

# THE COLLECTORS DIGEST

MAY 1947  
Next Issue  
June 1947

Vol.1: No.5.  
Price 1s.1d.  
Post Free





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Editor:

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR:

When our substantial April issue appeared we said "this cannot happen again". But it has, for here is No.5 with the same generous offering, moreover it appears two months earlier in the year. Progress! Yet some of our contributors turning over the pages may say "What! No sign of my article yet?" Well, we can only crave their indulgence. The swindle revelations take up a considerable amount of space, but we are sure it will be admitted that these must be dealt with whilst they are still news. That they make an illuminating story, and in places are amusing, is undeniable; you will find the latest developments in later pages.

Now for more apologies. There were a few errors in No.4. These were no doubt due to that misadventure of mine during the floods, and a weary hand whilst re-writing the copy in the early hours. On the last line of page 83 our clever young artist Mr.Robert Whiter was called "Noel", and on page 90 Mr.Leslie Vosper's surname appeared as "Jasper". Thirdly, lower on the same page referring to Mr. Alfred Horsey returning the surcharged letter to Leicester, he was made to say "There was a strong urge to do business" whereas it should have read "that was a strange way to do business". My humble apologies, you fellows. And now to the future.

My colleague sprang an idea on me the other

day. Maurice is always getting brain waves, and this one made me rub my eyes. For it was nothing more or less than a suggestion for a COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, to be published at the end of the year. He, moreover, had some of the contents already planned out, lists of authors and artists, famous characters, a record of boys papers with start-stop dates, contributions from the professionals we have the good fortune to know, etc. etc., in fact, a veritable Collectors' Bible, anything from 75 to 100 pages, price in the region of 3s.6d.

Well, our friends at the duplicating agency say they could tackle the job, so the next thing is to get YOUR opinion. It would help a lot if all those in favour would say in their next letter "Go ahead" accompanied by any ideas. I'll say no more here except to repeat that the credit for the proposal goes entirely to my energetic colleague who presides over the "Blakiana" section, and helps a good deal with mine.

Here's more good news. A short time ago I received a bulky packet and when I set eyes on its contents it even made me forget Mr. Dalton's new commandment "Thou shalt not Smoke", which had just sent me into a fit of depression. For the packet contained several contributions from Mr. F. Addington Symonds, first editor of "The Champion" - that sensational success when it made its appearance in 1922. One of the real romances of the Street of Adventure. One of these contributors "Personalities of the Post" gives some delightfully candid pen-pictures of authors and artists you all know: Gwyn Evans, Coutts Brisbane, A.S. Hardy, J.H. Valda; you will know them better when you have read this article. It will be a star attraction in No. 6.

Did you know The Collectors' Digest had been mentioned on the air? Well, it has! You'll see something about it on another page. We've been in the hands of the police, now the name of our mag. is heard by millions. No so bad for a new-comer!

Finally, we are happy to present a new sketch by Mr. Robert Whiter. I made a few suggestions to him and lo! the sketch was on my desk within four days. We think he has excelled himself. Old-timers will have no difficulty in recognising the trio at the top: for the benefit of the younger generation they represent faithfully, Jack, Sam and Pete, popular characters of yesteryear. The others require no explaining.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert Whiter*

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Single copies 1s.1d post free. Three copies 3s.3d post free. Six copies 6s.6d post free. Postal Orders to be made payable to H. Leckenby, at York, un-crossed.

WANTED: Thrillers. Many numbers required. Good condition essential. Please state price required. John W. Gocher, Jun., Victoria Cottage, Constitution Hill, Sudbury, Suffolk.

WANTED: Nos. 12, 13, 14, 15 Monster Library, also Magnet No. 1672 of 1940. Must contain map of Greyfriars. Jack Cook, 178 Maria Street, Benwell, Newcastle.

COMIC PAPERS WANTED, 1890-1914: Comic Cuts, Chips, Funny Cuts, Worlds Comic, Funny Wonder, Larks, Comic Home Journal, Big Budget, Halfpenny Comic, Coloured Comic, Jester and Wonder, Butterfly, Puck, Lot o' Fun. Harris, Ceyton, Llanrhos Road, Llandudno.

WANTED: Boys Comic, Boys of England, Young Men of Great Britain, Family Herald and Supplement, Stevens 3d & 6d Magazine of Fiction, Bow Bells, Halfpenny and Penny Miscellany, London Journal. A.W. Lawson, 11, River Street, Clerkenwell, London, E.C.1.

FOR SALE: Bundle of 100 Nelson Lees in Bulk. What Offers. L. Vosper, 13 Kinlet Rd. London, S.E.18.

Most of our readers will be familiar with the work of this, our latest, contributor, F.N. Wearing. His first article for the C.D. concerns a gentleman with a reputation second to none, so we feel sure you will be interested when Mr. Wearing says:-

#### A FEW WORDS ABOUT SWEENEY TODD

Issued in Mid-Victorian days, probably one of the most sought for bloods published in penny weekly numbers is "Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street". Most strange and varied are the tales concerning Sweeney Todd and from time to time much discussion had arisen in literary circles as to the origin of the person himself, the story and play. As a matter of fact no absolute record of such a personage or crime exists in criminal annals. A belief that Sweeney Todd was executed at Tyburn long prevailed, but it is apparently unfounded. There is a copy of "Sweeney Todd", a most delectable publication, in the British Museum, and founded on this work there was produced a drama at the Britannia Theatre by Frederick Hazelton, the stock writer of "The Old Brit". It has been suggested that the late George Augustus Sala wrote this penny dreadful amongst many others that emanated from his pen in his early days. We know, from the accounts that are handed down to us, there was at least a substratum of fact in the absolute existence of a barber who dwelt in Fleet Street and whose career was not free from suspicion. As the story goes it shows how Sweeney Todd had a shaving chair fixed to a revolving trap which had a similar chair attached beneath, so that whichever side was shown the position of the chair and its appearance were the same. Whenever a customer who came into the shop seemed worth robbing the barber would indicate to him the fatal seat, lather his face, and then retire under the pretext of fetching his razor, to an adjoining room where was the crank actuating the diabolical apparatus. Then suddenly the chair would turn half a somersault, hurling the occupant into a cellar fifteen feet deep, and paved with sharp edges of stone placed in a perpendicular position.

If the fall did not kill the victim outright this agreeable Demon Barber descended and finished the job with a razor or a knife. The bodies were disposed of by his confederate, Mrs. Lovitt, who kept a pie shop next door in Bell Yard, close to Temple Bar. Popular rumour is supposed to have suggested that the barber's victims were made into pies and sausages, and this idea is fully sustained in at least two dramas that were actually performed on the London stage. There was one Barstick, a famous barber in business in Drury Lane, who supplied much matter to J.T. Smith for his work "The Ancient Topography of London" who only casually mentions the Fleet Street barber, and yet his reference is not without a sinister suggestion. He makes special mention of the women barbers who committed shameful crimes in Drury Lane in the days of Charles the Second, and who certainly robbed their victims. "Sweeney Todd" the drama was based upon a story called "The String of Pearls" which ran as a serial in Lloyd's "People's Periodical and Family Library" 1846-7. The first drama on the subject was written by George D. Pitt the author of such lively pieces as "The Drunkards Doom" and "Marionna - the Child of Charity", and was revived many times at the "Old Brit." In the tale of the "String of Pearls" which is definitely stated to have been founded on fact. A sailor, who was known to possess this string of gems, which he wore beneath his blouse or blue jacket, was given away by some woman who had seen the pearls. Jack had intended them for his sweetheart but he was murdered for their value, and this is the real origin of the story of "Sweeney Todd" - the Demon Barber of Fleet Street", issued in 1883 by Charles Fox, 48 penny numbers, with sensational illustrations.

WANTED: Lists, Prices: early Dreadnoughts, Boys' Friends, and Complete old boys' books. Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

The Latest about the SwindlesPearson Still Active!"Carstairs - Merrivale" Moves to London!

Enter

"Gerald St.Clair" and "Hugh Montgomery"THE "C.D." HELPS AGAIN!

This story seems never ending, more cases having been reported to us, concerning both Pearson of Leicester and the roving racketeer with a flair for artistic names, operating in the South. There is reason to believe, however, that they are not finding it as lucrative a business as they did, and for this we think the "C.D." can claim part of the credit. Here is the record of recent events.

In our last issue we announced briefly some dramatic developments. One concerned a letter we had received from Mr. John Medcroft telling us that Pearson was working the same racket as long ago as 1933, and that he got three months imprisonment as a consequence. Then we heard from Mr. T. Satchell that he had been interviewed by the police for a couple of hours concerning Pearson. They knew a good deal about this gentleman, so much so, that we would have thought an end would have been put to his latest activities ere this. However, it may be that it is a case of their methods being slow but sure. Incidentally the G.I.D. expressed great interest in our special number.

Next, we were just in time to state that a well-known collector had sent "Merrivale" £25. We can now reveal that this was Mr. Fred Bottomley of Tottenham, and we now go on to relate what has happened since No. 4 went to press.

Just as we were about to mail that issue we received a letter from Mr. Bottomley saying he had received an assurance from Merrivale that everything was alright, and he would be receiving the books very shortly. Well, for Mr. Bottomley's sake

we hoped he would, even if it put us in an awkward position. We were so convinced however, that we had made no mistake, that we did not delay dispatch of the copies. Here is the sequel.

On 15th April, we received another letter from Mr. Bottomley. It started thus: "You were right. 'Merrivale' is a swindler all right. Have just had a letter to him returned by the Post Office endorsed 'Gone away'."

Yes, Merrivale has left Bristol all right and if the Post Office or the police want to know where he proceeded to we can tell them, as we shall show in a moment.

Mr. Bottomley enclosed two letters, one of these was signed "Spencer Merrivale" - stated to be the brother of Lancelot. Quite an aristocratic sort of family, arn't they? Well, just wait awhile. "Spencer" explained that brother "Lancelot" had departed for Harrogate to take the waters for his rheumatism just before Mr. Bottomley's letter arrived. (In passing "Spencer" spelt Harrogate with a "u" just as did "Lancelot" - perhaps at Marlborough, or whichever public school they were educated they were better at sports than lessons). He had been in touch with his brother by 'phone and he could assure Mr. Bottomley that the moment "Lancelot" returned the books would be dispatched. He (Spencer) knew they were all ready. Note that subtle reference to Harrogate, favourite resort of retired colonels, wealthy maiden ladies, and tired business men. All very convincing and shrewd if you didn't know Merrivale's little games.

But we say without fear of contradiction that "Lancelot" never went to Harrogate, for with the aid of a different pen-nib, he wrote that letter himself. So exit "Spencer" and as a matter of fact "Lancelot" also, for on leaving Bristol he left his "Lancelot Percival Merrivale" behind him, too.

We will leave him here to report that a little

prior to receiving Mr. Bottomley's letter we had also received one from Mr. Arthur Harris, of Ilandudno, owner of that famous collection of amateur journals, stating that he had unfortunately made the acquaintance of "Miss" Pearson, way back in February, and was poorer by £5 in consequence. It was the same story except that in his case the departed brother had left a large quantity of comics, the papers Mr. Harris had advertised for. "She did not really know much about them. She was only a young woman but a friend had told her they were really of value". Mr. Harris, not knowing of the other cases at the time, found the letter so convincing that he parted with his money. However, he too, has now been interviewed by the police.

Now comes another dramatic development. In the "Exchange and Mart" for 12th April, there appeared two advertisements for "Magnets". We had not the acquaintance of either of the advertisers, but we thought it just as well to give them a warning. Consequently, a copy of G.D. No.4, was sent to each with a covering letter. Here is the sequel.

On 15th April we received a letter from Mr. Read of Chatham, one of the advertisers. It started like this: "Never was I so glad to get a letter as when I received yours this morning." Yes, he had been approached - with a vengeance, for he enclosed some letters. The now familiar writing of Pearson, still in a feminine role, caught our eye. The audacity of this crook leaves us breathless. It would appear he does not find the racket as lucrative as he did formerly, for after writing on 3rd April and 7th April, he went to the expense of a telegram on the 10th urging dispatch of cash at once, as Mr. Read was hesitating. Well, Pearson is still waiting.

But that wasn't all. Mr. Read enclosed another letter concerning another tempting offer, signed with a new name to us, and written from 89 Talbot Road, London, W.2. on 7th April. We couldn't resist a smile when we read it for though the name was new the story was the now oh so familiar one of

the 'old oak chest', full of Magnets, Gems and S.O. Library's. Garstairs - Merrivale had surpassed himself, for the signature was now - Ye Gods! - - Gerald St. Clair! Verily he is advancing in the social scale. When next we hear of him we shall expect to find him in possession of a title, providing Fate doesn't step in and he becomes merely a number.

Anyhow, five minutes after receiving Mr. Read's letter we were talking to him on the 'phone and he soon knew all about "Gerald St. Clair". Yes, the Roving Racketeer had departed from Bristol all right. By the way, his collection seems to be substantially reduced, he has now only 250 Gems and 188 S.O. Libs. We wonder where the others have got to.

Well, that's the story up to the moment of writing. Probably we shall have a postscript to add. We had hoped to hear of drastic police action ere this, but surely that cannot be long delayed. If we do hear of any such developments between dispatch of this issue and the preparing of the next we shall be tempted to send out another 'special circular'.

#### STOP PRESS:

Garstairs-Merrivale-St. Clair - is now High Montgomery. An amusing reply he got will appear in No. 6. Look out for it.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, 1st New Series. Nos. 20-43 inclusive. For Sale: or Exchange - number of Schoolboys Own. E. McPherson, 80 Benedict Street, Glastonbury, Somerset.

FOR SALE: 2d Plucks, Vol. 1 (1-26) 1922. Bound. Chums, Vols. Bound, 1913, 1914 & 1915. Holiday Annuals 1923 & 1937. 36 Schoolboys Own Lib. between 189 and 313. Bound Vol. 40 Thrillers. H. Dowler, 86 Hamilton Road, Longsight, Manchester.

WANTED: Aldine Pubs. Turpins, Duvals, etc. Landy, 4 Nunneaton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

LETTER BOX:

We are happy to publish another letter from Frank Richards, with further proof of his versatility, and keep your eyes on Odhams.

7th April, 1947.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for your letter this morning with the "Digest", which I hasten to acknowledge. It grows better and better: though certainly I was very shocked to read about collectors coming up against the underworld. I could never have dreamed that old Gems and Magnets would have attracted the attention of racketeers. I seem to remember seeing in "Exchange and Mart" that they have a system of holding the stakes, as it were, to ensure fair dealing to both sides: so if such purchases were carried out through the paper, everything would have to be above board. It is rather risky sending money to strangers: though I must admit that I should not have thought of it in this connection, but for the article in G.D.

No, I don't seem to have any news, excepting that the "cuts" seem to have slowed up everything everywhere. I hope to see our old fat friend in May: and I hear that new Tophams and St. Olive's will soon be chez Woolworth; while "Pie", of course, goes on for ever, but other things seem to be in a comatose state - owing to the ups and down in industry - that is, the hold-ups and the slow-downs! One must hope that this business of cutting everything and everybody will not be carried to the Chinese length of "death by a thousand cuts"...

To tell the truth, of late I have been giving Remington an occasional rest and gravitating to Bechstein. Sometimes I used to write songs in the prehistoric days before the 1st War, and now I am dallying with the idea of an incursion into Tin Pan Alley. So instead of the

click of the typewriter, the air here is often filled with consecutive fifths and augmented unpteenths.

The public have had a narrow escape of a Bunter picture-strip in a daily paper. The Feature Editor came to see me, and we came to a happy agreement on the subject - when the A.P. butted in and queered the pitch. I wish they would forget my existence! I should be so happy to forget theirs!

By the way, perhaps you may be interested to hear that I have written a short "Bunter" story to go into a collection of short stories to be published by Odhams. It is called "Billy Bunter, a Booby-Trap". When the book will appear is still on the knees of the Gods.

With kind regards,  
Yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

.. ..

When we published Mr. Roger Jenkin's little item "St. Frank's versus the Rest" we rather expected a lot of protests from "N.L.L." fans, but we can truthfully state that we did not expect such a strong reply as that given by Olive Simpson. He commences:-

It is difficult to imagine that Mr. Jenkin's article was not written with tongue in cheek deliberately to provoke. It would appear that he has read no more than a few odd copies of the N.L.L. and those either very early or very late. I am rather surprised that the editors of the C.D. should allow such a welter of half truths to appear in the guise of informed opinion. Answering the amazing statement that "more than 90% of N.L.L. stories were 'tee yarns'" I suggest that anyone with sufficient leisure examine the 300 issues from No. 463 (Old series) to No. 194 (1st New Series). Of these I can find no more than 20 which approximate

to the description "a band of crooks", etc. Thus R.M.J. is within 83% of accuracy, about a fair measure of his article as a whole. Few have enjoyed C.H.'s. stories more than I but why must current Hamiltonians affect such a superiority over their fellows? Why should St.Frank's stories have been based "upon Greyfriars"? What indeed WERE they based upon, pure and original historical research or inspired genius? Would it be heresy to say that school stories were being written before the Hamilton era? That the St.Frank's stories succeeded is obvious from the N.L.L.'s. run of sixteen years and the fact that the S.O.L. was increased by another monthly volume to cover St.Frank's reprints. "Lack of realism" Mr.Jenkins? Think of the various up-to-date series appearing in the N.L.L. dealing with archaeology, the boat race, the Test Matches, etc. etc. So Mr.Brooks went to "fantastic lengths" and his stories had "weak characterisation". These accepted Facts, as Mr.Jenkins calls them form subject for a full-dress debate, and I think sadly of such writers as H.G.Wells, Jules Verne and Conon Doyle being swept into the basement by R.J.M.'s big bass broom.

Perhaps Handforth did owe his inception to Coker partially, but to say that the fully developed personality bore any resemblance is absurd.

I suggest that the series dealing with Handforth at St.Jim's was a publicity stunt on the part of the A.P. in an effort to boost up the sales of a flagging "Gem" since the N.L.L. was, at the time, at it's zenith.

I should have thought that C.H.'s. work was able to stand on its own merits, but Mr.Jenkin's obviously has doubts in his mind else why try to bolster up that author's works by bludgeoning that of another. I feel that the C.D. should now publish a series of articles comparing and contrasting the St.Frank's stories with those referred to by Mr.Jenkins. Let us thrash out each point thoroughly.

Please, Messrs. Bond & Leckenby, do demand a more critical standpoint from your contributors, and if they wish to be controversial, let them give chapter and verse. I am not ashamed to sign myself a loyal "Franciscan" of more than 20 years standing.

Clive Simpson.

Note:

Owing to lack of available space Mr. Simpson's reply has had to be considerably cut, but the main points of his article are all contained in the above.

H.L.

.. ..  
E PUBULUS UNUM

I am a St. Frank's Fan!

I read Mr. Jenkin's article "St. Frank's versus the Rest". Now to run true to form I ought to retaliate by taking up my pen and slating this gentleman hip and thigh. Well, of course, how utterly ridiculous.

Goodness knows I am an ardent admirer of our revered Charles Hamilton. As a schoolboy I read "The Magnet", "The Popular", "The Gem", and in addition "The Schoolboy's Own Library", from its inception until its final demise.

But I also read, "The Nelson Lee Library" and enjoyed that too! Surely that's better than being prejudiced?

It was, as I have already told in "The Story Paper Collector" from one particular series of "The Nelson Lee" that concerned the activities of Ezra Quirke, that I gained the inspiration to make the grade as professional magician. And if Mr. Jenkins could see but once, the hundreds of happy, laughing children who often form my audiences, and find the same music in their delightful chuckles when I conjure for them, he would agree, I feel sure, that I and thousands of others do thus owe a debt to Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks.

The readers of "The Magnet", of the "Gem", the "Nelson Lee" and all other boys' journals are all links in a great and binding chain. I visualise each of these sections as a link bearing it's own particular number, the whole as a great brotherhood - shall we say "The Fraternity of the Links" with membership open to all who once were readers and many applying for the coveted Certificate of Enrolment.

Why! the "Collector's Digest" might even become the Fraternity's official organ.

Yes, enough of this sword crossing. Is there one amongst us who will take on a higher and nobler task ?

Is there ? I wonder?

Leslie Vosper.

Leslie's letter has had to be cut, too, and there were several other indignant comments from loyal Leeites, which we regret we cannot find room for. Now its up to you Roger.

By the way, does anyone know Mr. Brook's present address? H.L.

.. ..

To the Editor of the "C.D."

Dear Sir,

Mr. Simpson's reply to my letter shows that in at least one case he misinterpreted what I wrote. I was not comparing Bunter to Falstaff and Iago, but said that they were akin in one respect: namely - that we do not actually like them, though we find them interesting and admire the skill with which they are depicted.

In suggesting that Mr. Hamilton is not a genius, Mr. Simpson is completely in error. This author's exceptional ability to create almost innumerable characters of very varied types should ensure a permanent place among the great-

est writers in English literature. That, in fact, the literary experts may pass him by altogether is due to the fact that most of his work appeared in weekly papers - in which one does not usually look for great writing.

I described Mr. Hamilton as "the only truly (misprinted "true") great writer" nearly all of whose stories were intended for young readers. Of the authors mentioned by Mr. Simpson only Lewis Carrol is worthy to be compared with Mr. Hamilton.

In conclusion, it is desirable to mention that my criticism is not unbalanced, as Mr. Simpson suggests. Much as I admire these school stories, there are many great works of art - not all literary - that have given me even greater pleasure; such as much of Shakespeare, Wagner's "Ring", Mozart's Music, and James Joyce's "Ulysses".

Yours truly,  
John R. Shaw.

And with Mr. Shaw's reply, we regret we must bring this controversy, started by "Pat", to a close.  
H.L.

**WANTED:** Certain early Magnets, Gems, Plucks, especially Gems Nos. 16, 22, 99 & 392. Would gladly buy or exchange. John R. Shaw, 4 Brunswick Park, Camberwell, London, S.E. 5. (Late of Colney Hatch Lane).

**WANTED:** 1914 Magnets, especially Nos. 332, 336, 337. Could exchange Nos. 329, 330, 333 of 1914. Coverless fair condition. Would purchase. B. Prime, 43 Mayfield Road, Sanderstead, Surrey.

**FOR SALE:** 6 Vols. Young England, 1888-1900. Vols. Captain, 1908, 1911. Holiday Annuals 1930. **WANTED** Magnets pre-1929. W.H. Neate, Wenlock High Street, Burnham, Bucks.

NO MIRACLES EXPECTED: Fair price always paid for parcels Schoolboys' Owns, Magnet, Gem, Lee, Monster, Popular, Friend, Realm, Greyfriars, Herald, H.A., Young Britain, etc. Joseph Baguley, Middle Hill, Pensilva, Cornwall.

WANTED: A Sexton Blake Bust, if price reasonable. V.A. Baxendale, 1 Vincent Street, Openshaw, Manchester, 11.

WANTED: Gems and Magnets before 1930. Populars, Sexton Blake Libraries of Granite Grant and Kestrel. Girls Friends, Homes and Readers. Butterfly, Merry & Bright. Eric Fayne, 23, Grove Road, Surbiton.

UNION JACKS: The following numbers wanted urgently: 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1007, 1009, 1061, 1065, 1076, 1091, 1134, 1243, 1245, 1252, 1292, 1294. H.M. Bond, 10 Erw, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

Here is still another new contributor to our Paper. His story of how he became acquainted with Frank Richards, has those sentimental nostalgic touches about it collectors' love and make them say - "That reminds me of ...." We hope Mr. Corbett will write for us again.

I UNEARTHED A GENIUS  
by Jack Corbett.

Like many people who have read the famous "Magnet" and "Gem", also "Popular" papers, the thought, of course, often arose in my mind - who is this writer (or writers) that can give us such a vivid human picture of schoolboy life?

When a boy of about 15, I often had the dream of writing to the "Greyfriars" author, but there again, the idea that "Frank Richards" was not the real name of the mysterious author daunted me; and again, surely so large a concern as the Amalgamated Press must have thousands of such admiring letters, which possibly never reached the author in person.

So there it was, and rather than write and try to get through to someone I greatly admired and perhaps get no reply, I dropped the whole idea.

Then some years later, long after I had given up those happy schoolboy stories, I was unwrapping some goods at my business when suddenly amongst the paper I espied the word "Magnet". Just imagine my joy at picking up a practically new condition copy of the "Greyfriars" paper bearing the date 1940 which had been in the bottom of the box. We were, at this time, about three years into the 2nd world war and how wonderful to know that the old "Magnet" was still going strong. (I had yet to learn of it's untimely sudden death on 18th May of that year).

Well, I carefully put the "find" in my desk, and that evening took it home, and, I admit, rather sheepishly walked into the sitting room with it and showed it to my wife. I explained how fine were these stories, how human nature lived like unto real life, and where boys could, while enjoying a story, learn geography, facts about the world, general knowledge, etc; but, at that time, my good lady smiled benevolently at me as though I had brought her a copy of "The Rainbow" or "Tiger Tim". You see my wife was, until then, one of the few people who had never read about Billy Bunter, but certainly that copy of the "Magnet" made a big change in her life, for from that day I started to advertise for back numbers, any years I could get, of both the "Magnet" and the "Gem", finally deciding to concentrate on the former.

Now this explanation of how the "Magnet" came to me in later years makes the keynote of this article, for, with greater force than ever, the old desire to get a word of thanks to the author of Billy Bunter returned to me. By this time my advertisements had met with much success, and my wife and I sat round the fire reading Billy Bunter with more than contentment and interest.

Around this time. I learned that in some magazine a letter had been written regarding some matter and signed by the author of Billy Bunter, but, alas, no proper address was given, only Kingsgate, Kent (this information was given by our overseas pal W.H.Gender), and vague though it was I penned off a carefully thought out letter and hoped for the best. Some two weeks later my wife received from the postman in a nonchalant manner a letter bearing my name in (what has since become very familiar) purple type.

With Billy Bunter, just at that moment, far from my thoughts, the letter was opened, and, at the foot of a neatly typed letter, was the handwritten signature of "Frank Richards". For some few seconds I was quite speechless, and then excitedly called my wife to look; we really found it quite difficult to believe, but slowly the truth of the letter was apparant, and in a friendly human way I learned of the blow our author friend had suffered, and to what an extent the sudden suspension of the "Magnet" had affected him. One phrase in this letter stands out very vividly in my mind when he refers to the "poor old 'Magnet' and it's humble author". Poor old 'Magnet' and it's humble author indeed! Surely there is no collector in this world who would say anything but the grand old 'Magnet' and it's wonderful author.

The cordial invitation to ask any questions I liked was extended to me, and the welcome words made one glow with a feeling of pride, that gave a greater realism to those wonderful "Greyfriars" yarns in realising that after all Frank Richards was still with us, and only too eager to hear from readers.

Needless to say, very soon after I wrote again, and learned many of the secrets, including the origin of the great Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the origin of Billy Bunter's postal order, and how the picture of "Greyfriars" was first inspired (by the way, those who possess back numbers of our compan-

ion paper the S.P.C. I would refer them to my article "Frank Richards - the founder of 'Greyfriars' together with a poem, in the special "Greyfriars" number). Some few days later I wrote and told the good news to Mr. Gander, and was he thrilled!

I think that everyone who heard that Frank Richards was "still in the land" felt the same, that greater realism and interest surrounded their favourite hobby, knowing the genius who inspired it was not inaccessible, as so many authors are.

Returning to our overseas collector, Mr. Gander, of course, contacted Billy Bunter's author, and also learned much. Then, I believe, other well known collectors, including Mr. John Shaw, Mr. Leckenby, etc., eagerly expressed their praise and congratulations to the "Greyfriars" founder, and one and all had pet questions to ask, which were all answered in a friendly, kindly, and appreciative way.

The marvellous realisation that readers letters were so welcome to so great a man is still the golden thought to those who have written to our literary friend. How many less great authors and artists have never deigned to answer, or bother with, the humble reader? This is the thing we appreciate - that the PERSONAL personality of Frank Richards reaches us, not just from an agent or secretary, but from the great man himself. Surely a golden treasure to all "Magnet" readers.

So that, my friends, was, I believe, how we first heard of a great man. Of course, individual readers, over a period of years, have no doubt written to Frank Richards, but I believe that since 1940 we have had the curtain lifted on what was before a mythical, almost legendary figure, of whom little was known.

So there is fate - an old copy of the "Magnet" coming to me in a box lined with packing, a chance letter in a journal, and a "shot in the dark" to what seemed to be no proper address, and to be rec-

eived by whom?

So let me say earnestly, thanks Mr. Gender for that chance address, thanks for being a factor in unearthing - from an accumulation of modesty and retirement, a genius, who created not just a series of schoolboy papers over long years, but who created an era in this life.

We regret that owing to pressure of space, we have been obliged to hold over the continuation of both "Authors and Their Pen Names" and "Aldine Dick Turpin Titles" until the next issue.

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS:

Personalities of the Past : by F. Addington Symonds  
 Sentiment in Schoolboy Fiction : by Tom Armitage  
 The Shylock of Greyfriars : : by Roger Jenkins  
 The Boys' Standard : : : : by Henry Steel  
 The Circulation Mystery : : : : by Eric Fayne  
 Authors and Artists I Disliked : by R.A.H. Goodyear  
 Those were the Days : : : : : by F.W. Webb  
 Off the Beaten Track : : : : by Roger Jenkins  
 Masters of Greyfriars : : : : by T.W. Puokrin

FOOTNOTE:

One suggestion for the Annual is that we should have a list of bona fide collectors. What do you think to the idea.

Would intending advertisers send their copy for No.6 as early as possible, please.

## BLAKIANA

A Section of the C.D. devoted to Sexton Blake. All letters, articles, etc. to be addressed to H.M. Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

THE ROUND TABLE:

The title of this feature will be immediately familiar to all old readers of THE UNION JACK for it was under this heading that the Editor of that dear old paper used to chat to his readers. I thought that it would be a good idea to revive the feature in "Blakiana" and am sure that it will meet with the approval of all readers. In addition to my discussing current topics of interest in this new "Round Table" I shall frequently refer to items of interest that once appeared in it's predecessor and if any reader can help out by forwarding me interesting tit-bits relating to Blake history, I shall be delighted to consider them for inclusion in future numbers.

Well, fellow Blake lovers, this month we have a very important subject to deal with. I refer to the recent frauds which have been responsible for depleting the finances of several of our readers. Most of you now know the whole story, as printed in our special number (No.3a) and also No.4, but we feel rather proud that our little paper has followed in the steps of the master detective. As Blake has always been determined to curb the activities of the big time crook so are we determined that members of the collecting fraternity should be safeguarded against the birds of prey (for so they are) responsible for bolstering up the hopes and then taking money under false pretences. When I first heard that the C.I.D. had seen the C.D. I was quite elated and thought that it might result in a bit of welcome publicity for our paper. Well, it might be so yet! For there is no doubt that we have been responsible in no small degree

for the curbing of the activities of these rogues and I trust that all my readers will take warning from the experiences of others. A vast stack of U.J's. or S.B.L's. is a rare thing these days. Think twice before parting with a penny. In other words, resist temptation until you KNOW with whom you are dealing.

Looking through UNION JACK No. 1155 dated 28th November, 1925, I saw, on page 8, a little inset that intrigued me considerably. It is the only example of its kind that I have seen in a Blake publication and it set me wondering if it was successful. It was headed ALLAN McDONALD and went on "who is a reader of this paper and who left his home at Marshall Street, Edinburgh, in August last, is earnestly requested to communicate with his parents, to whom his disappearance has caused much anxiety; or with Scotland Yard or any Police Station". At that time the UNION JACK was enjoying large circulation and the parents of Mr. (or master) McDonald evidently thought that their son was sufficiently interested in Sexton Blake to ensure that he would not miss his weekly paper and was thus bound to see the announcement. It will never be known whether or not this single "agony" ad. was a success, but in a way it is a tribute to the popularity of "the man from Baker Street".

It is well known that Gilbert Chester was the creator of Gilbert and Eileen Hale and that Andrew Murray gave us the formidable Professor Kew. Yet, in several instances, these characters appeared in the same story, notably in "The Adventure of the Railway Raiders" in UNION JACK No. 1188 dated 24th July, 1926. Are we to suppose that Kew was borrowed by Chester (or vice versa by Murray in regard to the Hales) or are we to have yet another theory squashed? After all, there are many who only recently found out that Plummer was NOT a G.H. Teed creation and it is quite possible that yet another error has been made in that gigantic jig saw puzzle which characterises the saga of Sexton Blake.

As this issue goes to press I glance through the new (March) numbers of the S.B.L. and see that John Hunter has returned again, this time to turn Tinker into a perfect specimen of the "spiv". And my word! that young assistant of Blake's has certainly acquired a taste for the liquor! We trust that the latest Lewis Jackson novel which accompanies the Hunter story, is not going to cause the critics to bridle again! May we ask, where is Warwick Jardine who was promised as a possible return some time ago?

Cheerio for now.

H. M. BOND.

One more member of the Sexton Blake Club joins our list of contributors with his informative article on the once popular Waldo. Mr. Dolphin also compiled the Cross-word on another page, a good start indeed.

"FIRST APPEARANCE"

No. 1

RUPERT WALDO

by Rex Dolphin

The idea of this series is to trace the "birth" of some well-known Blake character, describe the actual story in which he made his first appearance, and to study the changes that later took place in him - in some cases quite startling changes. Still, it is said that the character who "develops" is a live character, not just a puppet. Sexton Blake himself, for instance.

I have suggested to the Editor that any reader who has the necessary first story featuring any popular character should be invited to join in this series. For myself, I'm starting the ball rolling with:-

RUPERT WALDO, THE WONDER-MAN

Waldo made his first bow in the Christmas No. of the Union Jack for 1918, No.794, dated 28th Dec.

This was a pink-covered issue, priced at 1½d, containing 16 pages of close print on rough wartime quality paper. Blake readers had their troubles even in those days, but at least World War I never halted Blake's weekly adventures!

The cover was by Arthur Jones, and bore illustrations of four episodes from the story, which was entitled simple, "Waldo, The Wonder-Man". We see immediately that we are in for a circus story. Yes, Waldo was actually a circus strong-man! - a fact that hasn't been mentioned much by Mr. Brooks in later stories.

Now for the story itself, supposedly related by Tinker. Sexton Blake, having just completed an investigation in rural Sussex, has a long wait for a train home, and spends this time yarning with the local Superintendent of Police, while Tinker and the Super's children go to the circus.

Tinker describes various turns on the bill, including Osiris, the conjurer, Ethel Hanwell, a lady performer, and ... "Waldo, the Wonder-man. I seriously thought of suggesting that we go home, because this chap was really the strong man of the circus and I never care much for that sort of exhibition. But the last turn was Durand the tramp cyclist, and I wanted to see him. Furthermore, I soon found that Waldo was like everybody else in this first-class circus - quite above the average. He wasn't a brawny individual with huge muscles and a chest like Hercules. When he first came into the ring I thought there was some mistake, for Waldo turned out to be quite slim and not an inch above the average height."

Waldo does his stuff, and Tinker takes up the challenge to prove that the weights are faked - but simply succeeds in proving himself an ass.

Then - Durand the trick cyclist is found dead in his tent, shot with a poisoned arrow!

Fletcher, alias Osiris, the conjurer, is suspected. The evidence is heavy, and he is known to

have quarrelled with Durand over Miss Hanwell. He is arrested.

Tinker gets Blake to look into the case. No need to go closely into the plot. Blake finally proves Fletcher innocent and Waldo guilty. Waldo has faked the evidence against Fletcher. Durand has been blackmailing Waldo, who is actually an escaped convict named William Waldron and has been serving ten years for burglary with violence. His history cannot be traced any further back than that.

They arrest Waldo in his caravan, but he breaks his handcuffs and hurls an oil-stove at Blake, setting the caravan on fire. They think he has perished but, badly burnt, he gets away and jumps a goods train. Finally after a rather unnecessary episode bringing in Nelson Lee, Nipper and the boys of St. Franks', Waldo is brought to bay, wounded, burnt, but feeling no pain.

Mr. Brooks defends himself by quoting an extract from the Lancet describing the case of a man who could feel no pain, cold, nor heat. So the Lancet may actually be responsible for the birth of Waldo!

(In later stories, logically enough, he is shown handling heavy electrical voltages without harm).

The tail piece comes when Blake learns later that Waldo has escaped. He receives this letter:-

"Did you think that I would remain in custody? I have you to thank for my present position, and I shall remember it. Now that I am up against the police - the enemy of all men - I intend to start a campaign of crime ... But my first effort, Mr. Sexton Blake, will be to get even with you."

Sexton Blake comments:-

"Hang it all, Tinker, the man's an audacious rascal! I can't help having a sneaking admiration for him, But he's a cold-blooded scoundrel and he will assuredly end his existence on the gallows."

But the story in which Waldo hangs has never been written and never will be. In later stories, Waldo's villainy was somewhat watered down, and on occasions he even became Blake's ally.

But despite all the "Robin Hood" atmosphere surrounding the Wonder-Man, we have to remember that he was a murderer, and that, worse, he framed an innocent man for murder. For where fictional crime ethics do sometimes excuse murder, that crime is unforgivable.

### I VISIT BAKER STREET

by H.M.B.

No. 1. Part 3.

I smiled. "Yes", I replied, "you certainly have - as a matter of fact it was only recently that I read the whole Satire series through for the third time, and as I did so I could not help but feel that he was the most dangerous man you had ever had to battle with".

"And yet" said Blake, "he had several opportunities to put an end to my career, but rather than do so directly he always evolved some means of slow death. Fortunately with the help of Tinker and Inspector Coutts I managed always to escape the end he had intended for me".

"You had some very narrow escapes anyhow" I answered, "tell me Mr. Blake, have you any idea of the number of times you have escaped from such devilish plans for your death? I ask this because it has been said that you, and Tinker for that matter, have been knocked on the head, gagged, bound, and been in various tight corners far too many times for credulity".

Sexton Blake stuffed more tobacco into his pipe and gave me a rather curious look.

"That" he said "is what I was referring to when I said that some of the authors had bolstered up

some of my adventures in order to thrill their readers. I must confess that Tinker and I have been in very many tight corners, but there have been innumerable cases of chroniclers describing such situations in a way hardly compatible with the truth".

"Does that mean that some of those situations you found yourself in during the Satira case were untrue?" I asked.

"Well, yes and no" replied Blake, "you see Satira DID plan to kill both of us in a truly devilish way, but I am afraid that author Robert Murray rather overdid things when describing them to his readers. Take the time when Coutts, Tinker and myself were supposed to be burned to death in the village police station. The story told the reader that Satira stretched a cloth over the top of a bucket of petrol and set the stub of a lighted candle in the centre so that when the candle burnt to its end the cloth would catch fire and fall into the spirit, causing an immediate explosion. What actually happened is rather different. Satira and his accomplices poured petrol over everything they could find that was likely to ignite quickly, and just set alight to the building before their hurried departure".

"H'm, that's very interesting" I said, "but surely such a thing would have been even more dangerous for the three of you seeing that you did not have so much time in which to escape from the situation?"

"Ah, yes" exclaimed Blake "but if you had read the story correctly you would know that we did not actually escape ourselves but were released by police officers almost immediately after Satira and his gang had left the building. In fact, they could hardly have been out of sight".

"True" I agreed, nodding my head "and I think I understand what you mean by 'bolstering' now."

Blake applied a match to his brier. "Good" he

said "but answering your question as to how many tight corners Tinker and I had been in - well, I'm afraid I've lost count, there have certainly been many".

At that moment there came a tap on the door of the consulting room.

"Come in" called Blake, glancing towards the door. My heart gave another leap.

"This must be Tinker," I thought, and as the door opened I could see that I was right.

Blake's young assistant appeared much older than I had imagined him to be, and yet there was a certain boyishness about his features that indicated that he was quite a young man, say about twenty-two.

"Hullo guv'nor" greeted Tinker, and then, on seeing me set opposite his master, "Oh! I hope I'm not butting in".

"Not at all" I said, "I am only ..."

"This is Mr. Bond" interrupted Blake, "He is an amateur editor, or rather the part editor of an amateur magazine."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Tinker, "that's jolly interesting Mr. Bond, I'm a bit interested in amateur papers myself."

"Are you really" I said, "but I wonder if OUR type of magazine is YOUR type?"

"Doesn't matter about type" replied Tinker, "its the production of the thing I'm interested in".

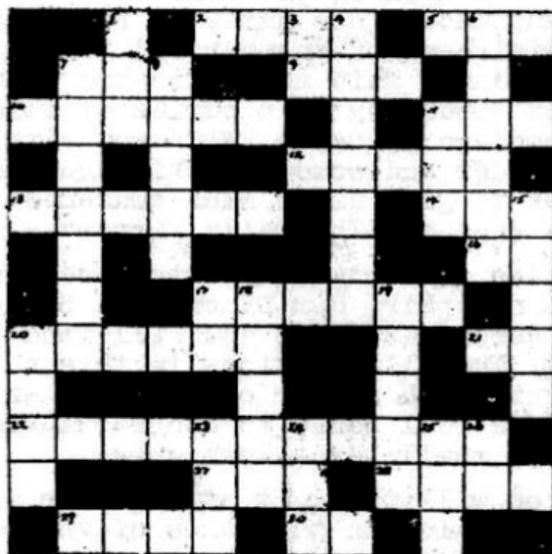
"Oh well" I said, "Ours is only a duplicated effort you know, hardly what one could call brilliant, but full of good stuff". (Contd.)

SEXTON BLAKE CROSSWORD:

By Rex Dolphin

Across: 2 & 12. As Welsh as his name. 5. Satira was Lord of The --- Men. 7. Blake's closest rival. 9. Coutts is a member of it. 10. Girl enemy & ally.

11. Familiar signature of the artist. 13. Associate of 25 down. 14. Pedro, for instance. 16. Reverse 21 across. 17. One of the Stuarts. 20. Andrew or Robert? 21. Initials of the Nasmyth girl. 22. The man himself. 27. Sometimes used by Kestrel. 28. The -- Move". 29. Muriel was her name. 30. Initials of a Hunter.



Down: 1. He wrote about the valdt. (Christian name)  
 3. Initials of a lovely lady. 4. Tinker's sweet-heart. 6. His plural is a famous Anthony. 7. Black creation of Hayter's, featured by 1 down. 8. Another black character, this time Teed's. 11. What all Blake stories must do. 15. Richard is his name. 17. Ames' initials, less a £. 18. Zenith's faithful servant. 19. Creed. 20. Evans' Invisible Man. 23. Count Bonalli. 24. Reversed initials of Brandon. 25. Notorious professor. 26. Behead 1 down.

UP AND DOING:

Do you listen to this B.B.C. programme? If you do you may have heard of your "up & doing" mag

Salutations to  
"THE GIRL FROM QUAKER STREET"

We have just been introduced to a new sleuth. As can be ascertained from the above heading this new solver of crimes is a woman and she is the creation of a member of the S.B. circle who wishes to remain anonymous. Her name? A rather strange one but reminiscent of another old friend, for it is Ourlilock Ohms. This sophisticated young lady detective is appearing in a series of illustrations in the new modern magazine "WIT" and with her long cigarette holder and somewhat chic dressing gown she promises to give us as much amusement in her way as does Jane of "The Daily Mirror".

"WIT" also contains long detective stories featuring a new pair, Rex Dimond and Sally Dexter, and we can assure you that you will find them quite fascinating. The illustrations in this new magazine remind us very much of our old friend, Eric R. Parker, and we feel bound to congratulate the artist upon some really excellent work.

Maybe you will think it strange for us to mention a new Magazine in the pages of an amateur devoted to old boys papers, but seeing that it's birth is partly due to one whose love of dear old Blake is undoubted, we felt that it was the right thing to do, and it really IS a fine little mag.

Subscriptions for "WIT" 4s.6d for four issues, should be addressed to BGM/Bizarresque, or 14,16 Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4. (Mention C.D. when doing so).

Contd. from Page 145:

The Collectors' Digest on the air. A recent "Hobby Horse" section of this programme introduced by radio star C. Denier Warren and featuring also Charles Hawtry and Jack McLaren was devoted to a discussion on "penny dreadfuls", and the "C.D." amongst others, was mentioned.