COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 22 • No 255 • 2/-

MARCH 1968

Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 22 No. 255 MARCH 1968 Price 2s. 0d.

A CHAT WITH MY CHUMS

Conducted by THE ADMIRAL

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ELIZABETH GERTRUDE?

Fairly recently, Merlin Books put out two Bessie Bunter stories "by Hilda Richards." I have been browsing over one of them, entitled "Bessie Bunter and the Gold Robbers." Bessie only plays a comparatively minor role in the story, and the title is obviously concocted to include the magic name "Bunter."

I have in my collection about the first 150 issues of the old School Friend, and I always regarded them as very readable stories Any reader now joining Cliff House with Merlin finds himself in something of a new world, and wonders just when all the changes took place.

This Bessie Bunter, though there is reference to her expecting a postal-order, is very different from the old one. She is now a simple, likeable, plump girl, with no very marked characterisation.

Some of the early characters get mention. Clara Clevlyn and Marjorie Hazeldene put in a brief appearance. Stella Stone is still head girl. Miss Bullivant is there. There is a mention of Marcia Loftus, Nancy Bell, and one or two others. Jemima Carstairs who became fairly famous, after my interest in the School Friend waned, plays a substantial part.

Babs and Mabs, with Bessie, are still in Study 4. But it is Mabel Lynn who seems to strike such a false note. She is described as "golden-haired," and is the daughter of a famous playwright and

his wife, a famous actress. She has a cousin, Austin Lynn, who is a famous detective. Mabs herself writes plays, one of which has been professionally produced. Her golden head, which is quite new to me, is frequently mentioned. In addition, there are heaps of new girls since my time.

These changes are, of course, due to the fact that several different writers handled Cliff House over the years. They were authors who could not be described as substitute writers, but who were, in turn, given sole control of Cliff House for long periods of time. As a result, not unnaturally, they set about making the series their own with a wealth of new details and characters.

The Merlins are probably reprinted from the Schoolgirls' Own Library, and originally appeared in extended form in the old School Friend. I daresay there are some experts who could tell us exactly from which period of the S.F. they hail.

For me, the real Cliff House was the one of the earlier days, with the original settings and characterisation with which Charles Hamilton started it off.

TO THE PURE --

A contributor to our Blakiana Column this month did not like the editorial item which appeared last year under the heading "Not For the Squeamish." I'm sorry about that, but it can't be helped. Two views are permissible. My own, which is that standards are slipping in this country and that near-pornographic books and films are helping them to slip, may well be the minority one.

Our Blakiana contributor comments that "It's in the eye of the beholder" - a somewhat ancient gibe - which is another way of saying that "To the pure, all things are pure."

I suppose it means that one has to be dirty-minded to recognise filth as filth, while the pure in heart can see beauty in catchpenny beastliness.

THIS IS WHERE WE CAME IN

So a pop-record at the top of the charts was not made by the group credited with the performance. Less well known musicians made the record, and it was issued as the pop-group-s work. We have long been acquainted with substitute stories, but substitute records are something new. Or are they?

EDITOR's DILEMMA

Getting out a journal is no picnic. If we print jokes people say we are silly. If we don't they say we are too serious. If we

we clip things from other magazines, we are too lazy to write them ourselves. If we don't we are stuck on our own stuff.

If we don't print every word of all contributions we don't appreciate genius. If we do print them the columns are filled with junk. If we make a change in the other fellow's article we are too critical. If we don't we are blamed for poor editing.

Now, as like as not, someone will say: We swiped this from some other source:

We did.

--- And so did we. The above came from the Blackpool Baptist Tabernacle Newsletter (sent to us by William Lister), which, in its turn, had "swiped" it from a New Zealand Baptist Newsletter.

THE EDITOR.

FRANK SHAW reluctantly reducing collection offers, in good condition, post free to first bidders, the following: 1. C.D. Annuals 1952-1955, £4.4s. the lot, with (free) Golden Hours for Feb. 1964. 2. C.D. Annuals 1961-1965, £5.5s. lot with (free) Greyfriars Herald Jan. 10th 1920. 3. 30 C.Ds. between 1951 and 1955 with (free) Cheerio June 1919. 4. C.Ds. 1964-1966 £4.4s. with (free) S.P.C. October 1959. 5. The Writer 1963-1966, not mint. £5.5s. with (free) Collectors' Miscellany March 1959. 6. 12 Writers unclassified 1954-1961. £2.2s. with (free) Writer for Dec. 1941. 7. Vols. 1 - 2 Punch £2.2s. with (free) Ally Sloper 1885. 8. Many vols Punch 18--, 19-- (you name 'em!) 9. 12 Giles Annuals 1955-1966 £5.5s. with (free) S.P.C. Oct. 1960. 10. Many vols Edwardian and Victorian mags; hundred Sun. Times, Observer, colour supplements. Write first with s.a.e., naming lot no. or state requirements.

Gear Press, 39a, St. Anne St., Liverpool.

W A N T E D : Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 960, 967, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 427, 433, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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

W A N T E D : GEM 805; MAGNETS 779, 782.

TOM PORTER, 1 TIMBERTREE ROAD, CRADLEY HEATH, WARLEY, WORCS.

DANNY'S DIARY

MARCH 1918

Things are getting worse in the paper line as the war drags on. The good old "Penny Popular" has packed up at the end of this month, though the editor says it will appear again as soon as conditions improve. I wonder whether it will.
Also, all the penny papers have now gone up to 1½d which is a terrible rise in the cost of living.

There have been quite a few air raids this month, some from zeppelins and some from Gothas. Most of the zepp raids have been over the north of England while London has had the planes. The war news isn't very good at all, and food is pretty short in the shops.

The Boys' Friend has been as good as ever. The tip-top barring-out series about Rookwood has gone on. First was "Hard Pressed" in which Lattrey's father promised the Head that he would bring the rebels to heel. By means of a hose and tons of cold water, he flooded them out of their camp on the school allotments. They were taken back to school to await punishment.

However, in the next story "From Out The Past" we saw that they weren't beaten yet. They cleared out from the school, and carried on the barring-out in the quarries near Rookwood. There they came on a German spy, and they were aided by a British soldier. The soldier was badly injured.

Next week - "The Last of Lattrey." The injured soldier turned out to be the Headmaster's brother. Mr. Lattrey has been blackmailing the Head over him, but the brother's innocence is proved, and Mr. Lattrey's teeth are drawn. The Head expels Lattrey at long last.

In the next story, "Outcast and Hero," Mornington and Lattrey were in a train smash. Lattrey, going home after being expelled. Mornington on his way to hospital to have an operation for his blindness. Lattrey saved Mornington from death in the train smash.

The last Boys' Friend of the month saw the price go up to 1½d. The Rookwood story was "The Scamp of the Third," who was Algy Silver. Algy is selected to play for the Classical football team, and Peele expects him to show treachery. Peele bets against the Classicals. In the middle of the tale Mornington came back after his operation. He could see again.

The Cedar Creek tales were up to their usual high standard. The first three of them were all about the new Chinese boy Yen Chin. They were entitled "Yen Chin on the Warpath," "A Regular Terror" and "Yen Chin's Reformation." The last named was very funny indeed. Frank Richards & Co impressed on Yen Chin, who is a fearful liar, that he must tell the truth. But when he starts telling the truth, he causes kayos.

Then came "Flooded Out" in which the area round Thompson and Cedar Creek was badly flooded, and the Beauclerc shack was in the worst flooded area. Finally, in "The Parting of the Ways," it is decided that Beauclerc shall be adopted by his uncle, an English earl, and go to England. His father persuades him to accept, but the boy is sorrowful as the story ends.

The Cedar Creek tales must be very popular, for the early ones are in a Boys' Friend Library this month - and it is not so many months since they first appeared. The B.F.L. has gone up to 4d.

The Germans have a huge long-range gun which the soldiers call Big Bertha. On Good Friday a church in Paris was shelled, and 75 worshippers were killed and 90 injured.

Sir George Alexander has died this month. He was closely associated with the St. James Theatre which is said to be one of the most beautiful in London.

The two opening tales in the Magnet were about the German master, Herr Gans. He is a Saxon which isn't so bad as a Prussian. In the first story Mr. Sharp, the music master, joins the army, and his place is taken by a naturalised German named Mr. Bloomfield. This story was called "Skinner the Spy." In the following week's tale "Bunter's Latest," Mr. Bloomfield tries to make Herr Gans do spy work for Germany, but the Gander won't. Fairly good these two.

But the next one, "A Bird of Passage," about Archie Drake and Verney - two boys who changed places - was too silly to be read with any interest.

"Coker the Joker" was good fun. Coker decided that it would help the war effort if everybody tried to be a humorist and played tricks and made jokes. But Coker came a cropper.

Finally, "The Fighting Fifth" in which Hilton became captain of the Fifth Form in place of Blundell.

There has been a big picture on at one of our cinemas, and it was shown for a whole week. I think it was an Italian film. It was called "Quo Vadis," and a lady in front of us kept on sobbing

so violently that it distracted the attention. Her friend kept telling her "It's only a picture, Daisy," but it made no difference. She sobbed and sobbed.

Another time we saw Charles Ray in "The Clodhopper" and I liked this a lot. Yet another time we saw Henry Edwards and Alma Taylor in "Nearer my God to Thee." Mum liked this one, and I didn't mind it.

Jack Pickford and Louise Huff were in "The Varmint" and this was a winner. Jack Pickford is one of my favourites.

As for the Gem - oh, dear. "Grundy's Luck" wasn't so bad if you can stand Grundy. He has a relative in the army, who gets up a football team to play St. Jim's juniors. Grundy insists that he shall captain his own team which includes all the bad players. In the end, the game is called off, as Grundy's relative is sent to a distant camp.

"The St. Jim's Ruins" was silly. Some soldiers come to St. Jim's to dig up a bomb of some sort, and the idea gets round that some valuable relics are to be found at the digging site.

Now a series is on, and it seems it may go on for ever. About a sporting contest fixed up between the Shell and the Fourth, with points to be gained for all sorts of sporting events and other things. The titles were "Rival Forms," "Shell versus Fourth," and "A Stern Chase." In the last one, Racke is hogging food, which doesn't add to the fun and excitement. I find it all very, very dull, but I suppose it might be worse.

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W A N T E D : "Wroth" (Egerton Castle) also "Young Folks' Tales," "Betty" or "Mabel" only. "Child's Garden of Verses" 1907 edition only. Illustrated by Robinson.

40 FOWEY AVENUE, ILFORD, ESSEX.

- -

NELSON LEES (Old Series) for SALE. Will also exchange numbers 123 - 162 - 163 - 164 - 174 - 176 and 5 Christmas Nos. for O.S.Nos. 191 - 116 - 121 - 129 - 133 - 142 - 179 - 181 - 364 - 371 - 407 - 451.

HARLEY, 214 SALTWELLS ROAD, DUDLEY, WORCS.

- -

W A N T E D : "ADVENTURE;" "HOTSPUR;" "ROVER;" "WIZARD;" and their Annuals. However old or new, but particularly 1950 - 1964.

J. CALVERT, 67 BRAMERTON RD., BILBOROUGH, NOTTINGHAM, NG8. 4NN.

BLAKIANA

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

BLAKE'S IMAGE

By Deryck Harvey

Where does Sexton Blake go from here? His legion followers may well ask, now that the celebrated detective has landed a successful treble within a matter of weeks - a television series, a radio programme, and his first legitimate appearance in hard-back books.

Everything points to Blake currently enjoying unprecendented popularity, whether or not this might in fact be the case. Unfortunately, doubts recur by the ephemeral nature of the broadcast series, and the continuing intermittent appearance of his paper-backs on the bookstalls.

This is not all. Quality is not necessarily a guarantee of longevity, as old boys' book collectors well know, but real Blake enthusiasts must also be asking themselves whether any of the current series featuring their hero really deserve to last into posterity.

Personally, I have my doubts. Laurence Payne's performance on television is admirable as far as it goes: his character is dignified, intelligent, painstaking, and tolerant to the point of being pedantic when outlining his plans. But is he Blake?

The fellow who appears on screen has little or nothing to do with my preconception of Blake. He has no spark of the dynamism, little inkling of the crisp intellect, and hardly any of the panache that I have come to know and respect in the master detective over the years.

Not to labour the point, he seems old-fashioned. The series has been set in the 'twenties. I believe the reason to be that if Blake had been updated this would have placed him in direct competition with the Bonds and the Flints of this modern age - and that he would have lost ground.

I will go further and say that the television series is put out at teatime because it would be unsuitable for more sophisticated audiences. Until such care, detail and attention is lavished on Blake as has been afforded Maigret - or even Holmes - he must remain in his lesser station.

The radio series seemed even closer to a starchy traditional

image of the great detective. Too little of the character of the great names was evident although heaven knows, the writers bandied the familiar names and phrases about. But everything depended on the puzzle of the plot.

This leaves the current series of the Sexton Blake Library for consideration, and there will be some traditionalists who will not like my open admission to finding many of these books sensational by nature, lurid by detail, and often unconvincing by content.

So what do I want? Just Blake. Simply my beloved Baker Street hero, a man of action, intellect, directness, kindness and respect. He existed not so very long ago - I know that, because I remember him so vividly, and so do many other of his followers.

Nor can I believe that my attitude has only to do with a set of changing personal values over a period of time. The evidence is there that it is not, in the shape and form of the books of the past, no less. Few of today's stories come up to the standard I would hope of them.

Are these unkind words? Should we not be grateful that Blake appears at all, in any format? This rather depends upon what we expect of our Blake, and whether we care that he should last into the future, not merely in the collector's memory but as a modern, living, practising detective.

I cherish my old friend Sexton Blake's image, which is why I should like to see him go on to even greater success with future generations. But where Blake goes from here seems anyone's guess, I submit, unless he is allowed his full, traditional integrity.

* * *

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER — By Anon

Editorials like "Not for the Squeamish" irk me. Letters in "The Postman Called" praising the Old Papers for their purity and condemning today's literature annoy me. These people, though they do not realise it, are echoing what their parents said about the Old Papers back in the 'twenties and 'thirties.

"Rubbish!" "Penny Dreadfuls!" "Blood and Thunder!" were some of the epithets hurled at the schoolboy papers, which you and I stoutly defended, against schoolteacher and parent alike. It mattered not whether you read the "Champion," "Union Jack," "Magnet" or "Nelson Lee," they were all tarred with the same brush.

"King," "Mayfair," and "Playboy" all had their counterparts thirty odd years ago and were then surreptitiously read by perhaps

you, or you, or even you. At any rate they were available for those interested.

"Sadism" and "violence" are two words used freely to describe today's literature. I readily acknowledge this fact. But doesn't this literature only mirror the front pages of your daily paper or your T.V. screen? (In the latter I refer to newsreel items, not fictional programmes.)

If you want to be completely honest in your condemnation of sadism - violence, then you must condemn the "Union Jack." Week after week we were subjected to violence in every form - shooting, stabbing, bludgeoning, prison, and yes, even dope-taking. There were no "Purple Hearts" in those days, only "snowbirds" - cocain addicts, and opium dens.

Before you deny that the Union Jack was guilty of sadism, let me quote from "U.J. No. 1331:

"The Gargoyle's great fingers twined around Text's wrist and his grip intensified. Text screamed as the skin broke and the blood oozed through. When the Gargoyle released him, Text's hand dropped to his side shattered and useless." (Shades of Mickey Spillane!)

A little further on we read -

"From his pocket, the Gargoyle took a petrol lighter, unscrewed the top and spilled the inflammable spirit on the face of the helpless detective. He spun the wheel of the lighter against the flint, a spark reached the spirit soaked wick and burnt up into a blue flame.

"This trick," he explained, "was sometimes used by the Czar of all the Russians against political offenders."

"Slowly, savoring his enjoyment of the atrocity which he was about to commit, he brought the flame nearer and nearer to the spirit which was streaming over Blake's face and head."

Fear not, dear reader, Tinker arrived just then and a well aimed bullet shot the lighter out of the Gargoyle's hand, allowing Blake to live so that he, Blake, could perpetrate a little sadism of his own in U.J. 1478.

"Instinctively Blake ducked and leaped to one side. In the same moment a knife slid under his arm... and before the footpad could regain his balance, Blake had grasped the wrist of the hand that held the knife. With a savage twist he bent the other's arm backwards and upwards, ju-jitsu fashion, until the back of the hand lay between the shoulder-blades. Then Blake forced it higher

until he could grasp the coat-collar as well, and now he drew it still higher and higher until the agony in elbow and shoulder dragged a cry from his victim.

"The knife slid from nerveless fingers and clattered to the cobbles. Yet Blake did not desist. Up, up, up still higher he forced the hand, until suddenly there came a sharp crack in the bone, accompanied by a howl of anguish.

"Only now did he ease his grasp, the arm dropping to the footpad's side like something over which he had no control.

""Listen," Blake hissed, "the next time you use that knife of yours...don't make the mistake you made tonight, or you'll get your liver cut out!" "

This article is not to be construed as a condemnation of Sexton Blake or the "Union Jack," both of which I hold in the highest regard. I merely want to point out that violence, sadism and even horror were to be found if you cared to look for it. Like beauty, they are purely in the eye of the beholder.

* * *

"THE MAN WHO MADE SEXTON BLAKE" By Christopher A. J. Lowder

Harry Blyth, the "onlie begetter" (some say) of the most curious literary phenomenon not only of this century but surely of all time, has always struck me as being a bit of a myth.

Perhaps this is because he lived and died so long ago; perhaps because, by the very nature of his calling, we cannot even be sure that he did, in fact, create Sexton Blake, detective extraordinary - which is why I have called this article "The Man Who Made Sexton Blake." The difference between the words "create" and "make" is subtle indeed, yet difference there is.

Blyth is shrouded in the mists of the 19th Century, to most of us another world. In that era he died, leaving nothing save his name and the legacy attached to it by the thinnest, most fragile of cords. Tracing the man himself is like chasing one's own shadow - he will always remain, but as something completely intangible, completely devoid of meaning, abstract.

In our perplexity, we may echo Cleopatra - "Was there ever such a man...?" Rufus, however, seems to define our predicament more sharply: "His face we know not; his mind is but a dream."

But, of course, there was such a man, one of an army of writers that Alfred Harmsworth recruited for his early boys' papers, to give them the zip, the dash, the appeal they needed to set them

off on their long trails - Comic Cuts and Chips lasted into the early 1950s, the Wonder (under a variety of mastheads) into the Second World War, and the Marvel ran into Sport and Adventure after 30 years of hard slogging.

That tireless investigator on our behalfs, Bill Lofts, tracked down and interviewed Blyth's son some years ago; E. S. Turner recalls an anecdote of one of Blyth's contemporaries in "Boys Will Be Boys;" Reginald Cox, in his Saturday Book Blake File, relates a half-forgotten story concerning the choice of Blake's curious Christian name.

Yet still we are left with an incomplete picture. Indeed, we really have no picture at all, save what can be pieced together from memories and apocryphal tales.

Blyth wrote; he died. Was Sexton Blake his own brain-child or an Editorial command - "Blyth, make me a detective who will live for ever." If the latter, why was Blyth deputed to write the first stories? Was he the only staff writer who happened to be available at the time; or was it because he was well-known and his tales were popular? What did he write before Harmsworth enlisted him; did he specialize in detective tales? Lastly - and just as a matter of interest - was he even a good writer?

Blyth, the man, we might just as well leave to those Mists of Time - unless some enthusiast cares enough to research for a thesis. Blyth, the writer, is a different matter entirely. About this, we can at least judge for ourselves and/or make a few intelligent guesses.

Recently, there came into my eager, lusting hands a bundle of 50 or so very early Halfpenny Marvels. Alas, the ardent gleam in my eyes was somewhat dimmed by the fact that those precious issues - Nos. 6 and 7 - were conspicuous by their absence. Indeed, it would seem that the very items I particularly desired have been thoughtfully weeded out by some past owner.

Galling, to say the least, even though some veritable plums remain - unheeded, doubtless, in the mad rush.

However, what I have in front of me, in the end, certainly does ample justice to the price I paid. Which is heartening.

The issues stretch from No. 13 to a very tattered and incomplete No. 110. Incredibly, save for this latter, they are all in excellent condition. Foxed, perhaps; faded, certainly; even, in some cases, with their pastel green wrappers torn. But, with careful and jealous handling, likely to last for ever - and all

eminently readable.

They smell deliciously musty, and one can forgive a faint (though not patronizing) smile as one looks at their illustrations, with mustachioed heroes striking defiant poses in the face of extreme danger and hardship.

What strikes one immediately - apart, that is, from the intensely patriotic style of writing and plot - is the seemingly irreconcilable mixture of facetiousness and stern law-giving.

This latter, of course, pervades the Editorial sanctum like fresh, country air - to our ultra-sophisticated, air-conditioned telly-nostrils. The very title of the weekly columns, "The Editor Speaks," carries with it such an atmosphere of pontifical judgement that one tends to read it with something akin to guilt in one's mind. Eddy, the Happy Editor, was never like this.

On reflection, though, it served to fill the minds of the young of those days with plenty of facts and figures: "The stormy petrel, in proportion to its size, has immense wing-power, for it is the smallest web-footed bird;" "During the past ten or twelve years rents have dropped 25 per cent in some parts of Liverpool, and, taken all round, meat and provisions are abnormally cheap;" "Rats do desert a sinking ship, but it is a most singular fact that they do not wait until a boat or barge is sinking before they desert it;" "Sexton Blake ' who, by the way, is a real, live personage, and not a fictional character, as some may suppose - can, when he chooses, disguise himself so completely as to baffle even his most intimate friends..."

Indeed - facts and figures! For me, this proves beyond doubt that the Detective Weekly, or even the Union Jack of the early 1900s, was not the first journal to build Blake up as a "real, live personage." It was Editorial policy at the detective's birth.

Which is interesting, to say the least, for it bears out my own theory that Blake, as a detective hero, was fashioned, not by chance, but with skill and forethought.

Harry Blyth, I think it can be taken as read, was a pretty prolific writer, not confining himself to detective tales. It would be more than interesting if we knew to which publishing company he was attached before Harmsworth took him up. Probably, as with the majority of his fellow scribes, he wrote as many penny-dreadfuls as "pure, clean, healthy tales." But that is a matter of conjecture.

Of the five Blyth/Meredith novels in my collection, only one

concerns pure detective work. The others range from the story of a young man who finds himself a castaway on a mysterious island in the middle of the Sargasso Sea, to the adventures of two friends who escape from the convict-mines of Russia and trek across the Pamirs, the Roof of the World, from Siberia to India..../continued.

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FOR SALE: Volume of Boys' Friend containing ROOKWOOD AND CEDAR CREEK - vol contains 21 issues between Jan and June 1921 (this means that 3 issues in the run are missing. Excellent new binding and some splendid copies (one or two copies need minor repair). Great chance for some Rookwood and Cedar Creek fan. £10 the volume. Volume of Boys' Friend containing ROOKWOOD. Vol contains 24 issues between Jan and June 1922 (this means that one issue is missing in the run). Excellent new binding, contents excellent. Chance for Rookwood fan. £10 the volume.
1d White Magnets: 423 When Friends Fall Out; 424 Mailed Fist at Greyfriars; 426 Terrible Two; 430 Forbidden Match; 465 Getting Rich Quick; 467 Deserter; 12/6 each. Also the notorious "Linley Minor" excellent copy 15/-. Blue Gems: 408 Great Sports Tournament; 420 Sportsmen of St. Jim's (complete, but rather rough and not collectors' items) 6/- each. Also Blue Gems 423 By Luck & Pluck 425 Conscripts of St. Jim's. Good complete copies, but guillotined. 8/6 each. Postage extra on all items.

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P. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

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W A N T E D : Magnet, Thriller, Detective Weekly, pre-1940 Skipper, Wizard, Hotspur and Comics. Loose copies or bound volumes.

DENNIS MALLETT, 24 BATCHELORS BARN, ANDOVER, HANTS.

think to yourself: "This bloke writes like a nut. He ought to be certified."

As a boy, I never cared much for Cardew. I still don't care much for Cardew. To some extent, I know why. To some degree he took the limelight from Tom Merry. Now, as an adult, I can appreciate that Cardew is a remarkably fine character study. He was an asset to St. Jim's. Some of the Cardew repartee was magnificently written. Yet - I still never care much for Cardew.

And it's the same thing, all the way through my following of the Hamilton stories. The characters I loved long ago, I still love. The characters and the aspects I disliked, I still dislike.

It is not true that, long ago, we "accepted the stories and their characters completely." I think it likely that we were deeply critical. I certainly was. Often, in my boyish mind, I was extremely resentful.

As youngsters we were not cabbages. Yet some people have written, mournfully and accusingly: "It is only now that you claim to be able to distinguish a substitute tale from a genuine one."

It astounds me that any boy of twelve could not tell one from the other. And that some adults, who claim that they could not, profess to think that nobody else could either,

There is one strong point which I think that Mrs Story might have made in her plea for the tempering of criticism. The Lee ended about 1933, and the best of the Lee appeared many years earlier. Anyone under 45 is less likely to have read the Lee as a boy. And, of course, if you came to it as an adult, for the first time, we have another kettle of fish entirely. The adult reader, untouched by the magic wand of nostalgia, is more than likely to be unfairly critical.

Even in Hamiltonia, which, possibly, offers more scope for the adult critic, it is the younger adult who is likely to be much more critical of situation and appreciative of characterisation than the older enthusiast who remembers, fondly, buying the old papers week by week.

Had Mrs. Story blamed the younger adult, I might have been with her. In blaming the older adult for spurning the ladder, I think she is offside.

On one other issue, I would question whether Mrs. Story is right. She seems to absolve E. S. Brooks from blame for everything which happened to the Lee. I wouldn't!

It is fashionable, when the stories are right up our street, to pour praise over the deserving author. And, when things are

not right, to turn about and blame "editorial policy."

Some time ago, in this very column, I wrote:

"For the successes of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood - and those successes are prodigious - I give the author full praise. But where, in my personal opinion, some of the policy fell down, I blame nobody but the author. If a series overstayed its welcome, the author was at fault. The author must carry the can back."

I concluded that particular article:

"I am not intimately acquainted with the St. Frank's stories, but I have the impression that changes were made - a multiplication of houses and so on - which marred the overall picture and may have caused the untimely demise of the Lee. If that is the case, it would be interesting to know where our Lee fans place the blame. Do they - as I do every time - blame the author?"

It is unfair and unreasonable to praise the author when things go right, and to slam the editor when things go wrong. And, if a favourite old character happens to get slammed by one of the old boys of our movement, it just happens that the character was not everybody's favourite in the dear dead days. For the tastes of most of us haven't changed much.

And as for criticising as adults - well, of course we do. We are adults. We can't criticise as children. And, in fact, it is our adult criticism which keeps the old C.D. world turning. But, so far as the old papers are concerned, we still think a good deal as we thought as kids.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

GERALD ALLISON: In the December 'Controversial' you mention the Cedar Creek story in the Christmas Double Number for 1917 - "Frank Richards' Christmas," reprinted, as you mention, in the Holiday Annual under the title "How Father Christmas Came to White Pine."

In the "Echoes" in the January Digest, Frank Lay agrees that this is an example of the perfect Christmas story and says it deserves to be reprinted in an anthology of Christmas stories.

Well, it seems it has been In the December 'Dalesman,' which after the 'Collectors' Digest' is the finest monthly magazine in the world, is a review of an anthology of Christmas stories. After reviewing a description of a Christmas in a Yorkshire industrial town before the First World War; and the story in George Eliot's "Mill on the Floss" telling of how Tom Tulliver came home for the Christmas holidays, the reviewer says:-

"Next comes Bret Harte's ever famous story "How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar" which tells how a miner risked his life, so that a sick child might have presents on Christmas morning. Dick, riding in the dark, through storms and floods, with those few tawdry toys so carefully guarded, has always been a favourite Christmas hero,"

The writings of Bret Harte were great favourites of Charles Hamilton - see Tom Hopperton's 'Charles Hamilton's Tag List' in the C.D. Annual of 1960. So I have re-read How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar, and in my opinion the Cedar Creek yarn which has been so much admired, is a straight pinch from Bret Harte. But after all, Shakespeare based many of his plays on Holinshed's Chronicles.

JOHN TROVELL: The sterling quality of Redwing's character was very evident after the South Seas series, when he returned to Greyfriars, able to pay his own school fees, yet continued to show the same quiet patience and loyalty to the Bounder in all his varying moods.

Tom's cottage home in the charming village of Hawkscliff was the scene of many exciting incidents, notably in the Phantom of the Cave series, in which the rascally Soames made a villainous but welcome re-appearance.

A typical incident is delightfully illustrated on Page 9 of Magnet 1015 entitled 'Smithy's Pal.' Redwing, no longer at Greyfriars, has written to Smithy, inviting him to visit the cottage at Hawkscliff. The Bounder breaks detention to enable him to comply with Tom's request. The illustration portrays Redwing leaning on the cottage wall, very perturbed that Smithy's absence from the school will be discovered. The Bounder has turned in the saddle to wave a cheery goodbye to his chum, as he pedals along the picturesque village street, apparently unconcerned that expulsion may well await him on his return to Greyfriars.

ROGER JENKINS: It may seem a little ungenerous to disagree with you after you have endorsed my opinions so heartily, but I think that the post 1935 work in the Magnet and Bunter books showed a deterioration which was not due alone to repetitive plots and excessive conversation. The really fine stories of the Golden Age had a sparkling quality, which entertained the reader with new comments, unusual quotations, and incidents which came as a complete surprise because of their novelty. When the Magnet ceased to surprise, after 1935, it ceased to be truly great From then onwards, it coasted along, living on old memories and readers' loyalties.

PETER HANGER: I am always saddened when you and the other experts compare the last years of the Magnet so unfavourably to your own Golden Age. I have expressed the view before that the Magnet reached its peak in the second half of the twenties (First Wharton Rebel series to be precise) and that it maintained its UNIQUELY HIGH standard right to the end. I have always regarded 1938 as a particularly fine year, in spite of TEXAS, and if Egypt be substituted for Texas can say exactly the same for 1932. Really you know, there is so little in it. If only the simple comparative adjective BETTER were used instead of such phrases as vastly superior, I wouldn't even comment let alone protest.

I have read only one Gem from 1911-12 period, The Mystery of the Painted Room, which I finished the week before I received the February C.D. It was a good story and I enjoyed it very much but there must be well over 200 Magnets published after 1954 which I enjoyed more.

OUR COLUMNIST adds: I am entirely in agreement with Roger Jenkins. With regard to Mr. Hanger's remarks, this Column has always spoken in glowing terms of the Rebel Series of 1925, but there were really too many substitute stories at that time for 1925 to be included in the Golden Age of the Magnet. I wonder whether Mr. Hanger, as a boy, first read the later Magnet stories. If so, that "magic wand of nostalgia" may bathe the period in a rosy hue.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

EARLY DAYS

An item from the E. S. Brooks Collection — By R. Blythe

Among the many interesting items to be seen in the E. S. Brooks Archives is a letter, which must be unique, for as you read, you will see that it contains information of unparalleled importance when considering E.S.B's early literary activities. We now know without a shadow of a doubt who published his first tales, and their titles, together with other details of his very early stories. Incidentally it is only because Edwy kept a copy of nearly everything he wrote, including many letters, that we can read this epistle to his brother, penned on that far off day in April 1909. It must also be remembered that he was only 17 years old at the time

This letter has been transcribed from E.S.B's own handwriting which you can take it from me, was pretty atrocious. At some points it was impossible to make out what was written. Where these words occur I have put them in brackets with a question mark.

All stories mentioned in the letter are in my possession in their original manuscript form and as such constitute a very important part of the collection.

Bacton-on-Sea, Norfolk.
April 20th 1909.

Dear Arthur,

Thanks for your letter received today. I am glad that you think well of "The Plague of Weed" and that you are publishing it. Will you let me have my copies as early as possible next week? I'm naturally eager to see it. Do you think your publishing a "serial" such as this will improve the "M.P." (1) at all? M. & F.(2) think it will - makes people want the next number you know.

Since you have a thirst for general information concerning my humble self, I have no objection to setting you up with a few facts Here's to start at the beginning.

As you are aware, my last published story was "The Phantom Volcano" - a tale of Central Africa - and it appeared in No. 244 of "Yes and No" (Nov. 14th 1908).(3) Since then I may say I have had no great success. On the other hand, I think I can claim to having reached a step higher on the ladder notwithstanding the fact that I have had nothing published.

The surprise Mother hinted at is nothing great in reality, but I think it may lead to something better. It was this. In November

last I sent a story called "Jim Goodwin's Homecoming" to the editor of the Novel Magazine, and he had the good taste to accept it. That's all.

Of course, I was in raptures at having gained such a step. From "Yes and No" to the "Novel" is a good long way, you must remember the former is only a third rate (young?) weekly, while the latter is generally considered one of the best "all fiction Monthlies." Such writers as Conan Doyle, G.B. (B.....?), L.G. (M.....?), Richard Marsh, J. S. Fletcher, J. S. Winter, etc., etc. contribute regularly to the "Novel," while "Yes and No" never saw such names.

The price I received (?) for the story was £5 - it being 5,000 words in length. The acceptance of the tale even is a great Xmas box, and I was looking at every post to bring along that fiver. Evidently, it had made up its mind not to come for some little time, for I received the proofs - the first proof of the story - in the latter week of January and sent them back corrected. Then I waited to see "Jim Goodwin's Homecoming" published. I was sure it would appear in the March no. I bought it. Was it in? Of course not! When I had looked the number through you can realise what my thoughts were - with regard to the editor.

And still no fiver made its appearance.

When, on buying the April number and finding the tale not included in the contents, I got desperate and forthwith wrote to the Editor asking when it was likely to appear - and when I should receive payment. To cut a long story short, the reply I got coolly said that the Editor was "hoping to publish my story in either the June or July no." and that "their usual terms were payment on publication or 6 months from the date of acceptance, whichever is the shorter period.[5a]

Anyhow, it is something to know when the story will appear. So, old man, look out for it in the June or July no. of the Novel Magazine.[4] I hope you'll like it. Of course, I haven't got my money yet and won't have until the story comes out. And after all the monetary side of the question is secondary, for I have no doubt that having got one story in the "Novel" I shall get others. And perhaps - who knows? - it may enable me to get into the other mags. I hope it does.

And now to tell you what I have done this year. On week ending Jan. 2nd I had got written "An Act of Providence" (4,500 words) Soon after that I wrote "Dardy" (6,500). After that came "Abducted" a play in one act which I sent to Oswald.[5] Have you

read it bye the bye? He's still got it. If you haven't I should like your opinion on it.

Then on Feb. 1st I started writing "Oswald Raymond's Peril" my first big story. It is a school story and I finished it on Feb. 27th. (I had done 10,000 words of it some time before at Clacton). On rewriting it up it came to close on 70,000 words in length and filled 360 pages of paper.

The story is quite long enough to make a decent sized book. (The average 6/- novel is somewhere about 80,000 words, isn't it?) I wrote to the editor of "Chums," Mr. Newman Flower and asked him if he would read it. Very soon I got a reply to say that "he would be very glad if I would submit the school story" and that "he would give me an early decision thereon."

He did!

About ten days later I got the story back, but a very nice letter accompanied it. Here it is:- (5a)

"Dear Sir,

I have read your serial carefully, and although the style is quite nice, the movement is really far too slow, and therefore I am reluctantly compelled to return it to you. I shall always be glad to see anything you care to send in for Chums, and would point out that we are principally wanting short stories of 3,000 to 3,500 words in length.

Yours faithfully,
The Editor. "

Now I call that a real encouraging letter, don't you? It shows, for one thing, that he liked my style and apparently the only reason why he did not accept the story was because the "movement" was too slow for a serial - which means to say that for a book it would be alright. I intend to send it to Blake & Sons (6) now (it's been lying on my desk for the last month. It'll cost about 1 shilling and twopence to send and 1/2 is 1/2 nowadays. I'll have to get it off soon though).

You will also see from the letter that he particularly asks me to send him short stories. He says that he'll always be glad to see anything of mine. He did see something of mine - the next day too!

I sent him a football story called "A Stolen Match." He's had it about a month now, so I'm hoping for the best. At the same time I sent "Dardy" to the editor of the New Magazine - who is also the editor of "Chums." Of course, I pretended not to know it. I haven't heard anything of "Dardy" so far. Perhaps - but I'll wait

and see.

After I'd got the long story done I wrote a few boy's stories for "Chums," which I haven't even sent out yet. They're in front of me now.

"The Peril of the Pygmies" (4,500)
"For Their Country" (4,000)
"The Two Fugitives" (6,000)

Also a short story called ("The G..... S.....?). I shan't do anything with these until I hear from that Editor. I hope he'll hurry up and write. On Monday I sent him (to the Penny Magazine) a pretty long story called "The Chesterton Murder: an Adventure of Denman Cross, Detective" (6,700).(7) If he takes that I shall love him to the end of his life! Of course, I wrote it specially for the P.M. and if it comes back I shall have to retype it.

At the present moment I am engaged upon another long boy's story called "Among the Solar Planets," being an airship adventure in outer space, it is pretty imaginative and this morning I have been relating an adventure with a weird creature on the moon (I don't know what it is (.....?) yet; I've got to invent that tomorrow). So far I have written about 10,000 words of it. It will take me about 3 weeks to complete. When that time comes, it will be sent to "Chums".(8)

Now, I've told you everything up to date and I hope you're satisfied. Please do <u>not</u> tell Oswald or Nellie anything that this letter contains. That is why I've marked it "Private." I'll tell him all about these stories when they're published ' and that may not be at all. I know that (G.....?) will not say anything.

That's all - half a tick though! I've forgotten to tell you of my first effort at poetry (?) In (Jan?) I wrote 2 or 3 small poems and sent one of them to the "Storyteller." It came back and the others I haven't sent out at all.

I enclose one herewith as a sample just for you to read. I don't know what I shall do with them as yet. Lay them by for a bit I think.

The Novel Mag. offer a guinea for a short goem. I sent on an effort - the result hasn't appeared yet. This is what I sent:-

(not found)

Do you think it was worth sending?

Now, after this long letter, I think I'd better close. Please give my best love to (G.....?) and take it yourself. (I see Oswald is going to have "Sexton Blake" on at the "Grand"(9) - I thought he would). Again renewing my request to let me have the

M.P. as soon as it is published, I
best love to you and (G.....?)
Your affectionate brother
Edwy

Notes:
1. The Grand Theatre Magazine Programme, published in Swansea between 1906 and 1912 approx., for sale in the Grand Theatre and to subscribers. At this period his brother Arthur was the editor. Later a short story by E.S.B. appeared every week for some months.
2. Mother and Father.
3. Copies of this magazine are probably non-existent. The British Museum copies were destroyed by bombing during the war.
4. It appeared in the June issue.
5. Edward Oswald, his elder brother. He was manager and lessee of the Grand Theatre at this time and was a film agent in America some time later.
5a. The original letter is in the collection.
6. Literary Agents.
7. I have no evidence as yet, that any stories mentioned so far were ever published. More research is needed here.
8. This story eventually appeared in the Nelson Lee 10 years later! It was called "In Trackless Space," OS. 220-241, Aug. 1919 to Jan. 1920, and was reprinted in Boys Friend Lib., 1st.Ser. No. 504.
9. This was a play, "Sexton Blake Detective," with Murray Yorke as Sexton Blake and Will Glaze as Tinker. The play was put on the week of Aug. 2nd. 1909.

MODERN BOYS (28) available for exchange. (28 loose copies and two bound volumes, 2-26 and 231-255).
My wants as follows: The King's Air Force (1937 Skipper supplement) Skippers, Adventures, Wizards, years 1936-40. Comics years 1934-40, Champion 726-835.

P. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

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WRITE TO THE EDITOR -
HE IS ALWAYS DELIGHTED TO HEAR FROM YOU.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held January 30th, 1968

The first meeting of 1968 was attended by ten members and a very pleasant meeting was enjoyed by all present.

A letter from Ben Whiter to Tom Porter and the possibility of a meeting between London and Midland members were discussed and it was agreed to investigate the possibility of a get-together with London members in the summer season.

The meeting was in the hands of librarian, Tom Porter and he succeeded in captivating the attention of the meeting for the remainder of the evening apart from Norman Gregory's reading of John Mann's talk entitled "Forty Years On".

There was a quiz and a game called "One Minute Speech," - topics being drawn out of a hat at random. Ian Bennett on "Nelson Lee," Ted Davey on "Chapman," Ray Bennett on "Pon" all gave very amusing little talks.

Tom Porter provided the usual "Collector's Piece" and Anniversary number and Ivan Webster also brought along an Anniversary No. this month. These were No. 367 of "The Popular" Jan. 30th 1926, 42 years old and a most unusual Collector's piece No. 1 of "The Startler" an A.P. publication that ran from 1st March, 1930 to the 18th Feb. 1932, a short life, and it was a paper few of our members had ever heard of. Ivan's Anniversary number, was Magnet No. 1250 "Bold Bad Bunter" for 30th January, 1932 - 36 years ago.

The next meeting is an informal one but a special item is a film of The Ponsnett Railway." This shows an historic steam hauled line of the Black Country (now extinct of course) but it was at the height of its usefulness during the life-span of our favourite papers.

The meeting is on February 27th at the Birmingham Theatre Centre. Members are invited to bring any item for inclusion.

J. H. BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

AUSTRALIA

It is with satisfaction that I can report that the Golden Hours Club held a meeting on 30th January at Cahill's Restaurant, after a long period of inactivity. The main cause of the

inactivity was the loss of our esteemed secretary, Bette Pate, owing to her mother's ill health. I record how much we miss her, and hope that her friends' good wishes will be of help to her at this time. Then, our venue - Stanley Nicholls' Gaslight Bookshop - was also a casualty, and members' personal commitments added to the difficulty of keeping the meetings going.

Now that the meetings have been resumed, it has been decided that the scope shall be widened to cover such subjects as Sherlock Holmes, old films, etc. Members can then bring friends along where interests lay other than in the old papers, and the club may, in this way, gain new members.

Many interesting points were discussed. It was revealed that the Sexton Blake Library is no longer displayed on bookstalls. The agents, Gordon & Gotch, receive only 100 of each title for distribution, in N.S.W. Vic Colby admits that his S.B.L. collection has been complete for some time, and only a few "pink 'uns" remain to be found for the same thing to apply to his Union Jack collection.

Our next meeting is to be on the last Tuesday in March - same place. Best wishes to all our club friends in England, on behalf of all Australian members.

SYD SMYTH

NORTHERN

Meeting held February 10th, 1967

Though secretary Mollie Allison (in distant Australia) and one or two other stalwarts were missing, a steady quorum of regulars turned up for our February meeting at Hyde Park. The occasion, as the Chairman recalled with obvious pleasure, marked the tenth anniversary of his first attendance at a Northern branch meeting, and many of us, no doubt, were impelled to cast our minds back over an eventful and rewarding decade for the hobby.

Business concluded, the first item on the evening's programme was the reading of a series of articles in the local press concerning Sexton Blake's famous bloodhound Pedro. The subject had been raised in reminiscent vein by a Yorkshire Post columnist and further stimulated by Gerry Allison, who had sent him from the Club library a copy of a vintage SBL entitled "The Bloodhound's Revenge.

We were next subjected to a quiz-inquisition by Geoffrey Wilde who kindly warmed us up with ten hobby quickies as a starter. The main competition, though, was based on what one might call Magnet sub titles (no hyphen!). Geoffrey had invented ten bogus, but plausible, Magnet story titles, and included them in a list of

genuine ones, some used more than once. Our job was to sort them out - and a teasingly tricky task it was, too. Those who came fairly fresh through the puzzle were soon racking their brains even more over Geoffrey's elaborate marking scheme, which included penalties for wrong answers. These schoolmasters! We have the same trouble with Quelchy. Quite a number ended up with minus scores, but Elsie Taylor emphasised her detailed knowledge of the Magnet with the remarkable positive score of 21.

After a break for refreshments Jack Allison read to us an amusing story by our postal member John Jarman which harked back to a nostalgic recollection of Derby Day 1928. And very enjoyable too.

After a brief discussion the meeting wound up at 9.20 p.m. Next meeting - March 9th.

JOHNNY BULL

LONDON

Some twenty years ago, the inaugural meeting of the club took place at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S.E. 22., and by a streak of fate, the 20th Annual General Meeting took place at the same address and for that, in the self-same room. Five of the original hobbyists were present, the date Sunday, Feb. 18th. These were Len and Josie Packman, the hosts, daughter Eleanor, Bob Blythe and Ben Whiter.

The retiring chairman, Don Webster, presided over the preliminaries, minutes, correspondence, finance, two librarians' reports and venues for future meetings. Then stating that Neil Beck was progressing favourably as regards health, went on to say that host Len had slipped off a bus but was now slowly getting better; hence the reason for change of venue at the last moment.

Len Packman was duly elected chairman for 1968 and the retiring chairman, Don Webster, was given a hearty vote of thanks for his good work during year of office. Rest of officers re-elected en bloc, all being thanked most heartily, especially the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe.

Eric Lawrence read an extract from the Reading "Evening Post" of Dec. 27, 1967. The column, in which the extract appeared, goes under the heading of "Just My Own View," and is written by Basil Amps. It was unanimously agreed to be one of the best newspaper pieces as yet. Thanks must be accorded to our C. H. Chapman in sending Basil Amps a copy of "Billy Bunter's Picture Book," and to Eric for bringing along the reading. Brian Doyle told of the

(concluded on page 22)...

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

H. MACHIN (Preston): "You go on buying the papers with hope in your heart." How aptly Danny sums up the situation in February 1918. How often in those far-off days we parted with a hardly-earned three half-pence - hopefully, but doubtfully - to return home with Magnet or Gem. To read the first few paragraphs was enough - a speedy realization that it would have been far far better to have kept the three halfpence in our pockets. All too often did this tragedy occur.

I wonder what Danny will have to say of the Magnets of 1919 and 1920 or did he pack up wasting his money on them (as I did)?

In those years, that is where the Nelson Lee scored. At least you knew where you were; if you were a St. Frank's fan, you were sure of a good, wholesome story written by the same author week by week.

J. RANDOLPH COX (Northfield, U.S.A.): I feel compelled to make some comments about the article "Nick Carter - America's Sexton Blake" by Derek Smith, which appeared in the Annual. As something of a student of the Nick Carter story, I found it of interest. Mr. Smith has done his research well and it is not his fault that his source material is so full of errors that they flaw an otherwise entertaining piece. Very few writers on dime novels seem to have read enough of the Carter series to spot the errors in such works as Edmund Pearson's DIME NOVELS or in Robert Clurman's introduction to NICK CARTER, DETECTIVE. Having read about 300 of the stories in the past eight months, I can claim greater familiarity.

As far as I can tell, there were no Nick Carter stories in the seventies, as Clurman states and Smith reiterates. There is no record of a previous use of the name in any of the letters in the Street & Smith files on Nick Carter. I may be mistaken and I have written to the offices of Conde Nast (who merged with Street & Smith some years ago) to find out.

Nick Carter's father and mentor was named Sim Carter, not Seth Carter.

The most prolific author of the stories was named Frederick Merrill Van Rensselaer Dey, though he used the pseudonym of Marmaduke Dey often enough to be confusing. Thus, most of his biographies give his name as Marmaduke and not Merrill.

The legend of editorial disapproval of Nick's wife Ethel persists in spite of the fact that she is very much a part of the series (though only mentioned on occasion) as late as 1901. For some reason, she is called "Edith" in these later stories. Chick Carter's wife seems to have been hastily dispatched in one of the numbers of NICK CARTER LIBRARY (No. 18: "The Great Detective Defied") which may have begun this legend. I've seen it mentioned so often I merely smile when it comes up again.

One error which Mr. Smith did not repeat is the one about Nick not smoking or drinking. He did smoke cigars and in the pulp series in the 1930's, chain-smoked cigarettes. Though not a great drinker, he often drank beer and (if his disguise called for it) something stronger.

ARTHUR HOLLAND (Wellington, Australia): The names of the twins in the Dreadnought series were Leonard and David Fenwick. The Dreadnought was a warm favourite of mine and I have both these ripping serials complete.

I was delighted with the special enlarged Christmas number of the C.D. and I received much pleasure from our latest Annual which helped to make my Christmas season complete. I read "Mr. Buddle's Christmas Case" through twice. I hope that some day all the Slade stories will be published in a cloth bound volume.

I wish to congratulate H. Webb for his beautiful cover which really thrilled me.

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): One of the joys of Danny's Diary is his monthly mention of

movies that made up the silent saga.

In the December issue he refers to Louise Huff, an actress forgotten by picture-goers today.

I looked up Daniel Blum's "Pictorial History of the Silent Screen," and was pleased to note Louise Huff was mentioned six times, and pictured in five scenes from her old movies. She first appeared in 1916.

There are two other Huffs mentioned. Justin Huff, who played bit parts in 1915, and Jackie Huff, a lad of about 11 or 12 years of age, who appeared with Marion Davies in "Zander the Great" in 1925.

(According to Danny's Diary, Louise Huff made many films with Jack Pickford, and eventually became his wife. -ED.)

R. BLYTHE (Neasden): Frank Lay is puzzled by the fact that his records show L. J. Beeston as author of "The Stowaways Quest" yet E.S.B. is given credit for it on the cover of B.F.L. 403.

The problem is now solved! In the collection of E.S.B's letters is one of three pages addressed to Hinton dated 17/5/11 giving a synopsis of a story in which a boy stows away on a ship bound for the Tropics.

A few days later Brooks received a letter from Horace Phillips dated 26/5/11 asking E.S.B. to call on him. Horace Phillips was editor of "The Boys Herald."

Brooks made an appointment to see him on the 28th, and on the 30th we find a letter, in which occurs the following sentences -

"I am getting on with the second instalment of "The Stoaways Quest" and will let you have it on Thursday morning. The curtain to the first instalment I enclose herewith." From internal evidence I should think he wrote this story under the nom-de-plume of Norman Greaves.

DAVID HOBBS (Seattle): In line with your recent editorial comments, with which I could not agree more, regarding the present day exploitation of smut in all purveyable forms, the thought occurred to me while reading a second-hand Wodehouse I picked up for a dime, that while the title, "Three Man and a Maid" probably raised no eyebrows when it was originally published, back in the days of our innocence, now-a-days it would be interpreted in a very different light by almost anyone seeing it on a bookseller's shelf. Especially if it were to be re-issued with some lurid, and wholly irrelevant, paper cover.

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): Recently looking over a copy of The Jester, dated 23 Feb., 1929, I was surprised to see an advertisement for No. 1 of Fun and Fiction. The first Fun and Fiction was born in 1911, and died a few years later. It was noted for really sensational serials, and three of its 32 Magnet-sized pages were given over to cartoons and comic strips. All the stories were well illustrated, and a number I have dated Sep. 12, 1912, shows what must have been the world's first helicopter. On the green back cover Dainty Daisy Dimples, the tea-shop girl is shown flying at sea level in what is described as a waterplane, but has a strong resemblance to a modern 'copter.

Apparently the second Fun and Fiction venture followed the pattern of the first. Picture of the front cover shown in the Jester advert shows soldiers treking across a desert waste, an illustration to a story called, "The Foreign Legion." At the mast-head it was stated that a colour plate is included, also "3 complete film novels." The price was twopence.

I have an idea that the second venture of F. and F. did not last as long as the first. I can find no other mention of it in many papers of the same period. Does any C.D. reader recall the 1929 Fun and Fiction appearance? It would be interesting to learn how it measured up to the first, a really attractive paper that perished when the guns of World War One began to blast.

Edited by Eric Fayne, Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.
Litho-duplicated by York Duplicating Services, 12a The Shambles, York.