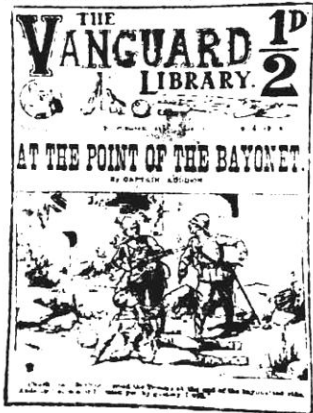


*The*  
**COLLECTOR'S  
DIGEST**

(Vol. 3) No. 35. November 1949. 1/1 Post Free

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36  
Pages.

## Gussy . . . . .

All the way from  
H.M.S. from a Chief  
Polly Officer of  
H.M.S. Fishon:

A colleague and I  
have more than a faint  
recollection of those  
two excellent boys'  
magazines the "Mag-  
net" and the "Gem".  
However, we have not  
given a thought to which  
of those two schools Grey-  
friars or St. Jim's did  
the Hon. Augustus  
Warcy attend?

Dear dear 'we Old  
Fags read the "Mag-  
net" and the "Gem"  
from the first numbers  
issued to the very last  
numbers issued. Gussy  
went to St. Jim's with  
Tom Merry!

Cutting Frank Rich-  
ards, the author: Wish  
you'd start 'em again,  
sir.

## St. Jim's Invention

ONE of the most intriguing bits  
of news I have heard lately is  
that of the "automatic bowling  
machine" which has been demon-  
strated at the cricket school run  
by Andy Sandham and Alf Gover.  
It took me straight back to the old  
days of *The Gem*.

Do you remember the school boy  
inventor, Kerr, who shared a study  
with Piggins and Patsy Wyan in  
the Wey House at St. Jim's? Well,  
about 30 years ago Kerr also in-  
vented an automatic bowler. It  
was a kind of windmill with a  
hand at the end of each "roll"  
and it could sling down balls cap-  
able of dismissing even the mighty  
Kilner.

If my memory serves me rightly  
the machine was wrong and  
started firing non-stop, putting up  
a creeping barrage of cricket balls  
which swarmed half the population  
of St. Jim's before the ammuni-  
tion ran out.

# CAKES—AND BUNTER WAS ONLY A SHADE

By Daily Graphic Reporter

**B**ILLY BUNTER  
would have loved it—  
particularly when the tea  
and cakes and sandwiches  
came round.

His admirers were meeting  
in Carleton-road, Holloway,  
N.7, yesterday to discuss the  
affairs of the Old Boys' Book  
Club.

It was a gathering devoted to  
the gems of literature that  
before the war related the  
games on at Greyfriars, Rook-  
wood and St. Jim's and the  
adventures of such characters  
as the intrepid detective  
Nelson Lee.

Bob Blythe, aged 35, who  
helps publish *Bible*, was host.

## £5 A COPY

Mr. Blythe, owner of every  
Nelson Lee from No. 1 pub-  
lished in 1915 to the last issue  
in 1932—and 780 *Magnets* gave  
a reading about the Remoat at  
St. Frank's.

Then Robert Whiter, of Wind  
Green, N.22, famed as the owner  
of a No. 1 *Magnet*, dated 1908  
read the story of Bunter's  
efforts in ventriloquism.

Leonard Packman, of Arch-  
dale-road, East Dulwich, S.E.22,  
co-founder of the club told me:  
"It has members all over the  
world.

"Most of them have special-  
ties among their collections,  
and we swap copies. Some old  
magazines that sold for 6d.  
are worth up to 20 s. copy."

"Nearly all have seen one of  
publications. But names like  
Charles Marshall, Frank  
Richards, Billy Soules Brooks  
and Maxwell Scott are not  
forgotten."

Daily Mirror  
11.10.49.

Daily Mirror  
16.10.49.

# THE DAILY MIRROR

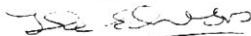
LIVE LETTERS

14.10.49

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

How nice of you to write.  
We have now heard from Frank  
Richards and will be giving his  
letter next week.

Kind regards,



Live Letters.

Daily Graphic  
17.10.49.



(Vol.3) No.35

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NOVEMBER 1949

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Developments: Verily, events move so quickly in the public world, that it is difficult to keep pace with them. Note some which have happened since our last issue and I'll vouch you'll agree with me.

First, fellow citizen Jack Wood thought he would try another John Drummond to see if he could be more successful than my co-editor. Jack's quarry was John L. Drummond, news editor of the Daily Graphic. Again it was a blank as far as tracing the Sexton Blake author was concerned, but Jack hadn't wasted his time. On the contrary, the news editor scouted a story in what Jack had told him about the hobby, and asked for fuller information. Following up, Jack suggested the Graphic send a reporter to the Old Boys' Book Club on the coming Sunday. They did so, and you see the result elsewhere.

Then, no doubt, many of you saw an amusing letter, and reply, which appeared in the "Daily Mirror" on October 11th. For those

who didn't. it's reproduced on the inside front cover, together with an acknowledgment of a letter I wrote the "old codgers" as they are known. Also letter from Frank Richards himself.

Following this, alert Bob Blythe had a chat with the "live letter" editors on the 'phone. He told them all about us; they were interested and suggested Bob get in touch with the features editor. Bob handed that job over to Len Peckman who, at the moment of writing, is busy on the story. If anything comes of it before this issue goes to press, I'll add a note elsewhere.

Hot on the heels of this incident, I received a letter from Frank Richards, with which he enclosed one from Mr. Sydney Jacobson, feature writer on the class 6d. weekly "Leader". You'll see these letters also on another page. The moment I'd read them I grabbed my 'phone and called the ever ready Len Peckman. He jumped to it, with the result that a meeting with Mr. Jacobson was arranged. If anything develops from that in time, that also will be referred to somewhere.

Well, that's not all, for Messrs. Charles Skilton are having a stand at the Sunday Times exhibition held at Grosvenor House, Park Lane (Oct. 31st - Nov. 14th) and on that stand will be a display of Bunter lore over 40 years.

Finally, A. J. Southway in far away South Africa is active seeing through an article on old boys' books which is to appear in "Outspan", leading journal in that part of the world.

Yes, all this, you fellows in connection with our once obscure now famous hobby. It just shows you what can be done when a lot of enthusiasts get together.

Dilemma: This, maybe, is hardly the place to discuss one's domestic affairs, but I have had so many kind letters (so many it is impossible to reply individually) of sympathy and offers of help following that hurried and rather dramatic postscript of mine in the last issue that I feel compelled to refer to it again. Moreover, it was perhaps not as clear as it might have been, for some of my friends got the impression that it was due to an accidental fire. Anyway, it does open up a question which to some extent concerns others as well as myself and as we are one big family, as it were, there is some excuse for me.

Well, this was the way of it. I had just returned from visits to several places where wives at least looked on their husbands' hobby interest with a tolerant eye, and, in some cases were as keen collectors. I had seen them together at the Dulwich meeting, the wives busy with the social side. With this in mind I arrived home to find bonfires had been made of a good proportion of my collection. You can picture then my feelings as I surveyed the ashes of what had once been treasured letters containing valuable information, file copies of the C.D., S.P.C's, C.M's, early Boys' Friend Libraries, Claude Duvals, Dick Turpins, other Aldines, and goodness knows what else. Incidentally, this experience will help to explain to those with whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting for a friendly chat why I have my correspondence addressed to the office.

Anyway, there has been compensation even for an unhappy episode like this, for I have been greatly cheered by the many kind and generous letters I have received, with their offers of help to replace my losses where possible, offers I shall be delighted to take advantage of as soon as I can get things straightened out.

Now I do from time to time hear of wives who do not take too kindly to their husbands' preoccupation with the hobby. Maybe it is understandable, maybe we are nuisances for the way we leave copies of papers lying about or occupying space for storing which they think could be put to better use. But that could be said about any hobby. Possibly, too, we are sometimes tempted to buy more than we can really afford, but in our case, at the present time at any rate, it is only like buying shares on a steady market, or where they tend to rise. If for some reason you want to unload you can, at least, get your money back after getting much enjoyment out of one's purchases.

However, where I am concerned, with all my problems, so long as I retain my faculties, the C.D. will always continue to come out about the first week in the month, even if I have to write my chat under a lamp-post on a winter's night in a snow-storm.

-----

**Disappointment:** Another doleful par. As will be seen from the Letter Box we are not to have Mr. E. S. Brooks' St. Franks story, announced so gleefully last month, after all. We are sure though, all will see Mr. Brooks' point of view. It will be difficult to pick up the threads after all these years, and he is a busy man. However, the Annual will still be full of good things as will be seen from a list on another page.

**Delight:** And now to something more cheerful. Close on the heels of Mr. Brooks' letter of regret came a packet containing John Medcraft's contribution to the Annual. It's entitled "The Comics in Their Heyday". It's in his best style, and you know what that means. To the old-timers especially it will bring a real whiff of nostalgia. You will hear all about those unique and remarkable serials which appeared in Chips and Comic Cuts in their great days, serials with such enticing titles as "The Man Without a Soul". "Beyond the Golden Mist", "Madam Bluebeard" and "The Vanishing Man". Younger members will hear about "Puck" and "Chuckles". Yes, it's the goods.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

**Last Minute Flash:** The meeting with the "Leader" representative duly came off and we are delighted to announce that there is every prospect of a fine write-up on the hobby generally in the Christmas number. And as the representative will be at the November meeting of the O.B.B.C. it is requested that every member should attend if at all possible.

**WANTED:** Copies of "Story Paper Collector", any numbers. Also copies Collector's Digest before No.21, except No. 10. J. Dow, 73 King Street, Aberdeen.

**FOR SALE:** Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, Union Jacks. All clearing at 6d. each. S.O.L's, Wide Worlds, 1/- each. Champions (1945-46 period) 2d. each. Stamp for list. J. . . Boland, 12 Cullenswood Gardens, Merton Drive, Renelagh, Dublin, Eire.

**WANTED:** Sexton Blake Libraries, 2nd Series, 171 or 723.

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

**WANTED:** Aldine Publications, Turpins, Duvals, Robin Hoods, etc.  
E. R. Lendy, 4 Nuneston Road, Dagenham, Essex.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MAXWELL SCOTTby Harry Dowler

(Continued)

Percy Tawn, proprietor of a very flourishing garage on the outskirts of Staithes, also told me many things about the Doctor. Percy, when he was quite a youth, used to work at "The Anchorage" and drive the Doctor on his rounds in the pony and trap. I showed Percy a small paper-backed book published long ago. I carried this book about with me a great deal while I was carrying out my investigations, showing it to nearly all the people I interrogated. It was No. 301 of the Boys' Friend 3d. Library entitled "On His Majesty's Service", a Tale of Nelson Lee and Nipper, and the German Spy Peril in our Midst. By MAXWELL SCOTT. Although I had read this story many times before, I read it again at odd moments, but generally at night-time in "The Anchorage". I used to pause now and again while I was reading the story and ponder on the strange and remarkable sequence of events. Maxwell Scott wrote this story nearly 35 years ago, and here was I reading it in the very house in which it was written! Anyway, let us get back to Percy Tawn. He held out the small paper-backed book admiringly so that his men working round him in the garage could see it. "He's got one of the Doctor's stories," he exclaimed. "Good old Maxwell Scott!" I liked Percy. His cheery sun-tanned and rugged countenance was a treat to look at, and the very next day a car suddenly stopped at my side in the High Street of Staithes, and there was Percy's cheery face with the door open, beckoning to me to hop up! He gave me a lift up to his garage which was on my way back to "The Anchorage". Our talk this time was mainly about football!

I talked with many other people. I had chats with a lady who at one time was a maid at "The Anchorage". I had another talk with a very old lady who, I gathered, went to "The Anchorage" several days a week to do the really hard work. I talked with Robert Ager, the ex-blacksmith and his married daughter. There was Harry Hesletine and his wife (a direct descendant of Captain Cook) who lived next door to the "Brown Cow". Oh, and there was Levinia Verrill in the High Street of Staithes. I must not forget the morning when I was slowly walking up the curiously winding but nevertheless very picturesque High Street of Staithes. I was suddenly conscious of a man directly behind me, and I

slightly turned and said some commonplace words about the beauty of this little fishing village. Then I came out with the query which had almost become a stock phrase with me. "Did I know Dr. Staniforth," he replied quickly to my question. "I should not have this finger if it had not been for Dr. Staniforth." And he held up one of the fingers of his hand! That started a fairly long conversation between us as we slowly walked along together until I got on one bus and he got on another.

I had opportunities of chatting with several men who had had accidents in the Grinkle Mines, and they all spoke of the kindness and great skill of Dr. Staniforth.

It was no secret in these parts that Dr. Staniforth was Maxwell Scott. Nearly everybody I spoke to knew that. Sometimes I followed up my first question by saying, "He was a writer, you know." And nearly always the reply came back in a flash. "Yes, I know that. He called himself Maxwell Scott." Sometimes these simple but good-hearted people would say, "Yes, didn't he write for the Boys' Friend? A green paper, wasn't it?"

Two or three old ladies in Staithes grouped themselves round me one afternoon when I was enquiring where the Doctor's branch surgery used to be. They all knew. It is now a cafe, and it gave me a pleasant thrill to have my tea in what was once the branch surgery of Dr. Staniforth.

Mrs. Bradshaw, who is now the proprietress of "The Anchorage Private Hotel", and has only been here for about 18 months, was frankly amazed when I told her all about Maxwell Scott, and showed her my plan of the bungalow and the exact spot where those thrilling and dramatic stories were typed out. I also showed her and her husband "On His Majesty's Service" By Maxwell Scott. After this they gave me free access to the room which was once Maxwell Scott's study, which is now their private sitting-room. One day Mrs. Bradshaw cheffingly remarked to me, "I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Dowler. I'll sell you "The Anchorage". You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

It may interest you to know that I first drafted this article out in shorthand, and afterwards typed it out just like Maxwell Scott did. It pleases me to write this. Also I have written it with dictionaries, reference books, letters, papers, and a plan all round me on the desk in my den. Just like Maxwell Scott! I have also made fairly liberal use of a little faded green book printed long long ago. The back is nearly coming off and it has been patched up with little bits of sticky paper. It is a book



which cost one shilling and is entitled "Just The Word Wanted". Yet this little book is one of my most highly prized possessions. On the fly-leaf there is a signature with the date June, 1892, written under it. The busy pen that wrote this signature stopped writing many many years ago, but the hand that wrote it gave terrific pleasure to thousands and thousands of boys, young and old. Yes, you are right. The signature on the fly-leaf of this little book is "John W. Staniforth". Scattered throughout the book are scores of words scribbled in the margins, and there is even a drawing all from the hand of Maxwell Scott. He sometimes used this book in his search for the exact word, and it gives me infinite pleasure to have and to make full use of one of the tools of trade of my favourite author.

Before I bring this somewhat discursive article to a close, I want you to accompany me to the last resting-place of this truly great man. He and his wife are buried side by side, not in the churchyard of St. Hilda's, but in the cemetery on the other side of the road. The grave has a simple grey granite cross over it, and it overlooks a wide sweep of the western hills which he loved so much, and where he had lived and worked for so many years. Let us stand in calm contemplation and slowly read the inscription:

In Memory of  
John W. Staniforth  
For 35 years  
Doctor in this Parish  
Born Nov. 14, 1863  
Died Jan. 3, 1927

---

WANTED: Magnets No's 1 to 6, 90, 100, 106, 110, 163, 207, 217, 263, 264, 266, 273, 283, 288, 308, 309, 312, 334, 343, 377, 382, 393, 411, 413, 417, 429, 432, 439, 448, 449, 648, 664, 668, 672, 775, 880, 938, 941, 942, 943, 948, 955, 973, 974, 975, 992, 1064, 1069, 1074. Condition good enough for binding desired. Would take volumes or short runs to obtain wanted numbers.  
Wm. H. Gander, P.O. Box 60, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

EXCHANGE Old Boys' Books for Fantasy Fiction. Lists exchanged or would buy. Henry J. H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

## Old Boys' Book Club

Holloway Meeting. October 16th

Coming after the successful meeting of last month it was only fitting that the October gathering took place at the home of the Nelson Lee authority, popular Bob Blythe, who together with Laura were the perfect hosts. Situated 'neath the shades of the notorious prison, where, no doubt, the famous sleuth helped to send many of the erring fair sex, a very successful and enjoyable time was had by all. Len Packman opened the proceedings by entertaining Mr. Here of the "Daily Graphic" and giving him important data about the club and the hobby. Then followed the usual reading of the minutes and correspondence, to be followed by the treasurer's report. One letter was from Charles Skilton, thanking the donors for the loan of books to be shown at the firm's stand at the forthcoming "Sunday Times" book exhibition.

The secretary then gave details of the poor response to the holding of the club social. On a vote it was agreed to shelve the idea and members gave various reasons for not having it. A vote of thanks was given to the committee for their good work on behalf of the social.

A proposal by B. Whiter and seconded by R. Whiter that postal members should participate in a draw for each Bunter or Tom Merry book that is issued in the future was carried unanimously.

Two readings were then given, firstly Bob Blythe obliged with a humorous chapter from Nelson Lee Library No.400 entitled "Under Petticoat Rule!" and secondly Bob Whiter carried on the laughter period with a chapter from Magnet No.1369 entitled "Bunter the Ventriloquist".

The congratulations of the club were extended to Peter Cushing on his fine performance in the film "Hamlet", a sheer joy and delight to all readers of Shakespeare including our own president Frank Richards.

Better support was urged for the "Collector's Miscellany" and members were asked to submit articles not only for this magazine but also for our own "Collector's Digest".

Bob Blythe surpassed us all with the best quiz ever yet devised. After a ding dong struggle of three rounds, Charlie Wright was successful, with Len Packman and Bob Whiter deadheading

for second place. Close behind in fourth place was Ben Whiter.

Next meetings:

Wood Green, Sunday November 20th.

Greenwich, Sunday, December 18th.

Will members who are behind with their subscriptions kindly forward on same to the secretary.

And so terminated another successful meeting with the usual good sale and exchange.

Attendance: Mr. Here (Daily Graphic), Len Peckman, Harold and M. A. Dubb, Frank and Mrs. Keeling, Herry Homer, John Geal, Ian Whitmore, A. Blunden, Charlie and Olive Wright, R. Deacon, A. Richardson, Claude Allen, Ben and Bob Whiter, Bob and Laura Blythe.

Three additions to our ranks were W. Lawson, W. H. Whiter, and W. Fenn of New Zealand.

BENJAMIN G. WHITER.

THE NOVOCASTRIANS STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' CLUB

A small but enthusiastic number attended the last meeting. They have no need to be discouraged, the London Old Boys' Book Club had small beginnings, and look where it has got to. It is true northern members are rather more scattered, but Jack Cook would be grateful if all in the vicinity of Newcastle would make a real endeavour to attend. His address is 178 Marie Street, Benwell, Newcastle.

AN INEXPENSIVE HOBBY: Collect Specimen Copies of Victorian boys' papers. I can supply Boys of England, Boys' Standard, Boys' Comic Journal, Boys of the Empire, Young Englishman, Boys' World, Black Bess, Black Highwaymen, Sweeney Todd, Blueskin, Tyburn Dick, Ching Ching, Herkewey, and hundreds more. 6/6 per dozen. Medcraft, 64 Woodlands Road, Ilford.

WANTED for collection: Magnets prior to No. 890. Gems prior to No. 1000. Populars, S.O.L's, Holiday Annuals, Nelson Lee, Boys' Friend. Pre-war Champion, Triumphs Hotspurs, Rovers, Pilots, Rangers, Adventures, Wizards and Skippers. Good prices paid. Books with school stories only. P. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middlesex.



Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

You'll see from one of Frank Richards' letters that no less than 134 people wrote to the "old codgers" of the "Daily Mirror" following the letter they published concerning the "Gem". A proof, crystal clear, of the remarkable interest in the papers we discuss here. I know several of the letters were written by members of our circle. It would be interesting if we could find out who the others were.

Still they come. The accompanying comment appeared in the London Evening News on Oct. 18th. Bill McGowan evidently was a devotee of the Gem in its early days, even though his memory did lead him astray when he said Kerr was the schoolboy inventor - he knows better now. And it's well over 30 years since our Martin Clifford thought

**GEM**

.....  
 Lots of letters, folks, about the old time "Gem", and "Magnet," all of them wanting a resumption, and calling on Frank Richards. Before we could print them, this letter reached us. I WAS very interested in the letter from Malta which headed "Gussy" in Last Letters and especially in the call to Frank Richards, the author, that followed.  
 May I say that Greffrath and St. Jim's are both still going strong in the "Bunter Books" and the "Tom Merry Books." And if no friends in Malta are interested in "Gussy" they will find him large as life in "Tom Merry's Annual" which will be out in good time for Christmas.  
 Yours sincerely, Frank Richards Martin Clifford  
 There he is the very gent himself's News-letters we Old Codgers as well as a host of readers, still want back the "Magnet" and the "Gem"!

of that idea. One begins to wonder if there is anyone in Fleet Street who didn't read the Gem and Magnet. Oh, yes, I can think of one. For, didn't James Agate, that caustic critic and writer of several books about James Agate, once say in the "Daily Express" that he had never heard of (or was it never seen?) a Magnet? Ah well, he's dead, so we'll forgive him.

+ + + +

In the September issue I said it would be interesting to know how many times Bunter's name appeared in the Magnet titles, actually, or by inference. Well, Len Packman has been at work with the result he calculates Bunter's name was actually mentioned 197 times and on at least 25 occasions he was indicated. In view of the scores of characters there are in Greyfriars lore, Bunter got his share, if not more so, as usual. In many other stories, of course, he was the biggest figure.

+ + + +

"Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" is out. So is "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School". Here are reproductions of the very attractive dust jackets. We can't show the colours, of course, but we can assure you they'll look very well on the bookshelves.

The long awaited Tom Merry's Annual has arrived, too. Reviews of all three books appear in this issue.

+ + + +



FRANK RICHARDS



FRANK RICHARDS

Well, I'm certainly not going to occupy all the Hamiltonian space this month, for I must get in this delightful sketch of the immortal Mr. Quelch by that Glasgow enthusiast, Dr. Wilson.

A JUST BEAST

By Robert Wilson

Some approve when Billy Bunter  
Proudly holds the stage.  
Others ever that Arthur Augustus  
D'Arcy is the rage.  
But I just smile when Bunter fools  
Or Gussy's hat goes 'squelch',  
For I am here to pay respect  
To Henry Samuel Quelch.

Even the name inspires respect. Henry Samuel Quelch. Here is no name to be trifled with. It stands aloof from the ribald limerick. "There once was a master named Quelch". But how to continue. Proper and effective rhymes are conspicuously lacking. And who, in any case, would dare the portentous frown which would greet his ill-turned levity?

Charles Hamilton has evolved many outstanding characters. Who is there among us who would not recognise, after only a few minutes' acquaintance, could we but meet them, Wherton, Vernon-Smith, Bull, Prout, Figgins, Retcliff and many more. Outstanding too were the vignettes of the many evanescent new boys — Jim Valentine and De Costa, to mention only two. But nowhere do we find character so solidly and dependably built up as in the many stories featuring Mr. Quelch?

His personal appearance is so much in keeping with his character. The tall angular figure with the grim and, at times, forbidding features of discipline itself, personified in this great man. That he is a great man, I am prepared to argue with the world, although he himself would probably be the first to break a lance with me on this statement. I can well imagine his instinctive reaction, "Pooh, nonsense."

His sense of duty, his unswerving rectitude and his physical courage all add stature to his portrait. He is a knowledgeable man, wise in the classics and other gateways to learning. Above all, he is wise in the ways of his fellow-men. Tolerant of their weaknesses, he is unbending in his condemnation of deliberate

falsity. A forthright man himself, he abhors tortuousness in others.

His patience with the backward pupil is noteworthy. He is a man of loyalties. Loyal to his school, loyal to his chief and loyal to his Form. No wolf ever sprang to the defence of its cubs with greater ardour than that which Mr. Quelch displays when defending the boys of his Form against the critical outsider. Within the classroom walls he is profligate of his terms of opprobrium by right of his position as mentor and Form-master. But the first breath of criticism from an unauthorised intruder brings him all bristling into the arena and rarely is he unsuccessful in confounding the calumnious wretch.

His tact, judgment and resourcefulness are worthy of mark. No situation finds him unready. He seems even to extract a certain amount of dignity from the booby-trap of which he has been the occasional and usually unintentional victim.

But this is no paragon whom I describe. His frailties are there, just as evident as his merits. His obstinacy has led to many awkward situations, as has also his quickness to take offence where no offence is meant. His pride too has occasionally led him to the inevitable fall. And yet, casting its benignant gleam over these darker patches of his make-up, there is his willingness to help and comfort the sore heart and the troubled mind. Many a harassed boy has come from his presence with uplifted spirits and a determination never again to fail his trust.

All the evidence goes to prove that he is held in esteem and affection by the boys of his Form. Witness their spontaneous and helpful reaction on several occasions when things have gone wrong with their trusted Form-master. Out-and-out rebellion has been evoked as resistance to a considered injustice. The indolent and shallow-pated call him a beast. The mischievous and careless admit somewhat wryly that he is a just beast. The industrious and straightforward see no beast in him at all. And this is as it should be.

Frank Richards touches in the portrait with a masterly hand and never falters in the delineation of his character. Long may the not-loud-but-deep voice of Mr. Quelch echo in the hearts of all Greyfriars adherents. And what more fitting a tribute to him than the words of Swinburne:—

"He is a man beloved, a man elect of men."

"BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY""BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL"Reviewed by Leonard Parkmen

Having seen a proof copy some months ago, I have been awaiting the publisher's release date of "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" with anticipatory impatience. Now that I have read this fine story during the week-end, I do not deviate one iota from the opinion that it is one of the best "Bunter" books yet.

The story and plot, with Bessie and Billy Bunter, "The Famous Five" and "Squiff" as the central characters, has a real "Christmas flavour", is full of humorous incidents, and needless to say is written in the usual Frank Richards style we love so well. It is, therefore, with the greatest confidence that I recommend "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" to all "Hamiltonians", who will, I am sure, vote it "a real winner".

Bearing in mind that I have always loved the Cliff House characters right from the early days of the "School Friend", it might be thought that meeting all my old "girl friends" once again in "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School" has evoked in me a greater enthusiasm than would otherwise have been the case. It is, therefore, an honest fact when I say that I consider the book to be streets in front of any "Billy Bunter" story yet published!

From the dust-cover jacket with its delightful picture of dear old Bessie and the lovely spread (not overlooking the "Tom Merry" books in the bookcase!), to the last page of the story, I have not set down to enjoy a book of this nature with such a feeling of satisfaction for years! The story and plot bring in the Greyfriars characters very largely, as well as introducing practically every well known character at Cliff House School. "Miss" Richards and Messrs. Skilton Ltd. are to be both congratulated and thanked for this excellent book which I, personally, shall derive much pleasure in reading over and over again.

The only criticism I have to make is in regard to the frontispiece. I feel that Mr. Macdonald should have depicted the girls in stockings instead of short socks!

Make no mistake, you Hamiltonians, this book is excellent. Take my tip, buy it, read it and jump on me if you do not endorse my opinion that it deserves a certificate of merit.



TOM MERRY'S ANNUAL (Kendeville Publications, 7/6 net)A Review by John R. Shaw

This long-awaited Annual is just published: the first of its kind for almost a decade. A nicely bound quarto size book of 300 well printed pages, it represents probably the best value for money among books of recent years.

Of primary importance amongst this feast of reading is a novel-length St. Jim's story. To relate how D'Arcy disappeared at Christmas-time, and how Tom Merry and Co. and R. R. Cardew — especially the latter — are involved, would spoil the story for readers. But I can say that this is one of the finest Christmas stories that Martin Clifford has ever given us.

All the stories as well as a number of excellent poems are the work of Mr. Charles Hamilton — mostly written under pen-names — and comprise the major part of the book. Rookwood School, Grimsdale, on the Yorkshire Moors, and "King of the Islands" all reappear after a great many years. The latter story especially evokes very happy memories of the Nineteen-thirties.

A very competent artist named J. Abbey contributes nearly all the illustrations, and an article on birds.

Among a number of interesting articles by various writers are two by Rex Dolphin, who is well known to readers of this journal; and a delightful nature story by Clive Penn, who contributed many stories of this kind to the old "Holiday Annual" — of which "Tom Merry's Annual" is a most worthy successor.

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WANTED Two or three dozen Magnets or Gems prior to 1939. Any odd numbers will be acceptable. The following numbers are for disposal, sale or exchange: Magnet 1383. Gems 1528, 1573, 1574, 1576, 1577, 1578, 1579, 1580, 1581, 1582, 1583, 1584, 1586, 1607, 1640, 1661. S.O.L. 178, 316, 352, 377, 406. Robert Pick, 3 Stongate Grove, Leeds, 7.

# The Nelson Lee Column

All suggestions and queries to Robert Blythe,  
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

This month I want first to pass on some good news which I feel sure you will all be pleased to hear. You will remember that in April last, when the exhibition was being held in London, I had the misfortune to have three Nelson Lee's stolen. Since that time, several of you have written offering your sympathy and the promise to help regain them if at all possible. Naturally, I have not been idle myself during the past seven months, but have had no luck. I began to think that they must have been the only three of those issues in existence, as it seemed that none of our collecting fraternity had them, or knew of anyone possessing them. Now, however, I'm pleased to be able to say that, thanks to the untiring efforts on my behalf by my friend and club colleague, Len Packman, my collection is in statu quo. You can imagine my surprise and delight when he turned up at my place grinning from ear to ear. Within a very few moments of my enquiring the reason for the merriment, I was making a very creditable effort to emulate the famous Cheshire Cat myself. So, many thanks to Len. Here's hoping that one day I may be able to return the compliment and render you as valuable a service. Some of you may have been wondering why I didn't mention Mr. Brooks' visit to the club in last month's C.D. The reason is simple, the copy was written before the meeting and was already too long for me to do him justice. This I propose to rectify immediately in the form of a brief history of the N.L., based on his answers to our questions at that meeting.

Our story opens (to use a phrase beloved of novelists) in the summer of 1910 when a young man of 17 walked into the Amalgamated Press Offices for an interview with the editor of the Gem, Mr. Beck. Mr. Beck was expecting the author of a manuscript story called "The Iron Island" which had so impressed him that he had asked the author to make a call with a view to publishing it in a subsequent issue of the "Gem". That young man was of course the author of the stories we admire so much, Edwy Searles Brooks. At first the editor thought he was one of his readers come to have a chat about the "Gem", and was greatly surprised to find that this was not the case. However, he quickly overcame his surprise

and got down to business, with the result that "The Iron Island" was published as a serial in the "Gem" of 1910/11. At the same time Brooks was commissioned to write full length stories of St.Jims and also to write for the Boys' Friend Library. This first effort of his to produce a St.Jims story was called "The Terrible Threes' Sub" and appeared in Gem No.146, (which I believe was published on 26th December, 1910, although the story itself was finished by the 21st September 1910). As for the Boys' Friend, an 11,000 word story called "Stage by Stage" was finished by the 19th November, 1910.

During the years that followed several other stories of St.Jims and Greyfriars as well as short stories appearing in other A.P. periodicals, flowed from his pen. Incidentally, I may as well state here that the practice of having St.Jims and Greyfriars stories printed under the name of Martin Clifford or Frank Richards was not to his liking. He would much rather have seen them appear under his own name quite apart from the fact that he felt it to be unfair to Charles Hamilton. However, he, as well as other writers, was employed by the A.P. and had to do as he was told. If he was instructed to write a Greyfriars story - well, it had to be done. This dislike of the practice of writing under another's name, and what was worse, having others write under one's own, is an aversion both he and Mr. Hamilton share, but it was the way things were done in the A.P. in those days, and had to be tolerated.

One day about the middle of 1915 a Mr. May, who had been made editor of a new venture, a detective weekly for boys called "The Nelson Lee Library", approached Brooks with the suggestion that he should write a story for that paper; Brooks agreed and the result was that in No.16 appeared the first story in the paper that was to make him famous. It was entitled "Twenty Fathoms Deep!"

At first Brooks was one among several authors including Maxwell Scott, G.H.Teed, and A.S.Hardy, writing for the new paper. Gradually, however, the other authors faded out until within a year he was sharing the story-writing with G.H.Teed alone. Finally, with No.109, he was given the sole responsibility for the stories, principally because the editor, May, recognised in Brooks the man he was looking for, someone with the gift of characterisation, ability to hold a boy's interest with a thrilling and adventurous, yet plausible yarn, and at the same time an author whose commitments were not such as to

prevent him giving his full time to the one paper.

It was at this period that the editor decided circulation figures needed a boost, and so he suggested to Brooks that he write a school story somewhat on the lines of those appearing in the "Magnet" and "Gem" as an experiment. This he did within a week of the editor's making the suggestion and the result was the famous "Nipper at St. Franks", a tale which was to be the turning point in the fortune of the "Nelson Lee". It was at first decided not to switch abruptly to school stories, but to introduce them gradually, alternating them with detective yarns. It was, however, very soon apparent what kind of stories the readers preferred, the circulation rising and falling sharply. The editor quickly made up his mind and within three months the matter was decided - school stories it was to be. However, an awkward situation arose and one that was never really overcome - the fact that Nelson Lee was a detective made it important that plenty of mystery should be provided, and this was a point upon which Brooks disagreed with the editor. Brooks contended that it would mean that the narratives would be neither detective nor school stories. Nevertheless, in spite of this handicap, his readers seemed not to worry, as the circulation steadily increased. So long as things stayed that way the editor was content to maintain his policy.

No particular school was in the author's mind whilst writing about St. Franks, but so as to make sure that as few mistakes as possible were made he compiled a large reference book with a comprehensive lay-out of his imaginary school, complete with scholars and staff from the principal down, as well as complete details of the surrounding countryside and its inhabitants. This reference book was so embracing, that it even included such information as the fare for the journey from Bellton to Bannington, which was 4d. return!

Brooks' method of writing was to produce a whole series at a time and when that was finished to commence another, the result being, that he always had two or three complete stories in hand. This stood him in good stead when he went to America some years later. He was a great believer in topicality in his stories, and anything he saw, heard or read, was all grist for his mill. Being possessed also of a vivid imagination he was able to write convincingly of things and events beyond normality.

With No. 338 the price was increased to 2d., in common with nearly all papers owing to the increased cost of production.

(That strikes a familiar note!) but far from causing the circulation to drop, it increased, mainly owing to the new ideas that were being incorporated, such as Nipper's Magazine, etc., all of which, including the St. Franks Mag., which came along later, were in the main written by Brooks.

The "Nelson Lee" was now in its heyday. The circulation figures are, unfortunately, not available, but the fact remains that it was fast oustripping its rival publications.

One major change took place during this period - the addition of new houses to the school in 1925 (O.S.537). This was the result of a discussion between Brooks and the editor, with the object of giving more scope to the stories and enabling the author to introduce more inter-house rivalry in school activities. Brooks set to work and revised his plans of the school, the result of which can be seen in the map given in No.537.

In 1926 it was found necessary to move the printing works elsewhere, and as the new premises did not possess the machinery to produce the 'N.L.' in its old format, it was decided to increase the size of the paper to suit the new circumstances, thus making a virtue of necessity, and after a great deal of advance publicity, the 1st New Series made its appearance. For a while all went well and circulation remained steady, or even increased, until that day in 1928 when Mr. May, the editor for so many years, retired, leaving the author/artist Alfred Edgar to take over.

Never was the old saying "a new broom sweeps clean" more applicable than now. Edgar was a man with ideas, ideas that he had long awaited to put into practice, and despite protests from Brooks, these notions were translated into action. It may be only a coincidence, but it is strange that Arthur Jones, who had been illustrating the N.L. since the beginning, disappeared from the pages at the same time that Edgar took over. There is no need for me to say anything of the rivalry between the editors and staffs of the various papers published by the A.P. - I have written of it elsewhere. Suffice it to say that not long elapsed before the picture changed.

Now, instead of a healthy circulation, figures were falling steadily. In an effort to boost up sales, St. Franks was wiped out and the "N.L." sent back to where it was in 1915, full of detective yarns. This was the introduction to the 2nd New Series. From then on, the story is familiar to most of you. The 'tec stories, although all written by Brooks under various pen-names (another of the editor's ideas!) were not successful, and the readers, surprised and annoyed to find the school they had

enjoyed reading about for years so summarily disposed of, demanded a return to school stories. So St. Franks was rebuilt! But it wasn't the same; Brooks did his best, but as he has stated, it was like flogging a dead horse, and by this time he was rapidly losing interest, likewise his readers. Small wonder that the quality of the stories fell. Finally, in a last effort, the old stories were revived in the 3rd New Series in 1933, but by now the damage had been done and after 25 numbers the Nelson Lee was merged with the "Gem".

Imagine Brooks' feelings, to see the paper that he had done so much to build, allowed to go to rack and ruin, and then to be asked to write stories which were to occupy the back pages of a rival paper! It is not surprising that very shortly after this final humiliation, he decided to sever his connections with the A.P. It must be gratifying to Brooks to know that in spite of all that had happened, his early stories have lived in the memory of his readers, so that today, the "N.L." is as much sought after as other, and perhaps better known, weeklies.

#### TITLES

O.S. No. 271, The Traitor King; 272, The Battle of the Giants; 273, the Lake of Gold; 274, The Return of the Wanderers; 275, The Study of Mystery (introducing David Goodwin); 276, The Lancashire Lad; 277, The Secret of the North Tower; 278, Missing from School; 279, The Clue of the Oil Trail; 280, The Ruined Lighthouse; 281, The Schoolboy's Patent; 282, Nipper & Co. in Lancashire; 283, Hendforth's Great Triumph; 284, Fatty Little's Hunger Strike; 285, The Jew of St. Franks; 286. Barred by the Head; 287, Something like an Ideal; 288, The Schoolboy Cinema Owners; 289, The Haunted House; 290, The Christmas Plot.

#### SERIES

##### 2nd New Series

- No's 1 - 4. Nelson Lee v. The Green Triangle.  
(Note: St. Franks is destroyed by the G.T. and Lee forms his "Cub" detective agency)
- " 5 - 8. Nelson Lee v. Dacca the Dwarf.
- " 9 - 14. Complete detective stories.
- " 15 - 28. Complete detective and complete short stories of St. Franks. (The short stories tell of the rebuilding of St. Franks.)

- No's 29-47. Complete St. Franks stories.  
 (Note: No.29 St.Franks reopens; No's 32,36,40 & 47  
 Complete detective and complete short stories of  
 St.Franks.)
- " 48-50. Gangsters at St.Franks.
- " 51-54. Barring-out against Mr. Pycroft.
- " 55-64. Complete School stories.
- " 65-70. The Second Visit to Northestria.
- " 71-73. Intro. Dr. Scattlebury as Headmester.

(Note: The Nelson Lee Column gets extra space this month,  
 and in view of the inside story we are sure it will be agreed  
 it is worth it. But it will probably mean the Boys' Leader  
 conclusion has had to be held over. - H.L.)

(Letter Box - contd.)

Nice Gesture!

13, Charles Square,  
 Pitfield Street, N.1.

8th October, 1949.

- Whiter Esq. Senr.  
 706, Lordship Lane, N.22.

Dear Sir,

I shall be pleased to lend you my copy of "Lambs of  
 Littlecote" any time you like to call and get it. Free of charge,  
 of course. Buses pass the end of the street - Brunswick Place.  
 Get off at Dawsons Reg shops and Brunswick Place is opposite.

Yours faithfully,

A. W. LAWSON.

(It will be remembered that in our last issue Mr. Whiter offered  
 10/- for loan of the "Lambs of Littlecote", a story he had en-  
 joyed in his youth. Promptly he got his reply. I asked per-  
 mission to publish it, for it is another example of the friendly  
 spirit which exists in our circle. - H.L.)

PART CONTENTS OF THE "ANNUAL"Something for Everybody

- The Collector's Who's Who (Many new names).
- The Comics in Their Heyday, by John Bedcraft.
- Magnet Masterpieces (a Review of the Series)  
Compiled by John T. Gerl.
- The "Gem" Reprints, Compiled by Leonard Peckman from the  
files of John R. Shew.
- The Education of an Editor, by F. Addington Symonds,  
first editor of the Champion.
- Castles, Crackers and Christmas Cheer (a review of the St. Franks  
Yuletide stories, by John R. Wood.
- The "Imitation" Gem and Magnet Stories, by John R. Shew.
- The Authors' Who's Who (second series) compiled by  
Herbert Lackenby.
- A Pleasant Evening, by Peter A. Walker.
- Cardew of the Fourth, by Roger Jenkins.
- The Champion 1949, by John T. Gocher, Junr.
- These were the "Bloods", by Herbert Lackenby.
- How They Arrived! (a great slice of St. Franks History)  
by Robert Blythe.
- The Great Nylon Mystery, by Rex Dolphin.
- A Novel Puzzles Section and a host of other Blake features.

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VARIETY! VIB!! VALUE!!!

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BE SURE AND ORDER BEFORE NOVEMBER 30th.

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7/9 Post Free





Lots of News from Frank Richards

October 8th, 1949.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I am afraid I am a little late in acknowledging the September C.D. for which many thanks. Good as ever - or better, if that be possible. Needless to say I found Leonard Peckman's article extremely interesting.

I was very interested too in your list of duplicated titles. Perhaps it may surprise you to hear that I don't think I ever duplicated a title in my life! It was active and superfluous sub-editorial work to gild refined gold and paint the lily! - in the shape of altering titles given by me. Sub-editors who made these last-minute "improvements" evidently never troubled to look out an old list.

I had a good laugh over Charles Wright's account of Gussy's toppers! I never realised before what a windfall Gussy must have been to his letter.

I have just had an advance copy of "Tom Merry's Annual". It is really an astonishing production, and how it can be done at 7/6 is one of those things no fellow can understand. It contains one story of 60,000 words - the length of an ordinary Tom Merry book - one of 25,000, one of 10,000, one of 8,000, and two of 3,000, not to mention Frank Richards' verses, and pages of articles and pictures. The old Greyfriars Holiday Annual is a poor little "also ran" in comparison. I have not seen such a book since those jolly old annuals when I was a boy in the early eighteen-eighties. 290 quarto pages, good paper and good printing. I was not surprised to hear that 14,000 copies have been taken up, still nearly a month ahead of publication, for really it is a prize-peeket. But isn't it jolly?

My "Lynwood" story will be out this month. I think I told you that this is published by Mr. Allen, of Stretford, near

Manchester, in a threepenny edition. Billy Bunter and Bessie Bunter both appear on the 14th. Did I tell you, by the way, that the "Felgate" stories are published in Raymond Glendenning's Sports Book, by Sportguide, Ltd. of the Greys Inn Road? Some time or other a Felgate periodical is to follow, goodness knows when. There will be a "Lynwood" story in a Christmas Annual that Mr. Allen will be publishing before long.

I was so pleased with Tom Merry's Annual when I saw it that it made me feel a mere kid of sixty-nine or so!

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

October 15th, 1949.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I enclose a letter I have received from Mr. Sydney Jacobson, who did an interview for the "Picture Post" a couple of years ago which you may perhaps remember. As you will see, he is interested in the "Greyfriars Association", which must mean the Old Boys' Book Club, and would like to do a "story" on one of the meetings. Could you let him have some particulars? I have told him that I am asking you to let him have the details he needs. I have sent him a copy of C.D., with an O.B.B.C. report in it, the September issue. Now, as it happens that this issue contains Leonard Packman's article, which I wished to preserve, do you happen to have another copy available, which you could let me have?

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

Mr. Jacobson's Letter

Dear Mr. Richards,

14th October, 1949.

I hope you will remember our meeting a couple of years ago, when I wrote an article about you for Picture Post. I am now on the Leader, and we have thought of getting a story on a meeting of the Greyfriars Association. Can you help us by letting me know when and where the next meeting will be, and if you will be attending?

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

SYDNEY JACOBSON.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

October 19th, 1949.

Many thanks for yours of the 16th and 17th, and your subsequent letter with the September C.D., for which I enclose stamps. I am very glad to have this.

I had a very pleasant letter from the "Old Codgers" a few days ago, and was told that 134 letters had been received on the subject! No doubt you have seen my letter in Monday's Daily Mirror.

You certainly do seem to have got a move on with the "Leader". I had a very pleasant letter this morning from Sydney Jacobson, in which he tells me that he hopes to "cover" the meeting of the O.B.B.C. on November 20th. I shall look forward to the account in the Leader, as well as in the C.D. It looks to me as if O.B.B.C. will soon be a household word.

Quite a curious thing happened the other day. The London editor of the Manchester Evening News wrote that the "Outspan" of Bloemfontein wanted an article on Frank Richards, and he is coming to see me this afternoon. This of course is very pleasant and interesting to me, but I shouldn't have guessed that they were interested in South Africa.

With kind regards, Always yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS

(Note: In our next issue will appear another letter from Frank Richards on a very interesting but rather different subject. Look out for it. - H.L.)

#### Disappointment!

"Caxton", 26, Briar Road,  
Bollard's Hill, S.W.16.

October 7th, 1949.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I am afraid I cannot possibly write a 5,000 words story for your Annual this year. I am exceedingly busy on a new novel, and although I've tried to start a school story for you on two or three occasions, I find I cannot get on with it. I am so completely out of touch with the old school characters that it would require an intensive period of re-reading and swotting up to get into the right mood — and it hardly seems worth it for a mere short story, especially as I am so behind with my other work owing to holidays. In any case, now that I have come to consider the matter, a very short story of St. Frank's would be unsatisfactory — and there is also the question of getting permission from the Amalgamated Press, which might be difficult.

With regrets, and kind regards,

Sincerely,

E. S. BROOKS.

Can Anyone Help?

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

Dear Editor,

In order to complete my records, I should be glad to hear from any collector who can oblige me with the titles of any of the following:- No.114, Schoolboy's Own Library; No.436, Boy's Friend Library, 1st series; Nos.616, 587, 588, 531, 528, 440, 248, 247, 245, 236. B. Friend Library, 2nd series. Nos. 7, 9, 37, 38, 39, 40, "Sexton Blake Library" 1st series.

Any help will be appreciated.

LEONARD PACKMAN.

3, Montgomery Drive,  
Sheffield 7.

Sept. 10th, 1949.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I should be very grateful to any fellow collector who can supply the original title and author of the following reprints in the Boys' Friend 4d. Library:-

No.687, The Stationmaster's Secret; 698, The Secret of the Missing Convict; 662, The Dead Man's Secret; 628, Bodyline Bill, the Bowler; 635, The Silver Dwarf; 607, Bravo, Sgt. Brady; 615, Last of the Cassidy's; 620, Nobody Wanted a Huggins; 576, The Man with Two Lives; 366, The Secret of the Roof, 372, The £1,000,000 Secret; 338, Buried Millions; 348, The Crimson Beetle; 300, Peril Pit; 364, The Man Who Defied the World. 289, War in the Desert.

All are credited to "John Andrews".

Yours sincerely,

L. M. ALLEN.

FOR SALE: About 20 1d. POPULARS (1st series) between numbers 60 and 89, or would exchange for SCHOOLBOY'S OWN LIBRARY. Nos. required are (St.Frank's) 4, 27, 54, 120, 336 and 369, (Bookwood) Any between Nos. 6 and 166 inclusive, also Nos.174, 206 and 262. (St.Jim's). Any between Nos.2 and 164 inclusive, also numbers 172, 176, 180, 190, 224, 230, 234, 236, 246 and 365. (Greyfriars). Almost any numbers especially before number 277. Must be in good condition with original covers. Particulars of numbers and price to L.J.Southway, P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

TRUTH IS STRANGER. - From 1906 to 1908 three remarkable series ran in the "Boy's Friend" - "Britain Invaded", "Britain at Bay" and "Britain's Revenge". They told mainly of the stirring adventures of the Villiers brothers, Stephen and Aubrey. Some criticised the yarns on the grounds that they were too far-fetched that the two boys fought the whole German army on their own. Well, if I remember rightly, they did capture the Kaiser. Anyway they were fine stories, and there is such a thing as author's license.

But were they too far-fetched? Listen to this. "Reynolds News" is making great play with a hitherto untold story of the war. The story that E.I.5 benned. They say "It is the story of two young men, little more than boys, who went to Crete after that island had been over-run by the Germans, who captured the Commander of the Sevastopol Division, who carried him around with them for more than a fortnight while they were chased from end to end of the island by tens of thousands of Germans, and finally carried him captive to Cairo.

Yes, truth is at least as strange as fiction.

NOTICE.- Jack Muriagh, of Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to apologise to all who have written him and received no reply of late. The reason for his seeming neglect is that he has been travelling about the country. However, he hopes to catch up with correspondence soon.

S.O.S. - We've run to 36 pages, and even then "Boy's Leader" story had to be held over.

MIDNIGHT FLASH.- "The Secret of the Study" is out. Review next month.

WANTED URGENTLY: Your Price Paid. Gems 819, 878, 879, 946. Can any Fellow Collector oblige? Leonard Peckman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED: Schoolgirl's Own Libraries, by Adelle Ascott and Gertrude Nelson. W. Colcombe, 256 South Avenue, Southend-on-Sea.

What about Your Questionnaire?  
We do want your name in the  
Collector's Who's Who.



All letters, manuscripts etc to be addressed to the Editor  
of Blakiana Section:-

H. H. Bond - 10 Dry Wen - Rhinwina - Cardiff.

#### THE ROUND TABLE.

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As I type these words it is just turned six o'clock on an October Sunday evening. Glancing out of my lounge window I see the darkness swiftly coming down and for the first time realise that the Winter is upon us. Looking up I see my Sexton Blake collection on the shelves and smile. "Thank goodness I have my old friend to fall back on during the Winter" I think. I wonder how many of you had similar feelings during this month. During the last six months it has been so gloriously summerlike that little thought has been given to Blake and his adventures. But it has not always been the same. In the days of the old U.J. we had a weekly treat that was always seasonable. In the summer you were treated to topical stories that definitely had some connection with the warm months. Blake visited Blackpool, Southend, or you were with him on a trip to sunny climes. In the winter, when rain, snow, wind and bad weather in general clamped down upon us we were treated to more suitable backgrounds. The Gwyn Evans Xmas stories were a case in point. The current S.B.L. do not reflect the seasons, but to those who have a collection of the old time stories the

coming months hold a hundred and one thrills. I don't suppose that I shall ever read all the Blake stories that I possess. Life today is too swift and there are so many things to occupy our minds to be able to read as much as we should like. Nevertheless I think that this will be a real Blake winter for the fans. There seems to be a lot more old numbers about this year and I know for a fact that many have increased their collections beyond their wildest dreams. I must also point out that with the dark evenings there will be more time to concentrate upon that article that you have promised yourself you would write for the C.D. I have told you all many times that copy is always wanted. At the time of writing the position is well nigh desperate. I don't want Blakiana to be an all-Bond effort. During the last 12 months a few old faithfuls have kept the ball rolling and I thank them profoundly for their support, but I do want to see variety introduced into our pages. Fresh names under the articles mean different points of view. We thrive on that sort of thing. So, now that ~~we~~ we have winter with us, how about it? Nothing is too long or too short. Even an original Blake story would be welcome as a change. I am afraid that the forthcoming annual will be mostly made up of items by Bond and Dolphin. Rex has been grand and has helped me out splendidly. Thanks again Rex!

And now I have to make an apology. Last month I published some notes from a letter which I said was by Wilf Darwin. I am afraid that I made a very bad error. The gentleman in question was actually Derek Ford of Lincellesfield. When I received a post card from him expressing surprise that Wilf should have the credit for HIS discoveries I could have kicked myself. I am wondering if Wilf Darwin noticed anything though? Sorry Derek to have made such an error, and sorry Wilf for using your name without cause. And while on the subject I must mention that I have had a couple of letters remarking on the John Drummond/John Newton Chance problem. John Cocher of Sudbury does not think that Chance masquerades as Drummond in the S.B.L. He thinks that the styles of the two authors are totally different. Well, to my way of thinking he is right on the face of it, but then the story that Derek sent along did not read like the usual Chance thriller and I am wondering if this is another example of ghost writing.

Either Drummond has blatantly copied Chance's sentences and called them his own, or Chance actually IS Drummond. But I cannot somehow link up the author of the De Havilland stories with the author of the current S.B.L. stories under the Drummond banner. I suppose we shall solve the problem some day. John continues his letter to the effect that he would rather say that author George Bellairs was Drummond, for here, he says, there is a great similarity in style. Another letter, this time from Walter Wobb of Birmingham points out that John Drummond has been using a character that always hitherto belonged to John Hunter, namely Inspector Pike. Walter is inclined to believe that Hunter and Drummond are in some way linked up. The problem is getting more tangled each month and reminds me of the other similar case some years ago when it was said that author John Andrews was a non-de-plume for almost every Blake author that had ever written. As far as we could find out the name John Andrews was a fictitious name used to conceal the identity of a host of authors when their stories were reprinted. I hope that the present John is not so ghostly as his predecessor. Somehow I do not think so. I believe that there IS a real John Drummond. Why do I think so? Well, I know of THREE literary John Drummonds already and it would be too much of a coincidence if someone picked on that particular name for a non-de-plume. The problem remains open to all to solve.

Cheerio for now.

H.L. Bond.

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**BLAKE FEATURES NEXT MONTH?**

We hope so if you will play up and send us along some reasonable contributions to include.

Owing to lack of space the "Blake and the First World War" has been held over until January number.

**DO YOU KNOW YOUR BLAKE?** You will be entertained and most certainly instructed when you read Rex Dolphin's "ARE YOU BLAKE CONSCIOUS" in the C.D. 1949 Annual.



Personally Speaking - About Blake.

A new feature from the pen of Rex Dolphin.

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Part 2.

Especially did the glimpses of foreign lands give me a passion for travel and geography. Sexton Blake led me to the Wide World Magazine and on to the National Geographic. His ability to mix with all nationalities urged me to take a keen interest in foreign languages. Interest was also stimulated in criminology and detective fiction generally, and an urge to write both fiction and non-fiction developed. I once thought I knew Sexton Blake so well that I could make a living writing up his cases. Editors thought differently. Sexton Blake also taught me chivalry (in its widest sense) and self-reliance. Faced with mental struggle for a difficult task, the thought "What would Blake do?" was always the key to the right course of action. (We could never emulate him fully, because of his superior mind and physique --- but we'll do our best).

There was the educational value of Sexton Blake --- a strange influence to find in publications rashly denounced by those who never read them as "pony dreadfuls".

No doubt the boy that I was thought that by trying to be like Blake he could become a detective himself. That, perhaps was the dream. The reality has been somewhat different, but the knowledge, as well as being interesting in itself, has certainly proved useful in life.

To be like Blake! The dream, in the old days, of many a boy. Blake was the ideal man --- a good man, a strong man, and a very lovable human being. Only the thoroughly depraved could think of Sexton Blake as his brother Nigel did, as a "snivelling Bivlo-puncher"! Even the worst of tough under-world characters respected him, trusted him. The aristocrats among the criminals openly admired him.

What boy was there who wouldn't have changed places with Tinker? There is the key to the Blake legend. For every boy did change places with Tinker --- myself included. One feels that without the healthy companionship and admiration

of this fatherless boy, Blake, an ascetic, a celibate, would have been no more than a very brilliant, tough detective. Perhaps worse, a ladies' man! With Tinker, he finds and gives affection. And we, changing places with Tinker, feel and give that affection too. When Tinker is missing from an adventure, the Blake-lover feels somehow cheated. He is --- because he's not there himself. He gets no more than a good average detective story or thriller.

Tinker is now inevitably growing up. That is all right, provided he doesn't outstrip the increasing adulthood of the average boy. For once he does this, his hold over the younger readers will slip, and Sexton Blake will become a veterans' hero. And veterans, however tenacious of life, have a habit of dying off.

It is not entirely because of Tinker's growing up that Sexton Blake has fallen on hard times. War, and the growing cynicism of people, have also had their effect. I shall continue to follow Sexton Blake through thick and thin, for he's still as good and active as ever himself. All he lacks are the right publicity agents. Blake himself would be the last to complain of that.

He was always a very modest man.

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THE END.

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"THE UNION JACK" 1930.

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|-------|----------------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1368. | The Twilight Feather.            | (1) | G.H. Teed.       |
| 1369. | The Mystery Of The Mailing Mall. | (2) | Gwyn Evans.      |
| 1370. | The Six Green Arabs.             | (3) | Gwyn Evans.      |
| 1371. | Burden Of Proof.                 |     | R.L.Hadfield.    |
| 1372. | Gangsters Gold.                  | (4) | Anthony Skone.   |
| 1373. | The Plunder Plane.               |     | Rex Hardinge.    |
| 1374. | False Lights.                    |     | Gilbert Chester. |
| 1375. | The Melodrama Mystery.           | (5) | Gwyn Evans.      |
| 1376. | Certified Insane.                | (6) | Gilbert Chester. |
| 1377. | Hidden Funge.                    |     | C.Colcoln Hicks. |
| 1378. | They Shall Repay.                | (7) | G.H. Teed.       |
| 1379. | The Green Jester.                |     | Donald Stuart.   |
| 1380. | The Man From Devils Island.      | (8) | G.H. Teed.       |

1381.	Paroled Boy.		Gilbert Chester.
1382.	The Sniper.		Anthony Skene.
1383.	The Brute Of Saigon.	(9)	G.H. Teed.
1384.	Quivering Steel.	(10)	E. S. Brooks.
1385.	The Broken Sphinx.	(11)	Gwyn Evans.
1386.	Burning Wire. (Reid Whitley)	(12)	<del>XXXXXXXXXXXX</del>
1387.	The Staring Stone.		Gilbert Chester.
1388.	Hunted Down!	(13)	G. H. Teed.
1389.	The Headsman.		Anthony Skene.
1390.	Jungle Justice.	(14)	G.H. Teed.
1391.	Overstalled!	(15)	H.H. Teed.
1392.	Black Brotherhood.	(16)	Gwyn Evans.
1393.	Drums Of Hate.	(17)	Gwyn Evans.
1394.	Prized!		Robert Murray.
1395.	The Unknown.		Robert Murray.
1396.	Blackmail!	(18)	G.H. Teed.
1397.	Shanghaied!	(19)	G.H. Teed.
1398.	The Grey Panther.	(20)	Gwyn Evans.
1399.	Disgrace!	(21)	Gwyn Evans.
1400.	Fear!		Gilbert Chester.
1401.	Sinister Hill.	(22)	G.H. Teed.
1402.	Killers Creed.	(23)	Anthony Skene.
1403.	Atonement.		Francis Warwick.
1404.	The Coffin Ship.		Gilbert Chester.
1405.	The Hate Doctor.		Anthony Skene.
1406.	The Man Who Sold Death.		Rex Hardinge.
1407.	Twice Dead.	(24)	Robert Murray.
1408.	The Fourth Lady.		David MacLure.
1409.	Crooks Convention.	(25)	Robert Murray.
1410.	The Shattered Room.	(26)	G.H. Teed.
1411.	The Last Of The Lynns.		C. Lincoln Mincks.
1412.	The Green Man.	(27)	Anthony Skene.
1413.	Gang Justice.		Gilbert Chester.
1414.	Sexton Blake-On gstor.		Robert Murray.
1415.	Manhunt!		Gilbert Chester.
1416.	Say It With Guns.		Rex Hardinge.
1417.	The Man Who Hated Xmas.	(28)	Gwyn Evans.
1418.	The Man From Chicago.		G.H. Teed.
1419.	Crooks Warning.	(29)	Anthony Skene.

Please turn the page for Keys to Characters:----

"The Union Jack" 1930 (continued).Key to Characters.

Huxton Fymer.	1.
Men Who Were Dead.	2. 3. 16. 17.
Splash Page.	3. 3. 5. 11. 16. 17. 20. 21. 28.
The Males.	6.
Roxane Marfield.	7. 8. 9. 13. 14. 15. 18. 19. 22. 26.
Lactace Cavendish.	10.
Ch. No.	12.
Genith the Albino.	23. 27. 29.
The Crime Minister.	24. 25.

Next Month: The UNION JACK for 1929.

Carefully keep these list of titles. When complete they will give you all the information you need about the character stories in the U.J.

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ROUND TABLE REMINISCENCES No. 3 @cc--

U.J. No. 1161 dated 9/1/26. Extract from readers letter:-  
 "I certainly agree with the majority of readers that the present run of stories is splendid, although I honestly do not think they are really so good as those in the good old time pink covers".

U.J. No. 523 dated 12/10/13. Extract from readers letter:-  
 "I am taking this opportunity to write telling you you are giving us the right stuff. . . By the way, an old reader of the U.J. - a man working for my father, and also the man who first told me to read it--says that the U.J. is not like it used to be".

Editors Note:- So where do we get them here? No wonder we think the modern Blake stories inferior to those of the old days. They always are - to someone, just as the current ones are 100% to the youngsters of to-day.