

42
(Vol.4) No. 42 : June 1950.

The
**COLLECTOR'S
DIGEST** Price: 1s. 1d.
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32 Pages again.

Reproduction of Front Cover of Volume 2
No. 42 ~ "Pluck" (New Series) ~ ~
The caption of which is as follows:~

"Now then," said
Cookey. ~ "don't
you whistle at
me ~ 'your' 'at'
don't fit yet very
well."

~

COMPLETE STORIES FOR ALL



THE MESSENGER BOY
AND

MOONSTONE LAGOON



Last Minute News:OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB : NORTHERN SECTIONInaugural DinnerRendezvous Cafe, Boar Lane, Leeds. 3rd June, 1950.

I have just returned from a right good do, and glad am I that I had the foresight to leave room for a few comments in this issue.

It went with a swing from start to finish. After an enjoyable repast, toasts were drunk to "Our Guest," Leonard Packman (just concluding his Northern Tour); "Our President", Frank Richards (this was followed by the singing of 'He's a jolly good Fellow' which made the rafters ring), "The Hobby", and "The Collectors' Digest".

It was discovered that we have quite a number of excellent 'after dinner speakers'.

Telegrams were sent to Frank Richards and Bob Blythe. Photographs were taken by "The Yorkshire Evening News". Then for a couple of hours the room hummed with chatter as men of all ages recaptured their youth, and the atmosphere was scented with nostalgia.

Present were Norman Smith, H. Barlow, G. Allison, H. Twinham, C. Simpson, Miss V. Coates, R. G. Hudson, Tom Sinclair, and Mrs. Sinclair, W. F. Sawyer, Mrs. Sawyer, and Wilfred Sawyer, W. L. Williamson, J. H. Dernott, and H. Leckenby.

From afar: Len Packman, Phil. Warren (Eccles), F. G. Beardsell (Stockport), Harry Dowler (Manchester), Francis Case (Liverpool), Harold Ogden and Mrs. Ogden (Manchester), T. W. Puckrin (Middlesbrough), A. Holmes (Colne).

Congratulations, Bill Sawyer, on a fine job.

Herbert Leckenby.



Vol.4. No.42.

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JUNE 1950

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Happy Event. The first meeting of the Northern Section Old Boys' Book Club briefly referred to in our May number, was a delightful occasion. When I entered the meeting room I found several fellows already there, and although they had been complete strangers to each other until a few minutes before, they were chatting away like old friends. That was the spirit the whole evening; it really did one's heart good. Everyone seemed to throw off years from their shoulders. It was just as if we were meeting somewhere in the Greyfriars country, where no one ever grows old.

And at the moment of writing plans are well advanced for the Dinner in Leeds on June 3rd. Hopes are high for a fine assembly. Leonard Packman will be with us as honoured guest, and altogether it looks like being a "reight good do."

Support in High Places. My word!. We are getting on, for a Minister of the Crown cordially supports us now. Did you see what Dr. Edith Summerskill said the other day? (If not, see our press cutting section). Evidently she's in complete agreement with what Bill Sawyer said in his "Manchester Guardian" letter. Whats more, she's written to Frank Richards, as you will also see.

Yes, and whatever you do, don't miss that cutting from "The Times" of May 1st. When we got space in the "Manchester Guardian" and "Daily Telegraph" I exclaimed "There only remains "The Times,"" And it happened, for there's the "leader" writer of that stately journal speaking knowledgeably of Mr. Quelch, Harry Wharton & Co, Skinner, Snoop and Scott. Well, where do we go from here?

+++++

Another Exhibition. Since Bill Sawyer entered the circle, there's been great activity in the Northern territory. His latest scoop is in obtaining the approval of the Leeds Corporation Committee for an exhibition of old boys books. This will be held in the near future, and will be on the lines at York and Islington last year. the bulk of the papers will come from my collection, but we shall want your help in various directions to make it another success. We know we shan't be disappointed. More details later.

+++++

Not so Good. And now for a more sombre note. The report of a survey among 10,000 Birmingham teenagers was recently published, and it would appear all is not well in the second city. It was not all gloom, of course, but there was enough to cause a lot of worried frowns. It was found, for instance, that quite a number could not spell simple words like "pictures" and "went". Where reading was concerned the survey revealed that some couldn't

read, many who could, didn't read, and among those who did, "No Orchids for Miss Blandish" and "Forever Amber" stood high in popularity. Good heavens! And we who left our teens long ago used to get into trouble for reading the ¹/₂ Marvel, the Boys Friend, and some with very stern parents, even the Magnet. Old timers will smile wryly when they think of the cost of present day education, and com---, no, dash it, I mustn't drift into things political.

+++++

Those No.1's. You would see in May issue a request to report any No.1's you are lucky enough to possess. The idea is a feature in the next Annual. There will be more about the Annual in the July issue. Its going to be a job to beat last year's, but we're going to try. The years getting on, and we want articles in in good time. So get down to it, won't you? In the fourth Annual I want to see less often the name of

Yours sincerely,
HERBERT LECKENBY.

THE AMAZING WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON

(The following extremely interesting letter from Jimmy Stewart Hunter will have a special appeal to old-timers who remember Murray Graydon, writer of countless thrilling yarns over several decades. Perhaps some reader can help regarding Robert Murray. H.L.)

Dear Editor,

I have received a long letter from Mr. Vincent Starrett, whom you will know as one of the leading figures in American literary circles, the writer of BOOKS ALIVE column in the CHICAGO TRIBUNE, and an authority on Sherlock Holmes.

Here are some extracts from his letter, concerning William Murray Graydon, which will, I am sure, interest readers of C.D.:

"When I was in London in 1924, I visited Graydon at Fleetway House. I found Graydon a slight, dapper, friendly little man with a waxed moustache, and that is about all I remember of his appearance. He was delighted to receive an old admirer and we spent a happy two hours together in his cubicle at Fleetway House. At some time during the conversation he pulled open a deep lower drawer and revealed what seemed to be hundreds of slim paper-backed books. They were all SEXTON BLAKES, he said, and he had written them all. I begged him for one as a souvenir of my visit, and he hunted for some time for a title that he remembered with pleasure. It was called, I think, "The Case of the Four Barons." This he autographed for me, and I still have it although it has been some years now since I have looked at it.

"He asked me which of his books I had liked best and I told him RED ROSE AND WHITE. He said that a rather nice edition of this had been published in England in cloth covers, and regretted that he had no copy of it to give me; then he dug deeper than ever in the bottomless drawer and came up with a small paper-bound reprint of the title. This, too, he autographed for me, and I am happy to say I still have that book too. It was signed 'Alfred Armitage' which he explained was one of his pen names. He told me, I remember, a great deal about his family and hoped I would be in England long enough to visit them in his home. Probably he told me a great deal about his early days in the States, too, but I made no notes of our conversation and I have no memory of this. We agreed to meet againbut I was called home within a day or two and had to write him that I could not keep the engagement. It has just occurred to me that during our conversation Graydon asked me if I remembered Pedro, the dog, and told me with a note of pride in his voice that he had created Pedro."

I think Mr. Walter Webb, who was positive (in the September C.D.) that W.M.G. created Pedro, will

be glad to have confirmation from Graydon himself.

Writing of Graydon's U.S. period, Mr. Starrett says that Graydon was a protege of Edward S. Ellis, the well-known American boys' writer; and Ellis said of Graydon's EXILED TO SIBERIA that "it dripped with color, as if the author had lived in Russia all his life." Among others that Mr. Starrett mentions are PRINCESS OF THE PURPLE PALACE, THE RAJAH'S FORTRESS, and a series of historical stories about the American Revolutionary War.

Mr. Starrett's introduction to Graydon's work was when, as a boy in the late 90's, he read the middle part of a serial THE CRYPTOGRAM. He thinks it may later have been printed in England. Mr. Starrett says "Before I die I should like to know how the story began and how it ended" -- and I'd certainly like to procure a copy for him if it exists. Can any of the brotherhood help with information?

Another query -- with regard to Graydon's son, Robert Murray. I had to tell Mr. Starrett that he was dead, but I had to guess that the date was just before the War. Can anyone fill in the rather sketchy biographical details given in the ANNUAL?

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST

No. 7 - "Pluck"

1st Series - Nov. 24th, 1894 - Oct. 29th, 1904 - 518

2d Series - Nov. 5th, 1904 - Mar. 18th, 1916 - 594

By Herbert Leckenby

Although "Pluck" never quite reached the top flight among boys' weeklies it had one claim to distinction, for, in it St. Jims was born. Readers of "Pluck" were the first to hear of Jack Blake, Herries and Digby, and to chuckle over the sensational arrival of D'Arcy. True Tom Merry waited until the school had the dignity of a paper to itself, and the school only stayed within yellow covers for about the length of a term, nevertheless the dist-

inction is there. However, to start at the beginning.

No.1 of "Pluck" 1st series, appeared November 24th, 1894. Its advent, no doubt, was due to the success of the "Marvel" and the Union Jack, which had then been in existence twenty and seven months respectively. Actually in the beginning, the title of the youngest of the trio was "Stories of Pluck" and it was to specialise in stories of brave deeds of soldiers, sailors, firemen, policemen, etc. Airmen of course were unheard of except in balloons. It had 16 pages of three columns, and its cover was yellow with printing in red ink. Twelve pages or so were devoted to a complete story, filling up with a serial and the editor's chat. "Stories of" was soon dropped from the title and the stories then became more varied. After about two years the red cover printing was changed to black or bronze blue.

Several Nelson Lee stories appeared in "Pluck" four of them being No.118 "Saved from Siberia"; 137 "The Missing Admiral"; 158, "A Christmas Mystery" (Double Number 1897) and 186, "Captain Twilight". Other popular authors of the day whose work frequently appeared in "Pluck" were Henry St. John, John G. Rowe, Paul Herring, S. Clarke Hook, and Alec G. Pearson. Artists whose work could often be seen were Harry Lane, Val Reading, T.W. Holmes, Fred Barrett, R.J. Macdonald (as early as 1900), and Leonard Shields.

Towards the end of the 1st series, serials reprinted from the Boys' Friend appeared. These included "Clive Hardacres Schooldays", "Val the Boy Acrobat" and "Silver Blaze".

On November 5th, 1904, "Pluck" again following in the footsteps of the "Marvel" and "Union Jack" became a penny paper. Whereas the "Marvel" settled down with two complete stories, and the "Union Jack" with one, "Pluck" tried three, in addition to a serial. A series which started in No.1 concerned "The Five Comrades" (one being a Jap.) by S. Clarke Hook. The stories were something on the lines of

Jack, Sam and Pete, but they did not catch on, and were soon dropped.

Early on came the stories of "The Captain, the Cook, and the Engineer" usually referred to by old-timers as the Cookey Scrubbs yarns. These appeared under the name Harry Belbin, but were actually written by H.J.Garrish. Mr.Garrish completed 50 years service with the Amalgamated Press towards the end of the war, and was still there in 1949. He was inimitable in writing a yarn of stirring adventure blended with delightfully whimsical humour, far superior to those of Jack, Sam and Pete. The "Cookey Scrubbs" yarns were Garrish at his best; and they deserved a far longer run. They were illustrated, by the way, by Arthur Clarke and a grand job he made of it.

With No.106, Nov.10th, 1906, came that historic story "Jack Blake of St. Jims". I venture to say that when the editor okayed the proofs that day in the long ago, he little dreamed that nearly 50 years on that sturdy member of the Fourth would still be at the school by the silvery Rhyl. No, more likely, he would look upon it just as another story for boys of the period, to while a pleasant hour or two away.

Several others followed, but they had to take turns with two other series of school stories, those of Specs. & Co. at Lyncroft, by H.Clarke Hook, and Jack North's (J.N.Pentelow) Wycliffe yarns. All were splendid stories, but dear old "Specs" is forgotten except by a very few, and Wycliffe passed into the shadows long, long ago, yet still revered by many.

After the St. Jim's stories had been transferred to the "Gem", "Pluck" continued with school yarns for a time. They shared the paper with another complete story, frequently detective (the

three complete story idea was dropped soon after the start), and a serial. In addition to the school ones already mentioned, there were some particularly fine ones by Michael Storm, a few by Lewis Hockley, and of Haygarth by Jack North. Haygarth was really Wycliffe re-born, made necessary because Jack North had made his characters grow older. This period with the school yarn prominent was, in my opinion, "Plucks" best.

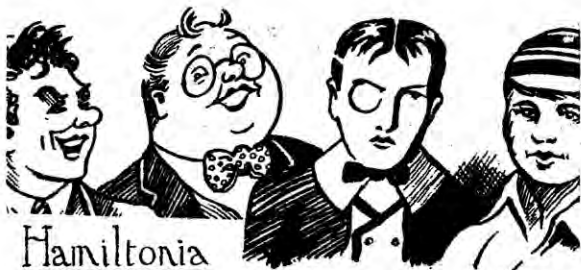
Then followed a fairly long series concerning Will Spearing, smart young policeman of Scotland Yard. He, apparently, was the same Spearing as the burly, somewhat dense detective inspector who frequently sought Sexton Blake's help in the "Union Jack". Still another series, short lived, but sought after to-day, dealt with circus life, and were written by Charles Hamilton, under pen-name Harry Dorrian.

There were other short stories too numerous to mention; and towards the end, popular films of the day appeared in story form.

It will be seen that "Pluck" ran for over 20 years, so it was by no means a failure. Yet somehow, it seemed never to be as healthy as its brothers, the "Marvel" and the "Union Jack". Perhaps it was a question that three's a crowd. Whereas Sexton Blake settled down in the "Union Jack" for decades, and the "Marvel" had "Jack, Sam and Pete for a score of years, "Pluck" was always chopping and changing, yet in my humble opinion, many of the stories tried were superior to those concerning Clarke Hook's trio.

And here's something I have often pondered over. Supposing the "Gem" had never been born in 1907, and the St. Jim's stories had continued in "Pluck", would that paper have run on until the Second World War instead of dying in the First? Or would St. Jim's have long ago passed into oblivion along with Lyncroft, Haygarth, Abbotscrag, and all the other schools which dwelt awhile within the yellow covers of "Pluck". Its an illuminating thought, but one which cannot be answered.

(Note: We have been asked for a write-up on the "Dreadnought". Can anyone oblige?)



Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Bill Sawyer's letter published in the "Manchester Guardian" (reproduced last month) created a lot of interest. It brought him a big mail, and as a sequel several members to the Northern Section of the Old Boys' Book Club. And, I can't help wondering if Dr. Summerskill's remarks just afterwards came just as a coincidence, or whether the letter gave her her cue, for one can take it for granted she reads the "Manchester Guardian". In any event, its all very gratifying.

Whats more, his letter has twice been referred to in "World's Press News", trade organ of newspaperdom. What they had to say on the second occasion will be found among the press cuttings. Evidently Bill caused quite a stir in Fleet Street.

One was sorry to learn, though, that those excellent Lynwood stories had not sold too well, but

they do come into a rather different category to the question as to whether a revived "Magnet" would be as popular as of old. It would have to be done by a firm like the A.P., prepared to lay out a tidy sum in preliminary advertising. That a new boys paper can succeed - well, see what "World's Press News" says about Hulton's "Eagle". Anyway, you will see from Frank Richard's letter that a "Magnet" on the bookstalls once more is at least, within the bounds of possibility. It may be that the new stories in an enlarged "Comet" are just by way of a try-out as I suggested last month. And with the thin end of the wedge in, who knows. However, we must wait and see.

+ + + + +

The "School Friend" is back, but oh lor! in very different form. What's the reason for this "story in pictures" craze? Is it really suggested that the present younger generations cannot read very well, or that they haven't much time. Its to be hoped that if ever they do revive the "Magnet" they will keep off this silly business. The charm of the great majority of the Greyfriars stories was their engrossing plots, fine character drawing blended with real humour; something you could settle down with by the fireside after the day's work was done. You can't get that with a few pictures. So have a heart Fleetway House.

I am always being asked "What about poor old Rookwood"? Well here's an account of Jimmy Silver's arrival there, written by Jack Cook, and one in Canada Bill Gander is busy writing "Rookwood Review", but that's for the "Annual".

JIMMY JOINS UP.

Being a brief account of how the newest, rawest kid of Rookwood School found his feet, licked all

comers and became Uncle James Captain of the Classical side and shining light of the Lower school.

Reading of the advent of a new boy to school, in our popular papers of our youth was always something of a thrill. When Jimmy Silver first came to Rookwood he sat in the railway carriage, unnoticed - excepting when somebody trod on his feet and unreasonably asked him if he wanted all the carriage."

Yet within the hour he had calmly pinched the Modern senior brake, and taking the reins had driven in terrific speed right through the gateway of the old school and right up to the ivy clad stone porch of the grey old School House.

Reading on, we learn that the enterprising Tommy Dodd spoofs Jimmy by solemnly telling him he must wear his cap in Hall - "You see, you can't expect the Head to know by the shape of your nose or the cut of your classic brow that you belong to the Classical side. And with that, the smiling Tommy and his pals walk away. Poor, innocent Jimmy walks into Hall as per instruction, wearing his cap! Bulkeley reaches for his cane, and Tommy Dodd puts in a helpful word:

"They've got no more manners than bears," said Tommy Dodd calmly. Still, coming into Hall with his cap on is a bit thick even for a Classic."

Crimson faced, Jimmy escapes, amid hilarious laughter - and is tripped at the doorway by the Moderns who pinch his cap.

Later that night there is a Modern raid on the Classical dorm., with disastrous results for the too cocky Moderns. Jimmy and Co. score a victory by tying up their rivals back to back and allowing them to wriggle home as best they can. They vow vengeance on Jimmy who had been the means of turning the tables on them.

Jimmy suddenly finds himself in the peculiar position of having the casting vote in the Junior Captaincy Election. Tommy Dodd versus Smythe, Smythe as Classical candidate. He is courted assiduously, fought over, cajoled but to no avail. At

the height of the election fever Jimmy calmly announces he hasn't decided. At the very last second Jimmy votes for Smythe - and Smythe is elected by one extra vote.

Jimmy's nerve enrages Lovell & Co. who try to kick him out of the end study - with the result that Lovell & Co. receive a bottle of ink over their chivvies. Lovell loses his temper and later follows Jimmy to the old quarry, where Jimmy had begun a spot of exploring. Lovell tries to jump a chasm to reach Jimmy - and slips on the brink. Jimmy climbs down and rescues Lovell, carrying him back to school pickaback. Peace in the end study.

Smythe's choice of a team to face Greyfriars gets Jimmy & Co. mad - they rag Smythe's study, and Bulkeley makes them clean up! Greyfriars wins - 6 - nil. Later, a four handed mill takes place; Fistical Four versus Dodd & Co. Jimmy licks Dodd and honours are even. The old rivalry remains a ding-dong battle for many a fine yarn after this - Jimmy becomes Captain, but its still a question of which is Cock House at Rookwood School.

— Finis —

Magnet Titles (contd.)

247. Top Dog; 248. The Bounder's Triumph; 249. The Greyfriars Crusaders; 250. Sacked from the School; 251. The Schoolboy Renegade; 252. Mark Linley's last fight; 253. Drummed out of Greyfriars; 254. Bob Cherry's Barring Out; 255. Harry Wharton's Win; 256. The Greyfriars Pantomime; 257. Fish's Fag Agency; 258. Rake of the Remove; 259. Left in the Lurch; 260. Harry Wharton & Co's Rescue; 261. Scorned by Greyfriars; 262. A Split in the Sixth; 263. Captain Coker; 264. A Son of the Sea; 265. The Captain's Minor; 266. Bob Cherry's Secret; 267. Chums Afloat; 268. The Schoolboy Conjuror; 269. Barred by the Fags; 270. Bob Cherry's Chase; 271. The Impossible Four; 272. The Schoolboy Money-lender; 273. 'Friars versus Saints;

THE POSTAL ORDER SAGA
by C. Wright.

W.G. Bunter was very much like Mr. Micawber in one respect. He was always waiting for something to turn up, but tricky as Micawber was in getting credit, the Owl had him licked to a frazzle as it were. The amount pocketed by Bunter on the strength of that wonderful postal order during his long and varied career at Greyfriars must have been immense.

It is true that the long expected order did turn up on one famous occasion, but as it was only for a humble tanner, and made payable at Courtfield at that, W.G. was more disgusted than pleased at receiving it.

The famous postal order was sprung on nearly every new boy who appeared at Greyfriars, quite a few of them were warned of it by some good samaritan, but as a general rule Bunter had been there first so to speak.

The times that the long suffering Famous Five cashed it for him must be practically countless, Mauly too, being another victim who often advanced sums large and small to get rid of the persistent Owl, so its nuisance value was pretty good too. Even hard nuts like the Bounder and Fishy were caught on rare occasions by the Wily Owl, although it must be admitted that he got more bootings than bobs from the last named two.

Had the "Magnet" continued on through the second World War the celebrated postal order must surely have become incorporated in the Greyfriars coat of arms, and Mr. Quelch would have had to devote a chapter or so on it in his History of Greyfriars.

The local shopkeepers immediately gave him the marble eye on mention of it, and even butlers at the houses where he spent a good many vacations were not immune from being "tapped" to cash it in advance. In fact Bunter and his postal order were synonymous like Gussy and his topper, or Inky and his wonderful English.

Dr. Edith brought up on 'Magnet' and 'Gem'

DR. EDITH SUMMERSKILL, Minister of National Insurance, said in London to-day that sadistic publications and pictures were among the worst enemies of society because they were provided at the expense of the most helpless among us—our children.

She told the Married Women's Association: "Having been brought up on the 'Magnet' and the 'Gem,' I was astonished at learning the pornographic rubbish it is possible for our young people to buy.

"And not more astonished when I go to the cinema to see pictures and for 30 minutes endure shooting, stabbing and choking scenes presented as if they were the normal British way of life."

But there were so-called responsible people who, by their prejudicial remarks, did more harm to the home than the more obvious conscienceless scoundrels responsible for sadistic films and novels.

Yorkshire Evening News
29.4.50.

Back to School

Back from the holidays and the homes where they have received the pinching attention of parents, been fattened on the cream of amusement, indulged in cakes and creams, come braggarts and bullies, brats and babes and blockheads, the swift, the surly, the skillful, the solid, plumped

World's Press News
4.5.50

SEVERAL newspapermen have written heartily agreeing with W. F. Sawyer's letter (WPN, April 20) to the MG, that if the Magnet, Gem, Chama, and so on were used again, juvenile delinquency would drop. But J. B. Allen, of J. B. Publications, sends a dampener.

Because of similar opinions, he decided to try out the market with two Frank Richards books. Mr. Richards wrote two special school tales for him, one for boys and the other for boys and girls. J. B. Publications issued the books at retail prices of 4d. and 3d., deliberately low, and sent specimen copies to 250 wholesalers.

Result, only ten placed orders. J. B. Publications were left with many thousand copies on their hands. What, asks Mr. Allen, can publishers do?

World's Greatest Collection of "Penny Dreadfuls" Is Owned by Barking Man

The man with the largest private collection of boys' magazines in the world is 55-year-old Mr. John Medcraft—and yet he has no youngsters of his own! He and his brother James are partners in a Hydraulic Leather Manufacturing Company at Herford Road, Barking.

'Bookshops?' Said 'Al'

The road block comes from wholesalers—who, of course, believe they know their market. Advertising promotion can circumvent it—but is admittedly costly. Hulton spared no money over Eagle, but they got their one million initial sale.

Perhaps there is another method.

J. B. Publications might remember Robert de Graf, who is to bring out his Glossy Pocket Books in Britain after launching them with great success through drug stores in the States. He got the idea from Governor Al Smith, who asked how his autobiography was going.

"It's in all the bookshops," he was told.

"Bookshops," said Al, "who the hell goes to bookshops?"

So alternatives were developed.

From this rather rare occupation he regularly turns to his even rarer hobby. For although the garnering of "penny dreadfuls" and "twopenny bloods" is becoming increasingly popular these days, there is still only a comparatively small circle of collectors in Britain.

Mr. Medcraft can boast that at his home he has a library of some 2000 bound volumes. Each volume contains upwards of 20 magazines some dating back as far as 1840. The collection has taken 30 years to build up and he is still adding to it.

Shortly before Easter he recently purchased several lots—total value £50—in an auction at Hodgsons, of Chancery Lane (brother James always attends auctions because John has slight difficulty in hearing).

Besides large numbers of such well-known weeklies as 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem,' he possesses magazines whose names will only be remembered by the older generation—the 'Sweeney Todd Magazine' for example.

Main difference between the old magazines and the new said Mr. Medcraft, is the recent upsurge of interest in sport. "Prior to 1900 sporting articles were more or less unknown but now they are one of the greatest factors in modern papers," he related.

Ossett Observer
6.4.50.

HEROES OF

attention of parents, been fattened on the cream of amusements, indulged in cabarets and circuses, come braggers and bullies, brats and babes and blockheads, the wit, the wit, the shrewd, the snail, gathered together as boys—

As founders and architects, architects, strength, wear-rough, and down-rough, set

All by the name of dog—
pouring into classrooms and corridors, pouring over playgrounds and paths, a mass of vital, fire-spread crystals in a foundry, there to be annealed, shaped, and stamped by men most tireless, most patient, and deservingly of the richest crochets their rarely won politeness brought. The reformulator is no ordinary teacher, and so long as youth continues it is impossible to look upon him as one. Psychologically it is found to make their work in the classroom more effective than any other line of their craft, but persons without wisdom. They are the embodiment of endless knowledge and abiding love of conduct which they seek to follow on those for whom ignorance is bliss. They are to be cultivated whenever possible, just as fair rearing among boys do, but apply. They have never been boys, but were born with cases and marks—marks, Harry Wharton and Co. in the table that delighted their youth had only to use a thing here and Mr. Quetch was completely bewildered. Probably he was ignorant of the principles of cricket. He was a just and even a respected enemy, but not a human being. Had the stories ever been told (even Mr. Quetch's tale of virtue, also known as that Harry Wharton and Co. might have suggested just a bit priggish) and the really interesting characters of the business would have been in accepted case. Skinner had Sneyd and Stort. Certainly no man without the broadest experience and liveliest memories of his own boyhood could have conceived such an astonishing collection as that composition form in fiction.

The Times of 1.5.50.

Quetch Observer
6.4.50.

HEROES OF BOYHOOD FICTION

BOOK CLUB KEEPS THEM ALIVE

About a dozen middle-aged men from all parts of the North of England gathered round a table in a Leeds apartment on a recent Saturday evening and talked for two hours about Billy Bunter, Tom Merry, Nelson Lee and the other heroes of the Boys' Book Club. Formed in London about a year ago by a few ardent collectors of boys' books which ceased publication when paper supplies were curtailed in 1940, the club now has members all over the world, even in Iceland and Brazil, and numbers amongst them famous athletes, lawyers, Mayfair street specialists, authors, headmasters and at least one bishop. It had an exciting cost-drama (that of revolvers, pipes, masks, James and life-savers), and published a monthly magazine, "Collector's Digest", which helps collectors to get in touch with one another and gives news and interesting inside information about the authors (many and varied) of the boys' books and the heroes they created.

BENEFICIAL EFFECT

Many members of the club feel that, although much of this fiction was somewhat lurid, it was cleaner and less harmful than much that is being produced for youngsters to-day, and on the whole had a beneficial influence on its readers, turning their adventurous imaginations into harmless channels. Journals like "Chums," "Boys' Own Paper," etc., enjoyed a particularly high standing in this respect.

old magazines and the new such as Mr. Medcraft, in the sport, upurge to 1900 sporting articles were more or less unknown but now they are one of the greatest factors in modern papers," he related.

Whether the old papers are of better quality than they are is a question about which Mr. Medcraft is undecided. On the whole he favours the new "modern papers seem better" writers and are probably more valuable for boys," he commented.

SENTIMENTAL VALUE

Why has Mr. Medcraft adopted such an unusual hobby? He explains that although he occasionally browses through the pages of his collection, he did not purchase the magazines for their reading value.

"It started with a craze for the acquirement value," he explained to the extent that they have got something that has other people in the country have not," he declared.

Dagenham Post
19.4.50

As, owing to continued paper scarcity there seems little likelihood of the deficient papers being revived, there is quite a demand, largely unmet, for old copies. It is the object of the recently-formed Northern Section of the Old Boys' Book Club to form a collection of as many of the papers as possible, from which donations can be made from time to time. The secretary, Mr. W. F. Sawyer, 75, Tarsalide-drive, Epsom, Surrey, London, will be glad to hear from any one who has any old copies available.

Old Boys' Book Club

WOOD GREEN MEETING, MAY, 21ST.

There was a splendid attendance on the occasion of the above meeting, with Clive Simpson of the Northern branch as the distinguished visitor. Len Packman, sprightly as ever, opened the meeting in his usual good style. The minutes of the last meeting and the months correspondence were read, and the Treasurer's report adopted. One of the letters read was from Glyn Protheroe, F.Z.S., Editor of "Feathered Friends". This gentleman, not only furnished a member of the clan with a copy of the number containing the story by Frank Richards, has also become a member and has offered two tickets, either for the London Zoo or Whipsnade, for prizes at one of the meetings when a good competitive quiz is held. The grateful thanks of the club are due to this gentleman, and to all interested in feathered friends will find the afore mentioned journal very useful and helpful.

Len Packman's unassailable position as quiz champion received a strong attack from the Northern branch in Clive Simpson and in a fighting finish, they deadheaded for first place with C.Wright a good third. In the short picture quiz that followed Len secured maximum points to finish first.

Sale and exchange followed and good business was done.

Orders for the Frank Richards photographs were taken and it is to be hoped to have these available at the next meeting.

Postal provincial members stationary will be dispatched now it has come to hand, and those not receiving same within a fortnight are asked to send a postcard to the Secretary.

Seven new members were enrolled:- H.Spencer, G.Protheroe, R.A.Nicholls, R.Crollie, F.Green, M. Fermeer and A.Stewart.

The next meeting is on Sunday, June 18th at 12,

Ashburnham Place, Greenwich, London, S.E.10.

Attendance: W., R. and R. Whiter, Len, Josie and E. Packman, C., O. and A. Wright, A. W. Lawson, M. Prior, Ian Whitmore, A. Blunden, R. Southwood, C. Wallis, A. Stewart, R. Brown, E. Reynolds, M. Fermeer, C. Simpson, J. Parratt, J. Geal, F. Keeling, R. and M. Deacon, N. Flatman and P. Podro.

Benjamin G. Whiter.

FOR SALE to the Highest offer. Bulleyes 1 - 184. Jan. 1931 - Sept. 1934. Complete Series. Boys' Friend Volume Bound December 1903 - June 1904. 26 copies B.F.L. Number 19. "Nelson Lees" Pupil, by Maxwell Scott. Nearly All Union Jacks from 1000 - 1531. Mint Condition. Bill Martin, 93, Hillside, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Odd lots mixed books, bound Fantasy Fiction, Odd Numbers Dreadnought, Boys' Friend 3d and 4d Libraries. Anything. Exchanges. Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED URGENTLY: To complete a volume for binding, Magnets Nos. 1118 and 1119, Robert Wilson, 100, Broomfield Road, Glasgow, N.

FOR SALE: B.O.P. Vol. XIV, 1891-2. Offers please. R. Crollie, 8, Lytton Road, Romford, Essex.

WANTED URGENTLY: To complete sets. No. 13 Collectors' Miscellany and Nos. 7, 9, and 10 of the Story Paper Collector. A.J. Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

WANTED: All back numbers Collectors' Digest, Also Annuals. Bill Martin, 93, Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED URGENTLY: Bound Volumes or Separate copies of Pictures and Picturegoer for years 1914-1918 inclusive. Thomas Johnson, Raby Cottage, Raby Park, Neston, Wirral, Cheshire.

The Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe.

The Lord only knows what Bob Blythe's thoughts have been regarding his Column these past two months, but no doubt I shall hear all about it when he returns home! Meanwhile, this month I am supplying more data. Some readers may think this is a waste of time and space, but to my mind, for the more interested and serious reader/collector, one cannot have too much data. Most Lee-ites know as much (or more) about the Nelson Lee stories as I do, and I feel that a more useful purpose can be served by filling this column with other relative information. Here then, are the titles of the first 50 St. Frank's stories published in the Boys Realm, as from Jan. 5th 1919, - the date of its return.

These titles will be continued in next months Column. Personally I am inclined to doubt the authenticity of a number of these stories, for they do not seem to be the same standard of work shown by Mr. Brooks in the Nelson Lee. However, he tells me he wrote them and he should know!

Needless to say, many of the illustrations are by that wizard of etchers E.E. Briscoe.

These titles are supplied through the courtesy of Mr. A.J. Southway to whom I tender my sincere thanks.

- No. 1. Handforth's Great Wheeze; 2. Rivals in Sport;
3. Wellborne's Little Plot; 4. Handforth's Latest;
5. By Half a Length; 6. Fullwood's Failure; 7. Skimming the Crossbar;
8. After Lights out; 9. His Word of Honour;
10. The Joy Riders; 11. Honour for St. Frank's;
12. The Surprise Packet; 13. Hart's Little Way;
14. A Stormy Affair; 15. Saved by the Enemy;
16. The Fateful Letter; 17. By Whose Hand?; 18. The

False Message; 19. His Honour Redeemed; 20. Rough on Handforth; 21. The Mystery of Hallowdene; 22. The Third Form Riot; 23. The Mystery House; 24. His Lordship; 25. The Schoolboy Spy; 26. Missing from School; 27. Marcus Lyle's Secret; 28. Too many Cooks; 29. The Limit in Masters; 30. Trouble for Three; 31. Admission One Shilling; 32. The Guy of St. Frank's; 33. The Match of the Term; 34. The Wolly of Fullwood; 35. The Remove Master's Secret; 36. Fighting Back; 37. The Cheerful Lunatic; 38. T.T. of St. Frank's; 40. The New Year Carnival; 41. Tucker Tuck; 42. Saving the Funds; 43. "Handy" the Hubby; 44. Handforth the Ventriloquist; 45. Too much of a Joke; 46. Handforth's Pie; 47. A "Prefect" Day; 48. The Remove Paper Chase; 49. Nipper & Co's Capture; 50. Fatty Little - Footballer.

And now, to conclude, here is this month's batch of Nelson Lee (O.S.) titles:-
 410. Always in the Wrong; 411. Sons of Gentlemen; 412. Sacked from the School; 413. Down and Out; 414. The Prisoner of the North Tower; 415. The Happy Caravaners; 416. The Schoolboy Minstrels; 417. Jogging along the Highway; 418. Champions of the Oppressed; 419. The Remove on Tour; 420. The Traveling School; 421. The Touring School in Wales; 422. The Lads in Lancashire; 423. The Mystery of Lake Thirtlemere; 424. Adrift on the Atlantic; 425. The Bright Lights of Broadway; 426. A Three Thousand Mile Race; 427. On the Californian Express; 428. St. Frank's in Filmland; 429. The Mystery of Dorrimore Island; 430. The Slaves of Dorrimore Island.

WANTED: Boys Friend Library. No.633. entitled "The Idol of St. Frank's". J.W. Cook, 4, Swanston Path, Oxhey, Watford, Herts.

WANTED: Will pay 6/- each and postage for following S.O.L's 41,42,65,66,89,90; and 5/- each for 161,162,185,209,210,233 and 391. B.D.Holtz, Vesturgata 11, Reykjavik, Iceland.



Dr. Summerskill is Hoping, Too.

May 9th, 1950.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D. and your letter. Good as ever, especially the "Story of the Toff".

Yes, I noted your query on page 147, and should be glad to answer it in the affirmative. But there is nothing definite on the subject so far. All I can say at present is that I still hope to see the old Magnet revived, and that it doesn't seem now so improbable as it did.

I was very pleased to see Dr. Summerskill's kindly reference to the old papers, and I have had a very pleasant letter from that distinguished lady expressing a kind hope that we shall soon see them on the bookstalls again. I enclose a cutting from the "Times" of May 1st that may interest you.

Your "quote" about Mr. Iraldi is certainly extremely interesting. We are now in touch, and I have had several very interesting letters from him.

My the way, there will be a "Billy Bunter" story in "Tom Merry's Own" annual this year. So many readers wrote to me about leaving Bunter out, that it just had to be done. The story is called "Bunter for Christmas". I have the idea too of

putting in a Spanish cross-word puzzle, on the behalf of readers studying that language. What do you think of that?

The new series begins in the Comet in the issue dated 27th May. I have also written a Bunter story for an A.P. Publication called "The Knock-Out Fun Book". What with writing Greyfriars again, and this glorious weather, Frank Richards is feeling as if the Time Machine had carried him back a quarter of a century or so, leaving him a mere kid of fifty!

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,
Frank Richards.

+ + + + +

We've a Friend at the B.B.C.

Broadcasting House, London, W.1. 8th May, 1950.

Dear Mr. Sawyer,

Please forgive the very long delay in replying to your letter of the 1st April.

I have great sympathy with your Club and its admiration for "Billy Bunter", and if there is the smallest chance of squeezing the fat boy on to the air, I assure you I will add my shoulder to the general heave.

Yours sincerely,
Lionel Gamlin.

Special Programme Organiser
"Hullo Children".

+ + + + +

The "Ghost" of Wally Hammond.

277, Kings Road,
Kingston, Surrey.

Dear Editor,

As is known the "Claverhouse" yarns in the "Modern Boy" are by 'Gunby Hadath' although the author's name is given as Wally Hammond the Cricket-er.

On looking through some "Modern Boys" of more

recent vintage, I noticed the "Told in the Tuckshop" tales by John Beresford are written in the same style, also some of the characters are the same. i.e. Danson and Potts of the 5th of "Claverhouse", (the rival school was "Greystones"), and in the tuckshop tales they are in the 5th of Greystones. Anyway, it all points to one and the same author.

Can anyone confirm this, and does anyone know of any more yarns by John Beresford?

JOHN GEAL.

+ + + + +

Economy at Fleetway House

3, Montgomery Drive,
Sheffield 7.

May 6th/50.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Referring the interesting history of "The Bullseye" by Mr.C.H.Groombridge in the May issue of the "C.D." may I draw attention to an article published in "The Story Paper Collector" No.4, October/December/41. The author, Bill Gander, makes comparisons between "The Bullseye" and a much earlier A.P. paper called "Fun and Fiction", the first number of which appeared on October 12th 1911. I quote from Bill's article.....

"This paper (The Bullseye), in style of stories, illustrations with characters in dress suits and spats, and blue cover pages, was "Fun and Fiction" all over again - minus the fun: there were no comic features in "The Bullseye". In the first few numbers were illustrations identical with some that appeared in either "F.& F." or "Firefly" years before - as far as can be told from memory - but the stories were different.

The Amalgamated Press made a good investment when they purchased these well executed drawings for they appeared, once again, only a few years ago, in "Film Fun" in which slightly revised stories of "The Bullseye" series, "The House of Thrills" were published.

Yours sincerely, Leonard M. Allen.

Hands across the Sea.

Lancaster,
P.A., U.S.A.
May 7, 1950.

Dear Mr. Leckeny,

Just a hurried note to tell you the three pkgs. arrived in fine shape and I'm well pleased with the weeklies. I certainly do appreciate your kindness in helping me obtain them. The condition is all you said it was, and the only thing I'm sorry for is the "scotch mending tape" that was used on the covers of eight or nine of them. will write more later.

P.S. it was nice of you to give me the little write up in C.D.

Sincerely,

R.L. Caldwell.

(Ray Caldwell's letter refers to a collection (140 copies) of American dime magazines - Nick Carter's, Diamond Dicks, etc. of 1899-1900. They were almost in mint condition, and in hands of someone quite outside our circle. I was confident they would be welcomed in America, just as red covered "Magnets" found somewhere in U.S.A. would be gratefully received over here. It intrigued me as to where they had been lying for over 50 years, apparently untouched. Unfortunately I didn't find out. H.L.)

FOR SALE: Complete works of Gunby Hadath (also as John Mowbray) up to 1948. About 60 books, 4/6 each, including postage. Titles on request. Good condition, many autographed. A.J. Southway, P.O. Box 3., Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

WANTED: "Modern Boys" and Boys Friend Libraries containing "Captain Justice" yarns. Also 1st new series Nelson Lee. John Geal, 277, King's Road, Kingston Surrey.

WANTED: Magnets 517-519 inclus. - Tom Redwings arrival at Greyfriars. P.Warren, 15 Vicarage Grove, Eccles.



.....
Readers of this section of the C.D. are again asked to
send ALL correspondence relating to Sexton Blake to the
Editor, W.M.Dond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, S. Wales.
.....

WINNING HIS SPURS

**** The story of Sexton Blake's Test Case ****
related by WALTER WEBB.

AFTER rising to the Sixth Form at St. Anne's, Blake left in order to finish his education at Oxford, and it was during his stay at the University that he definitely made up his mind as to what his future career was going to be.

HIS entry into the field of crime investigation was encouraging, and in the UNION JACK No. 125 dated 10th September 1896 was the story describing "How Sexton Blake Won his Spurs". This title was written by William Shaw Rae, one of the earliest of all Blake authors. It bears a certain resemblance to the first Blake story ever published; that which was entitled "The Mystery Millionaire" and appeared in the Marvel in 1893 under the authorship of Hal Meredith.

SHAW RAE began his ~~xxxxxx~~ version by describing scenes during the sinking of the "Princess Alice" in 1878. The

same vessel and its destruction was the theme of the Meredith version, who also described scenes during the sinking of it. IT was during the evening of the 3rd of September 1878 that there occurred one of the most terrible sea disasters in Britain's history. The saloon steamer "Princess Alice" was ploughing her way homeward up the lower reaches of the Thames with over nine hundred pleasure seeking men, women and children aboard. Among them was Sexton Blake, then a youth scarcely out of his teens, who had started alone for a day's pleasure. Far less reserved than he is to-day, young Blake, by reason of his pleasing personality, exuberant spirits and excellent dancing, had become very popular among those of the fair sex with whom he had become acquainted. BEFORE the disaster Blake had struck up a friendship with a youth of about his own age. The latter, whose name was Harry Harford, had been in glum spirits throughout the trip, due to the disappearance of his sweetheart, who, according to arrangement, should have been on board, and it was whilst Blake was trying to console him that the "Princess Alice" was rammed by the cargo boat "Bywell Castle", resulting in the rapid sinking of the pleasure steamer and the loss of over seven hundred lives, including those of Captain Griestead and nearly all his crew. Blake was described as having worked heroically in the rescue efforts, though so sudden and terrific was the force of impact that few lives could be saved.

TO Harford young Blake made a promise. He would endeavour to trace his friend's fiancée and thus make this a test case. He would work on it as a friend, and on the success of this would depend whether he entered the ranks of professionalism or not. And so, his future depending upon the result, Blake set out on his task of trying to locate the missing girl. WHAT he lacked in experience in those days he made up for with a remarkable enthusiasm for the profession which, with grim determination he meant to pursue and master. His self-confidence was amazing, so much so in fact that he set out on his quest with a pair of handcuffs jingling in his pocket, either not caring, or being unaware of the fact that, strictly speaking, he had no authority to arrest anyone, crook or no crook.

YOUNG Blake soon found himself following the trail of the girl's abductor, a criminal bearing the sinister sounding name of Egbert Trowolf. Lack of a capable assistant proved a handicap to the youthful investigator when it became necessary that two trails should be covered at one and the same time, and it was a bad error of judgment on his part which prompted him to send Harford out to shadow the crook, a move which only resulted in Trowolf being put on his guard, for, inexperienced in such work as he was, Harford was soon discovered. His task thereby made more difficult Blake decided to work alone. His optimism slightly dimmed but his confidence in himself by no means impaired.

TROWOLF was other things besides being a kidnapper; he had a most interesting sideline. In those days, when the golden gleam of a sovereign was a common enough sight to the eye, the crook was engaged in helping put into circulation considerable quantities of spurious coin. Gaining access to Trowolf's lodgings one night, young Blake discovered certain papers belonging to the crook. Young Blake soon discovered that the contents of these proved conclusively what particular head of criminal activity he was engaged upon.

IN one of the foulest and most lawless of slums in the East End a coining establishment had been set up and was carried on by a skilful gang. By reason of his position and influence, and driven by growing debts, Trowolf had joined up with them and had proved useful in disposing of large quantities of the spurious coinage, while his undoubted shrewdness and cunning had made him a rather indispensable member of the gang. His shrewdness, however, had suffered a bad lapse when it led him to the choosing of his lieutenants, his immediate two being individuals named Carroty Sam and Rooney.

BLAKE decided on the policy of "Setting a thief to catch a thief", a policy which led to the undoing of the arch-criminal Vidocq, and thereupon set out to contact Carroty Sam. Sam was one of those utterly despicable crooks, one, who, for a consideration, would be disposed to betray a fellow criminal to the police. Following a talk with the latter, Blake then lodged information with the authorities with the result that a warrant was issued for Trowolf's arrest.

SPEPS had to be taken quickly, for, according to the young sleuth's information Trewolf, discovering England to be too hot a place to carry on his activities, had decided on a general share out, after which he intended to escape to the Continent.

CARROTY SAILED Blake and the police through the somewhat complicated backstreets of the East End, in the heart of which, beneath a tottering old building the coiners' den, a large double vaulted cellar, was situated. In the ensuing raid Trewolf was captured but later escaped, and young Blake made hot pursuit as the crook, mounting floor after floor, gained the attics and so on to the roof of the building. From behind sheltered chimney stacks pursued and pursuer exchanged pistol shots. Below, a fire escape which had been summoned for the purpose of effecting the crooks arrest was placed into position. The jib, with it's life saving canvas sleeve was raised until it rested on the coping behind the desperate Trewolf. Escape cut off from both directions the crook swung himself into the canvas shoot, and Blake, nothing loth, followed him, landing on the body of his victim and knocking all the breath out of him. In no condition to resist arrect, Trewolf was at the young detective's mercy.

THE inspector in charge of police operations, noting with sympathy the youngster's excitement and enthusiasm, good naturedly stood aside and allowed Blake to put the handcuffs on his victim. A bluff and kindly man he was also an understanding one. And to quote from the story:-

"...and never did composer hear sweeter music than did Sexton Blake as the handcuffs clicked on the wrists of the criminal he had run to earth. His first triumph:"

TREWOLF'S reason for kidnapping the girl, who was rescued quite unharmed, had been carried out for the purpose of forcing her to marry him, the girl having just come into a considerable fortune by reason of the death of an Uncle in Australia.

For this, his first big criminal captive, young Blake received his first monetary reward, yet success in itself was the greatest recompense, as it entitled the amateur detective to pass into the professional ranks and attain

such signal success as to make his name a household word.
A last word about the author:

WILLIAM SHAW RAE was not the author's real name, and readers of the "Boy's Friend" may remember his real one, for under such he wrote several stories for that periodical in the old days.

SHAW RAE was a crime journalist named Ernest Troton,

--ooOoo--

THE END,

--ooOoo--

THE ROUND TABLE.

This month's letter box has been very poor indeed, in fact I do not think that I had a single letter on Blake matters from anyone.

This is a great pity really, for we have a grand opportunity in Blakiana to discuss matters amongst ourselves about our own special favourite in the detective world. Perhaps the summer months will be less fruitful than the winter ones as regards correspondence but I hope that you will write me when you have any ideas

or suggestions. On the completion of this month's issue I am off for two weeks holiday in West Wales. In my travelling case I have packed away quite a pile of Blakes including one or two of the 2nd series by G.H. Teed, and also a few of the moderns. For once I hope to have a quiet life with Blake. I hope all Blake fans will have a good holiday this year and also that they will not forget that a Blake story at the seaside or in the country can be as exciting as on a winter's afternoon at home.

One little item I would like to mention before closing is that our old friend Anthony Parsons seems to be slipping back into the rut out of which most Blake authors crawled some months ago. In his latest effort "Living In Fear" (S.B.L. 3rd series No. 215) he brings up that old sore CARTER. Blake introduces Tinker to his client as MR. CARTER. Please drop it Mr. Parsons, and all other Blake authors take warning. If a reason for Carter could be given it might not be so bad, but where on earth did they dig up that name. Is John Hunter to blame?

H.M. BOND.

I KNEW ANTHONY SKENE.

by Mr. A. Young of Balham S.W.17

My interest in the work of Anthony Skene first started when I was about 15. It was "The Man In Motley", his 3rd story and a "Zenith" opus, and it ousted the Confederation stories from my popular fancy although I still continued to like them. Skene's description of Blake as a big man always appealed to me. It differed from the other authors' description which were many and varied but nearly all were keen on Blake being exceedingly lean, almost ascetic in fact. It was in 1924 that Mr. Skene and I started our correspondence, and we have continued to write to each other periodically ever since. Perhaps this is rather an exaggeration for of late months he seems to have dropped out of my correspondence. At his request I gave him a call at his home in Hampstead, where we had a long pleasant chat over beer and pipes. He seemed reluctant to discuss his work but showed me a part of a novel he was writing at the time. His efforts struck me as both original and intolligent. I think his best work is to be found in his earlier stories for the UNION JACK beginning roughly with "The Death Spider" and ending with "Plague". I do not think he ever again captured the style and spirit of those early yarns, although "X-ine", "The Train Of Tragedy", The Gargoyle and Fifth Man series were goodish. As far as his S.B.L. stories were concerned I am of the opinion that they more or less deteriorated after "The Albino's Double" for I do not think any of the stories in this series were any good after that. One story I thought very good was "The Wizard of Wurtz", this, of course, in the U.J.

Anthony Skene told me that he considered his best stories were "The Tenth Case" published immediately after a duel to the death in 1918, and "The Case Of The Crystal Gazer". As far as I am concerned I liked "In League Against Him" much better. In contrast the editor of the U.J. once told me that he favoured "The Case Of The Crimson Curtain". There was a time when I thought Julia Fortune would become even more alive and charming than the estimable Yvonne, and I

rather suspect that Blake was inclined to think so too.

I used to like the way Skene sometime adroitly brought in the characters of other authors, one example being Leon Kestrel the creation of Lewis Jackson. The last time I heard from Mr. Skene he told me he had given up writing as it did not pay, and it seems as if this is correct, for apart from an article in the Evening News I have not since seen any work of his.

Owing to restricted space I am afraid that it will again be impossible to print the details of the UNION JACK for 1926 as arranged last month. Next month, however, most of Blakiana will be taken up with lists of titles and authors for I intend to give you all available details of the U.J. for 1924, 1925 and 1926.

S.O.S. Blakiana is again much in need to articles etc and it would be appreciated if you budding authors could help out. I know that there are many Blake matters which have been thoroughly covered by others in the past, but the field is very wide and I am sure that some of you could put another good article out.

Contributions for the 1950 G.D. Annual, Blakiana Section are also required. Please send manuscripts to me as soon as you possibly can. Suggestions will be as welcome as articles by the way.

Coming Soon:-

"Return to Baker Street" by H.L. Bond.