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No 1 Vol. 1.

Week ending January 24th, 1931.

TWOPENCE.

**THE HOUSE OF THRILLS!** See Page Three.



The vapour formed into the shape of an enormous electric bulb, which shimmered in the red glow of the roaring furnace. Within its gleaming outlines, dazed by the suffocating fumes, the imprigoned man bottled helplessly.

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Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

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### EDITORIAL



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C. Editor



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L. Editor



ROBERT J. CORBETT  
F. Editor



FRANK LYNETTE  
S. Editor

CHANGE FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGE. Recently, on B.B.C. Television, the compere said to the famous singing star: "Mr. So-and-So, you are now going to sing us in modern style, that lovely old song." The said star sang the lovely old song in modern style, rendering the melody unrecognizable and the lyric unintelligible. In fact, it ceased to be a song and became a series of moans and groans.

Which, for some reason or other, reminded us of the new presentation of that Edwardian thriller "Silver Dwarf", with the name of Nelson Lee changed to Jaxon Lee. We would have no objection to any change in a story which removed something grown absurd from the passing of time. But changing the name of Nelson to Jaxon strikes us as pointless and exasperating. Change merely for change's sake.

Is a story improved or brought up-to-date because a public school boy, instead of remarking "Buzz off", is now made to say "Scram"? We think it isn't.

OUR NEW CONTEST. Our contest to find the most popular character in O.B.E. fiction (which Collectors' Digest is running in association with Les Rowley who has generously given the prizes) will be enormously interesting. Twenty-three characters have been carefully selected to figure in the contest. No doubt, individual readers may think of some certain character who is omitted and whom they would have liked to see included, but that is inevitable. We think our 23 are representative.

Much skill will be necessary to forecast the ten which are likely to head the popular vote, and even more skill to determine in what order the ten will be placed. The result is by no means a foregone conclusion. In fact, we think it is as open as it could possibly be. It is going to prove tremendously exciting to find the most popular character in the weekly fiction of our day.

The success of the contest depends upon each one of you. PLEASE USE YOUR VOTE. Fill in and return your entry form. This contest is open to EVERY READER OF COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANYWHERE - and all votes count. Don't let your favourite character down. Don't let us down. If you happen to win, the prizes will make a nice little extra in time for the holidays - but, in any case, the main thing is taking part in this most fascinating of experiments. So PLEASE VOTE.

THE EDITOR.

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HOW THEY BEGAN No. 5

On our front cover this month we reproduce for you the cover of No. 1 of "BULLSEYE" dated January 1931. The paper ran for 188 issues until midsummer, 1934.

Somehow there was an irresistible attraction about BULLSEYE - a periodical which leaned towards the horrific without the sadism which seems to permeate "horror" productions today. Our expert, Bill Lofts, gives us the following items of information:

The controlling editor was F. G. Cordwell, who was editor of the old "Fun and Fiction." In fact, BULLSEYE was like a rather more juvenile "Fun and Fiction." Chief sub-editor, who was later editor of "Film Fun" for many years, was Phillip Davies. All stories were anonymous, but most of them were written by Alfred Edgar who created such serials as "The House of Thrills" and "The Phantom of Cursiter Fields."

Principal artists were J. Louis-Smythe and William George Wakefield. The latter illustrated "Fun and Fiction" and is, of course, famous for his illustrations of Rookwood characters in the "Boys' Friend."

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Mr. Chapman, the famous artist, thinks nothing of a cold bath, winter or summer. We don't think much of it either.

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST GREAT POPULARITY CONTEST

## FIRST PRIZE - £5

FOUR PRIZES OF 10/- EACH FOR RUNNERS-UP

This month COLLECTORS' DIGEST presents what we believe to be the most fascinating competition ever run by any magazine. The handsome prize list, totalling £7, is most generously given by Mr. Les Rowley, and is well worth winning. But, apart from the prizes, you have the chance to vote for the characters you have loved down the years. It is our aim to find out THE MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS IN OLD BOYS' FICTION - and it is going to be a tremendously interesting task. We are, in fact, aiming to discover the TEN most popular characters. Is Billy Bunter more popular than Harry Wharton - or is there another Greyfriars character who beats them both? Is Handforth more popular than Nipper? Do readers prefer Tinker to Sexton Blake? Is Jimmy Silver more popular than all the rest? Is Gussy outdated, so that he will not even feature in the first ten? At the moment we just don't know - but, with your help, we are going to find out.

In order to make it unnecessary for you to mutilate your copy of the Digest, we are giving the entry coupon separately. We ask every reader to fill in his coupon and return it as soon as possible to the Editor. In order that readers ALL OVER THE WORLD may take part, the CLOSING DATE is fixed for JUNE 3rd. Overseas readers can, if they wish, place the completed coupon in an UNSEALED ENVELOPE and send it by SECOND-CLASS AIRMAIL.

The Entry Coupon falls into TWO PARTS - the first grid you will fill in from the dictates of your heart - the second grid you will fill in from the dictates of your head. Your votes in Grid One will give us the order of popularity we are seeking. Your list in Grid Two will be your actual entry for the competition. The prizes will be awarded to the entrants who include the greatest number of names as given by the popular vote, and the nearer you are to the final list, and final order, the nearer you will be to winning the prizes.

RULES and INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make your entry in Grid One first. You may award a total of 60 marks, but you may give no single character more than 30. Apart from this, you may dispense your total of 60 marks just how you please. For instance, you may, if you wish, vote for just two, awarding 30 each. Or, if your favours are more widely spread, you may award 5 marks to each of 12 characters - a total of 60. Or, you can award 30 to your prime character, and 10 each to three others. In Grid One you will find three columns. These give you the index numbers and names of the selected characters plus a space for you to insert your marks. Leave BLANK those characters for whom you do not vote at all.
2. Now pass to Grid Two. This is the order in which you think the voting will put the TEN most popular characters. Here you use your SKILL and not your sentiment. As an instance, you may just worship Buffalo Bill, in which case you may have awarded him 30 marks. But, all the same, you may feel that he would have no chance of figuring in the first ten. Therefore, you will not include his index number in Grid Two.  
In Grid Two, enter, in the order you assess their popularity from the popular vote, the Index Numbers of the characters you believe will be voted thus. If you think Billy Bunter will come first, place his Index No. 4 against 1st in Grid Two. If you think Vernon-Smith will come second, place his Index No. 22 against 2nd in Grid Two - and so on until you have completed all ten in Grid Two.
3. Every entry must be made on the official entry form, given loose with the April issue of Collectors' Digest. No reader may send in more than one entry, but, where members of a family normally share one copy of the magazine, an additional copy can be purchased to provide a second coupon if desired. The number of extra copies available, beyond our normal subscribers' commitments, is very limited however.
4. The clerical work in connection with the contest will be heavy, and, though the competition does not close till June 3rd, it will help a lot if you send in your entries as soon as possible. Every vote will be carefully recorded, and the final records will be made available for the inspection of all the clubs after the close of the contest. The first prize will be awarded to the reader whose entry in Grid Two comes nearest to the order as given by the popular vote. The prizes for runners-up will be awarded similarly. The Editor reserves the right to vary the prize-awards if necessary, but the full prize list of £7 will be paid to winners.

PLEASE ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS GREAT VOTING CONTEST - SEND IN YOUR ENTRY FORMS.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

A few months ago, in our Controversial Echoes column, various readers passed their opinions as to whether or not it was feasible for Wally Bunter, Billy Bunter's double, to be appointed a form master. Some thought it was, some thought it wasn't, and, of course, no shade of opinion was changed by one iota from reading what somebody else thought.

Now we find Keith Banks, who was Billy Bunter this year at the Victoria Palace, playing a form-master (and playing it remarkably well, incidentally) in the B.B.C. television serial "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's". History has repeated itself as it so often seems to do.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.



I shall be most grateful if anyone can tell me whether they have ever read or heard of any stories about Dr. Huxton Rymer in any paper other than the UNION JACK prior to February, 1913.

From the first stories I have of Dr. Rymer (U.J. No. 488, February 1913, "When Greek Meets Greek," and B.F.L. (1st series) No. 228, May 1913 "The Great Mining Swindle") it would appear that Blake and Rymer had met before.

It could, of course, have been G.H. Teed's way of introducing a new character, but - WAS IT?

JOSEIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

ARTHUR J. PALK  
by D. J. Adley

On behalf of Bill Lofts and myself - as co-writers of the Sexton

Blake Authors Who's Who in the 1959 C.D. Annual - we feel that in our own interests we should make some reply to the very interesting comments made by S. Gordon Swan in the February C.D. regarding Arthur J. Palk.

Neither of us have ever felt perfectly satisfied that the identity of Palk was Arthur J. Paterson; in fact, we were most careful to state

in the Who's Who that this was only 'probably' the real identity.

On one of his visits to Mr. Twyman, Bill Lofts showed the former editor of the UNION JACK the story in question, and after a close scrutiny Mr. Twyman could not remember the author 'Palk' at all. In his opinion the story was either handled by a sub-editor when he (Twyman) was away from the office, or else it was submitted through a literary agency (as in the case of 'Frank Lelland', whose identity was solved a few years ago.)

The style of writing (according to Mr. Twyman) was similar to that of the late Arthur J. Paterson, and he theorized that this, and the same initials, plus the fact that Paterson lived in Australia for many years - although he may, as stated, have been born in New Mexico - could make a good case for a 'probability'. Perhaps a better word would have been 'possibility.'

The point that Mr. Swan makes regarding the fact that Paterson had long been dead when the Palk story was published does not prove anything at all, for many stories were held in reserve for years before being published - a fact which any A.P. editor would confirm - and this story could well have been an old one of Paterson's.

It may be possible that the author who wrote the story in the Australian publication that Mr. Swan mentions is the same writer as the Sexton Blake author, but on the other hand there are often writers with precisely the same christian and surnames. Even those with extremely uncommon names have been found to have a 'double' - so far as the name is concerned.

If Mr. Swan could possibly recollect the publishers of that Australian paper-back, no doubt the mystery could be solved as to whether the Arthur J. Palk who wrote therein was the same writer as the Blake author of the 1933 era. As it stands, the matter remains a mystery, and pending more definite information I think it will be agreed that Mr. Twyman's theory is still as good as any.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SEXTON BLAKE WINS A CASE

(The following article in a Newcastle daily paper was kindly sent to me by Mr. Roland Storey.)

Labourer Sexton Blake - "I'm my namesake's greatest fan" - took a page out of his hero's book the day he was "framed."

Thieves "planted" 200 feet of electric welding cable in his van, 24-year-old Sexton told Wallsend magistrates today.

He was stopped by the police, the cable worth £25 was found in his

van, and he was charged with stealing it or receiving it knowing it to be stolen.

But Sexton, who has followed the adventures of the legendary sleuth ever since he learned to read, turned detective - and today he said he had cracked the case.

After the magistrates had dismissed both the charges against him today, dark haired Sexton said: "I think I know who did it, but I don't think I will do anything. It is only heresay evidence. The cable has been returned and I have been cleared of any blame, so everyone is happy.

Sexton, of Union Street, Shieldfield, Newcastle, added: "I felt just like the real Sexton. I'm my namesake's greatest fan. I have a son called Sexton; I hope I don't have to do this again."

Earlier, Supt. W. E. Bishop told the magistrates that Sexton - his other christian name is William - was stopped while driving his van in Wallsend.

The cable was in the back. It was identified as the sort used at Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardsons's Wallsend yard and Sexton Blake had been to the yard that morning looking for work.

A charge of using the van without insurance was also dismissed.

Sexton did not get off altogether. The magistrates fined him a total of £10, with 10s. costs and gave him a month to pay.

\* \* \* \* \*

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SEXTON BLAKE THE ETERNAL

(Another extract from a chapter on Sexton Blake taken from the late Herbert Leckenby's "Memories of Old Boys' Papers.")

During the course of his career Blake travelled in many countries and climes. There is not a continental country he has not been in. He has had adventures in India and Peru, Australia and America, Chili and China, Japan and Jamaica, and has seen life in the Arctic and Pacific isles.

In the pursuit of his calling he has been nigh unto death on innumerable occasions, for he has been stabbed, shot, poisoned, nearly drowned, and been saved from hanging at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour. He has, more than once, been tried for murder.

For clients, he has had kings and princes, statesmen, numerous members of the peerage, millionaires, captains of industry, and hundreds of those in humbler walks of life.

In order to solve his problems he has at times taken up all sorts of trades and professions. He has been a fireman, an actor, a mechanic a cab-driver, a music-hall manager, a compositor, worked in a racing stable, been in the navy and served time as a convict, just to mention a few.

In the passing of his busy life he has crossed swords with many master criminals and kings of crime. There have been George Marsden Plummer, Professor Kew, Count Carlec, Leon Kestrel, Mr. Reece, Sir Philip Champion and the rest of the Confederation, Dr. Huxton Rymer, Wu Ling, Aubrey Dexter, Henri Garock, Laban Creed, Zenith the Albino, Waldo the Wonder Man, Paul Cynos, Dr. Satira, Dr. Ferraro, Gunga Dass and that audacious pair, Gilbert and Eileen Hale. There are many more he has fought titanic battles against throughout the years.

And, of course, during the greater part of this time there has been by his side his two faithful assistants, Tinker and Pedro the bloodhound. Tinker, in fact, must have been at death's door as often as his master .....

It would be interesting if one could discover who, of the band of authors of Blake stories, wrote the most, but I fear it would be almost impossible. I can, however, quote a number who wrote very many of the stories. In the early days of the penny U.J.'s and S.B.L.'s, W. Murray Graydon must have penned the word 'Blake' tens of thousands of times. The man who introduced Inspector Will Spearing (Mark Darran) also wrote a tremendous lot. Later there was Robert Murray (Murray Graydon's son) with his famous Confederation stories, which ran for years, followed by Paul Cynos and Dr. Satira. In the earlier days, too, there was Andrew

Murray, creator of John Lawless, Professor Kew and Count Iver Carlac.  
Andrew Murray's death left a big gap in the ranks,

Then we must not forget G. Hamilton Teed, for he must be high on the list for the biggest output. Perhaps he introduced more 'characters' than anyone else; the charming Yvonne Cartier; the villainous Dr. Huxton Rymer; Wu Ling the mystic; Nirvana the dancer; June Severance; The Three Musketeers, and many more. He also wrote the later George Marsden Plummer stories.

Others who were kept busy for years were E. S. Brooks, with Waldo the Wonder Man; Anthony Skene, who usually brought in Zenith the Albino; Lewis Jackson, to whom goes the credit for the Leon Kestrel stories; Gilbert Chester, who delighted thousands of readers with the audacities of Gilbert and Eileen Hale, the Gwyn Evans, lover of the bizarre, who created 'Splash Page, the slickest reporter in Fleet Street .....

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47 - 4d. Champion Libraries 115 - 257 (1933-1939); 12 - 4d. Boys Friend Libraries 415 - 571 (1934-1937); 6 - 4d. Boys Friend Libraries 428 - 656 (1934-1937); 3 - 4d. Boys Friend Libraries 585 - 606 (1937-1938); 4 - 3d. Boys Friend Libraries 92 - 265; 5 - 4d. Boys Friend Libraries (bound) 354 - 698 (1932-1939); 19 - 4d. Boys Friend Libraries 584 - 682 (1937 - 1939); 9 - 4d. Sexton Blake Libraries 409 - 579 (1933-1937); 5 - S.O.L.'s Greyfriars; 4 - S.O.L.'s St. Jim's; 3 - S.O.L.'s St. Franks; 1 - S.O.L. Paekdale; 1 - S.O.L. By Eric Rooke; 5 - Football and Sport Libraries 386 - 399 (1933-1934); 2 - 4d. Knockout Libraries; 1 - 4d. Bullseye Library; 1 - Schoolgirl Own Library. Offers. S.A.E.  
LITVAK, 58 STANWELL ROAD, ASHFORD, MIDDX.

WANTED: Collectors' Digest 1 - 71 and No. 122. Annuals 1947 - 50.  
P. J. HANCER, 72 Glasgow Street, Northampton.

MODERN BOY wanted: 2 - 4, 115, 118, 145, 147, 150, 152 - 157, 159 - 164, 166 - 181, 183 - 192, 194 - 198, 200, 202, 203, 207, 208, 212 - 237, 239 - 244, 337.  
DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries. 1st series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219, 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 485, 520, 667. Union Jacks Nos. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 704, 711, 721, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 1044, 1064, 1098, 1390.  
MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, S.E.22.

WANTED: GEMS 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 493, 549, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 979, 980, 984, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 417, 422, 435, 439, 446, 469, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 940, 942, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 968, 996. POPULARS: 183, 452, 455, 451, 466, 474. Your Price Paid or liberal exchanges made.  
ERIC PAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Chas. Churchill, 53 Union Road, Exeter.

# HAMILTONIANA

## FAMOUS SERIES

No. 6



The boy in peril in the boat is Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. The boy leaping to his rescue is Tom Redwing, a sailor's son, who lives in a small cottage near the Hawk's Cliff.

Later, a new boy named Clavering arrives at Greyfriars and the Bounder recognizes him as Redwing.

The story, IN ANOTHER'S PLACE, the first story of the first Redwing series, published in the Magnet in early 1918. The Bounder had always been a fairly prominent character and an interesting one, but with the coming of Tom Redwing, the last permanent newcomer introduced to the Remove, the popularity of Vernon-Smith was consolidated.

Artist - C. H. Chapman

## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

### No. 49. NO LARGER THAN LIFE!

In a recent issue of Collectors' Digest a contributor wrote: "Today the aristocrat of St. Jim's seems an out-dated, almost unreal

character." Which prompts me to ask whether any character in fiction can ever be unreal. Any schoolmaster of experience will have met boys in real life far more unusual than any he has met in fiction. I have met and known people who, if I wrote them into a story, would be considered fantastic - beyond the bounds of credence. In articles on the old school stories, I myself have sometimes referred to characters as being "larger than life" but I wonder whether any character in fiction is really larger than life.

Just how far is Gussy out-dated, for instance? In his character I would say not at all. I have known decent, simple, honest boys, gullible and unsuspecting - boys who are really "gentlemen" if that, too, is not an old-fashioned word. The wealthy aristocrat has almost gone, but there may be a few left. The monocle and the speech impediment are the only factors which could date Gussy. But I have never, in my whole life, ever seen a boy with a monocle, so I doubt if this dates him any more today than it did in 1920. Speech impediment is very rare today among youngsters. When I was at school, the Head Prefect stuttered, but, among the thousands of boys who passed through my hands as a school master, I cannot recall one who stuttered. Medical science has almost eradicated speech impediment among the young.

Of all the characters in the Hamilton schools the only one who I feel strikes a really false note is Dutton. No boy would cause amusement in class today by his deafness. He would wear a hearing aid; in fact, plenty schoolboys do.

The bores, the simpletons, the fools - these exist in real life, often far more extreme than anything in fiction. Lovell and Coker, Skimpole, Alonzo Todd and Clarence Cuffy - they seem to be larger than life - but they are not. Bores exist, people who never realise that their conversation and their mannerisms make their acquaintances dodge them if they can. Self-centred boys like Coker can be found in any school from time to time. The fool of the class, who says and does stupid things, is common. Usually he is putting on an act; a boy who is useless at work and sport finds that he can gain attention by being an utter ass, and he goes all out to gain that reputation.

The foul-mouthed boy, not found in our school stories, is foul-mouthed because he is no good at anything else. Invariably, I would say, the boy with the fund of smutty stories is, like the ass, a boy with an inferiority complex. He has found the one way he can gain attention and a reputation of sorts.

The long-winded boy and the boy who uses long words like Alonzo and Skimpole - they exist. I have known many boys who never use a short word, either when speaking or writing, if they can think of a long one

to fill the bill. Some boys have a mania for quoting foreign tags, particularly when writing - rather bad form in the learned and a real pitfall for the ignorant.

The boy who will not lie is no rarity, but it would be rare to find so many of them in one form room as we find in the Remove and the Shell.

I even had one Bunter in my class - an enormous lad with a laugh like an alarm-clock. He appeared in a few films, but I lost touch with him many years back.

I can recall no snob among my thousands of lads, and the bullies have been extremely rare. Boys can be cruel to one another and often are, but the cruelty is from the tongue and seldom physical. Mockery can make a boy's life a misery, but he is mocked for what he is as a character and not for his lack of possessions.

Good, conscientious prefects exist in real life, but not in large numbers. If, for instance, damage is done, it is a safe bet that if the prefects can't find out who did it, the culprit was a prefect.

I contend that fictional characters are no larger than life - but on certain occasions an author may cause a boy in his story to act out of character. I do not believe that a boy like Bunter would ever have the slightest wish to blackmail his way into a football match. I think that Skinner and Snoop and Racke would never be aggrieved because they were left out of games. Games dodgers are surprisingly prolific in any school, but I have yet to meet a real-life slacker who will try to get in the games.

It's just my point of view! What's yours?

\* \* \* \* \*

### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

#### No. 47. THE UGLY DUCKLING

ROGER JENKINS: As a collector I found the Popular something of a nuisance, even though it had certain endearing features. Its main drawback was its presentation of the weekly St. Jim's and Greyfriars stories in the 'twenties: they were so hacked about that they were often spoiled, and even so no single Magnet or Gem story could appear in less than two instalments in the Popular, with the result that every alternate story had an artificial conclusion.

Again, the whole effect was scrappy, with as many as five different serials running simultaneously; of course, the serials always finished at different times, so that no matter where you begin and end your collection of Populars you are always in the middle of some long story.

Still, there were pleasing points about the Popular. Some of Mr. Chapman's best illustrations are to be found in this paper, in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties. The Rookwood stories, of course, always fitted in nicely in the space allotted, as did the stories specially written for the paper. Mr. Hamilton's contributions under this

heading include not only the Rio Kid but the Popolaki Patrol.

The Popular was replaced by what the editor called "That spanking weekly treat, the Ranger". A more unlikely successor it would be difficult to imagine.

JOHN WERNHAM: If you have never heard anyone speak with affection of the Popular now is your chance. Although I only remember the P.P. during war one, in all its twenty years of life, I found it particularly attractive at a time when the Gem was past its best and there were too many sub stories about. It provided a glimpse of the quality of the pre-war stories in which I was more than ready to respond even at the tender age of ten and gave a sense, I think, of three jolly schools all utterly unlike, all having fun and adventure together in their respective spheres, at one and the same time, and all served up in one dish for the delight of one small boy.

It has always seemed to me that the old Popular enjoyed a special advantage in that all the best of the early Hamilton was at the disposal of the editors, and all the benefits of the editorial pruning knife could come into play. Surely the old paper was a sort of Hamilton Digest - a short story version of the earlier full-length issues.

You were not the only reader who felt melancholy when the old stories were discarded in favour of a new series, and, having seen these issues (1919?) recently, I felt melancholy all over again. In spite of the years between, those early impressions remain. Like you, I cannot explain why I like the Pop except for the reasons give above, and I often wonder what would happen if an omnibus edition of a score of the old stories were presented to the modern schoolboy. For that matter, what would be the reaction of the modern old boy?

If the Ugly Duckling is so despised, as you have said, it might be interesting to discover how many collectors still think of it as a swan.

EDWIN COLDWELL: At last someone has said something nice about the Popular. This was the first Hamilton paper I ever read. One morning in late 1919, I was wondering what to do, but this was changed when the milkman arrived to produce for me No. 2 of the Penny Popular.

This was my first introduction to the Popular, Magnet and Gem, but from that time on I read them week by week. For me, the Popular was certainly no Ugly Duckling.

(Mr. Coldwell obviously means No. 2 new series, judging by the date.)

E. THOMSON: I, too, loved the Popular - it was always my favourite. The shortness of the stories made such ideal bedtime reading, plus the fact that we had a feast of three grand school stories.

RON CRILLIE: I was always fond of the Popular because, in my young days, it was the only paper in which I could read about Rookwood. Also, the St. Jim's stories in the Popular were a refreshing change from those appearing in the Gem at that time, and which featured the girls of Spalding Hall, Mr. Pilbeam and other weird characters. It was a sad day for me when the Popular finished, to be succeeded by the Ranger. It was no consolation that the new paper featured brand new stories by Frank Richards. Grimalade was no substitute for Rookwood.

ARTHUR HOLLAND: Never again will you be able to say that you know nobody who had great affection for the Popular. It was one of my favourites from the first five years of its existence. During this period it featured Tom Merry, Sexton Blake, and Jack, Sam and Pete - strange company, I will admit. I consider the first five years to be the Golden Age of the Popular. The only fault I found with this rather remarkable periodical was when it resorted to tiny print. As I placed great value on my eyes, I gave up reading it - with much regret.

IMPRESSIONS

Mr. Len Packman has sent us a page from the well-known weekly paper "REVEILLE", which offers an article by John Black under the title "Fat Boy and Fat Women made them rich." The article is well written and quite entertaining, but it makes us think what a false picture of our Old Boys' Books is given to the younger generation today by modern journalists.

The article commences: "Two men have kept Britain laughing for more than half a century." The two men, considered in the article, are Frank Richards and Donald McGill, the latter having drawn saucy seaside postcards for much longer than most of us can remember. Yet for the life of us we cannot see any link between the respective work of these two famous men.

It needs a very wide stretch of imagination to suggest that Frank Richards has kept Britain laughing for 50 years. True, his T.V. plays and many of his post-war Bunter books have been humorous, and some of his pre-war series in all the papers were real rib-tickers. But surely nobody, who really knows Frank Richards' remarkable record, would claim that his main work has been to make Britain laugh. Such an assumption ignores entirely the great serious series - scores of them - of Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Jim's. Most of us would maintain that his greatest work has been in the powerful school dramas which he wrote with such a certain touch.

The article describes Mr. Richards as once a tireless visitor to the gaming tables at Monte Carlo, and quotes him as saying: "Fifty pounds a night was my limit. When I'd lost that, I went back to my hotel and wrote another Bunter story to recoup my losses."

We fancy that gives a misleading picture. Assuming that Mr. Richards' Monte Carlo days were prior to the first world war, we think it may have been several decades too early for him to have thought of them as Bunter stories. It's all right for a new generation, of course, but the picture is not too accurate.

But the plum per is yet to come: "At his peak, he wrote one and a half million words every year, and kept two weekly comics, the Gem and the Magnet, almost filled by his own efforts."

The underlining is ours.

GENS OF HAMILTONIANA

"It would be false modesty on my part, sir, to be blind to the fact that my brain-power is of a somewhat unusual order," explained Skimpole, blinking at his form-master. "My idea, therefore, is to obtain a post in the War Office. By doing so, I should be able to release some official who is doubtless eager to get to the front. The higher the post, the more suitable it would be for me. May I request you to place my case before the authorities, sir?"

From "The St. Jim's War-Workers" 1916.  
Sent in by John Farrell, Wigan.

(Book awards are made for every item found suitable for inclusion in this column.)

WANTED URGENTLY FOR BINDING: POPULARS Nos. 183 and 190.  
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

WANTED: "Mystery of Cloombur" "Refugees" "Firm of Girdlestone" "His Last Bow" (All Conan Doyle). "813"; "The Hollow Needle" "Arsene Lupin" (Leblanc)  
CHAPMAN, 35 BARROW ROAD, BARTON-ON-HUMBER.

No. 145 - GRAND NEW SERIES STARTS TODAY  
 It's THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY!



### THE MYSTERIOUS X

*(Small, illegible text, possibly a note or signature)*

(Cover re-drawn by Keith Godsave)

all had ruined abbeys or monasteries close by; secret doors and passages were all over the place.

Some of the characters were similar. All were ruled over by a venerable Head; all had popular and unpopular masters; pleasant and unpleasant fat boys; aristocratic dandies; good-hearted chumps (Handy, Coker and Lovell).

The stories generally were different. The Hamilton stories made good light reading. Usually interesting, often amusing, a little mildly exciting, they seemed to be aimed at younger readers.

## NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

Herbert Chapman weighs in with another interesting article this month, and there are many good things ahead as Spring gives way to Summer and the Test Matches. Hope to see some of you at Leeds on July 8th!

\* \* \*

HAMILTONIANA

versus

ST. FRANK'S

By Herbert Chapman

On reading the C.D., one must come to the conclusion that the Hamilton School stories were and are, more popular than those of St. Frank's, although I myself always preferred the latter.

In my opinion it is not possible to compare them as they were so different.

Certainly they resembled each other in some respects. All were situated in the country near to a river with the sea not far away;

close by; secret doors and

There was nothing blood and thunder about them and they always had a highly moral tone. Perhaps owing to their long run the plots suffered from a sameness and seemed to recur with each new generation of readers (no reason why they should not.)

Bunter's postal order, Bunter Court, Lowther's limericks, Manners' camera, Gussy's topper, Loder's trip to the Cross Keys, were rather overworked. Talbot's shady past cropped up rather too frequently.

In spite of these small drawbacks however, they were good solid, healthy reading, much superior to the modern stuff published for boys today. (Comic strips seem to have taken the place of reading these days.)

The St. Frank's stories were from a different mould altogether and were my choice every time. The Old Series suffered however, from being published in serial form, as each week one had to read (or skip) two or three pages of recapitulation before getting on with the story. This was liable to put new readers off, as it did me at first. They made much better, smoother reading when published in book form (The "Monster") several years later. What a great 1/- worth the "Monster" was!

Especially I liked the "narrative related throughout by Nipper" style, and the stories lost a lot when this was dropped.

There were some well drawn characters apart from Nelson Lee and Nipper, Handy, Archie, William Napoleon Browne, Phipps, Pitt "the Serpent", Colonel Clinton, Dorrie, Umlosi, to mention just a few.

The stories were set on a very large stage. School, sport, detection, even a little romance, all interwoven and seasoned with good fun, usually supplied by Handy, that Prince of Comedians.

New boys arrived regularly, each one possessing some unique ability as a boxer, footballer, cricketer, ventriloquist, etc. New masters appeared from time to time, each one surrounded by some mystery or other. Barring outs occurred more or less regularly, led by that great general Nipper who would have been a match for all the dictators put together.

Then there were the great holiday series, featuring Dorrie and Umlosi. Two great favourites. Trips across the desert; clashes with bushrangers, pirates, cannibals; trips in search of lost cities; shipwrecks on volcanic islands; danger when trapped in the Sargosso Seas.

In fact, one might be allowed to coin an old phrase and say that E. S. Brooks threw in everything except the kitchen sink.

Very sensational, blood and thunder at times of course, but I am sure they never did a healthy-minded boy any harm. To an adult of

those days they must have seemed fantastic, but one can read in the newspapers today of even more incredible happenings.

After all, boys do not want to read about everyday happenings; they want adventure, mystery, sensation, excitement and they certainly got it from Mr. Brooks.

Yes, St. Frank's every time for me.

On a somewhat similarly reminiscent theme, we add the following:

RANDOM THOUGHTS

By R. GODSAVE

To some readers of the Nelson Lee Library, both regular and casual, Nipper is a 'know all' and is to them faintly objectionable.

It has occurred to me that the characterisation of Nipper is based on self-reliance. From my own observations through life, I have found that self-reliance is given to few of us at an early age. It is of course, gained as one gets older, sometimes through necessity.

When one possesses it at an early age it must have the effect of being such as Nipper is thought to be by some of the readers.

At the age of fifteen or so, the majority of boys are not self-reliant, and they look to a boy who is. Thus, the boy who possesses this gift automatically becomes their leader and accepts the responsibility of guiding their thoughts and actions.

I know of a case of a boy who has been self-reliant from an early age and now at the age of sixteen and a half years is a sergeant in the school Cadet Corps. This perhaps shows that a boy or girl who possesses this quality stands out from the rest of their fellow scholars and attracts the attention of those in authority. Had Nipper not possessed this gift, I am sure that Nelson Lee would not have had him for his assistant.

There are others at St. Frank's I would place in the same category as Nipper, namely William Napoleon Browne and Willy Handforth. These boys would act without consulting their friends, as to a certain extent they are alone, also it would be unlikely that any brilliant or concrete suggestion would be forthcoming.

Others, such as Reggie Pitt and Sir Montie Tregellis-West are self-reliant to a lesser degree. So it seems to me that this quality is given to us in a greater or lesser degree, and in my own case, at the age of fifteen, to a very lesser degree.

Having served on various Committees, political and otherwise, I have seen a committee acting expeditiously under its chairman. Also I

have seen the reverse, with the Chairman giving little guidance, and vacillating with the result that items for consideration are constantly being postponed.

So, in summing up, I would say that if Nipper does appear to have a 'know all' attitude, it is because it is inevitable in one at the age of fifteen or so, who is self-reliant.

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## SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

WALTER WEBB reviews recently published Sexton Blake Novels

SHOT FROM THE DARK (No. 469)

PHILIP CHAMBERS

As a rule it is Blake who takes the offensive and forces his opponent to take evasive action. When Radic Roemer, an American war traitor, with the dimensions of a flyweight, but with ambitions by no means as diminutive, abducted Marion Lang, it was both a challenge to and a contempt of Blake's prowess as a crime fighter. Certainly, Roemer had he lived long enough, would soon have learned that a good big 'un is always more than a match for a little 'un, however good.

A T.V. game, to test the skill of a panel of experts, is the start of all the trouble, with an object - a Roman helmet of early fifteenth century origin, containing on its rim a Latin cypher - being the exhibit of particular interest to Roemer and his gang of thugs. Marion, taking over the feminine lead from Paula, has a particularly unhappy time of it with a razor-happy teddy boy, but emerges from her ordeal with credit. Credit too, to author Philip Chambers for a highly satisfactory second Blake Novel.

Rating.....Very Good.

PURSUIT TO ALGERIA (No. 470)

ARTHUR MACLEAN

A tough and suspenseful novel describing the incredible bravery and endurance of a patrol of legionnaires opposed to F.L.N. terrorists in the Algerian desert. Blake's presence in the column is due to an assignment by Craillie which makes it imperative for him to get to grips with a French Renegade, who is running arms to the terrorists, and so avenge a partial failure of his during the war, when he failed to regain a large, antique jewelled ring containing a spool of microfilm containing evidence of the traitorous designs of a certain individual now about to take up an important position with the Ministry of Defence.

One character in this book overshadows every other - even Blake. It is that of the German legionnaire, Zimmermann, whose courage and devotion to duty in the face of terrorist torture made Blake's quest the success it eventually became. From the splendid cover design by Caroselli to the last page this is entertainment plus. In the 'Berlin' and 'Sea Tigers' class, in fact.

Rating.....Excellent.

SOMETHING TO KILL ABOUT (No. 471)

DESMOND REID

An attractive cover by Camps, with Paula looking quite breath-taking in a low-cut yellow dress of modern brevity, hardly compensates for the shortcomings of this story, which, in quality, takes quite a nose-dive when compared with other stories published

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under the same name.

When he had a young Frenchman, Raoul Pichard deported to a Nazi Labour Camp following tortures which robbed him of both memory and sanity, Heinrich Vogel, head of the Gestapo in wartime Noirtelle-sur-Seine, was not to know that restoration of the aforementioned plus the crime-fighting abilities of a certain British criminologist, were to uncover his nest of art treasures looted from occupied France during the war. With over ten million at stake Vogel wanted Pichard, who knew of the hiding place of the loot, dead, and would certainly have achieved his object but for Blake.

Rating ..... Moderate

ASSAULT AND PEPPER (No. 472)

JACK TREVOR STORY

Easter .... the sea front at Brighton .... Hayling Island .... a homicidal maniac .... six dismembered bodies .... an absconding blonde .... Tinker in love yet again - and a murder subject; An appetising if somewhat gruesome literary dish, which does not quite add up to the author's best work. In both senses, this is a story almost devoid of humour apart from a passage here and there (see page 60) and a grim Story is not nearly so entertaining as an irrelevant one.

But I liked the ending he devised for his murderer - the sewerage was indeed the appropriate place for Mr. Pepper, Tinker? An enigma if ever there was one! Here, again, his primary weakness - the red-head - reasserts itself. In a profession where stability of the heart is as essential as stability of the mind, it is small wonder that he earns the cold condemnation of his chief.

Rating ..... Good

GENERAL COMMENTARY

COMING ATTRACTIONS: PETER SAXON, whose name was last seen on an S.B.L. cover in April, 1959, is due to return in MAY. His story will be followed by one set in Ireland in response to requests by readers, some of whose letters were reproduced in Mailbag some months ago. There are indications that the popularity of the Organisation's pretty and unassuming young receptionist is on the increase, so it can be confidently assumed that Marion Lang will be featured more consistently in future stories.

HANK JANSON: Perhaps the most intriguing item of news is the announcement that "Hank Janson" will be writing the occasional Sexton Blake story from now on. This writer - or should it be writers? - has a large following. Rumour has it that several authors used this non-de-plume, but if this particular Hank Janson is the original - S.D. Frances - then he is certainly capable of putting over a good Blake.

F. DUBREZ FAWCETT: When a novel published under this name appeared in a recent S.B.L., it was hinted in the Reviews that it might have been a pen-name of W. Howard Baker's. This is not so, however, and F. Dubrez Fawcett is the name of a new writer to the S.B.L. Looking through old issues of the "Birmingham Mail" recently, I came across his name as author of a true short story of the North Pole hoax of 1909, when the explorer, Dr. Frederick Albert Cook of New York, fraudulently claimed to have discovered the Pole single-handed.

ANTHONY SKENE AND THE B.B.C.

By Derek Adley

With regard to Walter Webb's references to Anthony Skene and the B.B.C. radio plays, I feel it will be in the best interests of accuracy to clear this matter up once and for all, and state the following.

During the past four or five years occasional plays - mainly of the mystery type -

have been performed on the sound radio with the authors name given as either Anthony Skene or Anthony Juan Skene.

As long ago as 1957, Mr. H. W. Twyman made a reference to the subject in a letter to Bill Lofts suggesting that here was good material for a spot of detective work. Bill did not pursue the matter however, as he felt that this was not the same author.

I have recently been fortunate enough to trace this old Blake author and asked him if he could throw some light on the matter and by return of post came the answer and here is an exact extract from his letter:

"Someday Anthony Juan Skene and I will have to come to an understanding. I don't know him, or anything of him, but I feel sure that he was not born or rather registered Anthony Skene, and that he inserted the Juan to differentiate when he found I was alive and kicking from one of my old friends of the roaring thirties."

So there you are. This is not our Anthony Skene after all and I think this is a classical example of how one can assume too much by taking an identical name as proof.

## OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

### AUSTRALIA

On Friday, February 24th, club members accepted an invitation from the Book Collectors' Society of Australia to be guest speakers for the evening. The meeting opened at 8 p.m. in the Lecture Room of the Public Library when members were welcomed by the Club Secretary.

Chairman of the Sydney Club, Mr. Syd Smyth, opened with an expression of thanks for the invitation and a brief explanation of the field covered by collectors here and overseas. Opening speaker Mr. Stan Nicholls, with practised ease gave a professional polish to his informative speech covering Old Boys' Books from the mid-nineteenth century to the rise of Associated Press publications. His humorous extracts from the Editorial advice pages of several of these books met with a ready laugh from a most receptive audience. After introducing the various fields in which the other speakers would specialise Mr. Nicholls made way for Victor Colby, club expert on the subject of Blakiana.

It was quite obvious that here, once again, Victor had spent a great deal of time and thought in preparing his field and the subject received an excellent coverage, sufficiently detailed so as to arouse the listeners' interest without boring them. Charles Hamilton's ardent champion, Syd Smyth took over the tale then with a narrative on the famous author's life and characters, illustrating his talk with copies of the Magnet and Gem in the same way as the previous speakers with the books featured in their speeches. And last, but by no means least in the field, Ernie Carter, a rabid Lee-ite covered that part of the hobby with a colourful word picture of Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's. An interesting feature of the evening was the half-hour discussion period which followed the well-received four part lecture. One Book Society member - a well known Sydney doctor - posed the intriguing question of "Why" and some interesting remarks were made in an endeavour to discover what made collectors "tick." We still don't know the answers, but most definitely are glad we do "tick" in this most interesting hobby. Altogether an enjoyable evening which brought welcome publicity to the club and hobby.

### MIDLAND

BETTE PATE - Secretary.

Meeting held February 28th, 1961

We could hardly have bettered our new meeting room at the Arden Hotel. It was

smaller but more comfortable than the one we had in January and the ten members who turned up seemed to very much appreciate this. In fact this was one of the best meetings we have had for some months. And as Billy Bunter would agree, the refreshments served by the hotel staff all helped. Apologies were sent in by Tom and Beryl Porter, Joe Marston, John Tomlinson and Ray Bennett. We were all delighted to hear the better news of Beryl and hope to see her in March.

The news that the Greyfriars Cup had "come home for good" was received with great pleasure and to celebrate the occasion it was decided to have as last item of the evening, the St. Frank's holiday yarn "Handforth Junior puts things right" by E. S. (Brooks) Broster! This was read by George Chatham. On behalf of the club, the Chairman offered condolences to Jack Corbett on the death of his father. Also congratulations to Tom Porter on his appointment to the Headship of Grace Mary School, Dudley.

For the quiz, the members were asked to name as many of the 39 "normal residents" of the Greyfriars Remove passage as they could. Jack Corbett and Jack Bellfield tied with 30 each. There was a very amusing reading by Jack Bellfield from 1940 Holiday Annual when Billy Bunter wins a "bike" or did he? He did - a "penny farthing" affair at first - this a joke by his schoolfellows - finally part of the first prize which amounted to a sixpenny postal order, which he had to journey to Courtfield to cash - but not on the "penny farthing."

The Desert Island Revisited item was in the capable hands of George Chatham. 1. Holiday Annual (1939) which included a good Rookwood yarn ("The Cheat") and "The Mystery of the Christmas Candles." No. 2 A Mauleverer Towers Yarn, S.O.L. No. 319. 3. Two Items here. A Christmas Gem No. 1139 and a Christmas Magnet No. 1661. 4. Two old Magnets Nos. 448 and 581. 5. "The Day at the Fox" by Norman Lewis. 6. "Merry Hall" by Beverley Nicholls. 7. "The Mandarin" by Simon De Beauvoir. George completed his 8 selections with "Narrow Gauge Railways in Mid Wales" by J. & C. Boyd.

A quiz set by Midge Corbett was a stiff hurdle for members - the Christian names of eighteen (not so well known) Hamilton characters. The Secretary got eight right and lucky at that. In all, a very enjoyable night's programme. We hope the one for Tuesday, March 28th will be better still, as Eric Fayne has promised to visit us that evening.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

#### MERSEYSIDE

#### Meeting held March 12th, 1961

Yet another well-attended meeting commenced with the chairman's remarks and the reading of correspondence, and this was followed by the Secretary's report. The financial situation being very satisfactory, it was resolved to take steps to replenish the library stock, and to dispose of those books for which the demand is exhausted. A quiz by Norman Prganell kept us fully occupied for the next 15 minutes; this was of the jumbled name type on characters from Greyfriars, Rookwood, etc., it proved to be quite a stiff task for the majority, calling for great concentration, and was ably won by Frank Unwin.

After refreshments and library business came another reading, a most enjoyable and amusing extract from a Bunter book, which Jack Morgan did full justice to. We then took part in a debate on an item submitted by Frank Unwin, a most controversial issue which resulted in animated discussion, and only that arch-enemy, time, put an end to the lively but friendly, differences of opinion voiced by the members.

The evening was rounded off in a particularly amusing way: our guest, Frank Shaw, gave us a reading of a story on Greyfriars, written by himself; this was couched in that slang peculiar to Liverpool, which almost certainly would be incomprehensible to any listener not a native of this fair city. However, it was crystal clear to the company, most of whom are Scousers, and the loud and sustained laughter, which at times compelled the reader to pause, was fully merited by the hilarious nature of the subject matter. We have never had anything quite like this before, and the time for departure found us

still chuckling, and loud in praise of Frank for a really entertaining half-hour.  
Next meeting - 9th April - 5.30 p.m.

FRANK CASE

NORTHERN

Meeting, Saturday, 11th March, 1961

There was another good attendance of 16 members present when our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened the meeting at 7 p.m. Geoffrey reminded us that our Annual General Meeting takes place next month.

After business had been disposed of, Gerry Allison paid a tribute to the late Fred Rutherford, whose recent death was such a loss to the hobby in general.

The talk this evening was given by Gerry, the subject being Arthur Courtney, that Greyfriars Sixth-former who was 'killed-off' by a substitute writer, it is said because his name was similar to that of Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe. Gerry illustrated his talk by excerpts from 'Magnet' stories featuring Courtney and very interesting and dramatic they were. It left us wondering why (a) none of these fine stories were ever reprinted and (b) why the Sixth Form had such a poor showing in the later 'Magnets.'

After an interval for refreshments we had a word game, the Greyfriars Acrostic, which was greatly enjoyed and produced some very ingenious and amusing answers. The final placings were (1) Frank Hancock, (2) Geoffrey Wilde, (3) Jack Wood.

Another most enjoyable meeting terminated at 9.45 a.m. Next Meeting - A.G.M. - Saturday, 8th April.

FRANK HANCOCK - Secretary.

LONDON

Our first visit to Clapham was a great success, Brian and Mrs. Doyle being perfect hosts. Through Brian's endeavours, Mylton Cleaver, the distinguished author of stories which appeared in 'Captain' 'Chums' 'Boys' Own Paper' attended the meeting and gave an excellent address. He answered various questions put to him by Bill Lofts, Len Packman, and Bill Hubbard, the latter just home from Kenya.

Gem enthusiasts were particularly pleased with Winifred Moras' 'Desert Island Books' all copies of the paper. Don Webster gave us a good Author and Artist Quiz, Ray Hopkins' quiz was entertaining, and Tom Wright's St. Sams' reading provoked much laughter.

Next meeting - Saturday, April 15th at Goodrich Road School, East Dulwich. Host - Horace Roberts. If intending to be present please write host at 12 Clairview Road, London, S.W.16 or phone Streatham 0499.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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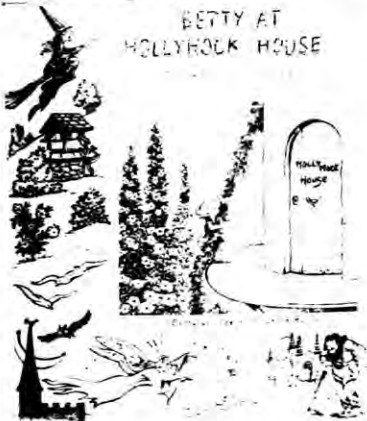
WANTED: Populars 120, 153, 160, 162, 163, 168, 169, 217, 219. Any pink Union Jacks prior to 1917. Sexton Blake Libraries, first series 1, 2, 4 - 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21 - 27, 29 - 32, 34 - 64. Fair condition; please state price.  
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# POT - POURRI

No. 333 Young Fellows

## BETTY AT HOLLYHOCK HOUSE



Some months ago an Australian reader mentioned how dearly he wished that he could see the cover of "Betty at Hollyhock House." We were unable to get hold of a copy but, like the elephant, Collectors' Digest never forgets. Mr. Bill Lofts paid a special visit to the British Museum and sketched the cover of that long-remembered copy. Here it is! We hope our Australian reader and others will regard it as Paddy, the Next Best Thing. It's just the service of the Digest.

### WOT? NO THOMPSON PAPERS? By Christopher Lowder

My main interests in the hobby are Amalgamated Press papers, and my especial interest in the A.P. is Sexton Blake. I have quite a substantial collection of 3rd series Sexton Blake Libraries including quite a few early ones; also, I have a few Union Jacks growing.

I enjoy Nelson Lee, though I wish he had never found St. Frank's. I suppose I shall have to watch my step with St. Frank's fans, but my humble opinion is that

Nelson Lee was at the peak of his career with Maxwell Scott, and that Edwy Searles Brooks could write better detective stories (Waldo, Norman Conquest, Ironsides, etc.) than school stories.

Still, my main object in writing this little article is to turn the spotlight on the Thompson papers and Dixon Hawke.

To my mind the Thompson papers are seriously under-rated. Their authors could produce some fine Westerns, exciting Detective stories, and World-Wide Treasure Hunts (or of course, mix them up together!) and the only thing I didn't like was their funny-school-stories and their heavy-sport-stories.

And then - there was Dixon Hawke.

Now here is a detective who gets less attention than he deserves. Whenever I talk about Hawke to other people their reply is that Blake is much, much better. I couldn't

agree more, but surely some respect, at least, is due to Hawke, who has been going regularly in the Adventure for forty years now.

Also, the Casebooks. These stories are little gems in which Hawke has to use his brain-power and there is very little blood and thunder. But now there are no more Casebooks, and the separate Adventure has vanished - and Dixon Hawke may vanish into the limbo at last. So why doesn't someone with knowledge write a few articles on Hawke, so that his trips round the world and his many cases will not have been in vain.

As E. S. Turner said: "Those who follow Blake seldom follow Hawke" so a new door is waiting to be opened for some people. I would dearly like to see, in Collectors' Digest, some articles on Hawke and the Thompson papers. If anybody has some out-of-the-way information on Hawke (identity of his creator, first story title, and the name of the man who writes of him today) here is one Digest reader who would eagerly lap it up.

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### CONCERNING ARTISTS

By Ray Hopkins

The "School Friend" cover of the February Digest was an unexpected treat. I always think that Dodshon's work tends to give a comic impression even though the characters are depicted in some situation fraught with nerve-wracking complication (example: "Her Brother - a Thief!!") He manages to catch a peculiarly woebegone expression that I find in no other artist of our old papers.

I have read statements to the effect that G. M. Dodshon's work was not in the least lifelike and often appeared to be slapdash, but I don't agree. His drawings of the Cliff House girls are the ones we remember. I saw very few of the original School Friend (about 1929 when it was on its last legs) and very few Cliff House stories when they started up again some time later in the (then) new paper The Schoolgirl.

If my memory is correct, the series began again as a serial called "Babs' Fight for Stella". The girls were then drawn by T. Laidler, an excellent artist, whose work still appears weekly in Girls' Crystal, illustrating a long-running humorous series called "Trixie's Diary." However, Laidler's Cliff House girls were not Dodshon's, though they were much more handsome and longer stemmed (but perhaps skirts were shorter). I believe also that a different author wrote the Cliff House stories in The Schoolgirl.

Laidler will always be the artist I remember for his portrayal of Renee Frazer's vivacious character Sunny McAlister. I first met her in the pages of the original School Friend, and she continued in The Schoolgirl. To this day I still remember her red hair and the twinkle in her eye as she surveyed the departing back of some routed villainess. She had the most enjoyable habit of insulting the adult ' heavies ' in their

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hearing in a way which left them gasping with frustrated anger.

It was impossible to disconcert the imperturbable Sunny and she was always wearing a big smile with the inevitable fringe of hair. Her adventures appear in several issues of the pre-war Schoolgirls' Own Library, but, to date, I have only been able to achieve ownership of "Sunny in the House of Secrets." This, in the old familiar yellow and black cover has a Laidler cover-drawing, but the title illustration is by G. M. Dodshon. This is a reprint of a serial in The Schoolgirl, judging by the S.O.L. date, May 1933, and I would, were it not absurd, be tempted to say: "Ah, Dodshon and Laidler both illustrated Cliff House and Sunny stories, therefore they must be one and same person." A.P. writers could fool the readers, but not so the artists, especially two such different stylists as Dodshon and Laidler.

(The work of Dodshon can be found in Pluck and other papers dear the turn of the century. Dodshon was good at getting character into the faces of Cliff House girls, but his backgrounds were scrappy and sketchy - ED.)

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## ODDS AND ENDS

By Gerry Allison

**HIGHCLIFFE AND CAPTAIN MARRYAT.** What a fascinating study it would be to trace the origins of the names of Charles Hamilton's characters. If only a chapter on the subject had appeared in the AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I have just come across what seems to be the inspiration of two of the principal members of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School. "The King's Own" by Marryat is a stirring story of the Navy, and among the actors are the names Admiral De Courcy and Lieutenant Courtenay!

Just as Handel would take a theme from another composer, and by his genius transmute it into the finest gold, so Frank Richards has borrowed a name here and a name there, and made them into living people. His liking for Kipling for instance, is obvious, but who now can remember Prout and Manders of STALKY & CO. or Hurree Mookerjee of KIM?

So now let one of the English Masters in our ranks get busy with a bit of research, and let us read an article "HAMILTON NOMENCLATURE" in the 1961 Annual.

**FOR THE RECORD.** In the February "Collectors' Digest" the editor refers to "our series of covers of First Issues." I know one of our coterie who is collecting illustrations of Number Ones, so I would like to point out that the picture on page 30 of the March 'C.D.' is not a copy of the first issue of TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY, although it is captioned "How they Began - No. 4". The illustration of No. 1 of that delightful comic, shows the three Bumpy Boys and Puss in Boots. The latter has a large sack, full of live mice - black ones. My grand-daughter age 4, dare not look at the final frame!

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(How they Began No. 4 was No. 1 (new series) of Tiger Tim's Weekly. The paper started in 1919 as Tiger Tim's Tales. In January 1921 it started again as Tiger Tim's Weekly. In November 1921 it started yet again at No. 1, the price being increased to 2d. The final issue appeared in May, 1940, after a total of 1039 weeks - ED.)

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WHY THE 'SCHOOL FRIEND' FAILEDBy W. O. G. LOFTS

After the first six stories of Cliff House in the 'School Friend' by Charles Hamilton, the stories were taken over by other writers. In order they were as follows: Horace Phillips, Reginald Kirkham, L. E. Ransome and John W. Wheway. Some years ago in the S.P.C. I expressed the opinion that the Golden Age of the Cliff House stories was in the period that L. E. Ransome was writing them, 1924/29.

In a Controversial in June 1959, C.D. our Editor made the very interesting point that if that was the Golden Age of the 'School Friend' saga - why did the paper undergo such a radical change - with a smaller 'School Friend' and shorter Cliff House yarns - plus a number of other different tales of equal length by different authors?

I recently received a very informative letter from Mr. L. E. Ransome about this (long delayed through the author being out of this country) and it is of great interest to all Cliff House readers.

I would like very much to reply to your editor's very interesting point of why the 'School Friend' failed. The 'School Friend' was killed primarily by the great slump, which brought general disaster to the publishing trade. In those days, fantastic as it may seem today, girls bought their weekly papers out of their own pocket-money. It was not then the custom for working and middle-class customers to order papers for delivery; this was a product of war-world II when papers could not be bought casually. Consequently, with wide-spread unemployment, and reduced wages, fathers gave their kids less pocket-money - with the result that circulations went down to below danger point. The revised 'School Friend' (later 'School Girl') was filled with short stories in order to get a wider market and not only to cater for those who liked school stories. Such a paper gives an editor a better chance to feel his market; if he finds that adventure stories for an example, have a wider appeal than school stories, then he can concentrate on them. By about 1931, the worst was over, and Cliff House School stories were revived again by John W. Wheway.

I was then writing three boys' stories a week - plus one or two girls' stories. Having suffered by the closure of the 'School Friend' to the extent of losing for a brief spell my entire income - I was not keen to take the same risk again. Writing a 20,000 word story a week is very nice while it lasts, but one is putting all one's eggs in one basket, and the larger output does rather prevent one keeping contact with other markets. What can happen once can happen again, and sure enough when world war II started in 1939, it had the same effect as before - Closure!

Of course, it may well be that there was some appeal lacking in my Cliff House stories. I won't say there wasn't, but there was an editor to tell me so. As the editor did not demand any basic change, I can only suppose that he thought they were alright, so he must share the blame. In fact, as editor, one might say, he took the largest part of the blame; for he could have reduced the stories to, say, half length, experimentally - however, I'm not trying to shovel off any blame, only to explain.

Perhaps readers today forget all about the Slump - though many remember the consequent unemployment. The Slump was a very worrying time for editor - and therefore for writers!

COLLECTION of 883 Magnets for sale. Years 1908 (14 only), 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1939, 1940. Condition excellent (apart from about 50 which could be described as "good") complete lists on application. Will NOT sell separately. Price 1400 dollars. B. R. BEASLEY, 1244, ESQUIMAULT STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA.

## EDWARD BLIGHT

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Peace, Dick Turpin, Dr. Pritchard. 7/6

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A full list which includes Boys Books over 100 years old, will be  
sent on receipt of a 3d. stamp. Postage extra on all items.

# Yours Sincerely

## (Interesting Items from the Editor's Postbag)

VICTOR WELLAND (Nuneaton) I am enjoying my membership with the Sexton Blake Circle. I have had some very interesting correspondence with other members, and with the Blake author, Rex Dolphin, and it is all due to the Sexton Blake Library.

FRANK CASE (Liverpool) Concerning Collectors' Digest I can do no better than quote our friend Ulfah Heep by saying that the old paper has "grewed out of all nollidge, Master Copperfield!"

BILL LOFTS (London) The Jaxon Lee story, mentioned in March Yours Sincerely, is of course, the old Nelson Lee - Silver Dwarf serial which appeared in the early Boys' Friend, hardly altered at all.

(But the one alteration of Nelson to Jaxon strikes us as incomprehensible. - ED.)

KENNETH BALL (Lincoln) When Master Shovel (in "No End in Sight") said "I thought a swain was a kind of cart", do you think he may have been thinking of a "wain"?

(Yes, sir, we feel quite sure that he was thinking of a "wain." - ED.)

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield) Bob Whiter has excelled himself with his superb drawing of the Rio Kid (C.D. March, 1961). It is one of his very best pictures. It looks to me as though "Famous Series" is all about Greyfriars - 5 of them in a row. What about St. Jim's and Rookwood? Why does Greyfriars get all the limelight? For some time now St. Jim's has been well in the background and Rookwood is very rarely mentioned. After all, the Gem was Charles Hamilton's first love.

(We don't think we have been neglecting St. Jim's or Rookwood, George, but you will be pleased to know that next month's Famous Series will feature a Rookwood item, and some of the St. Jim's series will be featured in due course. - ED.)

RON CROLLIE (Hornchurch) I do not altogether agree with Mr. Goodhead that radio is the only medium capable of handling the Greyfriars stories. After all, the B.B.C. made a good job of "Little Men" and "Jo's Boys", and with a little imagination they should be able to present a serious Greyfriars series. Imagine Peter Cushing as Mr. Quelch in the second Harry Wharton versus Mr. Quelch series. It makes my mouth water to think of it.

RONALD NICHOLLS (Whitchurch) The Digest gets better and better. How about articles on Scout, Chums or the comics Tiger Tim's, Rainbow, Bubbles and Puck?

(A special article on SCOUT is now in preparation and will appear in Collectors' Digest in the near future. - ED.)

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham) I was interested and not surprised to discover on listening to "Does the Team Think?" on the Light recently, that comedian Arthur Askey was a Magnet reader.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross) The cover of No. 1 of the Boys' Friend Library roused memories in my father's heart. He used to read the adventures of Jack, Sam and Pete in weekly doses in the old green 'un.