they accepted Yvonne and Roxane. For, in fact, most of them have probably never read a story of Yvonne or Roxane, and those two characters would be no more welcome than Paula with the majority.

We accept Mr. Webb's view that the writers of those very old melodramas hinted at the very same things which the modern writers describe without false modesty. The point still arises whether that sort of thing, either hinted or fully described, is really particularly desirable in a story of Sexton Blake.

** S.B.L. 1st Series Nos. 1; 37; 208; 307; 325.

S.B.L. 2nd Series Nos. 35; 463 (reprint of 1st Series No. 307).

(Yvonne was prominently featured in the Union Jack between the years 1913 and 1926, but with a gap of about five years, during which time the author, G. H. Teed, served with the Forces and then travelled round the world before settling down to writing again. - J.P.)

DANNY'S DIARY (cont'd from page 7..)

another serial, at the end of the week, called "Peg of the Ring" featuring Francis Ford and Grace Cunard.

Doug had the Union Jack once this month and the story was called "Besieged in Kut." It was a bit theatrical but exciting in parts. It started in London and then moved to Mesopotamia, where the beautiful Lady Walder got through the Turks' lines and dropped with a parachute.

Towards the end of the month the trial of Sir Roger Casement took place. He has been found guilty, but Dad says it is a pity as it will upset the Irish people.

WANTED: Copy of "Rallying Round Gussy" by Martin Clifford; also Holiday Annual 1930.

MORE WRYKYNfrom W. J. A. Hubbard

With regard to Mr. Norman Wright of Pinner's remarks on the "Wrykyn" stories he has found in the "Royal" Magazine for June and August, 1904, I was aware, when I wrote my article "Mainly Wrykyn" in the 1962 C.D. Annual that Mr. Wodehouse had written stories of school life for the "Royal" Magazine. I may add that he wrote school yarns for both "Pearsons" and the "Grand" Magazine as well.

I did not know, however, that the "Royal" Magazine stories featured "Wrykyn" and I doubt whether any other Wodehouse admirer knew either. With regard to the contention that titles may have been changed I do not think this has happened in this case as the two Wrykyn stories in the "Royal" are obviously contemporary with those in "The Captain." My solution to the mystery is that the two "Royal" stories are part of "Tales of Wrykyn" originally written for Volume XIII of "The Captain." It will be noticed that in my article "Mainly Wrykyn" I mention that one of these stories "A Division of Spoil" was printed out of sequence in Volume XV. I strongly suspect the two "Royal" stories were also for publication with the other "Tales" in "The Captain" but for some reason or other appeared in the "Royal" Magazine instead. Perhaps the "Royal" was short of material.

Judging by the title of one of the "Royal" yarns it would appear to be an episode in the school career of Mike Jackson. I have always been puzzled by certain discrepancies surrounding this fine Wrykyn character and the "Royal" story might provide a solution. I wonder if both "Pearsons" and the "Grand" Magazine also contain "Wrykyn" yarns. Mr. Wright has certainly uncovered some interesting material for discussion.

* * * * *

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: MAGNETS: 32; 39; 40; 41; 42; 44; 45; 131 to 149 inclusive, 205; 238; 239; 309; 328; 337; 351 to 359 inclusive; 435; 752; 753; 762; 763; 773; 850; 858; 862; 863; 864; 865; 868; 921; 940; 942; 951; 985; 988. GEMS: 493; some issues between 801 and 832; 953; 954; 956; 975; 980; 984; 985; 989; 990; 992; 993; 998. POPULARS: 452; 455; 466; 472.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON, SURREY.

Wanted GEMS before 1310.

Write: LOFTS, 56, SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LISSON STREET, LONDON, N.W.1

A HUNDRED NOT OUTBy Roger M. Jenkins

The Hamiltonian section of the C.D. has long been noted for its ability to conduct friendly arguments. No one has ever tried to lay down the party line or stifle discussion. As a result there has been a welcome divergence of opinions, and readers have been stimulated to think for themselves on a variety of topics. This, of course, has largely arisen since the inception of "Let's Be Controversial," begun by Eric Fayne in No. 124 of the C.D., dated April 1957. Old readers will recall that this series replaced another popular series called Potted Biographies.

The Controversial series began in a very modest way with five short paragraphs on the Toff, which brought a few modest replies. Remarks about Cliff House aroused more interest, whilst the fourth Controversial (on the substitute authors) sparked off quite a discussion, which led Eric to begin a summing-up after the Echoes. Two months later his summing-up was nearly as lengthy as the Echoes themselves.

It seems that Eric soon found out that topics which are interesting in themselves do not necessarily arouse controversy. A Controversial about Christmas numbers in the Gem was something of a damp squib, but the tenth Controversial (taking up Harry Broster's suggestion that some Hamiltonians tended to idolise Charles Hamilton) brought two pages of deeply-felt answers, including one from an anonymous faint-hearted who wrote, "I wish you had not brought up this subject." It was clear at this point that the series was an established success, and we were soon treated to a variety of stimulating discussions, like the one on the Hamiltonian masters. Another notable Controversial was the one in which Eric analysed the change in the structure of the Magnet series over the years, which was the first one to bring an Echo from Charles Hamilton himself, though it was not a very convincing reply to the points Eric made.

As time passed, a change occurred in the Controversial series. The more obvious topics soon became exhausted, and though a few topics were repeated with different slants - for example, Gussy, the Toff, and the substitute writers - there was really very little repetition. As a result, the discussions began to touch on many topics in one Controversial. So instead of a single rocket blazing through the night sky, we had a Catherine wheel sending sparks in all directions.

(cont'd on page 20)...

CONTROVERSIAL

No. 100: THE LAST OF THE BLUES

In this month's extract from his fading, time-worn Diary, Danny reminds us that it is exactly fifty years since the Gem lost its famous and familiar blue cover. "In the good days after the war, it might return again," mused the editor of that day - but it never did.

Though nobody can have realised it till long, long afterwards, an era ended with the passing of the blue covers.

For years the Gem reader had been spoiled; for years the Gem had been the apple of Charles Hamilton's eye. For most weeks in every year, the cream of the author's work had been skimmed off into the Gem; rarely, in the Gem, had there been any departure from the popular formula of the one very long school story plus the instalment of a serial. The long, complete school story had been the glittering main feature; such supporting programme as there had been was merely a token - nothing more. And Gem readers, spoiled darlings that they were, had liked it that way, and thought it would go on for ever.

True, for a year before the blue cover died, there had been strong signs of editorial preference swinging towards Greyfriars and the Magnet. But no such sign came from the author himself. Clearly, he still pinned his faith to the Gem; the cream of his work was still appearing between the blue covers; from mid-1914 there had been a slow deterioration in the quality of the Magnet, but the Gem, the Prince Charming of the boys' papers of the day, had marched serenely and proudly on its way, with no premonition of the fall which was coming.

And when the fall came, the Gem fell heavier, because it had risen so high and had further to fall. I commented last month that Pentelow's stories dropped into the Gem with a dull thud - and so they did. I commented that the Gem was never to be quite the same again - and nor was it.

It would be unfair, without knowing the full facts of the case, to blame Pentelow for what happened. In 1917 and 1918, Charles Hamilton seems to have been in the offing, but for some reason which is by no means clear, a regular supply of his stories was not available for either the Magnet or the Gem. A supply of stories from other writers was essential if the papers were not to disappear entirely. Pentelow, possibly with no alternative, wrote large numbers of these

(cont'd on page 20)...

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 98. FOR THE RECORD

ROGER JENKINS: Your comments on the Frank Richards record are very just, but I feel that a little mercy should be allowed to ameliorate the harshness of justice. For example, I personally do not object to the extracts read from the Greyfriars stories: it seems to me that with all their defects they are redeemed by the animation of the reader. Again, I do not regret the exclusion of St. Jim's, Rookwood, and the rest, much as I admire these schools: it was obvious long before the Bunter books came out (and even before the war) that Greyfriars was first and the rest nowhere, and Charles Hamilton told me that nearly all his correspondence was from Greyfriars fans. If the record had tried to cover all his work, it would merely have been tantalisingly scrappy.

To my mind, it is a unique tribute to our hobby that a long-playing record should ever have been made even about one aspect of one writer's work (and it is perhaps even more remarkable that the record, having been made, should ever have been issued, considering the lapse of time). It brings back vivid memories to me of that unforgettable afternoon when I outstayed my welcome, plying Charles Hamilton with questions for hour after hour, and I think that the most authentic touch of all was the sound of matches being struck as he constantly re-lit his pipe.

Each one of us could have compiled a better record (or so we think) but no collector could have secured the backing of a record company. That is why I accept "Floreat Greyfriars" thankfully: it is a voice from the grave, but how cheery, frank, and entertaining it is!

RAY BENNETT: Yes, I agree with nearly all the review, but I liked the School Song in Latin. A fitting prelude, I thought "C.H." was excellent of course, my only criticism that the boys voices were too obviously men trying to speak like boys.

GEORGE SELLARS: Yes I agree with you all the way about the L.P. record. What mattered most to all of us was to hear his voice. I remember when I first played it how thrilled I was. I could practically 'feel' his presence as he was talking, and how so natural he was - his pipe and chuckles, now and then. I was very surprised though hearing him say he preferred writing a book without pictures. I could never imagine the Gem and Magnet minus pictures. Certainly

they would not have been so attractive and popular with no pictures.

BOB WHITER: I agree with a good deal of your criticism of the record. What we really needed was about 6 records so that we could have discussions by Frank Richards on his other work. I heartily concur with your opinion concerning his fame. No man likes to admit that his recent work is not so good as that of earlier days. He wrote to me once and said that Carcroft was much better than Greyfriars. This still didn't stop him dropping Carcroft as soon as he was able to resume writing of Greyfriars.

LARRY MORLEY: I liked the Frank Richards side of the record, but I must criticise the voice of the reader. Still, all in all, it was a fine effort.

* * * * *

IF GREYFRIARS HAD JOINED UP

By Cliff Webb

Glancing through some of my back numbers of C.D. the other day, I re-read an article which appeared in July, 1960, entitled "JUST SUPPOSE." This article posed the question of what the Magnet might have been like had its run continued after 1940. It caused me to think what a great opportunity for some very fine series was lost when the grand old paper ceased publication.

Although many of the great series in Magnet were not dated by references to contemporary events, it is hardly possible that the stirring events of World War Two would not have found some echo in the pages of the Magnet. One cannot help wondering how the masters and boys of Greyfriars would have fared in the period 1940-45.

Only Frank Richards could have given us the answer of course, if indeed he gave the matter any thought at all, but it is pleasant to muse on what might have been had the Magnet not become a casualty.

I like to think that Frank Richards would have lightened the darkness of those days considerably with his yarns of Greyfriars at war. A score of possible titles spring to mind at once don't they? What price a "Greyfriars Invasion" series, with the boys coping manfully as a scouting party of Germans try to take over the school during the invasion scare? Or a series dealing with the off-duty activities of some of Fishy's relatives stationed near the school?

I fancy we can all imagine our favourite characters at war. Lascelles, of course, would have joined the services - and won a medal! It takes no stretch of the imagination to visualise Prout as a tower of strength (?) to the Home Guard, whilst in the middle of the biggest

air-raided ever Coker would still have been pointing out to the Famous Five that he had a "short way with fags."

Quelch, with his gimlet eyes would have made a fine warden, but how would he have found the time to continue his famous "History"?

On the debit side, I suppose quite a few of the basic ingredients for pre-war plots would have vanished. Bunter's circumference would undoubtedly have shrunk during the food shortage. Potter and Greene would no longer have been Coker's pals, for Aunt Judy's hampers would have become a thing of the past. The study spread would have been suspended for the duration, as would Bunter's raids on the cupboard, for even the Fat Owl would have jibbed at packets of dried egg!

So we are left to wonder, and we shall never know now. It may be that such thoughts of what might have been are futile - but they are pleasant too.

* * * * *

A HUNDRED NOT OUT (cont'd from page 16)...

Consequently the Echoes dealt with a variety of points.

Eric also used the Controversial to answer other critics, and occasionally, as when Laurie Sutton suggested that the substitute stories could be identified by the use of certain unusual words, Eric's Controversial was placed directly after the article he criticised, in the same number of the C.D. But whatever method he adopted, there has always been a ready response from Hamiltonians eager to put forward their own views in amicable discussion.

This month the series reaches its hundredth number. It is an astonishing achievement for a series which was originally intended to run for only six months, and which was extended again and again at the request of Herbert Leckenby until now it is an indispensable part of the C.D. Of course, as Eric himself has admitted, a series of this nature could not have been run at all unless the author whose work was under discussion was exceptionally gifted. At the same time, we might also add that a series of this kind could not be run at all unless there was a critic who himself was exceptionally gifted in arousing interest with his challenging remarks and lively assertions.

So it is quite in order to give a hearty round of applause at this batsman's first century, and to express the hope that his innings will continue for many years to come.

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No. 100: THE LAST OF THE BLUES (cont'd from page 16)..
stories himself.

Pentelow, as a writer under his own pen-names, undoubtedly had a substantial following. His own schools, in their day, had been an established success. He failed with the Gem and Magnet, not because of any blatant lack of quality in his stories, but because his style and Charles Hamilton's were as unlike as chalk and cheese. And the impact was greater on the Gem simply because the Gem, for so many years, had been vastly superior to anything else on the market. The loyal support for the Gem gradually drained away. The Magnet, which had been more of a "glory hole," rode out the storm, and eventually rose to replace the Gem as Charles Hamilton's pet.

Finally, just a glance at the two stories - one which marked the end of the blue cover era - and the sequel, which brought in the white cover years.

These two tales - one each side of the dividing line - made a fine long story which must rank among the real masterpieces from the Hamilton pen. Personally, I doubt whether he ever did anything better of its type. This story of Valentine Outram, the son of one of England's proudest and most honourable families, who was also George Purkiss, who had served a term in Hillstall Criminal Reformatory, was the perfect school tale, with its superb characterisation and those glimpses of pathos without mawkish sentimentality which are the hallmark of literary genius. This story of a schoolboy's strange secret, like "Bought Honours" of a few years earlier, proved Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to be one of the finest pieces of schoolboy characterisation of all time.

It is a curious thing that this was one of the themes which Hamilton never really repeated. Compared with many other tales of far inferior quality, it enjoyed but little reprinting. I cannot recall whether it was ever transferred to the Popular, though it seems likely that it was. It was, unfortunately, reprinted in the later Gem at a time when the main school stories were suffering from absurd and drastic pruning. Sadly, and oddly enough, it never featured in the Schoolboys' Own Library, though one would have thought it ideal for the purpose. If any publisher, in modern times, has the idea of reissuing a St. Jim's story, he could not do better than select this one. It could hardly fail.

Valentine Outram was reintroduced briefly to the Gem in a Christmas tale, some 18 months later. It was not outstandingly successful. As Roger Jenkins once commented so truthfully, a character who has a part to play in one series may well fail to ring the bell if he is brought back on the scene in later days and another setting.

Nelson Lee Column

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

By William Lister

Although I had been a reader of the Nelson Lee library for many years, I could not recall the closing tales, yet I can clearly remember the day the newsagent told me it did not exist any more and I had the feeling I had lost an old friend.

Of course, it would not occur to me then, that over 32 years after (through the kindness of Bob Blythe of the N.L. Library section) I would be able to re-read the closing tales, to be found, I was told, in the middle of the short 3rd New Series and at the end of the 2nd New Series. The rest were reprints.

Having read letters and various views on the reason for the close of our paper, a re-reading of these tales convinced me once and for all, that it was not Edwy S. Brooks who had run out of ideas or lost the power to write a gripping story.

The end of the 2nd N.S. produced "The Castle of Fear" and from the word Go! the thrills come as fast and as furious as in the latest James Bond thriller (without the squalid, seamy sex life of 007). The setting of a sinister old Spanish Castle, bristling with death traps, to catch the unwary spy, provides a foundation on which to build the meetings of a secret Brotherhood plus massed crime, including daring bank raids, that seemed far-fetched in those days but are commonplace today. (Surely, we have here the forerunner of "Goldfinger" and his fellow crooks in the latest 007 film.) I suggest you read both tales side by side.

Waldo, Nelson Lee, Handforth & Co., Nipper and many of the Remove boys of St. Frank's School plunge up to their necks in thrills and danger. "Waldo, the Gangbuster" brings to a close this gripping series, in which the crooks are smashed only after Waldo himself narrowly escapes death as he finds the spikes of the Iron Maiden closing in on him.

And now I turn to the very last tales of our beloved school, (I refer of course to those by E. S. Brooks and am not forgetting that our friend James Cook keeps St. Frank's open for us with the St. Frank's letters and especially with the one on the Chinese and Japanese characters of St. Frank's which I enjoyed so much).

These tales of the 3rd N.S. numbers 157 to 167, are introduced to

us by a coloured cover depicting a gang of black-hooded figures surrounding the bed of a suddenly awakened and much startled Nelson Lee, with the title, "The Fellowship of Fear," and you can take it from there. Is there a fading out of ideas, of plot? Indeed not! Just peep at the cover and the title "St. Frank's in Peril." Here we have Nelson Lee cutting himself free from a sack while hurtling through the air on an overhead cable. A car crashing into a motor-bike while the occupants are scattered across the road illustrates "The Fighting Six." A tense moment as we see the St. Frank's boys leaving school, and hidden in the surrounding trees the hooded figures have machine-guns trained on the school entrance. Now "Castle of Doom" and as our friends approach the gates we see two howling wolves leaping and snapping at them from behind the bars.

And so the last overseas journey for St. Frank's. BAVARIA - and as the story closes we have the last day at St. Frank's - a day of rejoicing, of victory, of triumph, as they return home - I quote the last words of this last story, "The St. Frank's fellows went **back** in triumph, to be given a great welcome at the Old School, Nipper, for the time being, at least, kept his old place as captain of the Remove, while Nelson Lee occupied himself with the formal rounding up of the 'Fellowship of Fear'."

And so the curtain falls - St. Frank's is dead! Long live St. Frank's.

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"IS THE MYSTERY REALLY SOLVED?"

By C. H. Churchill

Here are some further thoughts on the mystery of the cover of N.L. No. 243, first mentioned in November C.D. by Reuben Godsave, enlarged upon by myself in December C.D. and carried further by W. O. G. Lofts in January last.

Bill stated that "according to his information" the changes of cover and title were at the express orders of the controlling editor, when, he says, this editor was passing the proofs. If this was so, it appears rather strange that the editor only saw the proofs after the blocks for the cover had been made. Surely he would have passed the illustration before having blocks made. Even in those days blocks cost quite a fair amount to make and this money would have been wasted.

Another thing - why the rush? Bill Lofts agrees that this was a "hastily substituted cover." Surely these books went to press

something like six weeks before publication, at least so we have been told, so I do not see why there was insufficient time to get a fresh cover drawn and blocks made. Would the editor have disorganised the whole issue by such a last minute decision? Especially, as in my opinion, he must have passed the original cover picture before the blocks were made.

Bill Lofts does not consider the new cover too bad, but on comparison with others for that period of the N.L. I find it far inferior to the rest. Quite a different style, in fact. He says Arthur Jones did it, with his familiar and unique style of "spidery drawings and shaded backgrounds." I have failed to find any of this type in the covers of that period. The description can be applied to the inside illustrations without argument but not to the covers.

Unexplained, also, is the advertisement in the Boys Realm of the same week of issue. If the N.L. cover or title were cancelled at the last minute, why did only half the original cover picture appear in the Realm that week and why no wording at all?

Both Messrs. Godsave and Lofts mention that the title of Chapter six is missing. Maybe this was a printers omission but if one examines a copy of No. 243 one will find that all story titles are missing from the tops of the right hand pages except on Pages 11, 31 and 3 of cover.

It seems strange to me, all these peculiarities about one number only of the N.L. and I do not think they can all be explained by the editor making a last minute decision to alter the cover and title. He may have done this, of course, but even if so, I think that other odd things happened that week.

Referring again to the change of title, Bill, in his article, says "it is worth recording that the majority of E.S.B's own titles were altered by the editor." Turning to his other article "They changed the Title" on page four in January C.D. he says on E.S. Brooks - "he did not care how they altered his titles though also surprisingly very few were altered in the St. Frank's field." Perhaps Bill will give us another article when he can, explaining this apparent contradiction.

FOR EXCHANGE: 7 Wizards (1928), 2 Wizards (1938), 8 Wizards (1939); Bound Volume Hotspurs (1943-1944 (37 issues)); Bound Volume Rovers - 1940-1942 (30 issues)); Champion Annuals 1947 and 1950; Monster Lib No. 2; Gems Nos. 430, 843, 999, 1004, 1041, 1042, 1060, 1070, 1082, 1340.

WANTED: Dixon Hawke Libs.

McMAHON, 54 HOZIER CRES., TANNOCHSIDE.

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held April 26th, 1966

There was a full programme and a very lively meeting when we met at the Arden Hotel for what may possibly be our last gathering there.

A financial statement from Norman Gregory, our treasurer, made it quite clear that the present very high rent for our room at the Arden made it imperative to move to a cheaper room. There was welcome news that this should cause little difficulty and I can now say, in the light of later information, that we shall be meeting at The Birmingham Theatre Centre for our next meeting, which is the A.G.M.

The two collectors items were No. 1158 of the Magnet published on 26th April, 1930 "The Missing Moonstone," and The Sexton Blake Catalogue, an unusual choice for this item.

The acting secretary read a story from the 1935 Holiday Annual.

The raffle was drawn by our two lady members Win Brown and Win Patridge and both had the impudence to draw their own ticket numbers. This caused much amusement and naturally cries of "Fiddle". But of course it was genuine enough - just coincidence.

A quiz of eight questions by one of our youngest members, Ian Parish followed. Ian had put a lot of thinking into it and succeeded in flooring us except for Tom Porter who has a memory like a filing cabinet and got six correct out of eight.

A talk, the second in our series "My Collection," was given by Norman Gregory. Norman as we know is not a devotee of Charles Hamilton although he has read many of his stories. His aim he said was to build up a library which really deserved the title of "Old Boys' Books." The details he gave us of his books raised the question of where such a vast number of books could be stored within the confines of an ordinary house.

His collection covered works dating from Victorian times to the present day.

An interesting evening was rounded off by a game of 20 Questions. Gerald Price succeeded in 15 questions in arriving at the solution which was 'Bertie Vernon.'

The date arranged for our next meeting is May 31st, but in view of changed circumstances this may have to be altered, but of course, our members will be notified of this.

J. F. BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

LONDON

Nearly forty members attended the May meeting at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Doyle.

After the minutes had been read, the chairman dealt with the correspondence and stated he had received a nice letter from Mrs. Brooks, (widow of the late E.S.B.).

Don Webster, as acting treasurer, gave the balance in hand as £21. 10. 9. This was followed by satisfactory library reports - in fact Bob Blythe was pleased to state he had recorded his best 'takings' so far.

A discussion ensued re the venue for the August meeting. The Y.M.C.A. (Great Russell Street) had submitted quotations and it was decided to try to secure "The Oak Room" at a charge of £3. 3. 0. This would hold about forty members.

After tea we tackled a quiz on "Famous Sayings" (Hamilton) sent to us from the Northern Section. This proved a real 'stinker' and the winner was Don Webster with Laurie Sutton as runner-up.

Brian Doyle rendered a reading from the C.D. Annual 1950 - a fantasy on "What might have been."

We had a quiz from N. T. Wright and a further quiz from Bob Acraman.

The chairman welcomed two new members - John How and Andrew Barnes from Tottenham, and a welcome visitor was Bert Hamblett from the Liverpool club.

Next month we visit Eastwood (I mean Excelsior) House at Surbiton as guests of Eric Fayne. Will all members who are attending let him know in good time. The date is Sunday, June 19th.

D.B.W.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, May 8th.

The attendance at this meeting was better than for the April meeting which was held on Easter Sunday.

After the preliminaries of correspondence and the state of the 'kitty' we got down to a rather prolonged discussion on future programmes. All sorts of ideas were put forward, and it was decided to draw up a programme of items for each month in advance. Everybody will be making some contribution. There is no reason, therefore, why future meetings should not be successful.

We also discussed the growing problem of our membership. Our

numbers, unfortunately, are dwindling. I would therefore like to take this opportunity of inviting any reader of these notes, who lives within reasonable travelling distance of 33 Sefton Rd., Litherland, Liverpool 21, to attend our meetings. I am on the telephone at home at Waterloo 7546 should anyone wish to telephone me about the club.

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, June 12th.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14th May, 1966

After a five week interval we were pleased to see eighteen members thronging into the Club room. Library business over, Chairman Geoffrey Wilde welcomed all, with special mention of Cyril and Gertrude Banks, with daughter, Christine, happily amongst us again. The formal business was soon over, and we listened to news from Gerry Allison's post bag, including word from David Lancake, Henry Webb, Cliff Archer, and Tom Hopperton. We were sorry to hear that Tom was in hospital and hope that his health will be restored.

The programmes for the Summer meetings were next drawn up. The theme will be "My Collection," with four members leading each meeting, with talks, quizzes, games and readings. Twelve volunteers were quickly found, and we look forward to some varied and lively evenings.

The first item on the programme was a quiz sent to Gerry by Cliff Webb entitled "Remarks in Common." (Example given was, "Which Hamilton character might say the same as a man addressing the Royal Society?" Answer: Billy Bunter - "I say you fellows!") Exclamations of "Oh, of course" were heard when the answers were given to questions which had baffled the majority. Geoffrey Wilde and Bill Williamson were joint winners with Mollie Allison third.

Elsie Taylor then gave us a searching quiz in which we had to supply the real names of many characters who arrived under an alias. Elsie reads widely and deeply and there were a few blank looks, but Gerry Allison came out first, closely followed by Ron Hodgson with Jack Wood third. Elsie followed up with a word building game from the word "Greyfriars," which just concluded as the teapot arrived.

After the interval a reading was given by Jack Allison from "The Fifth Form at St. Dominics." It was the incomparable description of the concert given by the Fourth Junior Dramatic and Musical Society. Jack did it justice, and the antics of the Fourth Junior drew gusts of laughter from us. The meeting wound up with a spontaneous discussion comparing the styles of Frank Richards and Talbot Baines Reed until

9.20 p.m.

Next meeting - Saturday, June 11th.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Sec.

R E V I E W

"SORCERERS OF SET"

Martin Thomas. (3/6)

A woman's body is found in an hotel room - a freshly cut pink rose lies on the knife wounds in her chest.

Blood sacrifices, and ghastly rites performed in opulent Egyptian surroundings.

A body that crumbles away before an autopsy can be made.

These are a few of the horrifying events that take place when Set, Ancient Egyptian god of Evil, reaches out across three thousand years and lays his hand heavily on present day London.

A case that at face value appears to be an ordinary crime of passion with bizarre aspects, turns unexpectedly into a fight against the forces of Evil, a fight in which Tinker is brought to the brink of death, and Blake's very reason is put to the test.

A meeting with a mysterious woman, on the embankment within the shadow of Cleopatra's Needle, with a mist moving in from the river, is one of the many scenes which make this story, although set in present day London, strongly reminiscent of many of the stories of Sax Rohmer.

In this quite superbly thrilling novel of the occult, the author succeeds in underlining the deep feeling, and friendship that exists between Blake, Tinker and Coutts; succeeds where, in my opinion, most of today's authors fail.

We all have our favourite Blake authors, but Martin Thomas has taken such giant steps forward since his Fleetway days, that he must surely rank with the best from any period.

Ray Norton

FOR SALE: Holiday Annuals for 1925, 1926, 1926, 1927. £2 each plus postage. Letter first to Box C.R. c/o Collectors' Digest.

WANTED: SEXTON BLAKE ANNUALS.

LYNSKEY, 11 DUNLOE AVENUE, TOTTENHAM, LONDON N.17.

the postman called

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

W. H. WHITER (Wood Green): Sixty years ago, at the age of 17, I purchased a cricket bat, and used it every season up to two years ago. I then presented it to the makers (Lillywhite) who complimented me on its condition. They placed it in their museum among exhibits relating to the immortals of the cricket world. On several occasions my sons, Ben, Bob, and Douglas played with it too.

TOM SATCHELL (Plumstead): In the early Red Magnet Billy Bunter is depicted as a thin, weedy youth. How did Frank Richards make a mistake in the later Magnets, or did Bunter become fat very suddenly? The Magnet I have in mind actually described him as "weedy."

STANLEY A. PACHON (U.S.A.): I am not very keen on the idea of reprinting old articles, but I am wholeheartedly with Mr. Webb that some articles on the papers and authors of Victorian times would be most welcome. These would give the Digest a more balanced content.

I greatly enjoyed Danny in the January issue, and his list of contributions to the Boys' Friend was fascinating. I never knew before that G. A. Henty wrote for that paper. Could anybody give me the titles of the stories with their dates?

BILL LOFTS (London): I recently had a lunch date with the son of the popular artist Leonard Shields, who told me many new facts about his father. I hope to write this up for the Digest shortly.

M. HALL (Penryn): Last month the editor of Rover & Wizard wrote me as follows: "I am pleased to learn that you still enjoy the stories appearing in Rover & Wizard. I have numerous requests to bring back the old favourites - and you, as an old reader, will see that from time to time, this is in fact done. I shall certainly give every consideration to your suggestions about Dixon Hawke. I hope you continue long to enjoy our magazine."

I think that was a very nice letter.

BERT HOLMES (Barrow): I am against the reprinting of old articles. I think it would be a good idea to call the Lee Column "Brooksiana" - after all, Brooks made the Nelson Lee. I think Sexton Blake gets rather too much space, though lots wouldn't agree with me, of course. I like Danny. Very refreshing, brings out the old nostalgia. I like Slade. There's not enough of it. I would love to see a "Memory Lane" corner in C.D.

MARTIN THOMAS (London): From printers' errors preserve us! Like most authors, I have suffered the mutilations of inept compositors. From having a paragraph of careful reasoning ruined by the omission of entire lines - to having my original 'paranormal' printed as 'panorama.' But I wonder how many readers will notice the gem of mis-transposition on Page 11 of SORCERERS OF SET?

My original script read: 'Looking blearily up at the wife of his skeletal bosom, he said...' But in print it appears as: 'Looking blearily up at the skeletal bosom of his wife...'!

Apparently the person who transposed the words had never heard the phrase 'the wife of his bosom' - or couldn't recognise it when the adjective 'skeletal' was introduced. It was the husband who was thin, his bosom which was skeletal, but in six paragraphs the compositor reduced the wife's 'well-upholstered' figure to skeletal condition - and so made the author appear to be contradicting himself in one page. I feel sure that transposer of words has never heard another popular expression: 'Let well alone!'

THE 'BRITON'S OWN' LIBRARY

by Roy Parsons

In Herbert Leckenby's article 'A Look at the "Libraries"' in the 1948 C.D. Annual the following passage appears. The subject is the Aldine "Boy's Own Library."

"Though this library seems to have been fairly successful at first, it could not compete with the "Boy's Friend." By the time the First Great War broke out, some 93 numbers had appeared. Its title was then changed to "The Briton's Own Library" but in this form it had a very short life."

In the table at the end of the article "The Briton's Own Library" is listed as having a run of 12 numbers from 1914 to 1915 but with no specific dates given.

Among the "fringe items" of my own collection is one rather battered copy of a "Briton's Own Library." During its 50 years of life it has lost its covers, first four pages and part of its last page. Nevertheless it does give some information about the Library which may be of some interest. First there were at least 14 copies in the Library, not 12 as given above. The one I have is number 13. The titles in the series as far as can be determined from the last page were:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. On to Berlin! | 4. Dick Talbot's Triumph |
| 2. Spies in Khaki | 5. The Army of Hate |
| 3. The Zeppelin's Rival | 6. The Denham School Detective |

(cont'd on page 32)...

BILLY BUNTER'S HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1967



A FEAST OF FUN FOR EVERYONE

Here is the first Holiday Annual for 27 years. It will be on sale everywhere in September 1966. We publish this picture of the cover through the kind courtesy of Mr. George Beal of Odham's Press.

THE 'BRITON'S OWN' LIBRARY

(cont'd from page 30)...

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|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. A Flight for Fortune | 11. Dick Talbot |
| 8. Who's for the King? | 12. The Yellow Shadow |
| 9. The Secret..... | 13. Larks at Wyeminster |
| 10. The Bully | 14. For Outlaw, or King? |

No author's names were given. Number 14 of the library was due to appear on 27 October 1915 which, if the books were issued once a month suggested that the run of the library was from September 1914 to October 1915. (Number 14 was published, incidentally; I know a collector who has a copy.)

In his article Herbert Leckenby suggested that many of the stories in "The Boys' Own Library" were reprints. 'Larks at Wyeminster' could be one such reprint. There are several references to previous stories about the school which, from the titles given, do not appear to be printed in the previous issues of the Library. There are two German characters in the story, neither of which is a spy, although one is a crook.

'Larks at Wyeminster' seems a fairly typical and quite readable school story of the period. The light-hearted japing suggested by title forms, in fact, only the first part of the story. The second part is more dramatic with a plot of murder, attempted murder and forgery. The heroes of the tale are Cuthbert Kettle and his comrades Snope, Wiggins and Cosher of the Lower Fifth in the School House. Their rivals in the school are Jarman and Co. of Benson's House. Their rivals are Marmaduke Pye and Co. of Rye House Grammar School. For about 60 pages they rag each other and the masters until Mr. Duncan Ross "the well-known Scotland Yard detective" appears on the scene. After that the plot thickens and crimes are more evident than larks. All quite amusing though.

This is all the information that I can glean from my one battered copy. Two points interest me:-

1. Who wrote the story?
2. What happened on pages 1 to 4!

Can anyone help?

FOR SALE: Chatterbox 1912, 7/6; Little Folks 1910, 1911, 6/6 each; Golden Annual for Girls 1925, 4/-; Sunshine 1898, 4/-. Postage and packing extra.

S.a.e. first to:- Box 'Z' Collectors' Digest Office.