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Vol. 15.

Number 174

JUNE, 1961

Price 2s. 0d.

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,
Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

* * *

THE GOLD TRAIL, by RUPERT CHESTERTON. (cont.)



THE HISTORY OF THE SCOUT

By W. O. G. Lofts

"This is a new paper for boys; I like it; and I'm giving it to you, because I would prefer you to read it, instead of the trash which I so very often have to confiscate".

The schoolmaster who uttered these words in 1908, to young Fredrick Haydn Dimmock, then a lad in his teens, could never have foreseen that in a few years, this young boy, would join the staff of the above-mentioned paper. And, shortly after his war-service, would return to be editor for over 37 years, and in the opinion of many

authors and artists that I have met, to be the most popular and finest editor of all time.

One always associates the 'Magnet' with Frank Richards; and the 'Gem' with Martin Clifford, and likewise the 'Scout' always brings to mind F. Haydn Dimmock. But for the very early history of the 'Scout' one must go right back to the beginning in 1908.

Lieut-Generl R. S. S. Baden-Powell (later Lord) was immensely popular with the youngsters of 1908. He was the hero defender of Mafeking. Baden-Powell had set down his ideas for the Boy Scout Movement. These were published in six fortnightly parts under the title of 'Scouting for Boys', the first appearing in January 1908. These booklets were a very great success and sold by the thousand. As letters came pouring into the publishers from interested readers who wanted to know more about Scouting, the chief Scout felt that a paper should be launched which catered for the Boy Scout Movement. After considerable talks with advisors behind the scenes, and consultations with the publishers (C. Arthur Pearson Ltd.) the 'Scout' was born.

The first issue appeared on April 18th, 1908, and the paper was an instant success. "How I started Scouting" was in fact the first article, written appropriately enough by the Chief Scout, who continued writing similar articles almost up to the time of his death in 1941. There was also the usual competition, a familiar theme in new boys' magazines, but the great reward in this instance was thirty lucky winners spending a fortnight in General Baden-Powell's own camp! The second issue was a St. George's Day Special number, always a very important day in the life of a Scout. Authors in the very early years included Paul Herring, Singleton Carew, Andrew Wood, E. Le Breton Martin, E. Newton Bungey, Rupert Chesterton, Henry T. Johnson, Percy Longhurst, Christopher Beck, Jack North, Harry Huntington (the last two pen-names hiding the identity of John Nix Pentelow), Stacey Blake, Alec G. Pearson, and Ross Harvey - the last mentioned being H. Clarke Hook, son of the creator of Jack, Sam, & Pete - and a writer of many of the early 'Gem' substitute stories. Artists included Fred Bennett, G. M. Dodshon (of Cliff House Fame) Thomas Summerfield, and E.P. Kinsella, whose coloured covers on the double numbers were a real work of art. Serials, too, were a main feature in the 'Scout', one of special note being 'Secret of Sexton's Folly' written by Rupert Chesterton, though I hasten to inform Sexton Blake enthusiasts that 'Sexton's Folly' was the name of a house!

The first editor of the 'Scout' was Percy W. Everett (later Sir) who was also the controlling editor of C. Arthur Pearson Ltd. But

after a short time, he felt that his heavy duties did not permit him the time he would have wished in editing the paper, so he appointed an editor with fresh ideas to take full control of the 'Scout'. This new editor had strict instructions to improve the paper at all costs, and to make it worthy of its place in boys' fiction. Now here I wish to correct an error which seems to be in the Boy Scouts Association records of the 'Scout'. The second editor was none other than Horace Phillips, himself a most prolific writer of adult and school-boy stories in the very early days. If this name is still unfamiliar to the reader, I can add that in 1921 under the well-known pen-name of 'Marjorie Stanton' Mr. Phillips created that world famous girls' school of Morcove, featuring Betty Barton & Co. Horace Phillips brought continued success to the 'Scout' by employing the best authors and artists available at that time. But in 1910 he was offered a better position at the Amalgamated Press, to become editor of the new boys' paper 'Cheer Boys Cheer'. After much thought Mr. Phillips accepted this position, and Bernard Everett, a brother of Percy Everett, took over control of the Scout.

Fredrick Haydn Dimmock joined the staff as office boy in 1913, when strangely enough he had as a sub-editor a J. Bolton Dimmock, who was no relation. Both Dimmocks served in the first world war, alongside Bernard Everett, whilst the 'Scout' continued publication under the editorship of Nancy M. Hayes, the author and journalist. J. Bolton Dimmock was fated never to return from France and was killed in action, whilst Fredrick Haydn Dimmock was seriously wounded, but recovered and was appointed editor of Scout in 1918. Apart from a brief period in 1919 when he moved over to 'Pearsons Weekly' as assistant editor, when Bernard Everett resumed for a short while on the 'Scout' F. H. Dimmock held the position as 'Scout' editor right up to his death in 1934.

Besides the weekly issue of 'Scout' there was the one year's issues of the paper, bound in red, which was an attractive companion to 'Chums' and 'B.O.P.', whose contents were similar. In the early 20's, new authors who contributed to the paper included G.R. Samways, John Hunter, P. F. Westerman, C. M. Hincks and T.C. Bridges apart from F. Haydn Dimmock who himself was a fine and prolific author. New artists included Eric Parker of Sexton Blake fame, Kenneth Brooks of the Nelson Lee, and Thomas Henry of the 'William' books. Late 1933 was probably the most dramatic in the whole history of the 'Scout'. Sir Percy Everett who had a big say in the running of that paper resigned through ill-health. And a new controlling editor decided that the 'Scout' should change its format completely to become a deadly rival to such papers as 'Triumph', 'Champion', 'Hotspur', 'Skipper'

and others of that ilk. The title was changed from the 'Scout' to that of 'Every Boy's Weekly' though the 'Scout' remained on the cover in very small letters, while the numeration was for some reason continued as from the first 'Scout' in 1908.

Another startling change to the paper was its vivid red cover and sensational stories and the idea was that it should cater for all boys and not only Scouts. This was given a big send-off by an ambitious publicity campaign, and the first numbers reached very high circulation figures. But as always, when the free gifts had ceased the sales dropped right back to where they were before the change. Scouts and parents began to write letters of complaint, and there was the great possibility that this new type of paper would cease altogether. 'Every Boy's Weekly' was gradually dropped from the covers and No. 1418 was the last issue to have that title. The new controlling editor left suddenly, and after much discussion it was decided to bring out a new format of 'Scout' to cater only for Scouts - enlarged in size and the price increased from 2d to 3d. Another important factor, was that copies had to be ordered in advance. This saved the expense of having to bear the cost of returned and unsold copies. No. 1431 was the first issue of the new 'Scout'.

F. Haydn Dimmock in his editorial had this to say in the new era of his beloved paper:

"With this issue of the 'Scout', a new page is written in the History of Scouting. For over 27 years, our paper has taken its place on the bookstalls amongst all the other papers for boys. In appearance it was little different from its companions, and its contents were not always the sort of thing a really keen Scout would expect to find in his very own paper. I will admit quite frankly that I have long been dissatisfied with the amount of real Scouting material I was providing each week. I felt that the time has come for the 'Scout' to shake itself free from its somewhat lurid companions on the bookstalls, and stand alone, not just as a boys' paper, but as a special paper for Boy Scouts."

1940 saw the break of the 'Scout' from C. Arthur Pearson Ltd. when it was taken over and controlled by The Boy Scouts Association from No. 1684, 3rd August 1940. 1954 brought the very sad news of the death of F. Haydn Dimmock, who was succeeded by Rex Hazelwood. Today the 'Scout,' now priced 6d, owing to greatly increased production costs since 1940 bears very little resemblance in format to that of its early days, and is in size similar to that of those

pocket magazines 'Men Only' and 'Lilliput' though I hasten to say not in contents!

There have been, all told, six editors of the 'Scout' since its commencement in 1908, and not five as reported by The Boy Scouts Association. F. Haydn Dimmock who held office for over 37 years undoubtedly made the paper the success it was. The reader will appreciate the fact that it has been impossible to give the full history of the Scout in this article, but, as a former Wolf-Cub, Sixer, Scout, Patrol Leader, and finally Troop Leader, until world war II caused our group to disband, I have enjoyed happy memories in writing it.

In closing, to many readers who requested an article on the 'Scout' I can do no better than repeat the first words of the Scout Promise

"I promise to do my best."

EDITORIAL



FRANK HACKETT
1211 1/2 ST. CLAY



BOB HOLLAND
1211 1/2 ST. CLAY



FRANK HACKETT
1211 1/2 ST. CLAY



BOB HOLLAND
1211 1/2 ST. CLAY



FRANK HACKETT
1211 1/2 ST. CLAY

POT-POURRI: Our Pot-Pourri section of articles and oddments rather off the beaten track, is winning great popularity with readers. Mr. Lofts' charming and informative article on "THE SCOUT" will undoubtedly fill a long-felt want. The Scout has been too long neglected.

In the coming months our gifted and energetic band of writers will be bringing you absorbing articles of outstanding quality in POT-POURRI. Future treats include a survey of some of the Thomson papers, a fascinating look into the past at The Boys' Leader, and a delightful summary of the history of "Puck". We have a splendid programme of star attractions for you throughout the summer and into the autumn.

THE POPULARITY CONTEST: By the time this issue of Collectors' Digest is in your hands, our great contest will have closed. The poll has been heavy, which means that the project has been a great success. Next month, in a very special issue of the Digest, we shall bring you

the full results of the voting, the names of the prize-winners, an analysis of the final placings, and an article on the character who will have been proved to be the most popular in the century's juvenile literature.

Who is going to top the poll? Who are going to be the next nine? We can rest assured that every fellow who reaches the TOP TEN will be a character who enjoys enormous popularity - and always has done.

Our hundreds of voters are a representative cross-section of those who made up the circulations of the various papers years ago.

The TOP TEN to-day would have been the TOP TEN if this poll had been taken thirty years ago. It is a stirring thought.

THE EDITOR.

* * * * *

HOW THEY BEGAN: No. 7

On our cover this month we bring you the first copy of TRIUMPH. First published in September 1924 TRIUMPH ran for 814 issues until it disappeared as a war casualty in May 1940. There seems little demand for it among collectors, and we find it rarely mentioned by readers of Collectors' Digest, but, from the length of its life, it presumably was reasonably popular in its time.

* * * * *

T R A M S

Plenty of our readers are interested in the study of the former tramway systems of Britain. A new booklet, called "TRAMS", has just been issued, and will be published quarterly by the Tramway Museum Society. Beautifully printed and illustrated, this production is a must for the enthusiast. Single issues are 2/6, the annual subscription being 10/-. Anyone interested should write to Mr. R. Wiseman, 41, Greenhill Avenue, Sheffield, 8. The July issue of TRAMS will contain an article by Eric Fayne.

* * * * *

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Hobbies - Two bound vols. Nos. 625 - 676 (1907 - 8) Nos. 677 - 754 (loose) (1908 - 10) Nos. 1352 - 1395 (1921-22). About 50 Thrillers. Collectors' Digest Nos. 1-160. Modern Wonder Nos. 1 - 148. Modern World 1 - 54 (1940-41). WANTED: Nelson Lees old series 106, 252, 294, 328, 329, 331, 334, 357, 520, 533. Modern Boys. Any reasonable price paid.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

A few days ago I received a batch of Detective Weeklies, sent to me (from California) for the purpose of tracing the origin of the reprinted Blake stories. Among them is "The Man in Black," and having now read it I quite agree with Brian Doyle that this story has plenty of thrills and excitement. Incidentally, there is a curious error in the caption to the front page illustration of this issue. One of the central characters by the name of MOTAROV is referred to as MOLATOV. The fact that Molotov cocktails were much in evidence at the time this story was published may have had something to do with it!

JOSIE PACKMAN.

* * * * *

THE PALK - PATERSON "MYSTERY"

(In reply to "A Question of Authorship")

By Walter Webb

Can the identity of an Australian writer born or reared in Melbourne, and having written a book with espionage in Australia in the 1939-45 World War as the theme, be the same as an English writer, born in Cheshire and educated in London, who died about 15 years prior to the publication of that book? Impossible, of course, and, being so, proves beyond any doubt at all that Arthur J. Palk and Arthur Paterson were two separate and entirely different individuals.

Having boomed rather badly over the Anthony Skene affair, due to the filching of that Blake author's pen-name by a comparatively unknown writer, whilst pleading guilty to the charge of jumping to conclusions, I must, for the same reasons of accuracy, round on my accuser, Derek Adley, and reprimand him for doing precisely the same thing in regard to Palk and Paterson. His article in April Blakiana sought most convincingly to justify the claim put forward by himself, Bill Lofts and Mr. H. W. Twyman to the effect that Palk was probably Paterson because of three certain facts, they being (a) similarity of writing style, (b) the fact that Paterson spent many years in Australia and (c) the same initials of A.J.P.

On the issue of styles Mr. Twyman can be conceded his point - that was his opinion and he is entitled to it, though, personally, I could detect no similarities. On the second score the joint claims of Derek Adley and Mr. Twyman are obviously unfounded for the following reasons:

Contrary to the majority of Blake authors, Arthur Paterson's biographical details were published over a period of 20 odd years in "Who's Who", and not once was there any reference made to his having lived at any time in Australia. Let us go over his career in minute detail as outlined in "Who's Who", starting contrary wise, at the end instead of the beginning. From 1909 to 1928 - the year in which he died - we see that Paterson was living at 6, Thurlow Road, Hampstead, London, N.W. 3. During this period he wrote six books of considerable length whilst filling the posts of Secretary of the Social Welfare Association for London; Secretary of the National Alliance of Employers and Employed; and as Grand Scribe of the Order of Crusaders. Obviously, as an extremely busy man, Paterson could not at this period have lived "down under".

Now to the beginning: Born 15 July 1862, in Bowdon, Cheshire, Paterson was educated at the University College School, in London; was a sheep-rancher in New Mexico, U.S.A. between 1877-79 (at the tender age of 15 to 17 years, please note); a farmer in Western Kansas 1879-80; clerk in a merchant's office in Birkenhead on commencing work in England in 1881; sub-manager in 1884; District Secretary of the Charity Organisation in London 1885-96; and whilst occupying such a post married a Scots girl named Mary McCallum. Between 1896 and 1909 wrote no less than eleven long novels, biographies, historical dramas and reference works, all published in England. It is just possible that Arthur Paterson made a trip to Australia during this period of his eventful career, but, surely, in view of his scrupulous attention to the other details which made up his biography, he would have made this fact known?

On the third point Derek Adley made a quite inexcusable error, for he twice referred to Paterson as Arthur J. Paterson. This was, of course, incorrect, as the letter "J" was not the first letter of Paterson's middle name at all. It was "H", and it stood for Henry. Amusingly enough, for confirmation of this fact, one has only to refer to the article "Sexton Blake Authors Who's Who" (page 116), published in the 1959 edition of the C.D. Annual, and of which Derek himself was part author! And - more astonishing still - how did both Bill Lofts and Mr. Twyman come to make the same error?

Anyway, bang having gone the third theory of the identical initials, let us take a look at the meagre details which go to make up Palk's biography. In addition to what Mr. S. Gordon Swan wrote about him in the February issue this is what Mr. Twyman, or a sub-editor, wrote of Palk in the issue preceding that from which Mr. Gordon Swan took his extract: "Here's a yarn by a new author - Arthur J. Palk. The scene is Melbourne, Australia; the theme, "Chink-running" - the illicit smuggling of Chinese into Australia. In accordance with the "U.J." rule, the story has been written by an author who knows his background and his people; Mr. Palk is an Australian born - and a welcome newcomer to the ranks of Sexton Blake story writers."

Well, there can be little further doubt on this matter, I should imagine. Derek Adley's suggestion of a second Arthur J. Palk seems akin to the frantic massaging of a heart to restore a beat long since ceased, and I can't think that he himself really believes in the possibility of two Palks.

To conclude - a question asked in perplexity. Why all the doubt surrounding Paterson's nationality when Blakiana published extracts from his biography in June 1951, proving beyond any doubt that he was an Englishman born and bred?

The Editor,
"Collectors' Digest"

25.4.61.

Dear Sir,

I like the new Blake. As an old fan whose allegiance dates back to World War I days, I was not perturbed when the changeover to Berkeley Square took place, realising that the series needed re-vitalising. Only the tendency to make Blake a carbon copy of the American private eye made me vaguely uneasy, but that trend, fortunately, has been modified.

However, several references to Blake as being too austere, remote and less human in the old days have caused me to collect the following extracts from various stories in refutation of this impeachment. In the first excerpt we have Blake and a German girl, Thirza von Otto, on board a Channel steamer in the story "An Imperial Blunder," from "Penny Popular" No. 121, dated 30.1.1915 (probably a reprint of a "U.J." published about 1908-10).

....He could not help it, but his hands went forth to this strange, impulsive creature, so full of beauty and of charm - so strong in purpose and so dangerous to know. She met them with her own, and bent forward.

"Stop, Sexton Blake," she said, all the musical thrill coming back into her voice. "I would not have you act as other men. You are, to me, as far above the common herd as that great planet over our heads.... I am not an ordinary woman, though Heaven knows, I have a woman's heart that you may have for the asking; yet you will not ask it now."

Blake's feelings were indescribable.....

Observe that here we have the young lady restraining the detective, not vice versa. Later, in the same story, we find Thirza shooting a huge Nubian who attacks

Blake:

.....It was Thirza who had fired, and as she turned her great eyes to her lover with a smile of triumph, he sprang forward and clasped her in his arms.....

Austere, aloof? H'm!

A different aspect of Blake from Pierre Quiroule's "The Living Shadow" (originally published in the 'twenties):

A farcical piece was being shown on the screen. The audience roared with laughter, in which Blake joined too. The detective was not a snob; he liked to see people happy, and there was nothing he liked better than to join in their laughter. The man on his right was wiping his eyes with his handkerchief; he was gasping painfully. He nudged Blake in the ribs and muttered: "That man'll be the death of me one day. I nearly split my sides that time."

"Well, don't you split your sides next to me," rejoined Blake warningly. "I don't want to be enveloped in a nasty mess."

And here is a little piece from "The Captive of the Catacombs," by Jack Lewis, "U.J." No. 1271, 25.2.1928:

.....She threw her bare arms about his neck, clinging to him with an instinctive movement for protection. "He has gone? You...you have me. Oh, Tony, Tony!" He felt her cheek against his own, her bare arms about him. Presently he released her gently and gathered the kimono once more about her.....

I have no space available for the further instances I could quote, but— you see what I mean?

Yours faithfully,

S. GORDON SWAN.

(The Mystery of the Living Shadow; S.E.L. 1st series No. 141, reprinted 2nd series No. 451, and featuring Granite Grant & Madie Julie. J.P.)

* * * * *

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| | (Scene 2) | Sexton Blake's Rooms in Baker Street. |
| | (Scene 3) | The Library at Cossington Hall. |
| Act 4 | (Scene 1) | Birdcage Walk, St. James's Park, by Night. |
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Sorry to disappoint you all, but this was in the year 1908!

Josie Packman.

* * * * *

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No. 331	The Fatal Mascot (Zenith)	G. N. Phillips
No. 332	The Secret of the African Trader	R. Hardinge

WANTED: C.D. Annuals 1947 to 51, 1955, 56, 57 and 1959. Also British and U.S.A. Film magazines 1911 to 1950. Holiday Annuals. Magnet 767.

T. A. JOHNSON, 18, RABY PARK ROAD, NESTON, WIRRAL, CHESHIRE.

WANTED URGENTLY: "Populars" 2nd series. Any issues between numbers 170 and 260. Very good price offered.

L. PACEMAN, 27, ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E. 22.

WANTED: MAGNETS Nos. 648, 768, 771, 773, 933 and 1066. 15/- each offered or Red Magnets in exchange.

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

WANTED: Modern Boy Nos. 115, 161, 183, 239, 240, 244.

DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOKFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N. 1.

WANTED: S.O.L.'S 42, 258. Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid plus postage. The advertiser has some S.O.L.'s, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

Topicality, as we have always said, was the keynote of Edwy Searles Brooks's work, and even ahead of its time. School trips by air, sea and land were unlikely, if known at all in his day; today, they are commonplaces in a modern educational system.

Just how commonplace, Jack Cook, of Newcastle, reminds us in the following article.

* * *

THE SCHOOL SHIP SAILS UP THE TYNE!

by Jack Cook

When E.S. Brooks wrote his famous series of the floating schoolship, St. Francis, way back in 1929,

he had little idea how prophetic he was. But now, in April of 1961, a floating school, ex-troop ship "Dunera" came into Tyne waters.

A local contingent of school children, 800 strong, will leave shortly on a cruise to Norway, Denmark and Sweden! The lucky boys and girls will spend only three hours per day in the former troop deck rooms which have been converted into full scale class rooms, complete with blackboards, desks and chairs. There are separate dormitories, and even a modern juke box has been installed. Handforth and Co. never had it so good!

The boys and girls will attend lectures, see films - and spend



days ashore with their teachers. Will some obstinate boy wander away in search of adventure - as the self-willed Handy did on numerous occasions? And will his chums chase after him to fetch him back? (You see, already we have the start of a spanking adventure yarn - you would-be authors. I've already picked up my pen).

Authority must have had some similar inkling, for Captain B.A. Rogers said in an interview:

"I feel confident we will cope with any difficulties which may arise. Difficulties anticipated are indicated in a special booklet which will be issued to each youngster."

Also on board is a special dark room for youthful photographers, also a games room (or Common Room) and there is a fully equipped hospital, a swimming pool and other facilities.

There were similar advantages on board the first school ship, the Wanderer. Readers will remember "The Voyage of the Wanderer," Monster Lib. No. 13, also "Neath African Skies," Monster Lib. No. 7. These were, of course, reprints of the earlier old series Lee containing the exciting adventures of the St. Franks juniors while at sea, on strange islands, and many journeys to other lands.

Will the modern young Tynesider meet with any exciting adventures like this? Perhaps not, but we old 'uns can always turn back the years and the pages, and once more creep stealthily up the beach of some far off island, listen to the distant rumble of thunder and wonder when the savage horde will attack. Farewell to St. Francis - welcome to S.S. Dunera!

* * * * *

ST. FRANK'S IS BACK

St. Frank's fans will have been mightily pleased and excited at the return of the famous school for a regular appearance in FILM FUN. In fact, comments on the matter have been pouring into the COLLECTORS' DIGEST office, in readers' letters.

The story in FILM FUN is a reprint of Nelson Lee 1st series No. 10, dated 10th July, 1926, entitled "The Yellow Hand at St. Frank's." Unfortunately, though Mr. Stokes remains the master of West House, the housemaster of Ancient House is changed from Nelson Lee to Mr. Kent. Such a change is as inexplicable as was the change of Nelson to Jaxon in the reprint of the old Maxwell Scott story of the detective. Why on earth is it done? It spoils things very much for hundreds of Lee fans, whose interest in the event is inevitably sadly diminished. Rookwooders can think themselves lucky that, in Knockout,

the school's name wasn't changed to Ravenforest and Jimmy Silver to Jixon Gold. But it would have made just as much sense.

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, 702, 704, 711, 721, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.
MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E. 22.

WANTED: GEMS 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 493, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129, 1150; MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 295, 238, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 400, 417, 469, 719, 752, 773, 809, 812, 813, 819, 831, 835, 836, 838, 841, 842, 843, 850, 867, 869, 872, 874, 878, 879, 881, 883, 885, 886, 888, 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 940, 942, 946, 948, 951, 965, 967, 968, 996, POPULARS 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474.
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

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.
S. G. SWAN, 51 BEATTY AVENUE, VICTORIA PARK EAST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

12/6d EACH OFFERED FOR Magnets 751, 1247-54; Gems 713, 714, 755; S.O.Ls. 269, 275, 215, 217, 219, 221. £3.10.0d. offered for "The Boy Without a Name." Also many other books required by the London Club library. Write to:-
ROGER JENKINS, THE FIRS, EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

SALE: Holiday Annual 1926, 10/-; Black Bess Library, 36 copies 1-37, mint, 30/- us post. B.F.Ls. and S.B.Ls. S.A.E.
38, ST. THOMAS'S ROAD, PRESTON.

WANTED: Union Jacks Nos. 1149, 1150, 1156, 1159, 1161, 1168, 1198, 1200, 1201, 1202, 1203, 1208.
MRS. M. JARRETT, 111 WINCHESTER ROAD, BRISLINGTON, BRISTOL, 4.

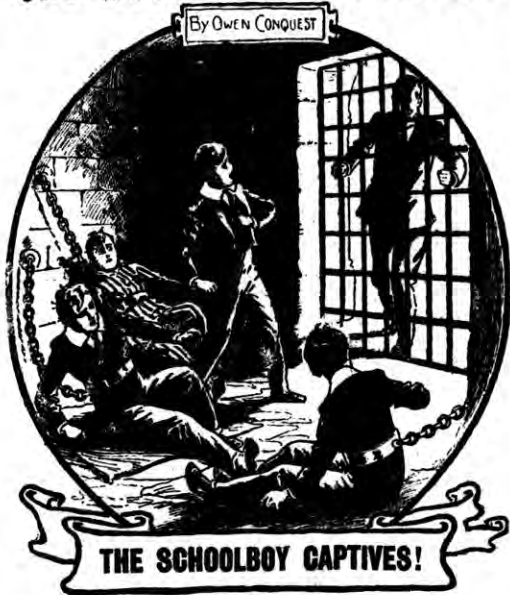
NEW THRILLERS

Two new books by F. Addington Symonds, founder and first editor of the Champion, and also the writer of a number of Sexton Blake stories, are to be published this year by Ward Lock & Co. "Stone Dead" is the title published in May, and "Death Goes Window-Shopping" is due in the autumn.

HAMILTONIAN A

The Secret of the Vaults!

By OWEN CONQUEST



THE SCHOOLBOY CAPTIVES!

**FAMOUS
SERIES**
No. 8

Here we have one of the most famous of all Rookwood series - the kid-napping stories in which, one after another, the Fistical Four all disappeared into the unknown. The series appeared in the Boys' Friend as far back as late-1918, the title of the yarns being "Lovell's Disappearance," "A Baffling Mystery," "The Vanishing of Newcome," "The Missing Trio," "The Kid-napping of Jimmy Silver," and "The

Secret of the Vaults." There was a strange eerie quality about the series which makes it unforgettable.

This series is now appearing in KNOCKOUT, and it is by far the most noteworthy Rookwood story so far presented in that paper. The presentation is excellent, with little pruning, and, at any rate up to the present, none of the interpolation of the snack-bar type of slang which slightly marred the earlier stories in the paper. The illustrations strike us as excellent. We heartily recommend this story to all Digest readers. Anybody who enjoys a tip-top school story, with lashings of uncanny happenings, should make sure not to miss it.

The artist responsible for our picture - G.W. Wakefield.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 50: MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR UNCLE SAM!

Occasionally I have seen it suggested that Frank Richards is anti-American. I don't believe for a moment that he is. Occasionally one or two of my reader friends have suggested, without any rancour, that I am anti-American. I don't think for a moment that I am.

The label, if it exists at all, has been attached to Frank Richards chiefly on account of Fisher T. Fish. America, in the Hamilton stories, has chiefly been represented by various gangsters - and Fish. Fish was really a stock character. His traits probably reflected the mood of the time. He was at his most unpleasant in the early years of the first World War when Britain was fighting for existence and the "Too proud to fight" gibe was carelessly tossed around concerning the States. Fish had been considerably modified by the time the Hollywood series appeared in the late Twenties, but again we were presented with something of the stock picture of America at that day - gangsters, prohibition, and money, money, money. The Hollywood series was a skilful mixture of fact and caricature. Surely most of us at that time were intrigued with the factual side of the series and tickled to death by the caricature.

And why not? There could be no feeling of kicking a man who was down, for America was and is on top of the world. At that time, with her supremacy in the film world, Hollywood often made a dig at the British and their way of life. American patriotism has ever been punched over with terrific intensity. Many of the thugs of the old Wild West have been turned into national heroes. Even the gangsters were given a thick veneer of glamour. The young American was shown to specialise in casual, understanding, friendliness. And we, on this side, loved it as much as they obviously did.

Surely here is a reason why American popular culture has swept the world. It never forgets that its roots are in the tradition of its country. It is frankly American, whereas too much of what we offer is only an imitation of something American. I wonder whether another reason for American supremacy is that the Americans have kept their optimism.

The same approach is harder for us because we are a more sophisticated race and know that the idealised tradition can often be bogus. Does this explain why we have never been able to establish a Canadian or Australian legend to match the legend of the American West? Martin Clifford wrote the Cedar Creek series, set in Canada - delightful reading and quite unforgettable, but the Canadian background was usually the English idea of what it should be. But Ralph Redway wrote a series of the American Wild West which was convincing to the last detail. The only time the Rio Kid put a foot wrong was when he fell anachronistically out of step and took his place in the Englishman's idea of Hollywood.

I am not anti-American. I have dozens of American friends. I have taught many American boys, and liked them all as American boys. Invariably I found them precocious, scholastically behind the average English boy of the same age - and very jolly fellows.

I love America as America; I love Britain as Britain. I am saddened when I see Britain, surely but not so slowly, becoming Americanised. It would give me a pang to see American architecture dominating the English landscape, American money dominating British industry, the American way of life replacing the English way of life.

The glamour that is America has a great effect on youth. When I was a very young man I attended a fancy dress ball attired as an American sailor, complete with tight trousers, stars on collar, and white pork-pie hat. I felt very dashing. When I look back on it, I am not ashamed of myself, but I suffer a little wry, self-conscious amusement. So, in my prime, I was pro-American; as I near my bath-chair, I have too much sense to be anti-American.

To stop wandering in reminiscence, I would add that I like Sexton Blake as a typical English detective. I am not so happy when he smacks of the brash, sexy, American private eye. Which means that I vastly prefer English literature to American.

I should add that I regard a solid friendship and understanding between the Commonwealth and the United States as the most important factor in the entire world to-day. And I don't think I am illogical when I can still gurgle with laughter at the Hollywood series, and

Fisher T. Fish.

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

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 49: NO LARGER THAN LIFE

ROGER JENKINS: I agree with you completely about Tom Dutton. While a deaf person's mistake can occasionally be amusing, I fail to see anything inherently humorous in any physical affliction or deformity. On this point alone - and no other that I can recall - am I in disagreement with Charles Hamilton's sense of humour. Quite apart from the fact that anyone as deaf as Dutton could never have heard anything Mr. Quelch said in the fore-room, I find his fruitless conversations with Bunter and Todd merely tedious. He appeared in episodes which were nearly always farcical, and so tended to lower the quality of any story in which he featured. I would love to see him leave Greyfriars and have Alonzo Todd back in his place.

LES ROWLEY: In the main I would agree with your contention that the fictional character is no larger than life - but, even in the Hamiltonian characters that serve to illustrate your point of view, there are points which tend to jar. Bunter's ventriloquism, Wibley's acting, Kipps' conjuring (all of which have been responsible for several readable series), and Dutton's affliction (which is NOT amusing at all), are all exaggeration.

On the other hand, I find that "Gussy" is not such an out-dated character. Even in this day and age there are still to be found many boys who take a pride in their appearance, and who possess impeccable manners - surely the two principal characteristics of our Arthur Augustus. After all, the eyeglass and the speech impediment would seldom be assessed as points of character in real life. So, "Wats to the wotten and widiculous remark of the contributah who wegahded the deah boy a back numbah."

Although we are not likely to meet a boy of fifteen wearing a monocle, or who is able to out-act Olivier, out-ventriloquise Edger Bergen, there are real life characters still in existence today who remind us of Gussy, Wibley and Bunter. The monocle, like Wun Lung's pigtail, is an accessory rendered superfluous by the passage of time..... the character remains as realistic as ever; long may it continue to do so.

RON CROLLIE: Once again I find myself agreeing with practically everything you say. When I was at school the form captains each seemed to resemble Bulstrode rather than Wharton. They were fairly good at games, but had no great gifts of leadership, were somewhat insensitive, particularly to the feelings of others, were a little rough and inclined to bully, but were fundamentally generous at heart. I always thought Bulstrode a very real character.

Of course, Wharton is intended to represent a boy of unusual character and ability, and I once knew a boy of this kind, but not at school. I also met several "Bounders," though they were not the sons of millionaires. Apart from Bulstrode, the most real characters in the old stories are, in my opinion, Manners and Lowther.

As for the unreal characters, I think Coker and Skinner tie for first place. I have never met anybody so self-centred and thick-skinned as Coker. As for Skinner, the idea of a boy of 15 whose hobbies consist almost entirely of smoking, gambling, and backing horses is ludicrous in the extreme.

RAY BENNETT: A bouquet for one of the best contributions that I have ever read in the C.D. - Let's Be Controversial No. 49. I just can't compete with material like that.

S. E. DINGDALE: I was much interested in your defence of Gussy from the imputation of being out-dated. I was surprised, however, by your reference to his speech impeded as a characteristic which could date him, as I have never regarded the "Yaas, wathah" and "vewy funnays" as indicating a speech impeded. They have always seemed to me to be Frank Richards' method of expressing an elegance of accent - what would nowadays be called an "Oxford accent."

STANLEY SMITH: To suggest that the more unusual boys to be found at the Hamilton schools are unreal is completely wrong. Every real life school has its quota of freaks, of simpletons, of bores, of decent chaps and of cads - and I have always found the proportion of each to be similar to those at a Hamilton establishment. Almost every school has a counterpart of Skinner or Crooke with their hangers-on. I have never met a Racke, but at least two Vernon-Smiths - and I once had the great displeasure of teaching a class that contained one boy with a streak of cruelty that was so extreme as to make a recital of his actions as bad as any horror comic! But I have always found the really decent chaps in the majority.

But it is of the freaks - boys with special or unusual abilities or those with uncommon appearance - that the accusation of "larger than life" is normally applied. These exist in every school and are often far more extreme than anything that Charles Hamilton ever wrote. Boring boys, long-winded boys who never use a word of one syllable if they know of a longer one to use instead, complete simpletons - these are common. I have never met a complete Bunter, I'll admit, but at least three whose composite would make up a complete William George. A fat boy - more of a Wynn than a Bunter, though - quite as large and heavy as the famous Owl of Greyfriars, a youngster who was always borrowing on the strength of the "tip" that he was going to get from his father next week-end and a man at college whose spelling was far worse than Bunter ever knew how to be. Schoolboy actors, boys who just couldn't tell an untruth, outrageous liars whose word couldn't be relied upon even for the smallest thing, schoolboy musicians of above average ability, boys who could tame any animal, born gamblers, light-hearted boys, solemn boys, leaders, followers, hangers-on, decent fellows and cads - I've met them all. They all exist! Possibly the most unusual schoolboy that I ever met was a schoolboy dowser. A water-diviner! But besides finding water - and his renown was so great that he was constantly being called away from school to undertake special jobs - this boy (I saw it all myself and so I know that it's correct) had the capacity of finding almost any lost object. All that he would ask would be another thing that had been in proximity with the lost article. Then, within minutes, the lost object would be found. Suppose Charles Hamilton had written stories of such a boy? Many would have said "larger than life"!

ARTHUR CARBIN: I don't think that the Hamilton characters were larger than life. At the secondary school which I attended at Merthyr Tydvil there were boys much like those at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. I met many who were as honest and truthful as Harry Wharton and Tom Merry, but the leaders in sports were more of the Vernon-Smith type without being as bad as Smithy could be. The school captains were much like Wingate, and, thinking about it now I realise with what care they were chosen. There were some bad hats and bullies as there are at the Hamilton schools.

"A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN"

In an article in STORY PAPER COLLECTOR No. 75, Mr. G.R. Samways discusses the J. N. Pentelow story "A Very Gallant Gentleman," and makes the following observation:

"Whether Pentelow's famous story merited all the tributes lavished upon it must be a matter of personal opinion. In my own view, the story has perhaps been overpraised, but it is nevertheless a much better Magnet yarn than most, and one cannot be surprised at its perennial popularity."

The underlining is ours. It is, of course, possible that Mr. Samways means "better than most substitute stories in the Magnet", in which case this column might be prepared to accept his view. If, however, Mr. Samways actually means what he says, we should be very surprised indeed if many Magnet fans agreed with what is, to us, a very surprising opinion.

* * * * *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

"It is bad form to waste money, when so many people are hard up. It's a vewy unpleasant welflection, you fellows, but I believe there are lots of people who hardly know which way to turn for a ten pound note."

From S.O.L. No. 332. The Holly Lodge Gem series.
(Sent in by David Lancake, Manchester.)

* * * * *

"Calm yourself, my dear Quelch," said the Head. "I am aware of the enormity of Bunter's offence. Bunter will be severely flogged —"
"Ow!"
"—Most severely —"
"Now!"
"And taken to the punishment room!"
"Oh, dear!"

The Head picked up his birch.
From S.O.L. No. 143 "Bunter's Barring-In".
(Sent in by J. Cook, Newcastle.)

* * * * *

(A book souvenir is awarded for every item found suitable for publication under this heading).

* * * * *

BUNTER GOES TO ETON

The Daily Mail recently presented a picture of Billy Bunter, resplendent in white trousers and sweater, playing cricket on the

hallowed turf of Eton. It was, of course, Gerald Campion, in character, rehearsing one of the forthcoming new series for T.V. The cutting was sent to us by Walter Fleming, and several other readers. Many thanks to them all.

* * * * *

— AND THE EDITOR STOOD ON HIS HEAD —

Mr. George Sellars of Sheffield writes us as follows:

"I don't remember any of Reynolds' sketches showing Tom Merry with a sunny face. His only portrait of Tom was in the St. Jim's Gallery 1918 - minus his sunny smile - and this picture was never reprinted. I think our friend Bill Lofts has slipped up a trifle in his very interesting article. It must be 40 years since I had a copy of the 1920 Holiday Annual, but even now I can recall those Reynolds' portraits. I am fairly certain that the picture bearing Tom Merry's name was really Harry Noble (standing at the wicket with his bat) and the supposed sketch of Glyn was really one of Crooke of the Shell, both from the St. Jim's Gallery 1918."

(Editor's note: Mr. Sellars is absolutely correct. What a truly amazing memory! Our investigation of the matter enables us to go even further. There were two pictures, purporting to be Tom Merry, in that 1920 Annual. One was the old picture of Harry Noble, the other was an old picture of Monty Lowther.)

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Many celebrities come to the good old Cynique Inn. Recently Miss Bette Pate of Australia was a guest there, and carried away happy memories. Latest visitor to our famous hostelry is Mr. Reuben Godsave, who hails from Leytonstone. This is what Mr. Godsave wrote in the visitors' book:

Few of us make the same mistake twice. We keep coming up with new ones.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

Owing to the non-arrival of his review copies, Walter Webb is unable to supply, in this issue, his usual reviews of the latest novels. The May stories are "LOVELY - BUT LETHAL" by Peter Saxon and "DEADLY PERSUASION" by Desmond Reid.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

BLAKE - THE COLD SHOULDER

AGAIN: Whenever there is a talk on radio on matters concerning crime, the criminal, and detective fiction, whereby well-known crime experts, fact and fictional, are put under the microscope, the Blake enthusiast generally has his ears cocked in the hope that some mention might be made of his own particular favourite detective. But where Blake is concerned it is all too often a vain hope. Speakers seem to imagine that the Doyle and Christie conceptions are all the reading public is interested in hearing about. At least, that is what Margaret Cole, the feminine half of the detective writing team of M.I. and G. D. H. Cole seemed to think in her talk on detective fiction in the Home Service on Saturday evening (May 13). She mentioned Sherlock Holmes and Peter Wimsey and one or two other well known characters, but, as usual, no Blake. One of these days someone alive to the fact that Blake is still the best-known British private detective in the business to-

day will go on the air and present him with the well deserved gift of some much too long delayed publicity. The dawn of this day would be rich in advantages for Sexton Blake.

THE NAME'S THE SAME - BUT? And, admittedly, in these instances they are very big 'buts' indeed. For many months now I have been somewhat intrigued over the possibility of two journalists who between them conduct an entertainments' page for a well-known Sunday newspaper being the actual Sexton Blake writers whose names they bear. It is not claimed here that there is any connection, for there must be thousands of Jack Lewis's and Fred Cocks's in this land of ours, although those numbers become drastically cut when confined to those in the writing profession only. But the possibility, however



small, does remain that perhaps one of them is in fact a former Blake writer. Take Fred Cooke as the more likely one. Is he the Fred Gordon Cooke who wrote so many boys' stories earlier on and under the name of "Bruce Chaverton" wrote a Blake story for the old "Detective Weekly"? And can it be that Jack Lewis, who is Cooke's colleague on the "SHOW PAGE" in REYNOLD'S NEWS, is none other than the veteran Sexton Blake author of the same name, still remembered for his excellent stories of the Kestrel Syndicate?

Not so improbable as it sounds when you realise that Gerard Fairlie, who wrote a serial for the U.J., which ran during the summer months of 1929, recently completed an article called "The Bardot Story" which appeared serially in the NEWS OF THE WORLD. Mr. Fairlie, the original Bulldog Drummond and now quite a veteran author, interviewed the French sex kitten, Brigitte Bardot, in the studio at Joinville, just outside Paris, during the shooting of her latest film, "La Verite." Does it not follow then that if one U.J. author, now in his seventies, can be engaged in writing film articles for one Sunday newspaper it is equally probable that another U.J. author, also in his seventies, is doing the same thing for another newspaper?

As before stated what has been written constitutes no sort of claim made on behalf of Messrs. Lewis and Cooke and only time can tell whether there is actually any connection between these newspaper contributors and the Blake writers of the same name.

* * * * *

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th April, 1961

There were apologies from Tom Porter and Jack Bellfield though we were again glad that Beryl continues to make progress. All the same the meetings do not seem the same without her and Tom. In all we were again reduced to eight but for all that, had a very enjoyable night's programme. It was decided to carry on with the idea of holding a dinner in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting, May 30th. The matter was left in the hands of the Secretary to arrange with the Arden Hotel. The Desert Isle item was mine for this programme and departing from the usual type of books chosen for these imaginary jaunts, I thought that eight stories of islands, desert or otherwise, would not be too boring to read - other activities permitting. The first one had to be "Robinson Crusoe". Who could get tired of reading that classic by Defoe? With that, we cannot fail to couple up "Treasure Island" by Robert Louis Stevenson: A boy's book - who can deny that? My third, - Coral Island by Ballantyne. Almost as famous and as enjoyable as the first three is the "Swiss Family Robinson" by Wyss. Far-fetched, whichever version you read, but always popular. Another one which I like so well is "Peter Duck" by Arthur Ransome. Another treasure island and pirates, boys and girls forming the crew of the ship. The sixth on my list would be a yarn of Scouting by Perc Westerman, a holiday spent on an island off the Cornish coast, "Scouts of Seal Island" and it takes me back to the early days of scouting. Based no doubt on Baden Powell's first camp for Scouts on Brownsea Island in 1908. I would also like to take the Magnet series of the Popper Island Rebellion for my seventh choice. One of the best of the various barring-out yarns by Frank Richards. To complete my list I like the Sexton Blake and Captain Dack stories by John Hunter and there is one called "Plunder" written under his other pen name of Peter Meriton which leaves out Sexton Blake and Tinker but not Dack, Sam Tench, Abe Gunson and the crew of the "Mary Ann Trinder."

Followed an interesting talk by John Tomlinson. It amazes the rest of us how he gets it all over with not one little note to help that wonderful memory of his. Ranging from Magnets to Gems, giving his candid views on various series and characters,

John T. reminded us of the single stories which appeared in both these papers. His favourite character seems to be Jack Blake of St. Jims but there was a special mention of Dick Julian, Lumley-Lumley, Knox the prefect, and one tale he mentioned in particular was Gem 835 - "Knights of the Pump." This, he knows, was by J. N. Pentelow. There was a short discussion on "substitutes" whom John T. has defended before. His opinion was that these people were unjustly condemned. All their work was not so inferior as it is generally supposed. A very interesting talk which had to be curtailed for time's sake. Maybe another time we shall hear more on this subject from John T.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERN

The meeting on 13th May was opened promptly at 7 p.m. by Chairman Geoffrey Wilde, back in his usual place after being unable to attend the Annual General Meeting. Geoff expressed his pleasure at the excellent results achieved during the year, and congratulated all concerned on being re-elected to office.

Routine business was soon disposed of, and then Gerry Allison referred to the fact that the Merseyside Section had found it necessary to suspend their monthly meetings. This was indeed sad news, and we were all very sorry to hear it. Gerry expressed the hope that this was only a temporary phase, and that before long our friends and colleagues in Lancashire would be in a position to resume - with which all present heartily concurred.

The forthcoming trip to Chesterfield to meet our friends of the Midland Section was also discussed, and the date, Sunday, June 25th definitely fixed.

This month our summer programme commenced with the first reading of Frank Richards' fine story of Highcliffe, 'Rivals and Chums'. It was given by Geoffrey Wilde, and Geoff, as usual, made the characters seem alive.

Then followed an interval for refreshments, after which we had a discussion on general topics.

At 9.15 another very enjoyable meeting was terminated.

Next meeting, Saturday, June 10th.

F. HANCOCK - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

At the May meeting, Thursday 11th at 6 p.m. the annual election of officers took place and the team for the year ahead remains unchanged with Syd Smyth re-elected as Chairman, Ernie Carter, Treasurer, and Bette Pate, Secretary.

In his capacity of Editor, Syd Smyth gave his report on the progress of issue No. 3 of the club magazine. Opinions received to date are most favourable and the response from overseas has been heartening.

As usual the letters from overseas were passed around and members expressed their pleasure at the news from New Zealand. After 36 years of searching Jack Murtagh now has a complete set of Nelson Lees - our heartiest congratulations Jack.

Ron Hodgson is still keeping club members here very well informed about activities in the Northern Club and a letter from Bill Hubbard brought interesting news of our London friends.

The May C.D. was passed around and an animated discussion ensued on the competition which has aroused great interest in this club. There was much speculation as to which character was leading and as everyone naturally held a different opinion the talk waxed fast and furious once battle was joined. We would like to take this opportunity of telling Eric Payne and Les Rowley how much their joint effort has been appreciated by the chaps out here - a first class idea which we hope will meet with the success it so richly deserves.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m. at its official rendezvous but continued very

pleasantly for another half-hour at the nearby coffee-shop..... date for the next get together will be June 15th, a wonderful evening guaranteed plus coffee which really tastes so good its unbelievable.

B. PATE - Secretary.

LONDON

A very jolly meeting took place at Bob and Laura Blythe's abode at Dollis Hill. First thing to greet members was the famous map of St. Frank's and environs on the wall. Bob conducted one of his grand quizzes, Eric Payne provided a fine "Down You Go" novelty with the usual appropriate prizes, Bill Hubbard provided another quiz and we had the first half of a quiz by Charlie Wright. I started the ball rolling with a "Desert Island Companions" list followed by a 'Schools' competition. Excellent business was done by Roger Jenkins with his Hamiltonian library; new additions to his stock will be given in the June newsletter. An excellent repast was put on by the hosts, some of the gathering partaking in the garden. Yes, it was truly a very happy time and the hosts are to be congratulated on such a good meeting.

Next meeting on Sunday, June 18th, at the home of Jim Swan, 3, Fifth Avenue, Paddington, London, W. 10. Kindly let our host know if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, May 14th

This month's meeting was well-attended, all the regulars, with the exception of Jim Walsh, being present. We were pleased to see George Riley again, who has been unable to get along to recent meetings.

Proceedings commenced with the chairman's report and remarks on various topics, one of which was the arranging of our venue for the June meeting. Bill Windsor has kindly offered us the use of a room at his home, and it should make a nice change to vary our meeting place on occasion, in addition to taking some of the work off Frank's shoulders.

Following the satisfactory financial report, came a reading by Norman Pragnell from one of the "William" books, an entertaining extract which could well have been longer. Then came a team game, a general knowledge quiz, based on the popular "Ask Me Another." This is to be played over a period, and in this first session, Frank Case's team, after a shaky start, managed to draw ahead of the team led by Norman Pragnell, and all the signs point to a keenly contested battle over the next few months.

After refreshments, we were occupied in listening to our guest, Frank Shaw, reading the draft of an article he is to submit for publication, dealing with Charles Hamilton and his work. This was a long and detailed account of one of our favourite authors, revealing many items which were news even to those among us who pride ourselves on our knowledge of the maestro. Frank invited criticism and remarks on the subject matter, and we hope we have been of some assistance to him in that respect.

The meeting closed shortly after nine o'clock, after an extremely enjoyable couple of hours. The next meeting will be on June 11th (6 p.m. prompt) at Bill Windsor's, 33, Sefton Road, Liverpool, 21. Give him a ring at WATERloo 7546 if you need help in finding the address.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Madge and Jack Corbett have recently moved to :-
1, ST. PETER'S ROAD, HARBORNE, BIRMINGHAM, 17. PHONE: 1416.

POT-POURRI



HOW THEY BEGAN, No. 8

The very first copy, dated mid-summer 1919, of TIGER TIM'S TALES. The forerunner of the delightful Tiger Tim's Weekly.

ODDS AND ENDS By Gerry Allison

TIGER TIM - EDITOR: Last month, Ronald Nicholls suggested articles on Comics, mentioning Tiger Tim's, and Puck. Here is a bit of news about these two old favourites.

As the Editor said, Tiger Tim's Tales started in 1919 - on June 1st to be exact - when Nos. 1 and 2 came out together. The

price was 1½d. Tiger Tim was the editor, and he said how pleased we should all be to hear that he did other things besides getting into mischief. There were stories and pictures, a Necks and Tails game - similar to Snakes and Ladders, and a painting competition, etc.

Two issues appeared again on the 1st of July and August. Then the Editor gave us the important news that "on and after August 29th, my Tales will be published every Friday." This continued until January 31st, 1920 when the paper was enlarged in size, but the number of pages reduced from twenty-four to twelve. The New Series began again with Number 1 on this date - not in January 1921 as stated last month in the footnote to Odds and Ends. My collection runs from No. 1 of Tiger Tim's Tales, to No. 88 of the Weekly, which was the new title given to the enlarged paper. The covers are in red and black on white, and the comic is one of the most delightful ever published for children. By the way - should we describe the 24 page 'Tales' as a comic??? I only asked!

HORATIO PIMPLE - OFFICE BOY OF 'PUCK'! How many times have we had quizzes at our meetings, asking for the names of the office boys of "CHIPS", "COMIC CUTS", and "FUNNY WONDER", and how many times have the knowing ones scored three points with the names, Philpot Bottles, Sebastian Ginger and Horatio Pimple, in that order?

Well, imagine my puzzlement, when I read in 'Mi Kollum' in No. 1180 of 'Comic Cuts' of 'Horatio Pimple', the 'Puck' office boy, oldin Sally Slapcabbage most ov the eventin'. What I want to kno - sorry - know now, is when and why young Pimple got the sack from 'Puck'? In June 1919, we read of him - 'avin a tare round the lokal fun sitty wiv Filpot Bottles, and Billy Nutt - ov the 'Jester'. Answer me that one.

A GHOST IN MARKET STREETBy Tony Glynn

When the March issue of the C.D. published an item on "Magnet" artist C. H. Chapman, based on an article which appeared in a Norfolk newspaper, I saw once more the ghost I usually see in Market Street, Manchester, whenever I pass along that thoroughfare. The spectre was conjured up by an inaccurate statement in the article to the effect that 19th Century challenger to "Punch" was "illustrated by Ally Sloper".

No, no, a thousand times no! My misty friend the ghost joins me in that hearty cry. He feels strongly about Ally Sloper because Ally made a name for my friend the wraith. My ghost of Market Street did, in fact, create Ally Sloper. For Ally Sloper was a comic paper character, a gin-tipping inhabitant of the lower levels of the English social scene and he sprang out of the brain of the genial ghost who I alone see on the steps of Cleveland Buildings, Market Street, whenever I pass that way.

Let me introduce him to you, for he is a friendly shade who will not scare you. He is young - still in his thirties - slim and of slight build. He has a wispy moustache and a little tuft of hair under his lower lip. You will notice that he is rather on the nervous side and that he constantly smokes the ghost of a cigarette.

His name is W.G. Baxter.

Baxter created Ally Sloper in the mid 1880's, the adventures of Sloper being contained in a halfpenny comic paper called "Ally Sloper's Half Holiday", published in London. But, since London does to-morrow what Manchester does to-day, Baxter had a highly appreciative audience in this city before the capital claimed him. It was here, over a drawing board in Cleveland Buildings, that he found his metier and perfected his craft.

From the late seventies until 1883, W. G. Baxter was joint-editor and complete art staff of a Manchester weekly called "Momus". The paper dealt in social and theatrical events and in general Mancunian affairs with a markedly lighthearted approach. Lancashire dialect poems and yarns were a strong feature and one of its biggest attractions was the work of Baxter.

Baxter drew Manchester scenes and Manchester people and he contributed at least one full page portrait each week, favouring the litho crayon for this work. Sometimes he drew noted Mancunians, sometimes visiting celebrities - for instance, Lily Langtry - and when a man of note died, such as Longfellow or Disraeli, he would work up an admirable portrait from a photograph. Anyone who was of any consequence sat for the energetic young Baxter when visiting Manchester in the latter seventies and early eighties. He worked speedily, always with a cigarette in his mouth, one eye squinting through drifting smoke as his nicotine-browned fingers plied the pencil.

Baxter had a wide knowledge of Dickens and Shakespeare and he frequently drew scenes from their writings for "Momus". In addition, he usually drew a weekly political cartoon.

Information on Baxter is difficult to come by, but a cutting from the "Manchester Evening News" of 1939 preserved at the city's Central Library, has it that he was born somewhere in the United States in 1856.

Nevertheless, the Derbyshire town of Buxton claims him as its own for he was living with his mother at her boarding house at the Broad Walk, Buxton, when his pictures first attracted attention. These drawings, done when he was still in his teens, one imagines, were clever sketches of the fashionable folk who went to the pleasant northern spa to take the waters. Many Baxter pictures are to be seen in the Buxton library to this day.

An enterprising publisher named James Bailey, who was getting up a Manchester weekly paper and looking for talent, heard of the bright youngster in Buxton, hired him and Baxter started out with "Momus" from its first number.

W. G. Baxter was undoubtedly a character. Often short of money, but generous when

he had some in his pocket, he was a drinking man and was frequently to be found among the newspapermen who all too often forgot the worries of the world at the bar of the Slip Inn in Old Market Place, a few yards from Cleveland Buildings. The "Slip", with all its many happy memories was blotted out in a single night, a night Manchester will not easily forget: December 22nd, 1940. Messrs. Hitler and Goering were the demolition contractors.

Possibly, Baxter knew a youngster by the name of Tom Barratt who played the piano in the Slip Inn about the time the artist was working in Manchester. This talented youth later turned his musical skill to producing popular songs, written under the name of "Leslie Stuart": the old coon favourites "Little Dolly Daydream" and "The Lily of Laguna" are but two of them. "Leslie Stuart" reached the top of the ladder with his famous musical extravaganza "Floradora", produced in 1899, and who doesn't know his rousing marching song which dates from the South African War: "The Soldiers of the Queen"?

"Mamus" folded up in 1883 and Baxter went to London. After a spell as a newspaper artist, some of it spent abroad, he created Ally Sloper, a low-life character who resembled Wilkins Micawber. Sloper, with his eternal bottle of gin poking from his coat pocket, was featured in a paper entirely devoted to him, "Ally Sloper's Half Holiday".

Before the eighties were out, however, young Baxter died. I have heard that tuberculosis and drink brought on his death and, according to the 1939 cutting already mentioned, this occurred in miserable London lodgings.

Perhaps some friend in London can dig up some information on "Ally Sloper's Half Holiday" and Baxter's years in the capital. I'd be happy to hear of anything which helps to fill in the background of the man who is my ghost of Market Street.

HYLTON CLEAVER AT THE LONDON CLUB

By Ray Hopkins

Hylton Cleaver made a genial personal appearance at the London Club's March meeting. Bill Lofts, whose contact with living authors interests all of us in the hobby, gave a talk on CHUMS with particular reference to Mr. Cleaver's work therein. Following this, the author mentioned some of the personalities he had been associated with in his days with CHUMS and THE CAPTAIN. Draycot M. Dell (no relation to Ethel M., he stated), R. S. Warren Bell and Reeves Shaw were three of the editors he remembers well.

Mr. Cleaver first began to write in THE CAPTAIN, his first accepted short story being THE RED RAG. This acceptance was a joy to him because THE CAPTAIN had been the magazine which he himself loved as a boy. Asked whether his school stories were based on his own schooldays at St. Paul's, the writer stated that St. Paul's was a day school and he used boarding schools as a backdrop for his own stories because that was a way of keeping all the characters in one little cosmos of their own. Though his stories were written for boys, he endeavoured to make the schoolmasters the personalities in the stories and, in order to make them attractive to the schoolboy reader, they were portrayed with an eccentric bias which gave him many opportunities for humour. His Mr. Dennett in the Greyminster series is one of his better known "odd" schoolmasters. Mr. Cleaver said Mr. Dennett probably had his beginnings in the Rev. Elam, a schoolmaster at St. Paul's in his own day. Rev. Elam's idiosyncrasies had to be considerably enlarged in order to approach the unconventional Mr. Dennett but he made a good basic model for that gentleman.

Hylton Cleaver loves to write school stories and regrets that the day of the school story seems to be over. He had been having them accepted by his publisher as late as 1950 and had submitted one to Fredk Warne since 1955 but they had returned it. However, he took the meat out of the book and has rewritten it as a short story which will appear in a future issue of BOYS OWN PAPER. He thinks school stories may return to favour some time in the future because he was recently approached by Fleetway Publications who wish to reprint one of his old stories in a comic. This is now appearing as a serial

called THE HAPPY COMPANY in FILM FUN and for which he receives three guineas per instalment. This originally appeared in an AP publication under the by-line of Reginald Crunden which is the only other pen-name Mr. Cleaver has ever used.

Asked whether he had ever written any Sexton Blake stories, the writer stated he had not for the reason that he would not wish to use any character in his writing that he had not himself invented. He had, however, written stories in which murder had been committed and also three plays, the run of which had been curtailed due to the war.

Mr. Cleaver believes the inspiration to write school stories came to him due to his great admiration for the school stories of P. G. Wodehouse, which he considers the best ever written. He stated the boys' dialogue in Wodehouse's school stories was several years senior to the boys' actual ages but it was, he believed, one of the reasons for their great success with youthful readers of that time. When P.G. Wodehouse retired from the school story field, H yton Cleaver hoped this was a chance for him to step into the Master's shoes. He believes Wodehouse had a considerable influence on his own style in the beginning.

The author was fortunate in that he didn't have to hawk his stories for a long time before one was accepted. He had no trouble getting started in the boys' school story field. During World War I, to cheer himself up and to pass the time while he was in the trenches, he wrote school stories in longhand and sent them home to be typed for submission. He sold them all. With the demise of THE CAPTAIN, Hylton Cleaver wrote adult stories for STRAND MAGAZINE and then became associated with CHUMS where some of his well-known school-story stable-mates were Gunby Hadath, Richard Bird and Alfred Judd. He admired Hadath's writing also, though that gentleman specialised in a more serious type of school story. Mr. Cleaver always tried to keep his stories humorous. The celebrated artist H. M. Brock, whose fine illustrations have adorned many school stories as well as historical and adventure stories for boys, very often illustrated Mr. Cleaver's stories.

The writer's favourite among his own stories is THE OLD ORDER. His first book, ROSCOE MAKES GOOD, was published by Oxford University Press. Mr. Cleaver is married and has a seventeen year old son and his by-line can still be seen in the Sports Pages of the EVENING STANDARD where he reports on Rugby and Boating.

Yours Sincerely

(Interesting Items from the Editor's Postbag)

JAMES W. COOK (Wembley): I notice that Frank Richards has been included in the new "Who's Who". This must be the only author connected with our hobby who can boast such an achievement.

I was delighted to see the Nelson Lee Library on television this week. It appeared in "To-night", and was among some interesting items in a museum in Scotland. It was of the New Series type, and although this era of the Lee does not find favour with us, it was, to use a schoolboy term, smashing to see it on T.V.

Mrs. D. LLOYD (Newbury): I only wish I had known Collectors' Digest years ago. I enjoy it so much, especially the issues featuring the old comics, which bring back happy memories.

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): I have at last completed my set of Nelson Lees, and now have a copy of every one that was ever issued, 99% of them in new condition. It has taken me 36 years to get them. I got my first in 1925 and have been chasing them ever since, and now my ambition is realised. The only other complete set I know of is owned by Robert Blythe.

(Hearty congratulations, Jack, on a splendid achievement. - ED.)