

VOL. 18  
Number 211

# COLLECTORS

PRICE

JULY 1964

# DIGEST

2/-



"THE WHO'S WHO OF BOYS' WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS" "THE WHO'S WHO OF

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

"THE WHO'S WHO OF BOYS' WRITERS  
AND ILLUSTRATORS"

Edited and Compiled by  
Brian Doyle

Will be published around the end of July and  
Orders are now being taken.

This unique and invaluable handbook - the first of its kind ever to appear - contains details of around 1,000 names, comprising approximately 750 authors and 250 illustrators. It covers authors, editors, publishers and artists who worked for boys' papers, magazines, annuals and books over approximately the past 100 years, from "Boys of England" in the 1860's to the Thomson papers of more recent times. All pseudonyms are listed and fully cross-referenced, so that it is easy to see at a glance who wrote for what and under which name. All known Sexton Blake authors are included, even the Modern SBL writers, as are those who wrote for such papers as "The Thriller" (including many of today's top mystery writers, who began their careers in its pages). Authors better-known for their hard-cover books for boys and also adult authors who have popular boys' stories to their credit are listed too. A particular feature is the inclusion of practically every school story author of note (also adult writers who published this type of story). The many illustrators, whose work was such an enjoyable and integral part of the old publications, range from the old Brett and Aldine artists right up to the Modern SEL cover designers.

In short, this exciting and absorbing "Who's Who" is a MUST for all interested in old boys' (and girls') papers and books and will surely find a permanent place on your shelves.

The price of the "Who's Who" is 15/- post free and Orders should be addressed to: Brian Doyle, 14a, Clarendon Drive, Putney, London, S.W.15. As soon as possible, please, as supplies are strictly limited.

DON'T MISS THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY!

"THE WHO'S WHO OF BOYS' WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS" "THE WHO'S WHO OF BOYS' WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS"

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# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 18

No. 211

JULY, 1964

Price 2s. Od.



## THE EDITOR'S CHAT

### OKAY, CHIEF!

In the autobiography of Chief Superintendent Peter Beveridge the author mentions that top detectives at Scotland Yard are always addressed as "Guv'nor" by their near-subordinates. In the conversation reported in the book, the term "Guv'nor" is often used.

Inevitably, one's mind wanders to the Sexton Blake stories. In earlier times, Tinker addressed Blake as "Guv'nor." There was a warm, English homeliness about it.

By the end of the Twenties, the editorial edict had clearly gone forth. "Guv'nor" was to be dropped, and "chief" was to be substituted. It is not difficult to guess why the change was made. In the early talking pictures America ruled the silver screen, and it was

common to hear "Okay, chief!" snarled in a nasal voice.

In the middle Thirties, Guv'nor returned to the S.B.L., only to be replaced once more by "Chief" with the passing of time.

As "Guv'nor" is still in use at Scotland Yard, the term can hardly be regarded as old-fashioned. Was it just that the American "Okay, chief!" was considered more euphonic than the English, "Right, guv'nor!"? Or was it just what the Rio Kid would have called the "ornery cussedness" of editors who liked change for the sake of change?

#### END OF AN ERA:

Fifty years ago an era was ending. Soon, a kind of iron curtain was to descend, cutting off the pre-war years from what came after. Was there an ominous, brooding atmosphere over the British Isles that sultry July, fifty years back? Or were things much the same as usual, with people carrying on in their old happy-go-lucky style, with no presentiment at all that soon the world was to fall apart?

The bookstalls must have been something of a paradise in July 1914. They were destined to lose something in quality, quantity, and variety which they would never find again.

The counters were stacked high with periodicals of all types. The value for money was breath-taking. The penny papers gave 32 pages. The Gem and the Magnet were supplying each week a 35,000-word school story, plus a serial. Papers like Pluck and the Marvel offered two complete stories plus a serial, every week. There were any amount of others. Double numbers, and they were frequent, comprised 52 pages or more for 2d. The Union Jack often presented a double number in which the star attraction would be an 80,000-word Sexton Blake story - more than double the length of the Blake stories we knew in recent times.

The comic papers, most of them sold at a halfpenny, had a character all their own. A glance at some of the old coloured comics of fifty and more years ago shows a quality of colour which is unsurpassed and often not equalled in the sixties.

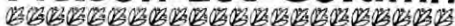
Most collectors will agree that the papers in the few years preceding the outbreak of war in 1914 had a strange endearing charm which they have seldom had since as the years have gone by. July 1914 was truly the beginning of the end of an era.

#### THE 1964 ANNUAL:

Work is now in hand for the Collectors' Digest Annual for 1964. Contributors are asked to send along their articles, etc, as soon as they can make it convenient to do so.

THE EDITOR

# Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

DISCOVERING ST. FRANK'S

By Arthur V. Holland

Recently, due mainly to the courtesy and generosity of James W. Cook, a stack of Nelson Lees came my way. From these, I experienced many hours of thrilling enjoyment.

Brooks was, undoubtedly, a man of unusual imagination. I believe his greatest gift as a writer rests upon the wonderful detail of his characters and descriptions.

In his barring-out series, he is careful to see that there is a good stock of food and water, bedding and blankets, as in his famous "Hunter the Hun," series.

I marvel at his gift of creating the appropriate atmosphere for a number of his stories which one can class as delightfully fantastic.

In his nerve-tingling tale of "The Lost Islands" (a serial in the 3rd N.S. of N.L.L.), featuring Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi, he tells how they got trapped in a deadly whirlpool, a vast maelstrom hundreds of miles in circumference. Within the whirlpool, the calm waters of the lagoon stretched for eighty or ninety miles, and there are two islands known as New Islam and New Britain.

It was written in the simple history books of New Britain, that several centuries previously a noble ship carrying some hundreds of pilgrims from East Anglia was seized by the dreaded Barbary corsairs, with their live stock of all descriptions, and they were enslaved by the men of Islam.

The ship was trapped in a great storm and drawn into the mighty whirlpool, and its wreckage was sent hurtling into the lagoon. Most of the people survived, the Islams settled on one island, and the pilgrims on the other.

After a number of exciting adventures Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi approach the island of New Britain in their large powerful motor-boat. Brooks gives this description of the island -

"They were entering a bay, and on the shores the town had been built on a gentle slope. One could see the quaint cobbled streets and half timbered houses and thatched cottages. Beyond, the countryside was wooded, and white roads could be seen twisting and turning after the fashion of English country lanes."

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Thus, Brooks in his masterful style adds beautiful prose to thrilling action. There is never a dull moment.

For two generations, I had been a staunch conservative Hamiltonian, believing that Charles was absolutely supreme in schoolboy fiction. Head and shoulders above all others. Charles Hamilton's stories meant a great deal to me in my boyhood days. In the early days of my life there was no Nelson Lee Library. In my early manhood this publication with St. Frank's stories did not come to the Australian bush village where I live. It was only four years ago when I became aware of the existence of our O.B.E.C., and less than six months since I was introduced to St. Frank's.

I will always be in debt to James W. Cook, who so kindly opened up for me the new avenue to many thrilling hours of pleasure with the St. Frank's personnel.

I have been intrigued with the controversy in "C.D." between the Hamiltonians and the Leeites, as to which is the better writer of schoolboy fiction. Roger Jenkins told us a few months ago (C.D. Nov. 1963), that the boys in his school where he teaches, could write stories as good as Brooks.

I refuse to take Roger seriously. We all know, that in real life, schoolmasters are noted for their keen sense of humour. In this particular case I considered the humour to be most unseemly.

In my opinion it is not fair to compare the Hamilton stories with those of St. Frank's, as they are so different.

Now that my eyes have been opened to the high quality of St. Frank's, I firmly believe that Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks are the two greatest writers of schoolboy fiction that this world of ours has ever known.

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"LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S"

By Jim Cook

It's just like old times at St. Frank's. Nipper tells me he is bringing back the St. Frank's Magazine due to an overwhelming demand from the Lower School and several pointed enquiries from the masters. At the moment he is undecided whether to fall back on the style of "Nipper's Magazine" or reintroduce it in the format of "St. Frank's Magazine." Whichever of the two he decides to publish I am very pleased that St. Frank's will be more interesting than ever in that the juniors will contribute some very interesting and informative articles. Nipper already has an abundant supply of "copy" from such old-time favourites as Reggie Pitt, Timothy Tucker, Buster Boots and

Josh Cuttle, for Handforth let the cat out of the bag weeks before Nipper had made up his mind. Trust Handy not to keep a secret for long.

Apart from the lively contributions the mag. will unearth some of those characters we seldom read about. Of course, it's their own fault for keeping in the background. These lesser lights of the junior school now have their chance to get on the front page as it were. I am thinking of boys who do not take part in the main events at the school but because of their literary talents you get to know them by their regular appearance in print. There's Hubert Jarrow of Study F in the Ancient House whose amusing style of writing carries him way and beyond the limits Nipper lays down and so very frequently Hubert's articles are cut. Lord Dorrimore is another regular of whom we don't hear enough. His Grace, the Duke of Somerton, will remind us he is still a St. Frank's junior by his timely contributions. Clarence Fellowe of Study Q in the Ancient House has promised to supply more Painful Parodies. This tall, lanky junior of over six feet filled an important gap when he came to St. Frank's. Until his arrival there wasn't what you would call an official poet at the school.

Solomon Levi has already written several articles relating to finance and I was privileged to see one or two when he invited me to tea in Study O the other day. One dealt with a reaction to his speech he made in the Junior Common Room. This was all about money as I mentioned in my previous letter. Nipper has also an article by Jack Grey. Jack seems to have slipped back into obscurity these days. At one time where you saw Pitt you would find Jack, but when they are in their study perhaps the bond of friendship is as strong as ever it was. However, after I have written this letter I shall pop along to Study K in the West House and ask Jack why he has fallen into the background lately. Although this breakaway from the limelight could apply equally to many juniors. Suddenly you would say to yourself "I wonder what's happened to Dick Goodwin or Augustus Hart or any of those juniors who at one time or another were very much in the news. Then just as suddenly you would run across them in the Triangle or in the Tuck shop. Talking about the Tuck shop this is the place to look in to if at any time you missed Fatty Little!

Church and McClure are going about looking forlorn. Even when they saw Teddy Long pulling faces at them they walked on without attempting to stop him. And Long, getting bolder, reached up and knocked Church's cap off his head. Had Handforth been with them Teddy wouldn't have dared even to block their path but master Edward Long always took chances when the odds were greatly in his favour. Even he

could see Church and McClure were so worried that they were open to attack. Luckily Long moved off when Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson appeared.

Since I reported the last paragraph the chums of Study D are back in force again. It appears Handy has been writing some Trackett Grim episodes for the Mag. and having shut himself in Study D every day after schoolbreaks Church and McClure were at a loose end and they showed it. What is going to happen to these three juniors in later life when events will separate them doesn't bear thinking. But that is in the distant future. These three may turn up together in some far flung outpost on another planet with Handy still punching his way through life.

I have been referring to some juniors who for some reason or other are seldom heard in my news about St. Frank's. But whereas these lesser lights of the Remove and the Fourth can break into publicity by writing for the Mag., other unfortunates with no literary ability are forgotten because they prefer to remain in the background.

But they are all there at St. Frank's. Nobody has been expelled and in case you have forgotten some of these "unfortunates" may I remind you of a few juniors to whom I spoke recently. There's the two Onions brothers of Study M. There's Owen major of Study P. Sir James (Jimmy) Potts, Study H. Alf. Brent, Archie Glenthorpe's study mate. Tom Burton of Study S in the West House and many others such as Farman, Doyle, Yung Ching, Larry Scott (the boy who couldn't lie) the Trotwood twins, the hon. Douglas Singleton, Hussi Ranjit Lal Kahn, Tunner, Page and Harron, Holroyd, Munroe and Peter Cobb. There's Harry Oldfield, Len Clapson and Billy Nation, Bob Christine, Roddy Yorke and Charles Talmadge.

The masters shouldn't be forgotten. Mr. Crowell, still taking the Remove, Mr. Pycraft, the ill-tempered master of the Fourth, Dr. Beverley Stokes, uncle to Mary Summers of the Moor View School, master of West House, later Housemaster. I mustn't forget Mr. Stockdale of the Modern House, nor Mr. Goole of the East House.

Of the Third Form perhaps Willy Handforth and his faithful chums, Lemon and Heath of the Ancient House deserve mention. Their adventures would always occupy a lengthy report but you can take my word for it they are well in front of anything that's going.

Did you know there used to be a Second Form at St. Frank's? This was many years ago but it was disbanded and merged into the Third. I have mentioned the Triangle. But strangely enough it isn't a triangle. In the old days it was a perfect triangle but when St. Frank's was

rebuilt it formed a quad. But the boys still call it the Triangle. Old names die hard.

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### BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

GERALD ALLISON writes: The contributions to the Column have been most enjoyable of late. Welcome to new writers J. Twells, Charles Churchill, Reg. Sanderson, and Roger Jenkins - of all people!

'FLASH-BACK' by Reg. Sanderson was brilliant indeed. Delightful humour - and fascinating in its new approach. What a pity it evoked such a sour response from James W. Cook.

I have more borrowers of St. Frank's stories in the Northern Section library than ever before. Here is an extract from a letter received this week from John McMahon. "....I love getting a parcel from you, and not knowing what it contains. I am once more a schoolboy opening his Christmas stocking. You will remember my thanking you for introducing me to Nelson Lee - (the more Lees I read, the more thankful I become!) Well, Gerry, I now feel that I must say the same about Sexton Blake. Thank you for sending me the Union Jack - I am now a fan. More please, Gerry."

So, if any reader of the 'C.D.' has any Lees or Monster Libs for sale - please drop a line to J, Bingley Road, Menston, Ilkley. (Advt!)

STANLEY KNIGHT writes: It isn't often I criticise, but I must say it was a pity when Roger Jenkins took a holiday from Hamiltonian fields for his "Do You Remember?" series, and chose the Lee Column to guest himself upon. What a pity when the mind is so taken up with the greatness of C.H. that in no other and nowhere else can it envisage or see greatness too.

Roger is a great man in his own field, but it seems a pity when those who idolize Charles Hamilton delight in kicking down and deriding the work of E. S. Brooks, presumably with the idea that by doing so they thereby raise a little higher that of C.H. Just my way of thinking, but I'm sure there are others who share the same view.

FRANK URMIN writes: James W. Cook should be in politics. Anyone with whom he disagrees is, evidently, an "ignorant gatecrasher." This is typical of the arrogant attitude of one or two people who believe they are such authorities on their particular hobbies that anyone who dares to state an opinion is "ignorant."

Of course, the rest of us have never shared Mr. Cook's tremendous privilege of being able to visit St. Frank's and hob-nobbing with Nipper and Co. whenever he wants to. We have to comment from the outside; possibly it is this undoubted advantage that makes him so arrogant.

However, it is barely possible that we lesser folk are still entitled to voice an opinion without being labelled "gatecrashers." The fact that E.S.B. was writing "to orders" during the terrible Parkington era is immaterial; the quality of these stories was appalling, and if Brooks had lost interest in writing them it might have served the interests of the Nelson Lee far better to have engaged a writer who was interested. And so, in spite of James W. Cook's air of righteous (?) indignation, I repeat that here was a case where a good sub-writer might have proved a blessing. I say this as a fervent admirer of the works of E.S.B., and, possibly to Mr. Cook's amazement and incredulity, as a reader of nearly all his yarns. I do not, however, blame editorial policy for the trash that was served up to us towards the end. In the long run, in spite of the excuse of lack of interest, the writer himself must take the blame.

NORMAN PRAGNELL writes: During the 13 years I have been a subscriber to Collectors' Digest I have never yet come across such a retrograde step as to allow Roger Jenkins to use the Nelson Lee Column to display his well-known dislike of St. Frank's. This is not the first time this has happened, for, several years ago, his unpleasant criticism

of St. Frank's in the S.P.C. rightly brought several retorts to his article. To see this happen again in our own paper, and, to make it worse, in the Nelson Lee Column, is something that must not be repeated - and for this, the responsibility for the error of judgment lies with the editor of C.D. and with the Nelson Lee Column respectively.

In the whole of the article there are only half a dozen words which in any way express admiration for the story by Edwy Searles Brooks. This article is just an excuse for Roger Jenkins to pour out his dislike of anything to do with St. Frank's. I am not concerned here with the merits or otherwise of this particular S.O.L. I have not read it. I do, however, most strongly protest against the whole tone and lack of good taste which allows such an article to appear in Collectors' Digest.

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 WANTED TO PURCHASE: Any Christmas Numbers of the MAGNET.

J. McMAHON, 54 HOZIER CRESCENT, TANNOCHSIDE, UDDINGSTON.

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### II. PREPARATION NOW:

#### COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1964

Contributors are asked to send in their material during the next few weeks.

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 WANTED: Magnets No. 829, 873, 875, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L. No. 60.

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

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### REVIEW

#### RED PLUSH AND GREASEPAINT

CLARKSON ROSE  
 (Museum Press 18/-)

Our readers like to look back. Their opera-glasses are centred on old periodicals, but a great many must enjoy also having a glimpse at the music-halls and the great stars who played in them, in the days when we were so much younger.

A real puller at the heart-strings - playing melodious chords on the harp of memory - is a new book just published, "Red Plush and Greasepaint." The author is Clarkson Rose, a great music-hall star, but better known, perhaps, to many of us for his fine show "Twinkle" which has been presented for countless years at seaside resorts all over the land.

From a purely literary viewpoint, the book slightly lacks balance. The author, in several fascinating chapters, writes of his boyhood and how he came to join the theatre, and it promises to be an autobiography. Later, however, the author takes the bit between his teeth, drops his autobiographical background, and entertains us, in chapter after chapter, with memories of dozens of music halls up and down the country and of the stars who played their parts between the wars. This book is a "must" for anyone who loved the music-halls and who remembers the names of those outstanding folk who performed in them. It is a wealth of nostalgia. Not a story of the London theatres, which we could only visit perhaps once a year, but of the music halls which stood in the High Streets of our own home towns. Highly recommended for all who like to look back.

Clarkson Rose tells us, in his pleasant, readable style, that if ever he won the pools he would like to buy a supermarket and turn it into a music hall. What a lovely thought! How that would hit the headlines!

# DANNY'S DIARY

JULY 1914

It was terribly hot at the start of the month, and any amount of people collapsed from the heat. At school we were allowed to take off our ties and our coats, but it was still very warm.

The Gem has been fine this month. Every story was about a new boy named Talbot, who was known in the criminal world as The Toff. "The Toff" was the title of the first story. Gussy was attacked in a lonely lane by a brute named Hookey Walker and his cronies, but Talbot came along and rescued Gussy.

"He was a youth of about D'Arcy's own age, well dressed, with a diamond pin in his tie, and a cigarette between his lips. His form was active, athletic; his face very handsome, with clear-cut features and dark, flashing eyes."

Later, Talbot rescued the Head from the same scoundrels. He told Dr. Holmes that he had been brought from Australia by his uncle, who had now left him deserted at an hotel.

Dr. Holmes took an interest in Talbot and decided to let him stay at St. Jim's for a while, though Mr. Railton was a bit suspicious of him. Joe Frayne recognised him as a criminal he had once known, called "The Toff." At the end of the story, Mr. Selby's collection of coins was stolen.

Next week, Joe Frayne ran away from school in the story "Here and Rascal." Talbot took part in a cricket match at Glyn House, and Mr. Glyn's safe was broken open.

Then came "The Hidden Hand" in which there was a robbery at the Grammar School. Final story of the month was "The Parting of the Ways" in which Talbot prevented Hookey Walker from breaking into St. Jim's. Talbot confessed, returned all the stuff he had stolen, and left St. Jim's. It was a smashing series.

During the month a serial called "A Bid for a Throne" by Clive Fenn started in the Gem, but I am not reading it.

Dad and Mum have been talking about Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife Sophie who were assassinated at Sarajevo at the end of last month. He was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, so that country now has trouble with Servia. There have been demonstrations in Berlin, though I can't see what business it is of theirs, but I expect they like to stir up trouble. There has been a slump on the British Stock Exchange.

Doug bought me The Boys' Friend one day, and that has a serial called "The Legions of the Kaiser" by John Tregellis, all about Germany invading Ireland. There is a wonderful new serial in the Boys' Friend, called "The Film Detective" by Maxwell Scott. It is all about Nelson Lee, the detective, and his assistant, Nipper. Nelson Lee and Nipper are engaged to star in a film, but they soon find a real life mystery. I hope to read some more of it.

Every Sunday Doug buys the News of the World because it gives away the music and words of a complete song each week. One week this month it gave the song "Destiny" which you hear all over the place. It is a haunting tune.

During July Dad had to go to Sheffield to see a friend, and he took Doug and me with him for a long week-end. Sheffield is a lovely town with fine covered-top trams. The present general manager of the L.C.C. trams, Mr. Aubrey Llewellyn Coventry Fell, was the manager of the Sheffield trams before he went to London.

While we were in Sheffield we went to the cricket to see Yorkshire play Kent. There was no play till after lunch on the Monday, owing to rain. Yorkshire were soon out for 101, Hurst being the only bat to do very much, and he had to retire with an



**The  
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GAOL**

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**FAVORITE  
COMIC**

injured hand for 50. Kent replied with 95 for 5, Woolley making 41.

We had to come home on the Tuesday, but Kent won the game with 5 wickets in hand. Humphreys of Kent was not out 41, and Booth was the star bowler for Yorkshire.

In the train I had The Favorite Comic which contains a good serial called "The Girl from Gaol." As a change, it is about an innocent girl who goes to prison. Doug had Pluck, which contained a story called "Stolen Honours," all about the Boer War, and a story about Andy, the film star.

The Marconi Company says that by the end of the year it will be possible to telephone from London to New York. We live in a marvellous age.

Early in the month there was a fight at Olympia between Willie Ritchie of America, the champion, and Freddy Welsh, the champion of Britain. The fight ran its full length of 20 rounds, and Welsh won on points.

The Magnet has been good. "The Shadow of the Past" was about the Bounder who has reformed. "Looking After Uncle" was an amusing story. Uncle Benjamin had decided to take one of his nephews on a long trip with him, but Peter Todd did not want to go. So Peter

played all sorts of pranks on Uncle Ben and Uncle Ben was glad to leave him at Greyfriars. "Wun Lung's Wheeze" was an interesting tale. Wun Lung was carried away on a kite, but his ghost came back to haunt Walker.

In "My Lord Fish" we met for the first time Mr. Hiran Fish, the father of Fisher T. The Fish family were tricked into believing that they were connected with the aristocracy. Mum went to the National Rose Show at Regent's Park. Queen Alexandra went the same day and Mum saw her. Among the new blooms were "Augustus Hartmann" and "Mrs. Bertran Walker." Mum grows a lot of roses in our garden.

Doug and his girl friend, Freda, are very cool to one another. She told Doug that while most of her boy friends give her expensive presents, he only gave her the nups.

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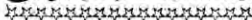
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ROGUES WHO NEVER RETURNED

- - -

By S. Gordon Swan

"IT'S ALL very nice, merry and bright, guv'nor," says Tinker, "but I don't like only half doing a job. Where's the villain of the piece, guv'nor? Where's John Arbour?"

"I don't know, my lad," Blake answers. "But don't worry. The world isn't as wide as some people think, and you and I have long memories, Tinker."

This piece of dialogue concludes "When Rogues Fall Out," (U.J. No. 724, dated 25.8.17) and refers to an elderly, Raffles-type gentleman, one John Baydon Arbour, who resided at the Arcomby. Described by Sidney Drew as an erect figure, with waxed grey moustache, his tall hat ironed and shining, his frock-coat fitting like a glove, his gloves new, his spats snow-white, John Arbour was a cool, suave rogue of whom one would have liked to hear more.

Involved in a jewel robbery, with a double-crossing confederate, John Baydon Arbour lost his loot (Tinker found the jewels hidden in a scarecrow) but retained his liberty. By the foregoing remarks one would have expected him to return, like MacArthur, but unfortunately, the long memories of Blake and Tinker did not encompass his further misdeeds.

Sidney Drew also created another elderly rogue in Claude Deember, whom Tinker referred to as an oily old hypocrite. Deember played a part in "The Affair of the Phantom Car" (S.B.L. 2nd Series No. 10 dated 31.8.25). This is an entertaining story of a band of criminals who used an ingenious method of transforming the appearance and colour of a car so that it would escape detection. Claude Deember was one of the gang who managed to escape in a boat to France. Luckier than John Arbour, this old scoundrel took some of the loot with him. Blake made an almost identical remark about him as he had in reference to John Arbour, but Claude Deember became another rogue who never returned.

In "The Amazing Affair of the Brixton Burglary," (U.J. No. 740,

15.12.17) the villain of the story is not apparent until nearly the end, and we scarcely have time to make his acquaintance before he has escaped. This was a crooked solicitor, of whom Blake said:

"Hawley Vyner-Steele is still at large..... And until I cross swords with him again I shall not rest content!"

But Blake's sword, while it may have been active enough in its endeavours to pink Zenith, Reece, Rymer and the rest, never found the chink in Hawley Vyner-Steele's armour, for the solicitor crook did not make a come-back. Would he have survived with a cumbersome name like that? After all, George Marsden Plummer is something of a mouthful too, but he continued for many a day.

Perhaps the most notable rogue never to return, however, was Dr. Gorlax Ribart, who figured in the "Scarab of Ament-Oba," (U.J. No. 1055, 29.12.23). This was an adventure story partly laid in a region of the world rarely exploited in fiction - the Seychelles Islands. It seemed that we were destined to hear more of this doctor with hypnotic powers, for he achieved the distinction of having his name printed at the head of the story as a new character, suggesting that there would be a series about him. But he did not appear again. What happened to him, or, perhaps, what happened to his creator? At the conclusion of the story he wrote a note to Blake: "You will not escape the next time we meet." Tinker would have consigned it to the waste-paper basket, but Blake kept it with a view to possible identification of the doctor's handwriting in the future. The opportunity never occurred, however.

One wonders if any of these characters, brought back from oblivion, would have survived the years as did Plummer, Kestrel, Waldo and the rest of the brave galaxy that illuminated the firmament of the Blake saga. We are left with no answer to this query.

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SIX OF THE BEST

No. 1 John G. Brandon

by Geoffrey Wilde

Among the contributors to the S.B.L. of the 1930's none was more prolific than John G. Brandon, creator of the Hon. R. S. V. Purvale. The established reputation with which he came to the Library in January 1933 seems to have been quickly confirmed by the Blake readers. The successors to that maiden effort (No. 365 'The Survivor's Secret') were published first at discreet intervals but later with such rapidity that over fifty Brandon novels appeared in the space of seven years, a rate of output that undoubtedly reflected the author's great popularity. As early as January, 1936 (when the best of his work was in my

opinion yet to come) the Editor was able to refer to him as 'Public Favourite No. 1.'

The Brandon yarns were certainly smooth, professional performances, whose almost fatal readability could understandably lead to addiction. Wholly adult in tone, their style is of the kind usually described as sophisticated: it favours the long, leisured sentence and a studiously polysyllabic witticism. Despite these complexities, the effect is surprisingly free from ponderousness. One is chiefly aware of an easy flow, urbane, indolent almost, but unmistakably the work of a practised craftsman: as anyone who has tried it will tell you, nothing in writing is more difficult than that which reads most effortlessly. The seemingly negligent ease with which the Brandon stories unfold conceals a very considerable narrative skill.

Though Brandon's relaxed and genial kind of story-telling is something to which one still turns with unadulterated pleasure, the chief secret of his immense popularity lay nevertheless undoubtedly elsewhere - in the character of the Hon. R. S. V. Purvale, aristocrat, adventurer, amateur ship's stoker, and champion of the underdog. Purvale, indeed, proved such good company that readers endured at times frankly indifferent stories simply for the joy of being with him. The benevolent bruiser, with his bent nose and his monocle, his noble breeding and deplorably plebeian pursuits, is a remarkably adroit mixture - a glorification of the Common Man who retains all the subtle appeal that attaches to high caste. The catch-phrase initials are a crowning touch. Of such stuff legends are born.

Mr. Purvale was one of the most engaging figures ever to grace the pages of the S.B.L.; whatever his implausibilities, there was something irresistibly likeable about him. He appeared in every one of the Brandon stories from first to last, and in time the reader became intimate, too, with a circle of relations and associates who all possessed something of the Purvale charm - the Dowager Duchess of Faulkside; the amiable Lord Montague Chanways; Big Bill Withers, the cockney cab-driver; and, of course, 'Flash' George Wibley, Purvale's omniscient valet and former cracksman. Readers may catch an echo of Bertie and Jeeves in R.S.V.P. and Wibley, and indeed Purvale started out on life very much as a neo-Wodehousian figure. With time, however, the excesses of his blithing line of conversation were pruned away and he became a more fully-realised and less typed character.

Some Blake connoisseurs will complain that R.S.V.P. so dominates the Brandon books as to overshadow Blake himself. I don't personally find this objection altogether valid: if the physical presence of Purvale looms large in the play of events it is always the master-mind

of Blake that shapes and controls them. It is more just, in my view, to complain of Brandon's treatment of Tinker, who simply doesn't appear in several of his books, and in others merely answers Blake's telephone. The fact is that the shrewd Wibley and the adventurous Purvale do between them tend to duplicate the Baker Street pair, and the resultant problem of character balance is solved at Tinker's expense. Brandon added to his own difficulty here by his inordinate fondness for Coutts, to whom he almost invariably gave a prominent part in his stories. The C.I.D. man admittedly inspired some enjoyable humorous interludes, but most Blake readers, I imagine, would have willingly dispensed with these to secure a stronger share in the narrative for Blake's popular assistant.

Mr. Purvale, as his biographer constantly reminded us, was an international adventurer, who had shouldered a dunnage-bag in every port of call from Maracaibo to Shanghai; but this was a side of his career that we saw surprisingly little of. The familiar setting for his adventures was the great metropolis, London itself. And J.G.B. certainly knew his London. The very life and presence of the city is woven into the fabric of his stories. The West End square, the midnight taxi, the lighted window, the watcher in the doorway - these are the essence of Brandon, ingredients whose flavour imparts a distinctive individuality to his work. His intimate topographical knowledge creates a new kind of authenticity, making of the background an actual participant, a new character in the drama.

If this is an undeniable part of his fascination, it can reveal itself also as a limitation that serves to emphasise his weaknesses. Brandon's are not detective stories so much as crime stories, studies of the metropolitan underworld. Their plots are often untidy, leaving loose ends, and stretching the long arm of coincidence beyond comfort. The criminals belong to organized gangs, while the only idea of detection is covert observation. Suspects obligingly put in a convenient appearance so that their movements may be followed, and an astonishing number of assaults and murders are actually witnessed. In consequence, there is often a lack of any real sense of mystery, and, in spite of the author's reputation, sometimes of action, too. Look at No. 469, 'The Downing Street Discovery.' The arresting title suggests a starting-point, the mystery from which the narrative will unfold. In fact, no discovery is ever described. The allusion, presumably, is to an incident - certainly not mysterious to the reader - that occurs half-way through the book. Look at any number of stories and you will find that the action consists of a series of largely fortuitous encounters that lead to the trailing of rather obvious suspects round the

West End of London. At times, indeed, that vast centre of population seems to reduce itself to a tiny cast of familiars endlessly engaged in a game of shadows. The presence of the city has ultimately become something claustrophobic.

How like a breath of clean, fresh air are those stories in which we really see something of Purvale the roving go-getter! The early part of 'The Diamonds of Ti Ling' (SBL 591), an exciting adventure in the Dutch East Indies, makes one wonder why on earth Brandon didn't give us far more stories of this kind. The later episodes in London are the more effective because for once they provide a contrast, and a hint of the supernatural in the working-out of the plot helps to set this book apart - excellent adult entertainment, something after the Sapper tradition. Its successor, SBL 595, 'The Melbourne Mystery,' is another delightful tale, in which Brandon displays an admirably light touch. The construction is unusually lucid; the dialogue sparkles throughout; the plot follows a most convincing false trail which proves of absorbing interest in itself as well as permitting surprise developments later; and the Australian background adds to the fascination of one of JGB's very best yarns.

Brandon in this lucid vein was a dazzling entertainer of tonic quality; unhappily, it was the first thing to desert him in his pot-boilers. Over the years, though, he maintained a consistency of standard remarkable in so large an output, and it is right, too, that we should pay tribute to the range and variety his work displayed. Apart from the various backgrounds that are knowledgeably employed - seafaring, boxing, flying, and the theatre are just a few - his stories embrace most of the themes known to the literature of crime - the straight whodunnit, the espionage thriller, the treasure-hunt, the impossible crime, and so on, with every form of attendant larceny from murder and international dope-peddling downwards.

"A real two-fisted he-man adventure:" so the blurbs used to run. There is at times a relish for violence in the Brandon books that may seem to presage a more recent and sadistic literary trend. Compare a Purvale rough-house with the modern product, however, and you will see the difference. There is a healthy-mindedness in the former that is quite unmistakable. Here is no calculated excitation, no morbid immersion in the raw detail of pain, but rather a simple - almost an old-fashioned - belief in fighting the good fight cheerfully and courageously, and a rejoicing in physical strength cleanly used. For all his sophistication of manner, there is a resilience, an optimistic gusto and life-assertion in Brandon that leaves an abiding impression of personality when other stories are forgotten. Like his engaging

hero, he is one of the best.

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SEXTON BLAKE - UNION JACK - OFFICIAL INFORMATION

No. 8.

By W. O. G. Lofts

THE BLIND BLAKE AUTHOR:

The name of J. G. Jones is certainly not a new one to appear as having written Sexton Blake. Indeed, many years ago he was revealed (under his more familiar pen-name of Ambrose Earle) as having written a solitary Sexton Blake Library 1st series No. 345. I can now confirm that this author wrote at least five Union Jack stories. No. 349. The Great Rubber Syndicate, 18.6.1910. No. 371. The Great Stores Mystery, 19.11.1910. 385. The Father of the Chapel, 25.2.1911. 411. Sexton Blake's Holiday Case, 26.8.1911. and 457 The Case of the Olympic Champion, 13.7.1912.

What is really so remarkable about this author is that after the early days of writing and editing The Violet Magazine, he suddenly went totally blind - a most tragic handicap for any author to undergo - yet still continued writing in a sense - when his daughter typed the stories. He had a most extraordinary method of writing them under this great disadvantage, as he had to plot the tale - allotting so many hundred words for each situation or incident, which was quite mathematical - consequently the tales were efficient, and passable in these circumstances.

Apart from these few Sexton Blake tales he had a prolific output for the girls papers - writing under the name of Enid Earle - and all the girl guide tales in the SCHOOLGIRLS OWN under the name of 'Mildred Gordon'.

As already mentioned he wrote as 'Ambrose Earle' for the boys papers - plus another not so far known 'Geoffrey Gordon' whilst I have been told that he was a great lover of Charles Hamilton's famous schools.

ANOTHER NEW BLAKE AUTHOR:

'Gordon Carr' was a pen-name of W. J. Bayfield' - so wrote the late Herbert Leckenby in an early Digest Annual. But alas, where our former editor got his information from will never be now known - except to say that not only was it incorrect but the authors by official records were two distinct individuals.

An early issue of the BOYS FRIEND however gives a big fan-fare to the first story by Gordon Carr - and later this author seems to have been a member of the Amalgamated Press staff - as he did editorial work on the Union Jack, and may have been a sub-editor. Union Jack Sexton Blake stories that he wrote were as follows:

247.	Bankrupt.	4.7.1908.
278.	The Man Hunt.	6.2.1909.
293.	Gregory Sanderson's Will.	22.5.1909.

Convicts and prison themes were a great favourite of his, and he wrote in BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY (1st Series) a thrilling story of a convict escape from prison, which, in the words of Walter Webb, was 'a most excellent and well written story.'

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FOR SALE: Volume containing the following SOL's (all bound without covers) "The Amateur Rogue," "Baggy Trimble's Reform," "Japers of St. Jin's," "Follow Uncle James," "The Rookwood Barring-in," "Taming the Bully," "Camp and Caravan," "The Scallywag of the Third," "The Boy Without a Name" (the latter the Tatters series), "The Cockney Schoolboy." £3, 10s. 0. plus postage. S.a.e., first, please.

ERIC FAYNE,

EXCELSIOR HOUSE,

GROVE ROAD,

SURBITON.

# Hamiltoniana

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 50 - Magnet No. 357 - "The Return of the Prodigal"

Double numbers continue to exercise a peculiar charm and fascination which is often entirely unconnected with the merits of the story itself. As a Club Librarian, I have ample proof of this from all kinds of borrowers, from the modest enquirer who requests a double number if one is available, to the superb optimist who writes to me out of the blue a week before Christmas and suggests I send him a dozen assorted double numbers by return of post. This unremitting demand for the enlarged editions of old, no matter what the quality of the story, is surely a tribute to the style of presentation that made such an impact in those far-off days.

The double number was nearly always resplendent in a coloured cover, the picture often bearing no relation to the story. The Christmas double number of the Magnet for 1914 has an illustration by P. J. Hayward of an old warrior showing a battle sword to his grandchildren. Inside the cover are advertisements carefully explaining how patriotic it would be to purchase such things as pistols, rifles, Christmas cards, and brooches. In the middle is a four-page supplement containing, strangely enough, "Tom Merry's Weekly."

Of course, it is the Greyfriars story itself that really matters. The prodigal was Percy Locke, the Head's nephew, who had left in disgrace some years ago, and in this story there are two newcomers who know one another and who are both mysterious in various ways, one being a temporary Remove master, and the other being the Head's guest. The story is well-knit, but the absence of seasonable gaiety seems to cast a chilling shadow over the narrative. There is certainly some snow at the beginning, and Mr. Quelch accidentally steps on a slide and comes to grief, but these two items are all that mark out the story as a Christmas number. Perhaps it was the war that was exerting such a feeling of gloom, but at any rate most of the events were distinctly

unseasonable, with Percy Locke being found intoxicated and staggering in Friardale Lane, and Dr. Locke weeping for shame and sorrow in his study.

The war was not referred to in the story (though the villain redeemed himself by volunteering for the army at the end), but C.H. Chapman made up for this by providing some pictures of our gallant army in battle. From the collector's point of view, however, the most interesting aspect is the match with Rookwood, whose team was captained by the lackadaisical Smythe. As the Rookwood stories had not yet commenced in the Boys' Friend, it seems that Charles Hamilton was providing a little advance publicity in the pages of the Magnet.

There is one point, nevertheless, that continues to puzzle me. How on earth did Bob Cherry manage to cycle from Greyfriars to Rookwood and back one winter's afternoon?

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BROWN STUDY

By S. Perry

It seems that Charles Hamilton rather disliked the name of Gerald - perhaps "disliked" is the wrong word, but it seems that most of his shady characters have that Christian name - Knox, Loder, Crocke, Cutts and Lumley-Lumley. No doubt other readers have noticed this, but so far I have not seen it commented on.

I have just finished reading the "Bob Cherry Swot" series in the Magnet and would like to comment on the football team. It seems that Nugent was a regular member of the forward line, but in several other stories he seldom made the grade. - Please don't think for one moment that I am trying to find any fault with Charles Hamilton - but these are the things that interest me. My regular team for St. Jim's had always been: WYNN, FIGGINS and KERR backs; REDFERN, NOBLE, LOWTHER, Half backs; TALBOT, LEVISON, MERRY, BLAKE and D'ARCY, forwards; with CLIVE and CARDEW as first reserves. It seemed always to remain that way, but I could never get a regular Greyfriars Team - St. Jim's could always beat them anyway!! - The goalkeeper was always George Bulstrode, reserve Hazeldene, and I thought that Field was the regular centre half, but at times he was the goalkeeper. Inside forwards never seemed to be the same, although my regular wingers were always Inky on the one side and Vernon Smith on the other. In the story I mentioned Donald Ogilvy was the left-winger.

As one gets older taste seems to change, even in the same books that one read when young. My favourite school was St. Jim's, and at that time I would have been disappointed to know that Greyfriars and

Rookwood were written by the same author. I think perhaps the illustrations were a lot to do with it. The boys of St. Jim's seemed to be so much better than the boys of Greyfriars. I always looked on Harry Wharton as a "swank pot" - I think even Frank Richards thought of him as a little that way. He made Harold Skinner comment on it several times and to me it did ring rather true! On reading these tales at a greater age, I seem to prefer Greyfriars - they are a little more adult! The same with other magazines. When young I could not stand "Chums" but now I think it wonderful and one of the best books ever for boys. So, really I don't think we can say what the modern youngster would really like to read. It cannot be all the fault of the publishers, because after all they are out to make money.

The "Rover and Wizard" seems to be the best of the weekly reading books now and it even has to publish reprints!

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 77. FIFTY YEARS OF "THE TOFF"

The extract which we publish this month from Danny's Diary reminds us that exactly fifty years have gone by since Reginald Talbot, the Toff, was introduced to the pages of the Gem.

When Talbot arrived, the Golden Age of the Gem had really passed. Soon the Magnet was to forge ahead of the Gem.

Up till this time, all the evidence points to the Gem having been a more popular paper than the Magnet, and I, personally, have never had any doubt that it was. In 1912 the reprinting of the early St. Jim's stories had started in the Penny Popular. Apart from a brief and unheralded serialisation of the first two Magnet tales, Greyfriars did not arrive in the Penny Pop till 1917.

A number of long complete stories of St. Jim's had appeared in the Boys' Friend 3d Library. There had been none of Greyfriars. Even as late as September 1914 a new long complete St. Jim's story appeared in the Boys' Friend Library.

In early 1914 Frank Richards had been given a second string to his bow when Chuckles came out with a series under his name. But this was a series about Courtfield Council School, even though some Greyfriars characters featured in them. They were indifferent items, and, from the fact that they were never to be republished, it seems doubtful whether they came from the pen of the genuine Frank.

By the end of 1914 the swing to Greyfriars had started, for early in 1915 appeared the first Greyfriars B.F.L., "The Boy Without a Name."

That year, the early Magnet stories were reprinted in the Dreadnought. By 1917, Greyfriars arrived with a fanfare in the Penny Popular.

So, quite clearly, by the end of 1914 St. Jim's was slipping and Greyfriars was creeping ahead. It is difficult not to decide that the slipping and the glut of Toff stories were related.

It would be idle to suggest that the actual arrival of the Toff had anything to do with it. Most readers must have delighted in that first Talbot series, exactly fifty years ago. Slightly sombre and lacking light relief, the series was nevertheless well written, with fine moments of pathos and drama. At the end of that first series Martin Clifford wrote: "Talbot was not seen again at St. Jim's."

The keen student of the Gem can hardly fail to see that if those words had been accurate, it would have been better for the paper. Had Talbot "not been seen again at St. Jim's," that first series would have shone for ever like a beacon in Gem history.

But a few weeks later Talbot returned in a second series. Even this would not have mattered, although, as Roger Jenkins has truly observed, a character who has a special part to play in one series has often outlived his usefulness when he is reintroduced.

The second series, in this case, was excellent, and had Talbot, after he won the King's pardon, been allowed to settle down as a normal member of the St. Jim's cast, he would have been entirely worth-while.

But that was not to be. Talbot series followed Talbot series. Talbot was joined by two more characters, Marie Rivers and the Professor. These two were fine character studies in small doses. Gem readers were given them in large doses. With the Marie Rivers stories the Gem, in fact, reverted to some extent to a type of tale which had featured occasionally in the early Magnet and which had been abandoned in the Magnet by 1914.

Unfortunately all the Talbot stories harped on the same theme - the shady past of the schoolboy ex-cracksman. Martin Clifford wrote a large number of them. Then the substitute writers rehased the same theme in tales sticky with sentimentality.

By and large, Charles Hamilton's best work had gone into the Gem up till the end of 1914. But, though both St. Jim's and Greyfriars slipped for a few years after 1914, the Gem still carried the cream of the writer's pen until 1916. The Magnet carried nothing outstanding between 1914 and 1917. It was not until 1917, with the "Judge Jeffries" series, and the arrival of Redwing with the consequent run of stunning stories concerning the Bounder and Redwing, that the cream was seen to have passed from the Gem to the Magnet. Why, then, is

the swing to Greyfriars away from St. Jim's, so far as readers' taste was concerned, evident by the end of 1914?

I suggest that it was due to a shortcoming in the Gem, and not to any new quality in the Magnet. Combined with the glut of Talbot stories - too much heavy material was out of place in the Gem, especially when it was repetitive - there were many other subtle changes which swung the limelight too much away from the well-trying, well-loved former leading characters.

Talbot, as a normal St. Jim's junior, was a character with enormous possibilities. The author never exploited those possibilities.

Was it editorial stupidity or author's stupidity? Probably the former, though the author wrote at least two post-war stories rehashing the old weary theme of Talbot's past. In the winter of his life, Charles Hamilton could never be bothered with anything but the old themes.

So much could have been done with Talbot. So little, comparatively, was done.

We loved him just the same. Salute the Toff.

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#### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No.

74 NO, SIR! (Further comments on the topic.)

JOHN GEAL: Surely when Leslie Rowley rushes to his Collection, and is prepared to cast to the four winds one of his treasures at the mere hint of the dread word 'sub,' he takes this hobby of ours too seriously.

It is like the Art Collector who shows with pride his latest find to his friends only to cast it into the dustbin on it being proved a fake. The man collected prestige not pleasure. If a picture pleases you it matters not one jot whether it came from Woolworth's or Christie's: so be it with Magnets. How can one suddenly change from affection to distaste overnight? If this is so then one only collects to flatter an ego, not because these books give you a pleasant nostalgia for your youth (which surely, is the reason for collecting these Old Boys Books?).

Unfortunately this sort of thinking seems to be on the increase in our collecting world. Still, having got that off my chest, I will now board up my windows and wait for the Brickbats to be thrown from the Ranks of Hamiltonia. Whilst I, tucked in the safety of those same shutters, settle down to read my Magnets and dream of my youth. Sub copies included!

LAURIE SUTTON: Lest any reader should be unduly influenced by Bill Lofts' impressive statement that he has, from official records, confirmed beyond all doubt, etc. I should like to point out that more than one collector has had cause to doubt the authenticity of these "official records."

Also readers may recall an occasion last year when I was able to demonstrate that four stories which Bill attributed to three different authors were, in fact, the work of one person. Following this disclosure another collector wrote doubting some other of Bill Lofts' authors. Furthermore, let me refer readers to an article which appeared in the 1951 C.D. Annual ("Inside Fleetway House"), in which Tom Ropperton quotes a letter from Stanley Austin on the question of stories written by that prolific sub-author.

Among the stories Mr. Austin wrote he lists the "Norfolk Broads" couplet in the Gem. As these were the only stories on this theme, the authors voluntary statement must be accepted as reliable - nevertheless Bill Lofts' "official records" give the author of these yarns as Francis Warwick.

One final point - I have recently read Gems 638 and 639 ("Talbot's Stolen Story" and sequel) which Bill lists as the work of G. R. Sawways. Well, if anything is one hundred per cent certain, it is that these stories were written, not by Sawways, but by J. N. Pentelov (the easiest to identify of all the sub-writers).

**FRANK UNWIN:** I feel that Laurie Sutton has tried to break the butterfly on the wheel. Unless one possesses the particular Magnet mentioned, "Billy Bunter's Bargain," it is quite impossible to check what Laurie calls his list of un-Hamilton-like expressions. From a quick glance through, however, his "evidence" of sub-writing is pretty thin and certainly would not convince me that the story was not genuine C.H.

**JOHN UPTON:** "Billy Bunter's Bargain" was written in a period of acute international tension, which took its quota of stress from every adult throughout the land. In re-reading, recently, the story: "Condemned Without Evidence" of the previous month, it seemed to me that the writing in the earlier part was not quite so effortless and enthusiastic as usual, and I wondered whether perchance it had actually been prepared during the first week of the war, with anxiety in the author's mind that he kept in the background but was bound to intrude to some extent. Who knows but that "Billy Bunter's Bargain" was not produced during the very week when C.H. learned that "The Gem" was to cease at the end of the year? If so, he could well have produced a yarn which, though superbly written, was affected by that sad news to the extent that, 25 years later, doubt could be passed on its authenticity.

All theory, of course! But the effect of outside influences must play its part in any assessment of the genuine style. And it is completely ignored in Laurie Sutton's provocative article.

**ARTHUR CARBIN:** After reading the article by Mr. Laurie Sutton, and then the story "Billy Bunter's Bargain," I find that I agree with your views entirely.

I have read this story more than once and never doubted that it was a genuine Hamilton story. I still think it is. If Mr. Sutton has to go to all that trouble to find a substitute tale then it must be a genuine one. I don't think there was a substitute author as good as Mr. Sutton suggests.

If other people follow Mr. Sutton's lead we will find that Charles Hamilton wrote less stories of the famous schools than the substitute writers, and in the end maybe that he didn't write any and that some other person wrote them. Shades of Shakespeare and Bacon,

**HARRY BROSTER:** The story which Mr. Sutton puts forward as the "last" Magnet sub story appears to me as a very, very typical Frank Richards yarn. The plot has everything F.R. would produce. Is Mr. Sutton trying to say Frank Richards never repeated himself? I would say, without any reflection on the author, that Charles Hamilton could beat any author of our time in that direction, but he had a genius for making the re-hash very palatable, and no one cared, even if they noticed it.

Definitely "Billy Bunter's Bargain" is not a substitute story. If it is, any of the Magnets could be a sub story - even No. 1.

**PETER HANGER:** I am sure that Laurie Sutton is wrong. "Billy Bunter's Bargain" was one of the first Magnets I ever read, and that, with others of the same type, was sufficient to make me devoted to Greyfriars for ever.

**BERNARD PRIME:** Imitation or not, I enjoyed that story immensely, and that is the chief thing. But I think it's genuine Hamilton all right.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 9 (New series)

Arthur Augustus maintained a stony silence.

Oxford had been left behind, and all through the voyage since that unfortunate incident that had started with the "distant spires and antique towers," Arthur Augustus had maintained an impenetrable reserve.

Perhaps it had been a relief not to draw upon his stores of knowledge, while Oxford was at hand. But now Tom Merry & Co. felt that it had gone far enough; and they sought to persuade Arthur Augustus off his dignity, and they did not spare the "soft sawder."

But soft sawder failed of its effect. Arthur Augustus was not to be drawn.

"I don't see how we're to choose a suitable camp if Gussy doesn't help us," remarked Monty Lowther.

Unfortunately, Lowther winked at Manners as he made that remark, and Arthur Augustus spotted the wink. Lowther's words might have softened him, but the wink had quite the opposite effect. Arthur Augustus realised with great clearness that his noble leg was being pulled, and, like Pharoah of old, he hardened his heart.

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E. W. M. M.

A new, monthly crime fiction magazine will be appearing shortly, and will feature the current work of several of the ex-SEL authors.

The magazine is EDGAR WALLACE MYSTERY MAGAZINE and the first number will be on sale 15th July. It will have 128 pages, a full-colour cover, and will sell at 2s. 6d.

Among the authors who will be contributing novelettes and stories to the new publication are Martin Thomas, Rex Dolphin, Arthur Kent, James Stagg, V. J. Hanson, Rex Hardinge, J. T. Lang (Walter Tyrer), and Jacques Pendower (T. C. H. Jacobs).

The first number will include material by Martin Thomas and Arthur Kent, and a vintage Wallace novelette entitled "The Ghost of Down Hill." Copies of this story, which originally appeared in a Readers' Library edition, are very rare and our typescript was prepared from microfilm of the volume in The British Museum. This is a must for lovers of the traditional-style British thriller.

The closure of SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY last year, left a gap for both authors and readers which has yet to be filled satisfactorily. We hope EWM will help towards this.

# News from the Clubs

## MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th May, 1964.

Ten members were present to elect officers for the coming year, have the various reports and transact the routine business connected with the A.G.M. There was no change in the positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian (myself), Norman Gregory and Tom Porter having no opposition (as usual). Everyone seemed satisfied. There were the usual thanks for past services but no offers to take over, so that was that. The choice of Chairman seemed unanimous likewise and it was with popular assent that Tom Porter took over for 1964/5. Norman as per rule, holds the vice-chairmanship. The Treasurer's report showed a decrease in profit and again Norman emphasised the urgent need for more members and more subscriptions. The Library report was a good one, however. A very small increase in funds but the stock of 80 Magnets had risen to 170. These at the present market price gave the club an asset which made up for the rather disappointing state of finance shown by the Treasurer's report. That part of the business being settled we finalised on the arrangements for the Chesterfield re-union now fixed for Sunday, 21st June. There was not time for much of the usual routine. The Anniversary Number brought along by Tom was Nelson Lee Library (O.S.) No. 416. The Schoolboy Minstrels. This was exactly 41 years today (as Tom said). The Collectors Item was a very early Boys Friend Library. The 3rd series No. 30 entitled "Tom Merry & Co." The first BFL. written by Charles Hamilton (as Martin Clifford), date 1st November, 1907. After refreshments there was a discussion initiated by Ted Davey "Did the Magnet decline and fall?" Ted has seen this question debated several times and his opinion was - No. He gave his reasons and invited comments. No firm decision was arrived at but there were many interesting points of view put forward on the matter. The raffle was won by Ted Davy.

HARRY BROSTER Sec.

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NORTHERN

Meeting, Saturday, 13th June, 1964.

Holidays again left their mark on the attendance for our June meeting, several regulars being absent, but even so we had a good attendance for our Wodehouse programme. As chairman Geoffrey Wilde pointed out, 'P.G.' is due to be interviewed on B.B.C. Television by Malcolm Muggeridge in a few days' time, which, in view of the fine school stories he penned in his early days, should be full of interest to O.B.B.C. enthusiasts.

Formal business having been dealt with, Gerry Allison gave us the correspondence of the month, which was of the usual varied and interesting character, and included the usual tributes to the postal library facilities from members who live too far away to attend the meetings.

Gerry then played a tape recording of 'P.G.' being interviewed by Alastaire Cooke of the B.B.C., and it was interesting to note that, like Frank Richards, his voice sounded remarkably youthful, with no trace of an American accent. Then we had a talk, by Gerry himself, on the Wodehouse school stories, and how he began to write them in his early days, and Gerry followed this by reading one of them, 'The Last Place,' from The Captain, cricket being the theme.

Refreshments followed, and the next item was a competition devised by Gerry, which consisted of a piece of prose with thirty passages omitted, these passages being titles of P.G.'s stories, of which more than seventy were printed on the other side of the paper! Fitting them in to make sense was quite an exacting task, but very interesting. Geoff. was the winner, several of us being stumped for the last two or three titles.

Then followed a reading by Geoff. of a Jeeves story, 'The Ordeal of Young Tuppy,' which brought this most interesting and unusual meeting to an end.

Next meeting, Saturday, 11th July.

F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

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MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held June 7th.

The attendance at this meeting was a little below par, but I suppose we can expect this sort of thing during the summer months.

We were pleased to receive another tape from David Hobbs. He seems to be rather concerned lest we should feel embarrassed and put

out by making recordings of parts of our meetings. I can assure David that we enjoy the experience. Anything which introduces a new interest to our meetings is always welcome and correspondence by tape seems to be such a good idea that other clubs might well follow the example set by Merseyside. I think I am right in saying that we were the first in the field when we made a tape for our friends in Australia some years ago.

If the attendance justifies it, we may record some of our next meeting.

To revert to purely domestic matters we received a letter and a quiz from Frank Case which I was fortunate enough to win with Bill Galley second. Frank may be one of our "absent friends" but he always seems to be with us. Norman Pragnell then gave a reading from a Nelson Lee which he said served to illustrate the adult approach E.S.B. made in writing some of his detective stories, which suggests that he may at that time have been tiring of writing schoolboy yarns.

The next meeting is July 12th when we hope to have an improved attendance.

BILL WINDSOR

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AUSTRALIA

A good attendance, with everyone in an enthusiastic mood, set the stage for an enjoyable meeting on Thursday, June 11th, at the Book Bargain Bazaar, Sydney.

Chairman Syd Smyth opened the evening's proceedings at 6.15 p.m. and threw the meeting open for general discussion by inviting the secretary to read the correspondence.

An item in this month's C.D. dealing with "Raffles" and his creator E. Hornung sparked off another interesting discussion concerning the authors of the early 1900's. The origin of this famous or infamous character (according to one's point of view), his take-over by writer Barry Perowne who featured him in a modern setting and then reverted to the original hansom cab era, led up to the question of whether the "Amateur Cracksman" was a desirable character or a completely unscrupulous type. General opinion favoured the latter point of view up on analysis, which of course, is contrary to the popular image of this character nowadays. From this point the discussion broadened out to include other famous writers of this period including H. Rider Haggard, John Buchan, Arnold Bennett, E. Harcourt Berridge, Charles Emmett and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with members deciding that in the field of adventure, their writings had stood the test of time better than their

romances or novels - these adventure stories have a timeless quality about them which insure their place in modern reading tastes.

A pleasant little interlude with another old friend of this era made an hilarious ending to the meeting when Stan Nicholls produced a copy of "The London Mystery Magazine." In this Roy Willis has written a delicious little "send-up" of the Holmes-Watson relationship called "The Truth at Last." Read by Bette Pate and Victor Colby when the former reader was overcome by hysterics, it provided an amazing new viewpoint on the famous pair and on some Baker Street irregularities - Stan is an ardent and knowledgeable Holmes man and he enjoyed the wit as much as the folk who support the rival firm of Blake & Co.

Altogether a grand evening of discussion and good fellowship with everyone looking forward with happy anticipation to the next meeting on Thursday, July 9th.

B. PATE Secretary.

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LONDON

On a day which was rather cool, with only intermittent short bursts of sunshine, the walled garden at Excelsior House looked even lovelier than ever for the June meeting. There are over 200 different types of rose at Excelsior House, and they made a glorious show.

Acting-chairman Bob Elythe opened the meeting of thirty, welcoming distinguished guests which included the ever-youthful Mr. C. H. Chapman who was bubbling with high spirits; Mr. W. L. Catchpole; and Miss Hood, the late Charles Hamilton's housekeeper who entered into the spirit of the day and clearly enjoyed every minute of it.

President John Wernham spoke of the club's past achievements and of the high hopes for the future. Mr. W. L. Catchpole won all hearts with his bright and breezy personality, telling of how he became a writer for the Gem, Magnet, and Union Jack, as well as other A.P. publications. He had prompt answers for questions put to him by the meeting, and there were some entertaining exchanges of comments between him and Mr. Chapman.

Roger Jenkins announced that he has received for the Hamiltonian Library some 200 Magnets as a gift from John Wernham's Archives. A further nine series have made a welcome addition to the library, which now numbers 1558 books, nearly 1,000 of them being Magnets. Demand for library books continues to be heavy, and there was also brisk business in selling surplus Magnets.

Bob Elythe gave excellent report of the Nelson Lee Library, with the pleasing information that a previous deficit of £2.17.0. was now

reduced to 8/4d. There are many new additions to this section.

At 5 p.m. the company adjourned to the dining room where the daintily-laid tables groaned with goodly viands awaiting our attack. Don Webster expressed the thanks of all to "Madam" and her ladies for the wonderful work they had put in.

After tea there was discussion on the outing tentatively planned to take place on September 13th to Margate and Kingsgate. Present arrangements, confirmation to be made later, are that meals will cost 23/- per head and coach fare 12/-.

Then host Eric Fayne took over and fun and games became the order of the evening. An elimination game got everything going well, and this was followed by half a dozen rounds of the ever-fascinating "Take a Letter." Then, fast and furious, came a new game called "Scramble" which met with the approval of all. The most successful contestants in the three competitions were Roger Jenkins, Don Webster and Roy Parsons, but at least a dozen others won souvenirs to carry away to remind them of this exceptionally joyous meeting.

Next meeting July 19th at Greyfriars, Hollybush Ride, Wokingham; host Eric Lawrence.

DON WEBSTER

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STINGAREE

By W. H. Goodhead

Leonard Allen's letter in the June issue of the "Collectors Digest," in which he mentions E. W. Hornung's "Stingaree" stories brought back many pleasant memories to me.

I had the privilege of reading them in their original setting, (the "Strand Magazine" of sacred memory), round about the turn of the century. The series was not a very long one, comprising, if my memory serves me correctly, of at the most a dozen stories.

Furthermore, the final story, called (again relying on my memory) "The Moth and the Flame" was a bitter-sweet "renunciation" climax to the Stingaree saga which left no doubt in the mind of the reader that the hero was to be heard of no more. Altogether, a classic series in every way.

I must correct Mr. Allen, however, when he says that the setting was South Africa. It was, in fact, Australia, and I don't think Stingaree sported a monocle.

I always considered that these stories were immeasurably superior to the Raffles series. To me, at least, Raffles himself never seemed to be a particularly attractive, or even credible character. He was too much of a dilettante in crime, in fact his title "The Amateur Cracksman" seems to indicate that he wanted the best of both worlds.

Stingaree, however, was a far more formidable person. Like Raffles, he was born a gentleman, but unlike Raffles there was a hard, ruthless streak to his character which made his career as a bushranger credible and even, in a way, enviable.

I believe that the author lived for some time in Australia which would account for his sympathy with and admiration for an enemy of a system which was often harsh and tyrannical. (Ned Kelly had only been hung about twenty years previous), and the Iron Bandit, as we all know, is one of Australia's 'folk-heroes.'

It is a mystery to me why these stories are so little known these days. Perhaps some of our friends from Down Under could provide us with further information.

By the way, although I cannot recall the 1915 film which Mr. Allen mentions (slightly before my time) an excellent film was made in the early 1930's starring Richard Dix as Stingaree and Irene Dunne as the girl whom he helps to a successful operatic career. Also in the cast, if my memory serves me correctly, was Ian Hunter. It was described by one of the critics as "a horse-opera of the very highest kind."

The  
POSTMAN  
CALLED

(Interesting Items from the  
Editor's Letter Bag)

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STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): Danny's Diary is just as good and interesting as ever. I don't agree with Jack Cook over the name of the diarist. Danny is no longer a stranger, and he can speak

impartially on all aspects of his boyhood.

GERRY ALLISON (Ilkley): Replying to Walter Felming's question asking if "The Grand Adventure" which he has just read in No. 13 of Wonder Library, was reprinted from an earlier comic. Also the query by the Editor of the 'Collector's Digest' wondering if this could possibly be the story "Lonesome" referred to by Danny in his diary for 1914.

The answers are 'Yes,' and 'No,' in that order. "The Grand Adventure" or "The Convict's Luck" ran as a serial story in CHIPS in 1915. An excellent story about two escaped convicts - Arthur Lord and Peter Nutt - who joined the Grand Adventure Cinema Company. Much of the action is on a desert island, on which the tame-wild beasts of a shipwrecked menagerie roam at large. One illustration shows a lovely film-star unconsciously leading a tiger on a leash. Her pet toy terrier is inside the tiger!

WILLIAM SHARPE (Australia): I am not an active collector these days and have very few of the old books, but enjoy reading the articles about them. Slade stories are my favourite item in C.D. I would love to see them in a book of their own. It will be good to see the projected article on the Saint.

LEONARD M. ALLEN (Bournemouth): I was interested in Mr. Farrow's enquiry re Sports Pictorial. I don't recall this, but round about the 1922 period there was a paper

which fits the description - "Sports Pictures." This contained some excellent photos of sporting celebrities, mostly exclusive, copies of which could be purchased for a small sum. At one period the paper published each week an Educated Evans story by Edgar Wallace.

JIM MERRILLS (Canada): C.D. arrives faithfully each month, and a very welcome friend it is, too. Each issue is better and better. I would like to see Mr. Buddle as a regular feature every month. "The Postman Called" is very interesting, especially when readers mention old favourites like Triumph, Champion, Wizard, Hotspur, Pilot, Schoolboys' Own, Boys' Friend, and the like. I could often kick myself for letting stacks of these slip through my fingers to wrap the refuse in years ago. Thank goodness my Magnets escaped that fate.

M. HALL (Penryn): Could you give me information concerning a serial in Boy's Magazine, between 1925 and 1928, which contained the description of an invasion of Europe by robots in an attempt to conquer the world?

JOHN TROVELL (Colchester): The Editor's chat adequately expressed the appreciation due to Mr. C. H. Chapman for his long and faithful service to the Magnet.

Mr. Chapman's contribution to the June issue of the Digest was delightful reading, and his recognition and acknowledgement of the ability of Leonard Shields, the supreme school story illustrator, was a fine gesture.

The talent and cordial relationship between author and artists, reflected in the long and successful years of the Magnet, is indeed a tribute to those who laboured to produce something so worth while for our pleasure and delight.

REG GUEST (London): I enjoy C.D. immensely - it gets better all the time. My collection grows slowly. I have most of it bound now.

W. J. A. HUBBARD (Kenya): E. W. Hornung, the creator of "Raffles," wrote a school story. It is called "Fathers of Men" and it features Jan Rutter, a left-arm bowler with a natural break from leg. Published in 1911, it is hard to obtain, and I have yet to learn of a collector who owns a copy.

BERNARD PRIME (Sanderstead): Some years ago I wrote to Mr. Chapman and asked him for a special Magnet I thought he might have. He did not have it, but sent me, to my great pleasure, an example of his work - a cover from the Wibley series of 1937. I affixed that drawing to my bedroom wall, and it is still there to this day.

WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following:

MAGNETS - 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 751, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996.

GENS - Many issues between 400 and 500. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also Nos. 925, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 48.

ERIC FAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.