

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Long, complete Tale of
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No 277

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FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 19

No. 217

JANUARY, 1965

Price 2s. Od.



Eric Fayne with one of the subjects of his "Digest."

His hobby goes all over the world

the Magnet, some fifty years ago. As a result he was deluged with letters from readers who were impolite enough to suggest that he looked young enough to be in the army.

Digest readers will not write me in that strain, alas! They are more likely to write that I look old enough to be retired to a home for the aged.

The picture above appeared in a Surrey newspaper a few weeks ago, and we reproduce it here in order to give distant readers an idea of what the old skipper looks like. The glasses on the end of the nose were a photographer's gimmick. He assured me that he was not trying to make a fool of me, and thought they would be "good fun." Your

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

TIME HAS POWER ONLY
OVER THE HOURS, NONE
OVER THE HEART.

HINTONIAN ECHO:

Probably the
last editor to head
his chats with his
own picture was
Herbert Hinton in

editor, lacking the moral courage of the boy in the old hymn who said "no," agreed sadly. Besides, he was a very nice photographer.

The copy of Lot-O-Fun in the picture had just come back from being reproduced in the 1964 Annual.

IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD!

We are all accustomed to waiting for buses which never come. We are acquainted with trains which "run to rule," which, for some obscure reason, means that they run an hour late - or not at all. We are familiar with newly purchased appliances which shed nuts and bolts and screws after we have used them twice.

Our envelopes for the Annual are made especially to size for our Year Book. When the Annual was ready for dispatch in mid-December, the envelopes had not arrived, though they had been on order for three months. We're used to it.

We should all be familiar with the vagaries of publishing houses. Don't we remember how, a year or two ago, readers were writing to us by the score to say they couldn't buy the Sexton Blake Library in the shops for love or money?

Last June I was in Oxford. On the station book-stall I spotted some nice little paper-cover books named Woman's Weekly Library, price 1/- each. They were romances, women's stories, and I bought them to take home to my ladies. The ladies enjoyed them.

The Woman's Weekly Library issues four new stories every month, publication date being the 17th. I ordered the four new titles to be obtained for me every month by my newsagent.

In July, four new books arrived at the end of the month. In August, two titles only turned up. In September, once again two titles arrived. In October none at all. In November, three new books arrived at the end of the month. At the time of writing, I don't know the count for December.

Yet four new stories were advertised each month and presumably were published. I am assured by my newsagent that he made every effort to obtain them all for me.

The W.W.L. contains delightful stories for the gentler sex. Yet the people who publish them don't seem to want to sell them. Surely something must be going wrong somewhere in this second half of the twentieth century.

THE 1965 LOOK:

York Duplicating Services, who print Collectors' Digest for us, is the most go-ahead firm of its kind in the land. The directors have

recently added new Litho-duplicating machines, at a cost of nearly £900, to their already extensive equipment. As soon as we learned of it, we decided to have Collectors' Digest produced by this method, and, in fact, our December issue was the first to be printed in this way. Litho is a printing medium, which gives a cleaner image. It enables us to use a gloss paper, with consequent improvement in feel and appearance. Reader Jim Hepburn of Blyth writes us: "I must remark on the paper this month. I do not know whether this is to be always used for C.D., but it is certainly 'nicer' - and gives the good old C.D. a nice feel and a real quality look."

Thanks, Mr. Hepburn. You now know the reason.

NEW WHO'S WHO COMING:

It is hoped to publish a new edition of Collectors' Digest Who's Who during the coming months. Further particulars in due course.

THE EDITOR

'MARJORIE STANTON' - KING OF SCHOOLGIRL STORY WRITERS?

By W. O. G. Lofts

Living in retirement, on a small farm in the deep of the west country, is an 84 year old gentleman by the name of Horace Phillips. Probably thousands of old readers of girls school stories will know him much better by his famous name of 'Marjorie Stanton' - and the North Devon school of Morcove - featuring Betty Barton & Co. These well-written and popular tales are probably just as famous as Charles Hamilton's Cliff House - and are much sought today.

"It has been a great treat I assure you, to hear from someone who is so conversant with the Morcove history: for you to have written after all these years to say that my stories are so well remembered today, is something that I feel I hardly deserve. I am simply astounded at the amount of patient research, which has been brought to bear, on what was called purely ephemeral stuff in those days, and most unfortunately, for that reason all my file copies of stories were disposed of long ago as waste paper."

So wrote Mr. Phillips to me in recent times. It has been far from easy to compile fresh data for this article - nevertheless Mr. Phillips most kindly gave me a few new details about himself, and Morcove, and I trust that the many enthusiasts of this school may find pleasure in these revelations.

Coming from a family of artists, Horace Phillips seemed the odd man out. His first story was published as far back as 1904 - when he first wrote for the religious and adult papers. This is the simple explanation why his juvenile stories have a serious and realistic tone in general.

He wrote a considerable number of school stories for boys in the Henderson 'Nugget Library' in 1905 - and he thinks this was the best pennyworth of fiction.

1906 - and when THE SCOUT was but a year old - he was appointed editor. His job was to improve the paper at all costs - so that it was worthy of the Boy Scout movement. He engaged all the best authors and artists possible - and another great change was the much clearer type. THE SCOUT shows a great change in this period.

1911 saw him transfer his editorship to the Amalgamated Press Ltd - where he became

editor of 'CHEER BOYS CHEER' - later changed to 'BOYS JOURNAL' - but he can remember very little about this paper; though he can recollect a 'Mrs. Storm' writing several tales for him.

About 1914 he decided to go free-lancing and lived in the heart of the country, only paying fleeting visits to London every six months - so he cannot remember anything about other authors or editors at that period, as he never mixed with them socially.

1919 saw him take over the Cliff House stories in the SCHOOL FRIEND after Charles Hamilton had ceased to write them. In conjunction with Reginald Kirkham (who wrote the numerous tales whilst Mr. Phillips penned the serious ones) they wrote them until 1921 - when another writer took over. Horace Phillips confesses that he was never happy about writing about another creator's characters, and as soon as the opportunity arose, he created a school of his own. This chance came when 'The Schoolgirl's Own Weekly' was launched in February 1921. Morcove was purely fictional, and was not based on any school or place he had known in real life. His favourite schoolgirl was Pam Willoughby - certainly not one of the principal characters whilst he was also fond of Tess Trelawney, who was fond of sketching and painting, and who was very modest about her talents. At least two of his brothers were painters, and it is quite probable that Tess was based on someone near and dear to him.

The first story entitled 'Scorned by the School' told how Betty Barton from the North of England arrived at Morcove, and after great hardship and putting up with snobbishness, became in time Captain of the Fourth. The stories were highly popular at that time, and readers included boys as well as girls! Running a total of 798 issues, all the stories were written by Horace Phillips under the name of 'Marjorie Stanton.' This has been confirmed by Mr. Phillips - and by Mr. E. L. McKeag whom I know well as the former editor - but also by official records; an achievement which any author could be proud of.

At the conclusion of 'The Schoolgirls Own Weekly' - with other more important work in hand and with Morcove still a big draw with readers - he was paid a retaining fee for other writers to pen about the school, and so the serial stories in THE SCHOOLGIRL were written by such other well known authors as L. E. Ransome and John W. Wheway, whom I also have the pleasure of knowing quite well.

The stories of Morcove in THE SCHOOLGIRLS ANNUAL were, however, written by the original 'Marjorie Stanton' - plus the interesting play. Apart from still writing adult fiction, he wrote other girls stories under the name of 'Joy Phillips' - but certainly not under the name of 'Ida Melbourne', who was in fact Mr. L. E. Ransome. The confusion may have arisen by the latter writer also penning Morcove at a much later date.

Horace Phillips never penned any St. Jim's of Greyfriars stories, for a reason as already stated - that he strongly disliked writing about another author's creations - though he seemed to recall writing several Sexton Blake's for Willy Back way back in 1912. As all the stories in the UNION JACK and SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY are now accounted for in this period from official sources, it is possible that they may have been short tales for ANSWERS or PENNY PICTORIAL, now forgotten.

With great talent for portraying the rich and poor side of life - and in the days of the 20's when such themes as poor mill girls coming to public schools and mixing with rich titled snobbish girls were all the rage - Horace Phillips can look back with pride on his early achievement.

EXCHANGE: Sexton Blake Library 1st series: 8, 63, 90, 351; 2nd series: 38, 77, 456, 518, 707, 734; 3rd series: 105, 127, 138, 141, 467, 478, 507, 525, 526.

WANTED: Blakes 2nd series: range 500 - 744.

P. M. KING, "Havercroft," Kirby Rd, Walton-on-Naze, Essex.

FOR SALE or EXCHANGE: Boys Own Annual 1903/4, excellent condition; offers to:

R. SANDERSON, 53 Trap Lane, Bents Green, Sheffield, 11.

THOSE OFFICIAL RECORDSLaurie Sutton replies

I am sorry if I have upset Derek Adley in suggesting that the Lofts/Adley statistics are not 100% reliable, but my own knowledge and judgement make me bound to state this opinion. Although I have repeatedly expressed my gratitude for the research done by Bill Lofts, it is not of much use to tell me, for example, that Gems 638 and 639 were written by G. R. Samways when in fact I know perfectly well that they were written by the unmistakable J. N. Pentelow.

Such sweeping statements as "Mr. Hamilton told me not once, but several times in his lifetime..." look very impressive and might give the impression that Mr. Adley was a contemporary of Mr. Hamilton and in the habit of dropping in for a week-end chat. But according to the C.D. "Who's Who" Mr. Adley was not more than 34 years of age at the time of the great writer's death.

Derek Adley appears to take C.H.'s remark that he had no idea what went on in the editorial office and rarely bothered to look at the published form to apply literally from Gem 1-1663. I had emphasised that the story referred to ("The Terrible Three's Air-Cruise") appeared in 1909, when the Gem had been running for only two years. The Autobiography certainly suggests that C.H. knew a good deal about the editorial office of this period. As for having no interest in the stories' published form, Mr. Hamilton's general indignation over the substitute stories contradicts this. Furthermore C.H. has told us that he put out most of his collection of Gems and Magnets for salvage during 1940; the Charles Hamilton Museum at Maidstone contains a good many Magnets from the author's personal collection, and I myself possess a few of his old Gems.

The point that the various editors of the Companion Papers wrote Magnet and Gem stories has never been disputed - in fact I am quite sure they wrote many more than have been officially credited to them!

Regarding the statement that in the majority of cases (Twyman, Catchpole, Newman, Warwick, Samways) these authors still have the original copies in their files at home, this revelation seems a bit late in the day. Both Mr. Twyman and Mr. Samways have contributed to the C.D. in the past, and have never mentioned this interesting fact. Both authors are well aware of the interest in the sub stories, so it does appear rather strange that they should have withheld such information from the editor of the C.D. Furthermore, Mr. Catchpole attended the Surbiton meeting of the London O.B.B.C. a few months back, when he kindly gave an interesting little talk, and answered a number of questions. In fact, Mr. Catchpole was very vague about his

authorship of sub stories, and could give only one definite title among the stories he wrote. Concerning Francis Warwick we have the strange circumstance of the "Norfolk Broads" stories in the Gem which Stanley Austin claimed to have written and which were later attributed by Bill Lofts to F.W. I certainly don't feel 100% certain in this case that Bill's information is correct.

If, as Mr. Adley suggests, the publishers have been reluctant to release or make public details of authorship, this would surely suggest their unreliability rather than their authenticity, for it suggests that some names on record were not the true authors of the stories.

To sum up, I conclude that at this stage we must accept that certain information will never now come to light. I am not willing to fill in the gaps by putting an author's name to a story in cases where my own knowledge and judgement cause me to doubt its reliability.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: No further discussion on this subject will be accepted for publication. Neither Mr. Lofts nor Collectors' Digest claims that Mr. Lofts' list of authors is 100% accurate. The occasional error is unavoidable after so great a lapse of time. But, in the many hundreds of stories which Mr. Lofts has quoted, it is clear to anyone that the errors are remarkably rare. His information, mainly obtained from the old records of the A.P., has been invaluable to readers who like to know the history of the old tales and their authors.

RESULT OF ELIMINATION COMPETITION

This little contest was so popular that we hope to run another of the same kind in the near future. The word required as the answer was ABBEY. In the batch of postcards which had arrived at this office by closing date, there were only four correct efforts. Therefore, instead of drawing the three winners from a bag, we decided to increase the number of prizes, and one of our book awards has gone to each of the following: G. Allison (Menston); E. N. Lambert (Chessington); Neil Beck (Lewes); G. H. Wilde (Leeds).

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, 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. GEMS - 413, 415, 493. Some issues between 800 and 832. Also Nos. 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, 58. ERIC FAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

As you will have read in last month's C.D. an article on the hobby, written by Mr. E. S. Turner, appeared in the Daily Telegraph coloured supplement for Friday, 6th November. The reference to Len and myself (also our photograph) brought us quite a lot of letters, some of which contained very interesting information. One of these letters was from the daughter of the late ANDREW MURRAY. Full details of the information I was given will appear in February Blakiana.

In addition to the letters, extracts from two of which appear in this issue, we had a visit from Mr. John East whose grandfather, John M. East, not only produced the play SEXTON BLAKE, in 1908, but also had the role of Blake. The play was adapted from U.J. No. 165 (December 1906) FIVE YEARS APTER, later reprinted in the S.B.L. 1st series No. 105 (Xmas 1919). He it was, too, who owned the original PEDRO. The present Mr. East appears frequently in radio and television. He was recently with Harry Worth (Here's Harry) in "The Quarrel." He is a most interesting conversationalist, and the fact that I was able to loan him a copy of that particular S.B.L. for his mother to read was pleasing for all concerned. The little article which you will read in this issue was very kindly given to me (neatly typed) by Mr. East when returning my S.B.L. I am sure you will all enjoy it, especially where Pedro is concerned, for this is one of the very rare occasions when our beloved bloodhound plays a featured part.

A Happy New Year to you all.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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.....As an ardent Sexton Blake reader and a former contributor to its "Detective Magazine" supplement the article in the "Weekend Telegraph" last week particularly interested me.

It mentions there that you possess one of the few surviving Sexton Blake busts which were given to readers of the UNION JACK, and you may care to know that I also own one. It was given to me personally by the then editor of the UNION JACK, Mr. H. W. Twyman, when I once visited him at Fleetway House, just off Fleet Street.

Then, after a training as a cub reporter on a local paper, I was just commencing as a freelance journalist, and for the first six months kept myself by writing articles for the UNION JACK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

SUPPLEMENT, which was given away in the centre of the magazine so that it could be detached without spoiling the Sexton Blake story. It commenced publication in May 1922, and ran through four volumes. I kept all my copies and now possess the volumes separately bound in stiff board with gold lettering on the spine. I should imagine that very few such volumes are now extant. In them are many of my short articles and long features, and only to-day I ran through them with great interest, and came across my own photo among the group of contributors which the editor featured at the start of vol. 3.

All this is going back some forty years and one cannot but wonder how the reading tastes of the young and older adolescent have changed during that time. I well remember the BOY'S HERALD, BOY'S FRIEND and BOY'S REALM and their thrilling serial stories, and then the coming of the UNION JACK with Sexton Blake. By the way, do you remember that the BOY'S HERALD, I think it was, featured Sexton Blake's early days before he became a famous detective, and told of how he was dared to plunge his naked hand into a bath of molten lead? And this he did, without harm. Personally, I always thought that the Crime Confederation series was one of the best the UNION JACK published, and for many years I had the complete set - until I lent them and never had them back....."

NORMAN K. HARRISON

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....."I was very interested in the references to Mr. Packman and yourself in the DAILY TELEGRAPH Colour Supplement.

I was associated with the Sexton Blake - Dixon Hawke set-up for many years. I think my first contribution to the old UNION JACK was in the early 1920's. I knew the Sexton Blake editor, Len Pratt, very well, and still frequently meet Frank Howe who wrote hundreds of Dixon Hawkes, and Jakes Pendower who used to write the annual Hawke Case Book. I wrote a number of Blakes under names of which I've forgotten most of them as they didn't seem to matter. But I think I could still identify the stories from the plots, as to which my memory is photographic.

As a member of the Press Club I never visit Fleet Street without having a quick one in the "Punch" tavern, where from 2 to 3 p.m. every afternoon Len Pratt held audience and his regular writers would drift in, buy him a pint, outline a plot, and hear him decide "Yes" or "No." I'm proud to say he never said "No" to my plots, and I went away knowing I'd earned £80 except for the slight formality of writing down the words (an easy week-end's work).

When Howard Baker took over we spent several wild evenings in Soho and he outlined his ideas for stream-lining and glamorising Blake, and

I felt that it was not my cup of tea. (Fancy S.B. leering lustfully at his secretary, at his age!)

Did you know that it was Len Pratt, Sexton Blake editor, who once entertained at his Southend home a desperate young freelance who thought he could write but simply could not create a central character? Dear Len threw off an idea of a character to be called "The Saint," and the young freelance became the million-dollar company called Leslie Charteris Inc. He used to get together with another man whom I knew well, Peter Cheyney.

Having written practically everything from radio plays to ponderous tomes on criminology quote all over the world by psychiatrists (and having proudly added to the OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY the word "Multicide" for the mass murderers) I can honestly say that what I most enjoyed writing were Sexton Blake stories, as with a young son of my own (you may have read his short stories in the Evening News) I sincerely agreed with Len Pratt's principles that in Blake stories there must be no guns, no dope, no hypodermic syringes, no back-stabbing with knives etc. If Blake and Tinker got into a scrap, they must use their fists. All healthy sort of stuff that it didn't worry me to let my (then) little boy read.

Have your researches uncovered the obscure economics of the trade in second-hand magazines? As a pre-First World War schoolboy I was one of a trio who each spent his weekly twopence pocket money on a "Gem" or a "Magnet" or a "Union Jack." After devouring these and exchanging them among ourselves we would go to a stall in Lupus Street, Pimlico, where we could exchange two old ones for one new (or rather fresh) old one. After again exchanging and reading these among ourselves we would do some more changing at the stall. The net result was that we each were able to read (and thoroughly enjoy) about six magazines for our twopence.

I don't know how other Blake writers worked, but I did take my stuff fairly seriously from the point of view of accuracy. For a story about a new method of smuggling I spent some time on the South Coast and finished up as a member of the Fisherman's Club; some twelve months later a STRAITS TIMES press cutting turned up reporting that the new method I had evolved in my story had been successfully used by Malayan smugglers around Singapore. Len Pratt was a stickler for accuracy, which is why I respected him, and perhaps why he never queried a single technical detail of any of my stories....."

GRIERSON DICKSON

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STORY OF THE DRAMATISATION OF "SEXTON BLAKE"

John M. East was a well known theatrical manager. He controlled the Lyric Hammersmith from 1892-1904, the Britannia Hoxton 1904-5, and the Elephant and Castle Theatre from 1906-7. He produced plays in the West End - "The Wheat King" Apollo and Avenue 1904, and his companies played all the London suburban houses like the Crown Peckham, Broadway New Cross, Shakespeare Clapham etc. East produced the famous "Invasion at the Crystal Palace in 1909 - with a cast of hundreds and a real zeppelin - it depicted an attack by air on a peaceful community. In 1914 he was associated with Percy Nash in building the first studios at Elstree-Neptune - and until his death East was largely concerned with appearing in films, here, in France and Russia.

John East saw the dramatic possibilities of "Sexton Blake" and he, Percy Nash, Brian Daly and others approached Harmsworth Press, who agreed to the idea. A copyright performance was given at the CROWN THEATRE, PECKHAM on Feb. 24th, 1908. The DRAMATIC SYNDICATE COMPANY with offices in Maiden Lane and later Panton Street, decided to send "SEXTON BLAKE" on tour. A No. 1 company, special plant and scenery was built, and the play with alterations by BRIAN DALY went into rehearsal produced by JOHN M. EAST to open at the WEST LONDON THEATRE March 30th, 1908, then to the SHAKESPEARE CLAPHAM, and on to the GRAND BRIGHTON, where it broke all records and over 10,000 attended the performances. Such was the success that by July 1908 CHARLES A. EAST was brought in to play the villain Randolph Lovell, and his wife MISS EAST ROBERTSON the American adventuress Philadelphia Kate. JOHN M. EAST played the 'Veritable Bill Sykes, a bad bold burglar Simon Faggus throughout the tour, as well as producing, and his partner BRIAN DALY, Farmer Blackburn. HORACE HUNTER, who East had under contract for some time made a great hit as SEXTON BLAKE, and his young wife Lily Hammersley played Marjorie Lovell. Life long friends the Hunters passed away in recent years, also Percy Nash, who was associated with the business side of the tour.

Tricky was to find a bloodhound. East saw an advertisement in "Exchange and Mart" and went to see a lady in Streatham. After a lengthy interview, East mentioned 'I need the animal to play Pedro in a play, "Sexton Blake".' She replied "Good morning Mr. East, I would never want my dog to go on the stage." However she relented, and East housed 'Pedro' in a special cage built for the purpose in the garden of his Chiswick home. John East's children would spend hours having rides on his back, and he became quite a celebrity in the district. Pedro had a long chain which allowed him to roam around the garden, and

John East's daughter took pity on him one morning. She knew he had one meal a day. Without compunction she threw out father's breakfast, a pound of steak and a bottle of beer - straight out of the window, and in toto. The steak satisfied his appetite, the broken glass lacerated his paws. Pedro recovered and became a great box office draw, getting big billing on all the posters. There were 7 tours of "Sexton Blake" by 1911. John East received a percentage, but gave up appearing in the play, because his production of "Invasion" at the Crystal Palace, in 1909, and on the continent in 1910 and 1911, occupied all his time. The Dramatic syndicate later toured "Hush Money" or "The Disappearance of Sexton Blake" "After Midnight" "Tracked by Wireless" "Master of the Mill" etc., and arranged the film rights. "Hush Money" toured from May 1909. "Pedro" retired to Charles East's estate at Watford and died there during the 1914 war.

Details of the play: "SEXTON BLAKE" produced by John M. East. It was billed as "Showing the many sidedness of human nature, avarice, greed, viciousness, cruelty, fidelity, trust, purity, and philanthropy: Of joy and happiness" "The Thrilling detective drama, the strongest cast on the road including John M. East (also producer) Horace Hunter, Brian Daly, Charles East and Miss East Robertson: Packed houses the rule"

1908 CASTS:

Sexton Blake	HORACE HUNTER	
Squire Lovell	ALGERNON SYMS	
Simon Faggus.....	JOHN M. EAST	
Randolph Lovell....	villain: H. H. Barrington, E. Maule Cole, and from July 1908: CHARLES A. EAST	
Philadelphia Kate...	Daisy Gwynne, from June 1908: MISS EAST ROBERTSON (Mrs. Chas East)	
Farmer Blackburn...	BRIAN DALY	
Tinker.....	JACK DENTON, later Bertram Noel, Billy Ross etc.	
Euphemia Pattacake.	AGNES PAULTON	
Marjorie Lovell....	Lily Hammersley - 'true to the fugitive'	
Roger Blackburn....	WILLIAM FELTON - 'Takes blame for crime, he thinks his father committed'	
Mrs. Blackburn.....	Ruth Woodhouse	
Rev. Grey.....	Stephen Nicholls	
Insp. Widgeon.....	Herbert Ravenscroft	
W. Smith.....	Edward Boddy	PRODUCED BY JOHN M. EAST
Mrs. Clifton.....	Miss Woolgar Mellon	
A Homeless woman...	Alice Jameson	Cast changed for later tours.
PEDRO the famous bloodhound...	HIMSELF	
Sally Brill.....	Annie Travers etc.	

Tour opened: March 30 1908 WEST LONDON, Apl 6: STAR LIVERPOOL, Apl 13: SHAKESPEARE CLAPHAM, Apl 20: GRAND BRIGHTON, Apl 27: TR WOOLWICH, May 4: TR SMETHWICH, May 11: DALSTON TH., May 18: COUNTY KINGSTON, May 25: T.R. BIRKENHEAD, June 1: T.R. PRESTON, June 8: T.R. BRISTOL, June 15: CARLTON BIRMINGHAM, June 22: T.R. MANCHESTER, etc. July 20: T.R. MARGATE, July 27: ROTUNDR A LIVERPOOL, Aug. 3: T.R. WEST BROMWICH, Aug. 10: County READING, Aug 17: ASTON, Aug. 24: GRAND NEWCASTLE, Aug. 31: PRINCESS'S GLASGOW, Sept. 7: LYCEUM GOVAN, Sept. 14: O.H. PERTH, Sept. 21: GRAND LANCASTER, Sept.28: His Maj. CARLISLE, Oct.5: T.R. NORTH SHIELDS, Oct. 12: O.H. RADCLYFFE, Oct. 19: METROPOLE BIRMINGHAM, Nov. 2: GRAND CHORLEY, Nov.9: EMPIRE OLDHAM, Nov. 16: T.R. STRATFORD LONDON E., Nov. 23: GRAND MIDDLESBROUGH, Nov. 30: T.R. HUDDERSFIELD, Dec. 6: O.H. CHELTENHAM. End 1st tour.

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THE RETURN OF SEXTON BLAKE (As seen by WHITEPRIAR in "Trade News")

Come February, under the editorship of Howard Baker, and under the chief editorship of MAYFLOWER'S John Watson, the firm will issue Sexton Blake epics in paper-back, at half-a-crown, starting on February 11 with the first pair of titles: Murderer At Large by William A. Ballinger; Let My People Be, by Wilfred McNeilly. Everyone concerned, including this columnist, expect a rush to the bookstands carrying MAYFLOWER titles, and I warn you to be ready for it.

A few facts about Sexton Blake may come in handy. When FLEETWAY killed him off, he had been appearing in some form or other for 67 years, and over 200 million words had been spilled on his exploits. More than one now-famous crime-writer cut his prentice teeth on the sleuth, but it was a chap called Hal Meredith who started it all, on April 4, 1894, in the Union Jack (4d.)

Since then, Sexton Blake yarns have been knocked out by many hands, including Gwyn Evans, G. H. Teed, Hylton Gregory, Robert Murray, Anthony Skene, and Lewis Jackson (who created some of the series' greatest criminals: Nigel Blake, Olga Nasmyth, Leon Kestrel).

Nearer to these days, writers at FLEETWAY included William Murray Graydon, Edwy Searles Brookes, Gilbert Chester, John G. Brandon, Barré Lyndon, Donald Stuart, John Hunter, L. C. Douthwaite, T. C. Bridges, John Creasey, Barry Perowne, Stacey Blake, George Dillnot, Ladbrooke Black, Ernest Dudley, Anthony Parsons and Howard Baker.

It's the same Howard Baker who is now editing MAYFLOWER Sexton Blakes, and it was he who wrote the last FLEETWAY Sexton Blake and who was editing the series at its death. He is also, I can tell you, William A. Ballinger who has authored MAYFLOWER'S first title (both February titles are originals; among titles that follow, one in four will be a classic reprinted from the vintage years).

Vintage years? I'd say that these were the years 1922 to 1933, with chaps like G. H. Teed knocking out yarns with George Marsden Plummer, Huxton Rymer and The Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle doing their worst to best Sexton Blake, Tinker, Pedro et al.

Tinker was Sexton Blake's great little assistant, but not his first. For the record, you should know that Tinker first appeared in print (in the Union Jack, at a penny) on October 15, 1904. Before that Sexton Blake had hired a Chinese boy called Wee-Wee, and a mysterious walf called Griff, and Wallace Lorimer. Tinker never had a name.

Pedro the bloodhound was gifted to the detective (with £100 in notes) by a pseudonymous admirer who signed himself 'Mr. Nemo,' and the noble beast saved his master's life many times, indeed he did. Mainly from such miscreants as Waldo the Wonder Man; Mr. Mist the Invisible Man; Carlac; Professor Kew; Baron von Kravitch, the luxury-loving aristocrat

who plotted against Society by night, was a picker-up of cigarette-ends by day.

I hope the MAYFLOWER Sexton Blakes are going to be as extravagant as the prototypes. I expect editor Howard Baker knows that once upon a time Blake was going to be fired to the moon by rocket but, with nine hours to go, he cut himself free with a pocket hacksaw. And that once he saw his Baker Street lodgings blown up (in 1912 that was) and he read about his death afterwards, and attended his own 'funeral.' Those were the sort of days that MAYFLOWER must emulate.

I expect they will.

Danny's Diary

January 1915:

Doug was in a good mood on New Year's Day, and he bought me the new Boys' Friend 3d Library entitled "The Boy Without a Name," by Frank Richards. He had promised to buy it for me, but he doesn't always keep his promises as I sometimes offend him in the meantime. However, I managed to keep him in a good mood by asking politely every day about his girl friend, Lavinia, who had a bilious attack just after Christmas. I don't usually like tales about snobbery, but "The Boy Without a Name" is exceptionally good. Quite one of the best stories Mr. Richards has ever written. I loved the Caterpillar, and I also liked Arthur Clare, who turned out to be named Courtenay.

There was an awful train smash on New Year's Day. It was on the Great Eastern Railway, and it was a bit thrilling to think that we travelled over the same lines when we came back from spending Christmas with my Gran in Essex. The driver of the 7.6 a.m. express from Clacton to London passed some signals at danger, and at Ilford the express crashed into a train from Gidea Park to Liverpool Street which was moving from the local to the fast line. Ten people were killed and 500 injured.

The Dreadnought has become a very interesting paper, as it has started to present the old Greyfriars stories. Doug remembers them from the Magnet, but they were before my time. The first tale to be reprinted was entitled "Bob Cherry's Triumph" and it told of how Bob Cherry came to Greyfriars. The next story was "Hazeldene's Treachery" and it was about Harry Wharton sitting for an exam. He had a habit of fiddling with a button, so Hazeldene snipped off the button and Wharton failed the exam. I must remember that idea. It is a good excuse for doing badly in exams. Doug thinks the story was once entitled "The Mystery of Greyfriars" and that it appeared in No. 3 of the Magnet.

The next story was called "Captured by Gipsies," and it was actually the first story ever written about Marjorie Hazeldene. It was entitled "Kidnapped" when it appeared in the Magnet.

I shan't be able to have the Dreadnought every week, owing to the money shortage. I have now spent all my Christmas tips. I may be able to pick up some second-hand copies of the paper.

Some zeppelins flew over Norfolk and dropped bombs on Yarmouth and other places. It's a bit unnerving but quite exciting. I wonder whether a zeppelin will ever come over our way.

Mum and I have been to the pictures several times this month. We saw Marie Dressler and Charlie Chaplin in "Tillie's Punctured Romance." I had been looking forward to this picture very much, as it is the first long picture that the Keystone company has made. There were a few funny bits, but it wasn't nearly as funny as the short Keystones. The picture was 6,000-feet, and lasted over an hour. Marie Dressler is a fat girl and Charlie Chaplin was a kind of a villain. Also in the programme was "Trey O' Hearts" which is a series of complete little pictures which will run for 15 weeks. Seems a long time.

Another time we saw Gladys Cooper, Tom Meighan, and Owen Nares in "Dandy Donovan."

It wasn't bad. Gladys Cooper is said to be the loveliest girl in the world. Also in the programme was "Max Linder's Elopement" and "Wiffles Catches a Spy."

One evening we saw Mary Pickford in "Behind the Scenes," and I liked this one. Mary is so popular that they are showing a lot of old one-reel Biograph pictures which she once made. But "Behind the Scenes" was in 4 reels.

On the whole, the Magnet has been very good this month. Better than it has been for quite a long time. "Skinner's Scheme" was about a visit to Greyfriars by Ferrers Locke, the detective. He is a clever man who can speak perfect French to Monsieur Charoentier and perfect German to Herr Gans who has come back to Greyfriars. Some thefts occur, and Ferrers Locke finds out the thief is Nosey Nimble, the son of Mrs. Nimble of the Tuckshop.

In "The Rival Ventriloquists," Bunter was blamed for ventriloquising and insulting people, but it turns out that Skinner has had lessons in ventriloquism and has been doing the insulting.

"The Fight for the Cup" was another story about football and the Coker Cup. This one was fairish. In "The Cruise of the Famous Five," Ponsonby & Co of Highcliffe sets adrift a barge on which are the Famous Five, and it gets blown out to sea where they meet some Germans. They land in France, and meet Major Cherry.

Far and away the best story of the month, and the best in the Magnet for a long time, was "Surprising the School." A plump girl named Cora Quelch, the niece of Mr. Quelch, visits Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter admires her so much that he reforms. A grand tale and quite a believable one. I hope Cora comes in again.

I had a couple of copies of The Boys' Friend, but they weren't very striking. There is a new series of stories by Horace Phillips, called "Chums of the Third Floor Back." These are fairly good, about three boys who live in digs, and call themselves "The Bachelors." There are such a lot of serials in the B.F., and they are a waste of time unless you can afford to take the paper every week, which I can't.

A small warship named H.M.S. "Formidable" has been sunk by a German submarine in the English Channel. Awful cheek, the Huns coming in our channel. The P. & O. liner "Nile" has foundered and sunk off the coast of Turkey.

Two Sexton Blake films are coming on at our Gem Cinema. They are "Britain's Secret Treaty" and "Sexton Blake and the Stolen Heirlooms," and I hope to go and see them.

I'm in a bit of a quagmire. The stories in the Gem are awfully good, but I still think we're getting too much Talbot. I like Talbot, but I don't want a surfeit of him. It's like when you pray for rain. You don't want a torrent. So it's a run position. Last month, three of the four tales were about Talbot. This month, four of the five are about Talbot. I'd write to the editor, but I hate writing letters - and I can't afford the penny stamp.

"Foes of St. Jim's" was about a feud between Monsieur Morny and Herr Schneider. The trouble was caused by Gore, and the story introduced Clifton Dane's parrot which we hadn't heard of lately. In "The Call of the Past," a lot of boys had influenza, so the Head had to engage an extra nurse. She was Miss March who was one of the "Little Sisters of the Poor." She turned out to be an old acquaintance of Talbot's, named Marie Rivers, and she once saved Talbot's life by nursing him. She was the daughter of the wicked Professor, who appeared in a story last month. But she couldn't persuade Talbot to go back to a life of crime.

In the next story, Talbot was kidnapped, and while he was in that state, several robberies were committed, and most people thought Talbot had done them. Then Talbot was released, and he went back to St. Jim's, but was "Cast Out From the School," which was the title of the tale.

In "Loyal to the Last," the Professor was captured, and it came out that Talbot hadn't been guilty of the robberies, so Tom Merry & Co went to look for Talbot. In the end they found him on the London Embankment with dreadful thoughts going through his mind. So they all went back to St. Jim's, and Talbot was righted again.

"The St. Jim's Recruit" of the final story of the month was (continued p. 27)..

Nelson Lee Column

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

First, every good wish to all my readers for 1965, particularly as this year we shall mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of the Nelson Lee Library.

Secondly, this seems a very good opportunity to bring Bob Blythe's painstaking and admirable guide to the Nelson Lee Library up-to-date in the light of later information (especially Bill Lofts' latest "gen" in the 1964 C.D. Annual on his work as Martin Clifford).

Easiest way, probably, will be to take it page by page, amending as we go.

Page 1 - In list of authors amend those of N.L.Ls. 1, 3, 4, 11 and 20 respectively to read: Andrew Gray, A. S. Hardy, Andrew Gray, W. M. Graydon and Andrew Gray.

Page 19 - No. 130 The Fortune Trail - R/P Pipe of Peace, S.B. 1st series No. 21 - Andrew Murray. No. 135 - The Case of the King's Spy - R/P S.B. 110 Same title.

Page 24 - Insert: S.O.L. 224 Handforth at St. Jim's - R/P Gems 1059-62.

Page 27 - Boys' Realm Nos. 28-35 and 39-40 are by Brooks.

Page 30 - Nugget 3rd Library No. 43 is also by Brooks.

Page 39 - Brooks as Martin Clifford

Add: 333 Ordered Off

374 A Waster's Reward	996 Rival Inventors
411 True Blue	997 The Bogus Inventor
994 Inventors All	1063 The Boy they Could Not Sack
995 Skimpole's Thought Reading Machine	1478 They Called him a Coward (R/P 285)

Delete: 515 Rivals in Sport; 520 The Man of Mystery; 1050 Cardew, the Knight Errant.

Page 41 - Schoolboys' Pocket Library

No. 1 R/P NL 124 1st N/S.	11 R/P NL 165 1st N/S.
2 R/P NL 102 1st N/S.	14 R/P NL 108 1st N/S.
3 R/P NL 6C 2nd N/S.	16 R/P NL 126 1st N/S.
5 R/P NL 59 2nd N/S.	23 R/P NL 35 2nd N/S.
7 R/P NL 127 1st N/S.	4 R/P NL 205 O.S.
9 R/P NL 125 1st N/S.	6 R/P NL 208 O.S.
103 1st N/S.	8 R/P NL 95 and 97 2nd N/S.
158 1st N/S.	10 R/P SOL 54.

No. 12 R/P NL 55 2nd N/S.
 17 R/P NL 72 1st N/S
 BFIS 615 & 619.

No. 18 R/P
 22 R/P NL 33 2nd N/S.

Page 42 - Schoolboys' Short Story

2nd Collection: Bill Smith's Birthday R/P NL 40 2nd N/S.
 3rd Collection: Old Motty Sees Red R/P NL 18 2nd N/S.

Page 42 - Bound Books

Whoopee at Westchester R/P Boys Realm 28-35
 The Rotter of Whitelands R/P Boys Friend Library 435.

Page 43 - Berkeley Gray's novels

1941 - Six Feet of Dynamite - R/P presumably of what would have been
 Thriller 590.
 1946 - The Ball of Fire - R/P of Black Hand of St. Frank's in Gem
 1436/1448.

Page 44 - Add: 1962 Conquest in the Underworld; 1963 Count down
 for Conquest; 1964 Castle Conquest!; 1964 Conquest Overboard.

Page 44 - Books by Victor Gunn: 1940 Ironsides of the Yard - R/P
 Thriller 556; 1945 Nice Day for a Murder - R/P NL 10 2nd N/S.

Page 45 - 1949 Dead Man's Warning - R/P of Dacca the Dwarf series
 in NL 2nd New Series; 1963 The Body in the Boot; 1963 Murder with a
 Kiss; 1964 Murder at the Motel.

Page 47 - Add: between Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee (headmasters)
 the name of Dr. Morrison Nicholls.

Page 47 - Form-masters and staff - Delete: Sports, Mr. Clifford
 Add: James as Christian name of Dr. Brett.

Page 48 - Ancient House - Study F - Jerrold, not Gerald, Dodd.
 Studies K, L, M & N - Empty. West House - Studies X, Y & Z - Empty.

In addition, it is interesting to note that in July 1920 the new
 Nugget Weekly came out as a joint publication of the former Prairie,
 Detective and Robin Hood Libraries.

In the first eight issues the St. Frank's serial, Honour of St.
 Frank's, was by E. S. Brooks, though ostensibly by 'Nipper.'

There was also a Sexton Blake/Tinker series, The Crescent of
 Dread, also by Brooks, relating the latest Jim the Penman activity.
 The separate titles were The Crescent of Dread, Raid on Carter's Bank,
 A Bid for Power, Check to the Crescent, On the Wings of the Air, The
 Winning Hand, The Grey Phantom of Beechwood and The Tudor Rose Nobles.
 (The last two were, of course, not part of the Crescent series, but
 provided a brief respite before Brooks started a new Zingrave series.

The Zingrave yarns were later reprinted in the Boys Friend
 Library 649, 656 and 657.

On Page 40 of his Guide, Bob Blythe notes of the Nugget Weekly, "All the stories in this paper are by E. S. Brooks." I assume Bob is referring only to the St. Frank's and Zingrave stories to which he specifically refers. But besides the Blake stories, to which he does not, there are Robin Hood and Buffalo Bill stories which don't read like Brooks to me. However, that's enough from me: good reading in 1965 and the years ahead.

* * * * *

POINTS OF VIEW

WILLIAM SHARPE (of Melbourne): I am a reasonably keen St. Frank's supporter so far as Nelson Lee Old Series go, but it seems to me from the correspondence columns that the Nelson Lee fans are a very touchy lot. I admit to being pro-Roger Jenkins on these questions.

Frankly I rather like a ding-dong go between the Hamiltonians and Leeites. It adds relish to the meat. There should be no bitterness, however. When the Leeites rush to defend their views it reminds me of the saying that "the fish are biting well," and I suspect some Hamiltonians love to go a-fishing.

JIM HEPBURN: I am an old Nelson Lee fan - always was - but when, in later years I saw some of the issues, in particular the 2nd new series, I was horrified. I would not try to compare the Old Series with the Magnet. They were entirely different, and that is why I liked them so much. This does not make them better than Greyfriars stories.

We read to relax, and usually choose stories with situations which appeal to us. And, after all, authors try to write what we want to read.

BILL LOFTS: The Frank Kingston stories were not in the E.S.B. Catalogue, and were not recorded before in any other article - though I agree that many collectors may have known of their existence including, of course, our Editor. I am somewhat amused to be classed a newcomer in the world of Old Boys' Books; and can name a considerable number of other collectors who have corresponded with famous authors. Probably my own difference is that I believe in sharing my information with collectors not so fortunate in contacting or meeting them - especially those overseas - but all the same Mr. L. S. Elliott should be a most interesting person to meet sometime! To avoid any misunderstanding I should make myself clear that I personally always have enjoyed the E. S. Brooks detective tales, and it speaks volumes for this author's work when I say that it's most likely that his are certainly considered the most favourable so far for reprinting in the new SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

WALTER WEBB: Of late, I have derived much entertainment in the

Hamilton-Brooks controversy, but cannot understand why some of the rival factions are getting so hot under the collar in expressing their opinion of our two most popular and best respected writers. Without the slightest doubt, Hamilton was the better craftsman, the more polished writer of the two; but the man with the better command over his pen does not necessarily produce the better stories from it. Brooks was an immensely entertaining writer, whose text simply bubbled with the enthusiasm of a man in love with his job, which made his work such a pleasure to read, and, personally, smoothly efficient as Hamilton undoubtedly was, I do not think there is a pin to choose between them in merit as boys' story writers.

H. CHAPMAN: I was careful in my last article not to mention or compare the work of any other author with that of E. S. Brooks, but even this does not seem to have satisfied L. Sutton.

In any case he only quoted part of a sentence which actually reads - "even when repeating a theme, however, Mr. Brooks always tried to give it variety and go one better, with the result that the later series seemed to become just a little more far-fetched and imaginative than the early ones."

May I be allowed to explain what I mean by repetition of theme?

April Fool Day, Guy Fawkes Day, Boat Race Day, etc. occurred every year at St. Frank's as well as in the rest of the country, and readers always expected something topical at these times, but Brooks got a different twist to the plot each year. The Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays came regularly and readers looked forward to them weeks ahead as they always brought an exciting Holiday Series.

There was great variety about these series, however. The holiday party visited among other places, the South Seas, India, China, Africa, America (north and south) Northestrria etc., and had different adventures each time. The college toured the country several times, but in various ways - by train, caravan, motor coach etc.

Perhaps some critics thought it would have been better to suspend publication of the Nelson Lee at the start of each holiday, and start up again when the college assembled for the new term.

If Mr. Sutton is going to bring up the subject of repetition, whether of plot, theme, jokes or quotations (or mis-quotations) he really is on very weak ground, or shall we say he is "leading with his chin?"

"FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE" 3 volumes of 'Chums' 1920, 1921, 1893.

J. LENNARD, 24 SAXON CROSSWAY, WINSFORD, CHESHIRE

HAMILTONIANA

LIBRARY BORROWERS AND THE SUBSTITUTE STORIES — By Roger M. Jenkins

Harry Broster's comic concern for the imaginary borrower from the London Club's Hamiltonian Library who cannot obtain his heart's desire - a substitute story - is entertainingly expressed, but, since it also contains an implied criticism of this library, the honour of the Club must not be allowed to go by default!

The library is called "The Charles Hamilton Library," as our printed catalogue boldly and unashamedly proclaims. It is hoped to build up the library beyond its present strength of 1600 genuine Hamilton stories until it becomes one of the finest collections in the country. The Club has resolved that it shall eventually be presented to a suitable library or museum as a permanent memorial to the work of a very gifted author. Is it so strange, therefore, that substitute stories are deemed inappropriate?

There is also the sad but inescapable fact that borrowers do not want to read substitute stories, strange though this may seem. We have continuously about 900 papers out on loan all the time, but never have I been asked for a substitute story. All our readers are perverse enough not to want to read second-rate, imitative material - they would rather have the genuine article. So the frustrated borrower whose dilemma so upsets Harry Broster is, I suspect, just a figment of his imagination.

I may add, for the record, that we do have one or two substitute stories that were interpolated into the otherwise genuine 1919 series about Wally Bunter in the Gem and Magnet. The borrowers' comments on these range from the caustic to the mildly despairing: I have never had a word of praise, or a telegram asking for more of these neglected masterpieces.

It seems quite clear to me, after years of experience as a librarian, that mature readers who really enjoy the Hamilton schools have no time for the substitute writers. It may be quite true that some readers, when boys, could not tell the difference between a real story and an imitation, but I never cease to be amazed when they illogically go on to assume that, because they couldn't tell the difference, then no one else could. It's rather like a blind man denying that anyone can possibly have the power of sight.

If there are any blind men still unconvinced, they have only to look at the Magnet and Gem in the late nineteen-twenties. The Gem was full of substitute stories, going downhill like an express train out of control, while the Magnet was gradually eliminating all the imitations, and going from strength to strength. There can be no doubt that thousands of young readers at the time could tell the difference between Stork and butter. If your palate was deceived, you were definitely in the minority.

Finally, may I suggest that it is no service to the substitute writers to exaggerate the literary value of their stories. Those of them who were, or later became, well-established writers (like Brooks and Pentelow) would probably not wish to be remembered for their slavish imitations of another man's style, but would rather let their reputations rest on their stories about their own original schools. The substitute stories were a necessary evil, but it is idle to pretend that they rank as anything more than outlandish curiosities compared with the genuine stories in the saga.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 83. YOUR EDITOR

Probably no other editor of the Companion Papers left so firm an imprint on the papers he controlled as Herbert Hinton. Throughout the time he occupied the chair, the editor made himself felt. He was no man behind the scenes. He kept himself well to the fore. His vivid personality shows all the time he is at the helm. His firm, confident signature, YOUR EDITOR, became as familiar to readers as the title Gem or Magnet on the cover.

When he left Fleetway House, to do war service, the flamboyancy left with him. Pentelow's leadership was far more restrained. The editor dropped into the background. Certainly with the smaller papers of the last year or so of the war, the editor had little space to spread himself, but it is doubtful whether Hinton would ever have effaced himself as Pentelow did.

In 1919, Hinton was back, and the old editorial flamboyancy was back too. But now he had less worthwhile material to present in most of the papers under his control. He was the right man for the job of dressing up brass to look like gold. And though the spacious days he had known were gone for ever, he still took a good deal of precious space to make the editor's presence felt.

In the matter of presentation, he was a first-class editor. He went all the way to making the lay-out of his papers attractive. In his descriptive captions he used the loud pedal with great effect. At this distance, his judgment in the case of the Magnet seems to have been his only fault on the presentation side. Hastily, at the outbreak of war, he started a war serial, and for many months this serial was the opening item of the paper. It was a mistake in a school story periodical. Two serials, in fact, were one too many, in the Magnet.

After the war, he tried the same policy in the Gem. Two serials, with the school story placed between them.

Early in the war, with recruiting decreasing the number of men at work at the Fleetway House, more and more papers came under his direct control. The school story boom was on with a vengeance, and Hinton knew it. He realized the immense demand for the work of

the star writer, Charles Hamilton. When the Dreadnought came under his control, he gave it a new look, and immediately introduced the old Greyfriars tales into it. He seems suddenly to have realised the great pulling power of Greyfriars. In the autumn of 1914 he had published a substitute story of St. Jim's in the Boys' Friend 3d Library. But January of 1915 saw "The Boy Without a Name" by the genuine writer in the Boys' Friend Library, Greyfriars went into the Dreadnought, and later on the same year came that remarkable little periodical "The Greyfriars Herald."

I find it rather surprising that this should have happened, for the Magnet stories of the whole of 1914 had not been outstanding. Yet the Gem had presented the Talbot stories, and there seems little doubt that they were immensely popular in their day. There was, for some tastes, too much Talbot as time went on, but he had hardly overstayed his welcome by the end of 1914.

It has been claimed that Bunter was the great draw of the Magnet, and so he was as the years went on. But there had been no very good Bunter tale during 1914, and there was but very little to capture general taste for the Owl in that year.

Yet evidence points to a swing to the Greyfriars stories by the end of 1914, though the St. Jim's stories were still strikingly superior. Why, then, did the taste of the juvenile reading public change so suddenly?

I would suggest that it hadn't changed. I would venture the opinion that it was only the editor's taste which changed. He made the sudden decision to push Greyfriars. He started advertising the Magnet lavishly in his other papers. He probably foresaw that Greyfriars had greater pulling power than St. Jim's. In the light of what happened in later years, he was probably right.

Hinton's greatest success was the Boys' Friend, which was dropped in his lap early in 1915. I think it certain that, under Hinton, the circulation of the old paper went ahead by leaps and bounds. Though the format remained the same, the improvement in presentation was enormous. And he introduced Rookwood. In fact, Rookwood had been in the Friend for a week or two before Hinton announced a special number with a coloured cover to celebrate the paper's change of editorship.

There were, in fact, quite a succession of special numbers, all enlarged, all fitted with a huge coloured cover of glossy paper. It is astounding that exceptionally fine numbers of this quality could be produced in war-time. And sold at one penny.

It would be a pleasure to place one of them before the publishers of modern boys' papers and see their eyes pop.

Hinton and Hamilton were firm friends, as Mr. Hamilton once told me. The decision to introduce Rookwood into the Boys' Friend was a joint plan. It was a momentous decision, not solely for the reason that the third of the Hamiltonian great schools was added to the list. It was also "carte blanche" for substitute writers. No matter what Mr. Hamilton said on the substitute question in the years immediately following 1915, it can hardly be doubted that he was fully aware, when he agreed to write Rookwood in 1915, that Greyfriars and St. Jim's could only be maintained by the use of a certain number of stories from other writers. Clearly, there must have been agreement to that end between Hinton and Hamilton.

Rookwood, plus the efforts of Hinton, brought a new prosperity to the Boys' Friend. It seems likely that plenty of readers, as the years passed on, bought the Friend for Rookwood alone. The most desirable period was when Rookwood and Cedar Creek were appearing together in the paper, but Hinton's years were those of the finest presentation of the paper as a whole.

It is odd, during the eleven years that Rookwood featured in the Friend, that it was not continuously plugged as the star attraction. Far too often it was part of the supporting programme to some slapstick serial. More than 50 per cent of the number of issues during the eleven years of Rookwood did not carry Rookwood on the front cover.

The average Rookwood fan, who does not possess a long run of the Boys' Friend - and but few do - would be surprised at how incomplete his knowledge of Rookwood really is. For though a large number of Rookwood tales were reprinted, a very large number never

appeared outside the Boys' Friend. The Popular was the greatest medium for the reprinting of Rookwood. When the Popular came on the scene again after the first world war, the very earliest Rookwood stories were a feature. The stories appeared which told of the arrival of Jimmy Silver and his feud with Lovell. These were followed by an early barrington series, after which there was an hiatus. Later, when the old stories of Rookwood returned, a jump forward had been made to the time when Erroll had joined the school. Plenty of Rookwood featured in the Schoolboys' Own Library, but it was mainly the longer series which were reprinted. The single tales - and there were lots of them - were largely neglected.

Hinton was an imaginative editor - a great showman. His failing was an inability to efface himself at any time. His lengthy editorials were always sensational. For months on end he would run campaigns in connection with illiterate, abusive letters which he claimed to have received from his readers. It seems almost certain that these letters were figments of the editor's active imagination, and one can only wonder why he published them. Probably he expected some advantage to his papers as the result of the indignant sympathy of his readers. The majority of his intelligent readers soon learned to accept the editor's rantings with a grain of salt.

One whole page of editor's chat in a large-sheeted paper like the Boys' Friend was certainly overdoing it. His "Anti-German League" in that paper, week after week, month after month, was even more astonishing than his publication of pseudo-letters from abusive readers. His aim was to obtain 150,000 signatures of boys and girls who were dedicated to "smashing Germany." For months he praised his patriotic readers; then he went on the defensive against "the cowardly cad of Chelmsford" and others who wrote to him quoting "Love your enemies." It is possible that the cowardly cad of Chelmsford did not exist outside the editor's imagination. Hinton seems to have got a kick out of martyrdom, whether it arose from abusive letters, Chelmsford cads, or people who said he ought to be in the army.

The reason for the Anti-German League, which went on for so long, seems rather obscure. It is possible that it provided the names and addresses of readers to whom Hinton wrote a few years later, signing his letters with the familiar "Your Editor," to inform them that a new school-story paper named "School & Sport" was being put on the market. Those letters went all over the country, and they led the then editor of the Gem and Magnet to issue the warning to their readers that the new paper was nothing to do with the Companion Papers. It was a slightly uncharitable action on the part of the Companion Papers.

Hinton, for all his flair for editorship, was unable to make a success of "School & Sport," although he had Charles Hamilton writing for him. Probably the loyalty of readers to Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood was too strong. Carcroft failed for the same reason, many years later.

But Hinton has left his personality firmly imprinted in the Companion Papers which he edited, and it remains for all to see. He had his faults, but his good qualities as an editor far outstripped the bad. Maybe it was his misfortune that the war gave him the opportunity to take the bit between his teeth. With a little more supervising from the top, there might have been a mild check on the grandiose inconsistencies of his editorial columns.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 81: IT'S JUST MY POINT OF VIEW

GEOFFREY WILDE: The Brooks-Hamilton controversy continues unabated, then; what a pity so much heat generates so little light. I'm one who is all for a little controversy as an enlivening factor in our club life, but the trouble here is that we see so little genuine argument -

merely affirmations and denials of a take-it-or-leave-it kind, with never a breath of reason. Until the partisans are ready for a serious and considered comparison all that can be said is that each excelled in his own particular way, and that these ways were very different from each other; which amounts to little that can be called a serious assessment. But then I suspect the Lee-ites rather want to avoid considered comparisons and serious assessments altogether, as too damaging to their case!

Nonetheless, the question of the size of cast reminds us once again that the answer may be "it all depends." For Brooks's kind of yarn I feel the large party was a success; I'm equally certain that the charm of Hamilton's best work would vanish under the weight of so huge a cast. Greyfriars seems to me to offer the ideal balance, and it's a pity that the process hardened in later years until we had the obviously under-sized Bunter-dominated cast of the post-war books. I've always regretted, though, that even in his best period Hamilton didn't show just that little bit more imagination in the handling of minor characters. Why had it to be Bunter who caused the accident that instigated the Secret Society series? In context it could just as easily have been a fag like Gatty or a minor Removite like Russell. Brooks was content to give these lesser fry a share in episodes that were incidental rather than essential to the plot, which is admirably natural. For integration of minor characters with major I feel we must give him the palm. Hamilton's overplaying of the few can probably be attributed to the pressure of a colossal output, but what a pleasure it is when he varies his hand a little - as in the Carter series, which finds a place for a number of minor figures like Desmond and Hoskins.

GERRY ALLISON: The question of substitute writers is of vital interest to me. But I must admit being annoyed by reading once again that sneer about "so-called experts being oh, so much wiser after the event." Harry Broster doubts if it is possible to tell a sub yarn from one by the 'real bloke.' After having given detailed evidence in recent issues of the Digest, just how I detected sub-stories about Rookwood and Cedar Creek, and having my opinion confirmed by Bill Lofts from official records, I hardly think I am the one who is not sensible in this matter.

JOHN TROVELL: To enjoy the Magnet and Gem was it necessary to like Bunter and D'Arcy? Both supplied the humour that delighted the youthful reader who was not concerned with the credibility of the characters, but viewed in the cold mature eyes of the older enthusiast, many

fine dramatic stories were marred by Bunter's farcical intrusions, and D'Arcy's childlike simplicity.

Youthful demand and editorial policy no doubt decreed that Bunter and D'Arcy should spread themselves to such an extent that more deserving feasible characters were denied that place in the spotlight dominated by these overrated king-pins of schoolboy fiction.

FRANK HANCOCK: I think Harry Broster made a very good point in his article (October C.D.) about the size of Brook's cast and the use he made of it. There should have been at least an occasional mention of less-familiar characters in the Greyfriars stories, if only to remind us that (a) Greyfriars was quite a large public school, and (b) the Remove was a numerous Form. One can read a large number of Magnets and get the impression there are only about a dozen fellows in all Greyfriars.

CHARLES CHURCHILL: Re your remarks on the number of characters at the various schools - I preferred the Gem but as a matter of taste and not because it had a more crowded scene. I do not feel the Gem failed because of the size of the cast but because of the way it was used. There is, surely, a parallel here to the Nelson Lee. In the later series, the new faces were starred at the expense of almost all the old ones and as a result we almost forgot Nipper & Co. - and so exit the Nelson Lee Library.

PETER HANGER: I haven't read a lot of St. Frank's, but have always enjoyed what I have read. But, and this is the acid test, I have never wanted to re-read them. The works of Charles Hamilton I can read time and time again. The main criticism of St. Frank's seems to be those fantastic holiday adventures, but I am of the opinion that they are the best thing about St. Frank's. When all is said and done, all fiction is fantasy. As long as the author can make it plausible, that's all I ask.

RON CROLLIE: The recent exchange of views on Hamilton and Brooks has been very interesting, but I must confess that I cannot see why some of your contributors should be so intensely partisan.

I don't think anybody could seriously dispute that the best of the Greyfriars stories published between the wars are the finest school stories ever to appear in a weekly paper. The two "Whaton versus Mr. Quelch" series, "The Bounder as Captain" the "Stacey" series - none of these has ever been surpassed.

But surely this does not prevent us from admitting that Brooks also wrote a good school story, capable of being enjoyed by adult readers. He should not be classed, by Hamiltonians, with those

writers whose works we enjoyed as boys but which bore us stiff now.

Lee Fans must accept criticism of some of Brooks' weak points. But if we are to have fair play, Hamiltonians must also admit that there were many times when Bunter and Coker became too much of a good thing. A holiday series, WITHOUT Bunter, would have been nice.

May I heartily endorse the closing remarks in your article. It IS a pity if anyone takes these arguments too seriously.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 15. (New Series)

The Big Hall of St. Jim's was packed.
Silence fell upon the assembly as the Head entered.
Dr. Holmes's face was grave and set.

He had an unpleasant task to perform, but the utter rascality of the condemned junior made it less unpleasant to him. He could not find in his heart a single throb of pity for the boy who had disgraced himself, his House, and his school.

In the ranks of the Shell, Manners and Lowther stood silent and grim.

A few weeks before they would never have dreamed that it could come to this - that their chum Tom Merry would be expelled from the school, and that they would be glad to see him go.

But it had come to that.

They did not pity him; they had no regret that he was going - they would be glad when he had shaken the dust of St. Jim's from his feet.

All eyes were on the junior who was to go. His own eyes sought the floor; he could not meet the glances of the St. Jim's fellows.

If there was one glance that had something of compassion in it, it was that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It's wuff!" the swell of St. Jim's murmured to Blake.

"Wathah wuff! He used to be such an awf'ly decent chap, you know."

Blake grunted.

"Then he's changed," he said. "But my belief is that he was spoofing all along. Fellows don't change so suddenly as all that."

PROGRESS IS A WONDERFUL THING! (Or is it?)

* * *

BY FRANK HANCOCK

Playing the game, on the field and off, was always the thing at Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Jim's, or any other of the fictional schools of our boyhood. I wonder if the same fine ideals still prevail in the public schools of to-day? Probably so, for these places have the reputation of being very conservative, and corporal punishment and

ragging, which play so prominent a part in Charles Hamilton's stories, are still the rule at many of them.

It is in the world outside the public schools - the world to which most of us belong - where most of the changes have taken place. Many boys to-day would consider a youth of fifteen who smoked as a man of the world, and a juvenile delinquent a bit of a hero. Such is progress.

There is no doubt that, according to modern ideas, many of Charles Hamilton's characters have been sadly misjudged. Those disagreeable masters, Messrs. Hacker, Selby, Ratcliffe, and Manders, are excellent examples. Mr. Manders, for instance, has an unhappy love affair in his younger days. The lady of his choice turned him down. This left him bitter and frustrated, with no resource but to work off his feelings on his pupils, poor chap.

Then again, consider the cads, Skinner, Racke, Peele & Co. They often got it in the neck when found out, receiving punishment from authority, or rough-and-ready justice at the hands of their school fellows. What injustice! Skinner has an unhappy home life, being afraid of his father and overawed by his domineering mother. This has left him with a feeling of frustration. Peele has had a guilt complex since he was ten, when his father confiscated his pet rabbits because they escaped and ate the cabbage plants in the kitchen garden. They can't help playing caddish tricks; they just have to do it. Obviously they don't deserve punishment of any kind; they need a psychiatrist.

Perhaps most serious of all is the way we have looked at the fat boys as figures of fun. Billy Bunter, for instance, is very greedy. He has an unlimited appetite for tuck of all kinds, his own or anybody else's, and habitually overeats. He is also uncommonly lazy, and always dodges games practice, or any other kind of exertion, whenever possible. This simple explanation of his fatness sufficed for us. How utterly wrong! Such fatness is not natural. Obviously he suffers from some glandular disorder and should be seen by a specialist.

Progress? I suppose so. But if we are to enjoy the old school stories to the full we had better stick to the values which prevailed when they were written, when people were held responsible for their own actions.

DANNY'S DIARY (continued from p. 15)..

Mr. Railton. He had been making recruiting speeches on the Wayland football ground, and eventually he joined the army as a private. John Rivers, the Professor, who had repented, also joined up as Private John Brown. St. Jim's will seem funny without Mr. Railton.

Doug had the Union Jack this month, and a strange thought struck me. The Union Jack still has 32 pages, as against the 28 pages of the other penny papers. I think the U.J. and the B.F. must be about the only story papers which were not reduced in size when the war broke out.

I treated myself to a Penny Popular which always contains an old St. Jim's story. This one was called "The Circus Chums," and it was about Tom Merry and Co at Tomsonio's circus. A long while ago, stories about this circus used to feature in Pluck. The Pop also had a story about Sexton Bleke called "The Last Stand." It was about a hypnotist, and Mr. Lindsay says he remembers that it was actually called "The Hypnotist" when it appeared in the Union Jack about seven years ago.

WANTED: Used postage stamps on or off paper. Will buy, or exchange with Australian. Any quantity.

P. C. NEVILLE, P.O. Box 304, CROW'S NEST, N.S.W. AUSTRALIA

FOR SALE: About 20 Volumes "Little Folks" between 1910/20, and 11 Volumes "New Book of Knowledge." Waverley - Hamerton. Exchange for O.B.B.

J. LENNARD, 24 SAXON CROSSWAY, WINSFORD, CHESHIRE.

NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

AUSTRALIA

Although attendance was not large, enthusiasm was as high as ever when members gathered at the Book Bargain Bazaar for their November meeting on Thursday 19th.

Before the programme for the evening got under way, a pleasant interlude was enjoyed by members thanks to Don Harkness' photographic skill. Colour slides featuring a varied selection from Bill Hall's extensive collection were viewed and discussed and Don was thanked for making this possible.

The secretary had an interesting item of news to report as she had been recently interviewed by a writer from "The Woman's Day" for an article featuring the Golden Hours Club and the hobby. In America there has been an upsurge of interest in their comics such as Flash Gordon, Captain Marvel and Superman with copies changing hands for \$30 each and an article written on this subject had sparked off interest in similar collecting hobbies here. It is to be hoped that this article, if it does appear will treat the subject as sincerely and generously as did Mr. E. S. Turner in the Telegraph Colour Supplement feature. Members were greatly interested in a copy of this article which had been sent out by Eric Fayne for their benefit.

Details of the Christmas Party were discussed and a tentative date December 17th was selected.

As usual it was good to hear from distant friends and letters were read from Arthur Holland, Jim Cook, Harry Curtis, Jack Murtagh and Bill Hubbard, bringing into the club room a stimulating pot-pourri of views and news and adding considerably to the atmosphere of good fellowship.

An item of particular interest was then passed around by the secretary and members discussed the contents of these amateur magazines which had been received from Mr. A. Harris of Wales.

Meeting concluded as usual in the local coffee shop where a pleasant hour was enjoyed by all.

B. PATE (Secretary)

NORTHERN

Christmas Party, Saturday, 12th December, 1964

We were favoured with a fine, clear night for our 15th consecutive Christmas Party, and, although one or two regulars were unable to come owing to previous engagements, twenty-three of us sat down to a sumptuous spread a little before five o'clock with lively anticipation of an enjoyable evening ahead.

After tea there was a brief interval for library business, and then we got down to the programme proper. The first item was a competition devised by Gerry Allison, which required us to identify various title pages from various old boys' books in Gerry's collection, and answer various questions about them (who was the artist, etc.), Gerry having mounted these all round the room in window envelopes which concealed the names and dates; very interesting, and a good test of one's knowledge of the hobby.

Jack Allison then took over with a card game - a sort of variation of 'Newmarket' - in which all the company were able to participate, seated in a circle, and this passed a pleasant twenty minutes or so; a neat bit of adaptation, this.

The next item was a complete contrast, being a musical quiz by Frank Hancock. He played a number of tunes on the piano, the competitors having to (a) name the tune, and (b) the show or film it came from. As they were all popular melodies nearly everybody

got good marks here.

There being plenty of tuck left, we had a break for supper, and made further inroads on the ample supplies laid in by the ladies.

The last item was provided by Geoffrey Wilde, an ingenious question-and-answer quiz, in which a correct answer was rewarded by a clue to the identity of a well-known personality in the news.

Gerry Allison had been busy all evening recording marks in all the events, and the result was that Bill Williamson came out on top with 124 points, Geoffrey Wilde second with 120, and Keith Balmforth third with 119, but, as usual, there was a prize for everybody. After collecting the same, and having a little informal discussion, we all departed homewards, the fog having fortunately failed to materialize.

Next meeting, Saturday, 9th January.

F. HANCOCK (Hon. Sec.)

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, 13th December:

It hardly seems a year since I last reported our Christmas meeting, yet, in spite of the atrocious weather, here we were again responding to the toast of 'Good health to the O.B.S.C.' and also to all those friends of ours, at home and overseas, who were unable to be with us. Once again Jim Walsh was the toast master, and he reminded us that this was the 13th successive time he had officiated. We all hope that Jim will be able to continue for at least another 13 years.

During the business part of the meeting Norman Pragnell said that he had replied to an advertisement in the November C.D. which offered some books for sale. He said that he had sent the letter on the same day that he had received the C.D. He received a reply from the advertiser, however, which stated that all the books had already been sold which suggested that the sale took place before the advertisement appeared. While an advertiser is, of course, at liberty to sell to whom and when he likes, Norman, and most of us, felt that if advance information of the availability of books is being obtained by certain people then it is a waste of time answering advertisements. It was agreed that Norman should write to Eric Payne about this matter. The business over we turned to more personal things.

The evening was varied. Norman read to us one of the "Gems of Hamiltonia" from an earlier C.D. which described the gastronomic efforts of Bunter at the Christmas dinner at Wharton Lodge. Norman, who is a Nelson Lee fan, described this as one of the best pieces of descriptive prose he had read. We all agreed that it was one of Hamilton's best. In addition, Norman gave the first quiz in which we had to name as many permanent characters as possible who appeared in stories of the four schools, excluding masters and boys. This was won by Frank Unwin with 40, whilst I came second with 30. After the sausage rolls and mince pies etc. we talked about our favourite Christmas stories. Jim Walsh chose the Polpelly series in the Magnet about which he spoke at some length. John Farrell, however, gave his vote to one of O. Henry's short stories.

Our next quiz came from Frank Unwin who gave us an "odd man out" quiz which had been sent to him by Don Webster. This was won by Jim Walsh with Norman as runner up.

All too soon the meeting came to an end and we departed with the usual good wishes and the hope that next year will prove to be just as prosperous for the club as 1964 has been. Next meeting Sunday, January 10th.

BILL WINDSOR

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: We regret to learn that our Merseyside Club was disappointed as the result of answering a C.D. advertisement. Now an advertiser disposes of items he has for sale is entirely his own business, so presumably the reference in the club minutes to certain people obtaining advance information is intended as a criticism of the editor of this magazine. Until we receive details of the advertisement in question, it is difficult to make a reply. We get many hundreds of letters at Excelsior House every month,

a large proportion of them asking for advice, which we try to give. It is not, however, our practice to divulge advance details of advertisements. Our own experience of advertising items for sale is that our telephone starts ringing within minutes of the latest C.D. having dropped through readers' letter-boxes.)

L O N D O N

The Christmas meeting was held at East Dulwich on Sunday, December 20th and was graced by the presence of the President of the Club, John Wernham. Chairman, Len Packman, welcomed all present and then read out 'Greetings' Telegram from Majorie and Bill Norris, who were unable to be present. Continuing, Len then read out a letter from Bob Whiter and displayed the greetings card that the latter had sent from California. Afterwards he read out the greetings card from the Golden Hours Club of Sydney to which was attached a photograph of Bette Pate, Ernie Carter, Vic Colby and Stan Nicholls.

Then followed the familiar pattern of a Yuletide meeting. Roger Jenkins reading a chapter or two from a "Magnet," depicting Bunter and the Famous Five at one of their Christmas holiday adventures. Previous to this Roger stated that a record 25 parcels of papers and books from the Hamiltonian library had been dispatched for borrowers' holiday reading and that books on loan were at that moment, the total of 902. A record month's takings was announced. Bob Blythe also had a good report to make of his Nelson Lee library, he has all the issues from 1926 up to the end available for loan.

Continuing the entertainment side, Winifred Mores and her two sons had compiled a very fine picture quiz. This was won by Bill Lofts with a very moderate total of correct answers. Roy Parsons and Josie Packman were the joint seconds. A fine film show by Roger Jenkins was greatly enjoyed by all. A film of the members outside the hotel on the occasion of the outing to Margate and Kingsgate was shown plus a film of Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin and one of the dear old 'Silly Symphonies.'

Len and Josie Packman put on a very fine study feed, to quote a remark by the President; this included hot mince pies. Josie Packman proposed and Eric Lawrence seconded a proposal that a hearty vote of thanks be given to the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe, for their very fine work during the year with their respective libraries.

Votes of thanks to the hosts, Len and Josie Packman, were given.

Next meeting on Sunday, January 17th, at the home of Marjorie and Bill Norris, 71 Olive Road, Cricklewood, London N.W.2. Phone GLAdstone 8146. Kindly advise if attending.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

M I D L A N D

No report of our Midland Club's meeting has been received for inclusion in this issue

STOP PRESS

(See It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, etc., in Editorial.) No copies of W.W.L. received in December.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

(Interesting items from
Editor's Letter-bag)



WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): I must say that at no time in the past has the format of the mag. been so attractive nor the contents so interesting as they are today. As one who likes to go wallowing into the past for long periods, you will understand why I like the feature DANNY'S DIARY so much. I hope the day is long distant before you decide that Danny has had his day.

J. P. H. HOBSON (Reigate): One of the last issues of the Sexton Blake Library dealing with the Eastern Counties, claimed that Sexton Blake had been at Cambridge. I well remember a story in the Boys' Friend Library about 1934 or 1935, entitled "Sexton Blake at Oxford" and dealing with a crime that Sexton Blake solved while he was an undergraduate there.

I think before the new series of Sexton Blake stories, certain basic facts such as his school and University might well be agreed upon and kept in mind by all the different authors.

There was also another Boys' Friend Library called "Sexton Blake at School," but I cannot remember much about this one. Possibly collectors have copies of these books still and the matter can be agreed by the editor of the new series.

THOMAS COCKBURN (Ayr): As one who was brought up on the early post-war A.P. and Thomson papers, I am saddened by the patronising attitude of some of your readers to these papers and also to the hard-cover Bunter books which I thoroughly enjoyed as a schoolboy - and still do. Each generation is true to itself, so many pre-1939 collectors look down on post-war material. Up till 1954 at least the A.P. papers were still in the old style. I can remember Tired Tim & Weary Willie on the front page of Chips in 1952, just before it became a little pink paper and then eventually was merged with good old Film Fun. Comic Cuts, Funny Wonder, Tip Top, Jingles, Radio Fun and Knockout were my favourites. The Champion, and early issues of Lion, bore all the A.P. hallmarks of quality. And do not let us forget Wizard, Rover, and Adventure. We were not all privileged to live in the era of Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake, and Nelson Lee. Surely a page of C.D. can be reserved occasionally for those "other papers" which so many of us knew and loved so well.

(Articles on post-war papers are always welcome for consideration for publication in C.D. - ED.)

FRED GRIFFIN (New York): Danny's Diary is one of my favourites. It brings back memories of certain things I knew.

RAY HOPKINE (New Cross): The reproduction of the Monster Library cover on the cover of C.D. prompts me to wonder how a publication like that, costing a shilling (a huge amount of money in those days) ever got bought by the age group at which it was aimed. They were a wonderful value for money, and, undoubtedly, had they gone on, the St. Frank's reprints would have appeared therein rather than in the S.O.L.

VICTOR GILEE (Barking): In quality of content and presentation the Digest goes from strength to strength. I took the suggestion contained in one of your editorials and had the copies for several years past made up into bound volumes. They have a permanent place on my bookshelves, and I find myself dipping into them at odd moments with the greatest pleasure.

JACK WOOD (York): Once again the Annual is a feast of good reading, and two articles in particular the product of painstaking research. How our colleagues keep it up baffles me, but good luck to them all. What a fascinating covert!

REVIEW

THE SATURDAY BOOK

HUTCHINSON 36/-

This latest edition of the Saturday Book, packed with fascinating features for the connoisseur, printed on high-gloss paper, is well up to its usual standard, and it is of special interest this year as it contains an article by C.D. reader and contributor, Robert Kelly. Using the title "The World of Charles Hamilton," Mr. Kelly gives a competent sketch of the writing life of the famous author and concentrates on the later years of the Magnet. He aims at a general public which may be only superficially acquainted with Hamilton and not, of course, at C.D. readers who know it all inside out.

Pleasing, and perhaps surprising, is the fact that he has been able to go into some details about the series of the last decade of the Magnet, material usually excluded from articles professionally published. It could be queried maybe whether the writer is accurate in saying, "even without Bunter there are times when it seems as if Greyfriars is nearer in spirit to Beachcomber's 'Narkover' and Jimmy Edwards' 'Chiselbury' than to St. Dominic's." We do not quite see why, when reading the Wharton Rebel series after one of the lighter stories it seems as though "a time machine had taken the reader from the 1930's into the 1880's." But those are minor details.

Mr. Kelly's contribution is very successful, and should whet the appetites of the public for whom it is intended. There are five illustrations - three by Shields and one by Chapman from the Magnet, and one by Macdonald from the Gem. The artists' names are not indicated, which is a pity. The reproduction of covers might have been more attractive than pictures selected from the interiors of the papers.

Saturday Book also contains an article on "Science Fiction Covers Uncovered," with some intriguing pictures, which will be of interest to plenty of readers.

OFFERS invited for 49 Gems, year 1928, plus postage - J. SMITH, 36 LANGHAM ROAD, NEWCASTLE-upon-TYNE 5.

WANTED: Schoolboys Own LBS 170, 174, 198, 206 (Rookwood), 285, 300, 336 (St. Franks); Also Sexton Blake 3rd., 96 page issues - THOMPSON, 55 Wallasey Park, Belfast 14.

S A L E : 25 Aldine Boys' Pocket Library £1; 11 Dick Turpins (3d) 12/-.

WANTED : Boys Friends, Populars, Tom Merry, Bunter Annuals, etc. - F. MACHIN, 38 St. Thomas's Road, Preston.

OFFERS INVITED for the following FOUR bound volumes of Nelson Lees 1st New Series in nice condition - 51-75, 76-102, 103-127, 128-152; also "Handforths Barring-out" 1st New Series 82-89 bound in absolutely perfect mint condition. Also one loose Monster No. 13. Will sell separately if needed - J. GREAVES, 50 GOSPORTH ROAD, BLACKPOOL, LANCs.

WANTED URGENTLY: Magnet No. 435. Good loose copy, or volume containing same.

URGENTLY WANTED: Gems 413, 415, 493 and Magnets 205, 237, 238, 239, 277. Good copies, or volumes containing same.

ERIC FAYNE *EXCELSIOR HOUSE* GROVE ROAD SURBITON SURREY