

The Collector's Digest

Vol.6.No.68. August 1952 Price 1/6 Post Free
Specially drawn by C.A.Chapman.

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Price 1s.6d.

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AUGUST 1952

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

The Start. At the moment of writing orders are coming in for the Annual in pleasing fashion. I am glad to note that every Questionnaire has the occupation of the collector. If all others follow suit it will add to the interest of the Who's Who.

Regarding the features you will see elsewhere a letter from Mr. C. H. Chapman relating to the illustrating of the Magnet stories. Now it is evident there is great interest in those artists and I am wondering if we can get a detailed record from beginning to end. We knew that Hutton Mitchell had the distinction of being the first and he continued until - I think I am right as says the Memory Man - No.38. Then came A. H. Clarke who continued until sometime in 1911. That maybe would be somewhere near No.200. Followed Mr. Chapman. Can some keen reader find the exact number? Remember Mr. Chapman was instructed to follow Clarke as closely as possible and he did the job quite well. But I believe it is possible to tell the difference.

Mr. Chapman, as he tells us in his letter, had the field to himself until 1928 - seventeen years! - then Leonard Shields came on the scene. Later came the tricky part, numbers where both had a share.

Doubtless it will take a bit of sorting out, but if a few of us get our heads together I feel sure we could get that record. Any volunteers?

Holiday. Next month, all being well, I hope to be taking my annual leave, and then having returned refreshed get down in real earnest to that other Annual. Truth to tell, I can do with a break, for life lately has been strenuous and no mistake. Needless to say, I hope to be in London town once more, for it draws me like a magnet. I shall look forward to meeting old friends and I hope too some I correspond with, but as yet not had the pleasure of meeting. Perhaps you'll drop me a line so that we can arrange a date. The air of London seems to act on me like nectar and if I am touring sixteen hours a day then all the happier will be.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

PENNY GREEN POPULARS for sale or exchange. Fine condition from 1912. Wanted: Gems, Magnets. Some for exchange. Richard Whorwell, 29 Aspinden Road, London, S.E.16.

WANTED: Brett's "Surprise"; early film magazines. E.V. Hughes, 38 East Front Road, Pagham Beech, Nr. Bognor Regis.

WANTED: 1d. Marvel No.393, Boys' Friend 3d Library Nos.2, 5,7,8,10,30,33,38,196,595, and Aldine Robin Hoods. Blight, Constantine Bay, St.Merryn, Padstow.

FOR SALE: Large collection of old Boys' books. Write stating requirements. S.A.E. please. Perks, Printer, Saltburn-by-Sea, Yorks.

SALE: Old boys' papers. Please state wants. A. Horsley, 60 Salcombe Road, London, E.17.

THE MEN WHO WROTE FOR BOYS

No.8 - T. C. Bridges

By Harry Dowler

To be known by your initials is a great honour. To have this honour conferred upon you it is necessary, or so it seems to me, to have some inherent quality that is not possessed by the ordinary person. In the obituary notice of T. C. Bridges that appeared in *Answers* of July 1, 1944, the writer constantly refers to T.C.B. with deep affection. He says all Fleet Street will miss T.C.B.

There is no doubt that Thomas Charles Bridges was above everything else a gentleman, and possessed in addition that elusive quality that raises one to the pinnacle of esteem, and one is rewarded by that quaint but decided honour, one's initials!

T.C.B. was an author and journalist for nearly 50 years, and during this period he wrote innumerable serial stories, short stories, and articles, and even serious works. He was greatly esteemed by his fellow writers, and Lord Northcliffe thought the world of him. We know very little about many of the men who contributed to boys' periodicals, but this is certainly not so in the case of T.C.B. His autobiography "Florida to Fleet Street" published in 1928 gives a tremendous amount of information about a kindly, unassuming, and very popular boys' writer. An autobiography, I always think, reveals the inner man with amazing exactitude. The writer endeavours to stress certain facts, but all he succeeds in doing is to reveal himself, his powers of strength, his weaknesses, his idiosyncrasies, and his whole outlook towards life and his fellow creature. T.C.B. comes through the dangerous task of writing his autobiography with honour and even distinction.

After finishing the book you can clearly see the kind clever face, the well-cut but not too smart suit, the dynamic energy, the entire absence of side — in fact a man who was thoroughly entitled to be known by his initials! The photograph at the beginning of the book amply confirms all this. You see a very handsome, distinguished-looking

man, clean-shaven, with keen intelligent eyes, who looks at first sight as if he were an actor, but on a thorough examination you can see Fleet Street definitely stamped all over his kindly face.

T.C.B. was born in 1868 and was the son of a clergyman. At the age of ten he went to Marlborough. In 1886 he went to Florida where he had a very hard and unsuccessful career on an orange plantation. After many adventures all over the western hemisphere he returned to England in 1894 practically penniless, but with a head stack-full of adventures simply asking to be turned into solid cash. And this was what happened. With characteristic determination T.C.B. assailed Fleet Street, and from that time never looked back. He wrote on everything and nothing. Articles, short stories, serials and books flowed from his hard-working pen. For nearly 50 years he contributed articles on all manner of subjects to Answers and similar papers.

In 1902 he wrote his first boys' story. Gilbert Floyd, who was at that time the editor of the Boys' Realm suggested he should write a boys' serials for this paper, and the result was "Paddy Leary's Schooldays" for which he received 15/- a thousand words. Afterwards he wrote further serials and short stories about Paddy Leary. And so he started writing boys' stories.

T.C.B. was one of the most prolific contributors to the popular press this country has ever known, and it is amazing that one man could have done so much work. Both serial and complete stories appeared in the Boys' Friend, the Boys' Realm, the Boys' Herald, Chums, the Scout, and many other papers, and many stories in bound book form stand to the credit of this hard-working writer. It would seem that nearly all these popular writers who gave us such pleasure when we were young were terribly energetic fellows. They must have dashed off their stories at an incredible speed, and I have often wished I could stand behind a Hamilton, a Henry St. John, or a T.C.B. and see for myself how they did these amazing record-breaking performances. The astonishing thing about T.C.B. is he did all his work with a fountain pen, for he says in his autobiography the idea of composing fiction while tapping typewriter keys was the most impossible idea.

He was a great friend of Sidney Gowing, better known to the boys of my time as David Goodwin and John Tregellis. Together they would go sailing on Gowing's small five-tonner yacht which he kept at Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex. Frequently they went cycling and fishing together.

In 1899 T.C.B. married and went to live on the borders of Epping Forest. In 1903 he and his wife removed to the wild table land of Dartmoor, only two miles from the great prison of Princetown. Princetown! How thrilling that word has always been to me. As a boy how I used to revel in stories of escapes on Dartmoor. How interesting and exciting to read a gripping yarn of prison life where a convict under cover of darkness, rain or fog, makes a dash for liberty. The great prison bell tolls ominously, guards are on every bridge, the police over a wide area are warned, everybody for miles round knows that a convict has escaped, and oh, how I want this poor devil to get away to freedom, honour, and a new life over the seas! Need I say that T.C.B. gave us many serials and complete stories of prison life based on his own extensive observation both inside and outside the great prison of Princetown.

These stories of prison life represent T.C.B. at his very best. He knew exactly what he was talking about, and he put a great deal more vim and dramatic power into his convict yarns than he did with his other stories. He was not a great writer. He certainly worked hard to master his chosen calling, and his stories were certainly not lacking in authenticity. But he was never more than what might be termed a competent writer and journalist, just the same as scores of other writers who earned a good living by sheer quantity rather than by quality. Maxwell Scott did thrill you in spite of his scores of machine-like words and phrases; Henry St. John both thrilled you and made you laugh; Charles Hamilton had such a charming and humorous style that he easily became first favourite of the authors who delighted us in the days of our youth. But the stories of T.C.B. apart from his prison stories were flat, colourless, lacking in dramatic power, and as for humour, I cannot recall that I ever laughed once while reading one of his stories.

He was rather more interesting when writing as "Martin Shaw". "Young Strongbow" in Vol. 3 of the Boys' Realm was

certainly much superior to "Paddy Leary's Schooldays". Sometimes he wrote as "Christopher Beck" and it would seem to a student of literature that he chose this pen-name for the stories he turned out when he was not quite up to the mark! He also wrote a large number of complete stories under the name of "John Stanton".

T.C.B. made money by the sheer volume of his work, and he seems to have used it wisely. From Dartmoor the Bridges went to North Bucks. where they bought a lovely house, "The Old Manor" at Weyendon. This was a delightful old-world country house where they had kindly neighbours, good golf, and according to T.C.B. everything that one could desire. It is interesting to note that this house was later on for many years the home of William Strong, the famous etcher and painter who died this year.

In a very friendly letter I received from T.C.B. in May, 1939, he states they were now living in a service flat at Torquay. He had passed "three score and ten", slackened up a little, but still contributing to the Scout, B.O.P., and the Children's Newspaper.

He died in June, 1944, and with the exception of Charles Hamilton, he was probably the last of the contributors to those long extant boys' papers now gone for ever, but which happily survive in our collection.

Although not a particular favourite of mine, T.C.B. undoubtedly contributed in large measure to those happy days when I used to go into the newsagent's shop next door to my home with a penny, and sometimes come out with a large green paper, and sometimes with a large pink paper, and sometimes with a large white paper. Oh, happy days!

(Letter Box continued. Miss Stevens' letter.)

describes their holiday travels about the world. Frank Richards is a boys' writer and I expected to read about his boyhood and friendship with the boy on whom he founded Harry Wharton. I should also have liked to have heard some details about the many pre-Gem and Magnet stories he wrote.

Yours sincerely,

SHEILA STEVENS.

(Miss Stevens chides Frank Richards yet when his famous characters make such an impression it seems to me that underlying her displeasure there's a tribute to the magic of his pen. - H.L.)

HAMILTONIA

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

What do you think to this for a great item of news, Oh ye Hamiltonians - another Autobiography is in the process of being written, none less than that of C. H. Chapman! I first got the tip from Stanley Smith of Basingstoke. He told me that on visiting a Show at Reading he came across the manager of the Reading and Berkshire Review. In the course of a chat Mr. King told him that someone had suggested to Mr. Chapman that his autobiography would make interesting reading. Mr. Chapman liked the idea and straight away got busy with an outline of story and some sketches.

When I heard of this I promptly wrote the Reading and Berkshire Review asking if they had any objection to the news being mentioned in the C.D. You'll see their reply in the correspondence columns. Moreover they kindly sent me a copy of the paper for July in which further news of the event appears as follows:

Chapman's Story Next.

Talking of Frank Richards' autobiography inevitably suggests a companion volume from our own Charles Chapman, who has a first-class tale to tell and illustrate.

When I saw him a few days ago he had already begun to assemble his material right back to his schooldays when with one or two classmates he ran the "Kendrick Comet". One of his immediate needs is to get hold of copies of the "Comet", period 1896-7 and he asks whether there are any of his contemporaries among "Review" readers who might have one or two among the treasured relics of their schooldays. He showed me a design for a book cover, and that alone I think would be a seller.

A feature of Chapman's book will be the illustrations. His only difficulty will be knowing which to leave out."

The Review for July also contains a very interesting account of what happened after the publication of the interview with C. H. Chapman in the March number and the notice which appeared in the C.D. It says:

"The Circulation Manager has been sending out copies all over the British Isles and quite a few overseas. The latest application comes from Mr. E. C. Carter of Kingsford, New South Wales, whose letter addressed: "The Reading & Berkshire Review", England, found its way here without difficulty (five days by air).

How did all these Billy Bunter fans get to know about the story in the Review? The "Collectors' Digest" published a most complimentary notice, and news also passed round among the Old Boys' Book Clubs which flourish in many parts of the country."

Well, seems we've been at it again, doesn't it? And we'll await more news about Mr. Chapman's activities with interest.

I am indebted to Sydney Smyth, staunch Australian Hamiltonian, for copy of a very interesting article which appeared in one of their papers recently. The name of the paper does not appear but seizing on a clue I think I can say it is the "Sydney Morning Herald". It is quite a long article with an illustration by Warwick Reynolds and carries a heading across three columns, "Billy Bunter Stole the Show". The writer, Edward C. Snow, it is particularly interesting to note stated "A Former Sub-editor of the Magnet and Gem now living in Australia."

Mr. Snow makes several comments which are worth noting; on the other hand his memory seems to fail him here and there. He starts off:

~~"Characters in fiction are similar to children: those who create them cannot control their individual popularity - or lack of it.~~

Take the case of William George Bunter, well-known to older-generation students of schoolboy fiction and recently given a new lease of life in television in Britain.

Bunter was one of the many brain-children of that prodigious writer Charles Hamilton, who introduced him into the Greyfriars series of the Magnet Library, in 1909, with qualities that gave him a high nuisance value

in plot construction.

Quite recently Hamilton said: "Bunter was not a nice fellow and it was never intended he should attain the fame he has acquired."

While Bunter's counterparts in the St.Jim's and Rookwood schoolboy stories have faded into obscurity, he has won something of the status of an immortal."

It would appear from that last statement that Mr.Snow has not heard of the Tom Merry books, Tom Merry's Own, etc Note, too, that 1909. He goes on to say:

"Charles Hamilton who wrote under many pretentious pen-names began his career as a teller of schoolboy tales with a short story in Pluck Library of St.Jim's in 1906. He was then 34.

His oldest characters are George Figgins and Jack Blake. Tom Merry the central figure of the Gem Library transferred from another school to St.Jims with Manners and Lowther in No.11 of the Gem in 1907. Harry Wharton and Co. began their adventures in the Magnet in 1908, but these early stories lacked most of the characters who were later to make the stories so famous and successful.

Then Bunter arrived, bringing with him a complete set of commandments, chief of which was: "Any form of beastliness committed in obtaining extra tuck is perfectly fair play."

It would appear from this last par, coupled with what he says earlier about 1909, that Mr. Snow was under the impression that Bunter wasn't in from No.1 but "arrived" like Johnny Bull, Vernon Smith and others, which is a curious mistake for one who was at the inside of things to make. Nevertheless the following revelations are interesting and useful to collectors of Hamilton lore.

"The early formula of the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' yarns lay in close teamwork between the editorial staff - with the correspondence of readers as a guide - and the author.

Hamilton, in turns, followed the policy and ideas of such schools as Dulwich, Rugby, and Charterhouse to teach boys to be good losers in the world of sport, business and society and to put up with petty troubles and inconveniences without sneaking and complaining.

Artists were specially chosen who were able to capture the atmosphere of the playing fields and the river sports, sculling shells, etc.

Then a major policy change was introduced. After ten years the author - who varied residence between Monte Carlo, the north of France and a farm in the south of England - introduced Talbot into the St.Jims yarns. (Rather less than ten years. - H.E.)

Talbot was a boy member of a gang of criminals, intent on organised burglary. The editors recorded a sharp increase in the circulation.

The formula for this series, known as 'The Toff Yarns', was to write it backwards and use the opening chapters as trailers. The chapters were also crossed so that the healthy life of the school and the criminal conspiracy were concomitant with each other.

From 1915 onwards Tom Merry and Harry Wharton stepped from the central limelight to the central background. This was because readers were wanting stronger meat - the more lurid adventures of cads, bounders and blacksheep with retribution laid on thickly.

During these changes, however, Bunter lost no ground, either in weight or popularity.

The next ten years saw as choice a collection of bad lads introduced into the yarns as ever left an author's pen. Skinner, Snoop, Vernon-Smith, Angel, Carne and Loder graced (or disgraced) the Greyfriars series while the St.Jims series were augmented by Cutts, Knox, Levison, Cardew and Racke.

Rookwood school had one sarcastic character named Valentine Mornington, whose studied insolence to his masters was very popular with the readers of the 'Boys' Friend'.

Naturally, when the aggregate of bad boys became too great for the balance of good ones, reformation set in. Reformation of a sort, that is, for the bounder never became a Tom Merry or a Harry Wharton.

They became a 'new type' - plucky, but still aloof; open-handed in deed, but ungenerous of mind; sneering at what others respected, but showing up magnificently in a crisis.

By 1919 the English school story business had boomed to fairy tale proportions, two publications had grown to ten, and two annuals, dealing with twenty fictitious schools had emerged. With a weekly circulation of a million and a quarter, Amalgamated Press, London, had become one of the world's largest publishing houses and its chief, Lord Northcliffe, one of England's most powerful men.

In their 40 years of life, the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' had many chief editors, sub-editors and contributors to help Charles Hamilton turn in his world's record output. That his 60 million words were produced in correct English was truly remarkable in a century of high speed and inevitable errors.

The formula for Hamilton's deputy writers, who managed about 10 per cent (rather more - H.L.) of all that was published, was to ensure that any sort of schoolboy delinquency was adequately punished. Stories of that type filled the gap which exceeded Hamilton's capacity.

His great success lay in the more subtle foundations of nomenclature and two stories in one. He wrote for pupil and master in one narrative.

Interspersed with rollicking adventures were Shakespearian quotations and expressions from 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' with aphorisms from Greek and Roman poets and philosophers to entertain senior readers.

Charles Hamilton's main reason for success is no trade secret; it lay in the fundamental gift of nomenclature. In order to make his characters live and last his lifetime careful consideration had to be given to alliteration, relevancy, class and vocation.

The author's ability in that respect has been admired or grudgingly admitted the world over.

The full details of the Bunter formula were worked out only over a long period - as indeed was the formula for every character. In the stories - but the Bunter recipe obviously had a 'little extra something' for he has outlived all his contemporaries."

Well, that's that. I've had a real sub-editor's job in cutting the lengthy article to the space available. However, it's been worth while for it is interesting to

learn what a man who was in the know thinks about it all, even if Mr. Snow does get a little off the rails at times. And once again it's significant when a leading newspaper at the other side of the world will allow so much space to be devoted to Hamiltonia.

The New Tom Merry Books. June.

No.7. D'ARCY IN DANGER

By Gerald Allison

It was always the rule, that whenever the boys at St.Jims or at Greyfriars had to shelter from the rain, they bumped into an adventure. This story is no exception.

Readers will find plenty of excitement with the well known features of the Charles Hamilton crook story. A jewel-robbery; thieves roaming the dormitories; a cryptogram - elementary, I am afraid; and the police at a loss. All excellent fun.

Just one rather pedantic point, I have often longed to make. Shakespeare's poem, "When icicles hang by the wall", in which "Merion's nose looked red and raw", is not a ballad. It is a lyric.

"MAGNET" TITLES (Contd.)

S denotes "Substitute"

- 950, The Ragging of Mosso. 951, Harry Wharton's Feud.
- 952 (S) The New Boy's Secret. 953 (S) The Mystery of Popper's Island.
- 954 (S) For Another's Sake. 955 (S) Bunter's Treasure Trove.
- 956, The Persecution of Billy Bunter. 957, Bunter's Barring-in.
- 958, The Slackers' Awakening. 959, The Punishment of Ponsonby.
- 960, The Joker of Greyfriars. 961, The Nabob's Double.
- 962, The Peril of the Night. 963, Outward Bound.
- 964, In Perilous Seas. 965, Harry Wharton & Co. in India.
- 966, Bound for Bhanipur. 967, In the Heart of the Himalayas.
- 968, The Terror of the Jungle. 969, The Nabob's Rival.
- 970, From India to Greyfriars. 971, Coker the Rebel.
- 972 (S) Chums Through Thick and Thin. 973, Asking for Trouble.
- 974 (S) The Suspected Form-Master. 975, The Swot.
- 976, The Ishmael of the Form. 977, The Deserter.
- 978, Nobody's Chum. 979, Bob Cherry Wins Through.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

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All communications to Robert Blythe,
46 Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

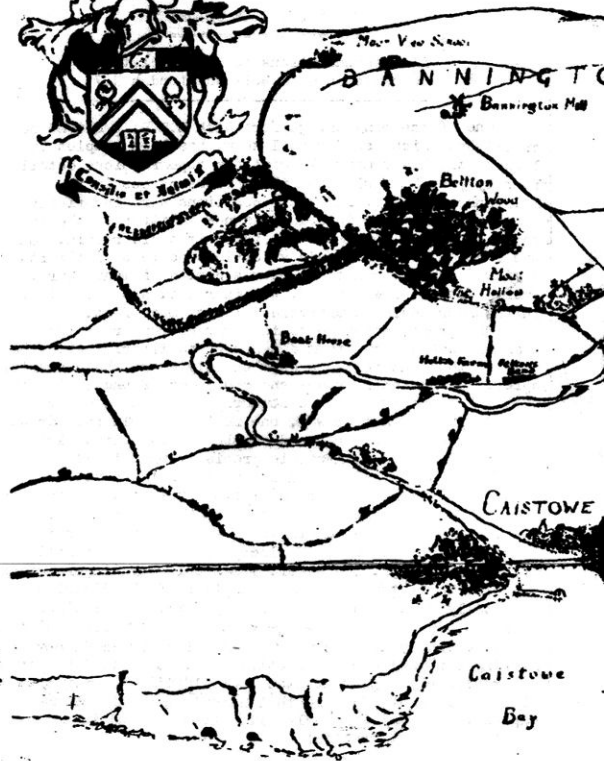
One of the many things for which E.S.B. received no credit and which, so far as I know, has been completely overlooked, was his remarkable gift for topographical detail. Year by year he would describe various places in the St. Franks locality, and their positions were invariably the same. If, when he introduced a new addition to the landscape, wherever he placed it, there it would remain. On the face of it this sounds so obvious as to be not worth saying. But to remember, over a period of many years, every feature, new and old, was in relation to all others in the surrounding countryside, was no mean feat.

The great advantage to the average reader of long standing was to give them a sense of familiarity with the area so that one felt one knew exactly where the characters were enacting their scene, and could have found one's own way back to St. Franks or elsewhere, as the case may be.

To put it another way, one felt one could have drawn a map, so vividly did Brooks describe the locality. And that, to cut a long story short, is precisely what I have attempted. And all being well you should find it on the next page.

I haven't seen the result myself yet, and possibly the various features are no more than blobs with names over them. If so, the agency is in no way to blame, for reducing a map from 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 16" to foolscap size must be bristling with difficulties. However, I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

I'm well aware that my conception of the district may be totally opposed to some strongly formed conclusions of your own, and if so I'd be grateful if you'd write and tell me so, giving your reasons, because if I have made any glaring errors I want to rectify them. Also if I've missed any reasonably important place out I'd like to know that too, although I might add here that Shingle Head Lighthouse doesn't appear because it is a half mile off-shore and is consequently just off the map! /



Map View North

BANNINGTON

Bannington Mill

Belton

Hollow

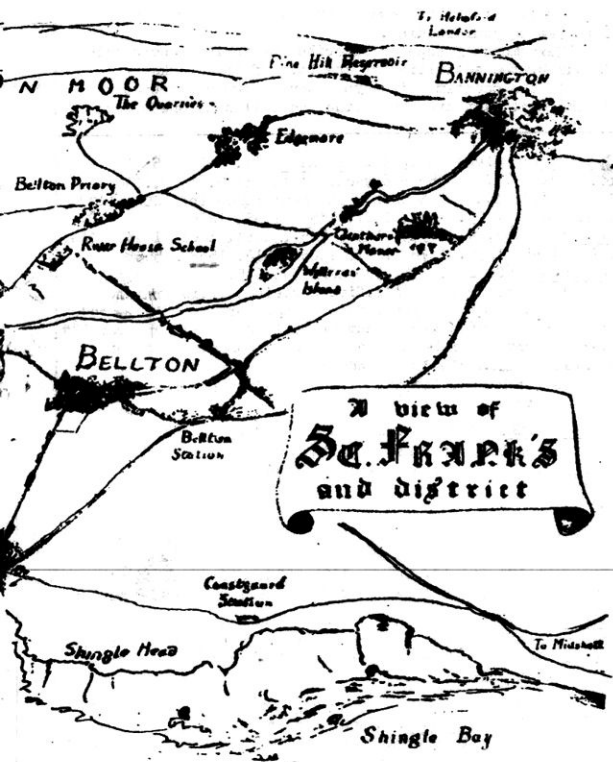
Boat House

Hollow Farm

CAISTOWE

Caistowe

Bay



Well, here it is, and I trust it will give added interest to your reading.

Next month I hope to describe the various spots made famous by the activities of the boys of St. Franks.

In the meantime, if anyone would like a spare copy of the map, just drop me a line and I'll send one along.

CAN ANYONE please help with Magnets 881, 882, 925; 10/- each offered. 737 to 959 3/6 each; 1219, 1349, 1350, 1365, 1381, 1382, 1385, 2/6 each. And your price for 1400, 1402, 1403, 1472, 1475, 1476, 1481, 1493, 1495, 1496. Gems 867, 919, 928, 973, 1456, 1457, 1461, 1462, 1463, 1465, 1466, 1468, 1470, 1478, 1497, 1505, 1513, 1538, 1555. Populars 268, 274, 275, 380-400, 595-615.

I am prepared to sacrifice certain numbers from my collection, year for year, in exchange for any of the above. Even the help of a single number will be greatly appreciated. Lists of any other Magnets and Gems welcomed. Cost of airmail replies gladly refunded. Charles van Renen, Box 50, Uitenhage, Cape Province, South Africa.

FOR EXCHANGE: Several complete series of Magnets, also assorted numbers of Gems, S.O.L's and Bunter Books. S.A.E. for details to H. Bloom, 22 Clova Road, Forest Gate, London, E.7.

FOR SALE: Good condition, Magnets 14 copies 1920-1924; 32 copies 1935-1938. Gems, 18 copies, 1935-1938. Boys' Realms (2d) About 150 copies 1923-1926 (long runs). Also many 10d and 1/- Chums, 1921-1925. First Class condition. Reasonable offers to Ingram, 97 Tottenhall Road, Wolverhampton.

WANTED: Magnets between 700 and 900 or Bound Copies. Pre-war Hotspurs, Triumphs, Skippers, Adventures, Wizards, Rovers also collected. Lists to Church Cottage, Laleham, Nr. Steinae, Middlesex.

FOR SALE: 150 Nelson Lees (old and new series) 8 vols. Chums. Send for list. Wanted: Schoolboys' Own Library. A.C. Matheson, 11 Ackergill Street, Wick, Caithness, Scotland.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB
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London Section. East Dulwich. July 20th, 1952.

Another enjoyable chairman's meeting with Len in sparkling form. A well balanced agenda was proceeded with and amongst those present to enjoy this was Myer Jacobs, late of Italy, where in the course of his studies he enjoyed the relaxation of Greyfriars stories. After the usual formalities Bob Blythe delighted us with another Nelson Lee reading and this came from No.536, Old series, viz "The Terror of the Pacific". Len's quiz was very popular and it was Charlie Wright who gave most answers to the 3-part competition; 2nd was Josie Packman, and 3rd, Ron Deacon. Ron, not to be outdone, gave a splendid reading from an article he had written on the "Boys' Magazine", and the company must have enjoyed it as the result of the ten question quiz fully shewed. Ray Hopkins won by a neck as it were with five sharing 2nd place. These were Len and Josie Packman, John Geal, Bob Blythe and Bob Whiter. Both the quiz compilers provided suitable prizes. The only disappointment was the inability of doyen Arthur Lawson to give one of his fine talks on the Victorian papers. Amongst the correspondence was the good offer of "Red Magnet" Robby to hold the usual Hove meeting once again, and after discussion it was provisionally fixed for Sunday September 21st, with the proposed date of the August meeting at Wood Green on the 17th. The grateful thanks of the club were afforded to Robby as the Hove meeting is one of the highlights of the year. And so after a very full and enjoyable meeting callover was sounded and homeward bound went the London members of the Brotherhood of the Happy Hours safe in the knowledge that the new Buses that have replaced the old trams may have an adventure for them to enjoy like the famous Sexton Blake Proud Tram Series of stories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

Northern Section. Meeting, Leeds, July 12th, 1952.

A pleasant surprise was the presence of Cliff Beardsell, of Stockport. He was one of a baker's dozen who took part in an entertaining evening at the height of the holiday season.

Secretary Norman Smith, having read the minutes, gave details of a "Trip to York" on July 20th, where those taking part would be met by Jack Wood and myself. It was hoped to visit a modern ice-cream factory and, if fine, journey up, or down, the river which flows through the ancient city.

"Top of the bill" for the evening was Gerry Allison. One would have thought he would have dried up for ideas by now, but not on your life. Having told of some substantial additions to the library, bringing the total books to the region of 2000, and a record in borrowing during the month of £5.15.4., he explained a new game he had devised. This he called "Doubles". 100 neatly written slips were laid out on chairs. Another 100 were deposited on a table. Those taking part had to pick up a slip from the table, glance at the name thereon, and find its twin on the chair. Thus, Sidney Drew-Ferrers Lord; Trevor-Treluce. On succeeding, he, or she, picked up another slip and went on the hunt again. Some were a little breathless at the finish. There were three prizes: Cliff Beardsell came out first with sixteen finds, followed closely by Norman Smith and Breeze Bentley. It was right good fun.

Horace Twinham then read a very entertaining Rookwood story which was much enjoyed.

Then refreshments and chatter.

Next meeting, August 9th.

H. LECKENBY,

Northern Section Correspondent.

Postscript: The Trip to York went off exactly according to plan. It was a fine day and the event thoroughly enjoyed.

Merseyside Section Meeting. Sunday, 13th July, 1952.

The meeting opened 7.30 p.m. to the usual attendance. The chairman commenced with a talk on club matters; he mentioned that a telegram had been sent to Edna wishing her a pleasant vacation. He thanked George Simpson for his generous gift of books, value 5/-, to the library, also another member for a number of "Gems". Our library is growing steadily, although we still have some distance to go to reach the fantastic figure once quoted.

The subject of the possible visit of some of the members of the Northern Section to Southport was discussed. The company thought it a very bright idea, and our Northern friends can be assured of a really hearty welcome if the proposed visit materialises. So it is up to you now, Northern; just arrange things from your end, and leave this end to us! The secretary having read the minutes and financial report; refreshments were taken, and a quiz "Hidden Hamiltonia", by Frank Case, kept the members busy for the next twenty minutes. Don Webster (who had to be persuaded to compete) gained the full points, with young Peter not far behind; in fact, there were no poor returns, and all seemed to have enjoyed the contest. Next month's posers come from George Timmins.

The meeting ended at 10 p.m. with the usual library business; next meeting, second Sunday in August.

F. CASE.

Secretary.

Australasian Branch.

The fourth meeting of the O.B.B.C. in Australia was held on Friday, March 28th, at the Victorian Railways Institute. Formal business was commenced at 8.15 p.m.

The minutes of the third meeting having been read and confirmed, the Treasurer rose and delivered his report. He said that, with £3.2.0 in hand, the Club was in a sound financial position

Club business having been dealt with, Miss Stevens commenced the main feature of the evening with an excellent discourse on "Harry Wharton, Captain of the Remove". So good did those present consider it that it was decided that an amended form of it should appear in the Newsletter. Other talks given were Tom Dobson on "Tom Merry" and Don Wicks on "Coker". So absorbed was everyone in the debate which followed these, that time went quickly by and, after papers had been exchanged and other private business seen to, the meeting closed at 11.30 p.m.

The fifth meeting of the Club was an informal gathering held at the home of Don Wicks. Chairman Don Wicks announced that he would like to start off a Club library by donating

15 copies of the "Gem". This generous gift was accepted by the Club, and it was decided that the 2 series represented should be bound. Other members came forward with offers of papers and it was decided that the library could be "opened" without delay. After some discussion the rate of 3d per paper; 1/6 per bound series, both plus postage, was adopted.

DISPOSING OF LARGE COLLECTION:

Aldines, Bretts, Fox, Lloyd, Boys' Friends, Her-alds, Leader, Standard, Big Budget, Nuggets, etc. State wants. S.A.E. Please. Parks, Printer, Saltburn-on-Sea, Yorkshire.

S.O.S:

On 2nd August I had the misfortune to lose, or have stolen from me, a packet containing a large proportion of subs. for the Annual. They consisted of notes, P.O's, and cheques. I have been able to advise most of those whose cheques were concerned. In addition I have safe subs. from Frank Richards, Ben Whiter, Ray Jones, and W.H. Bradshaw. Should there be anyone else who sent me a cheque for the Annual before the 2nd, kindly take steps to have cheque stopped.

Regarding postal orders, would anyone who crossed them hold on to counterfoil and kindly advise me.

THE LATEST TOM MERRY BOOK:

Written in Martin Clifford's inimitable style, "D'ARCY ON THE WARPATH", the latest of the Tom Merry series, is a jolly little trifle, and readers who like stories of the lighter type will find themselves in clover. With only the merest suggestion of a plot, and no originality, this bright little romp makes pleasant reading. It seems as though Gussy is to be made the centre of every story now.

Eric Faync

Midland Section Meeting. June 30th, 1952.

It was a very hot and humid evening, consequently we were very late starting; but in view of the sultry weather, Mr. Quelch, (who is a stickler for punctuality), might perhaps have let us off with nothing worse than an expressive snort.

Our numbers were unusually small for us - only fifteen, excluding a keen stalwart, Mr. Bourne, who, determined not to miss the meeting altogether, looked in for ten minutes. Actually, several members were on holiday.

So we had an informal meeting, and after the minutes etc., we made great use of George Smallwood's tape recorder. Firstly certain speeches made at the memorable first birthday party in April were played back for us, and then we made some fresh recordings on which sundry members related favourite stories or expressed ideas about Greyfriars and St.Jims.

These recordings in turn were played back, and it was very interesting to notice that certain voices were easily recognised, whereas others were not!

A quiz prepared by Mrs. Corbett was tackled next, and caused alarm and despondency, being decidedly difficult! Even St. Jims experts were sorely puzzled by such teasers as:- "Who was Joe Frayne, the waif of St.Jims?", and "When did Nelson Lee stories first appear in the Gem?"

After refreshments our latest venture, the Library, went off to a flying start, thanks to our indefatigable Treasurer (Norman Gregory), who had kindly undertaken the duties of Librarian, as well as those of Treasurer.

But alas! all too soon yet another club night was passed and gone.

EDWARD DARBY.

WANTED: Magnets, 1929-40. Good prices paid.
Mervyn Lewis, 10 Dudley Road, Folkestone, Kent.

WANTED URGENTLY: To complete set - Magnets 1549-1555.
Good condition essential. J. A. Boland, College Historical Society, Trinity College, Dublin University, Eire.

LETTER BOX

Another for Your Bookshelf

Reading & Berkshire Review,
47 London Street,
Reading.
July 23rd, 1952.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Thank you for your letter of July 1st, and for the copy of the Collector's Digest, which I look forward to reading.

I am sending you a copy of the July Review, from which (page 5) you will see a reference to Frank Richards's autobiography and mention of Charles Chapman's projected work. Chapman has already got together a good deal of his illustrations covering many years, and he is now on what is (for him) the harder part - the writing. He has done a handsome cover in full colour, picturing Billy Bunter (of course!) and another typical Bunter episode for a colour plate inside. There is no doubt that a book by Chapman would have a ready sale because of the illustrations.

Chapman, who looks in at our office for a chat every week, is still full of life, bubbling over with good spirits and Bunter-enthusiasm.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Frank King.

Bunter for Home Cinemas!

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea,
Broadstairs, Kent.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I don't think I have mentioned that our old friend Bunter is to be put in pictures on 16-mm. films for home projectors. I rather like this idea.

Yes, you are quite right in thinking that I would like to see the extract from the letter from Brisbane: though extremely sorry to hear of an old reader in such

bad case. I do most sincerely hope that matters may not be so bad as Mr. Hughes fears, and that the poor fellow may take a turn for the better. While there is life there is always hope. I am glad to know that he has found even a little pleasure in what I have written: if Billy Bunter could make him forget his trouble even for a few minutes, Billy Bunter was well worth while. Jack Hughes seems to be a very good fellow, and he must have been very glad that he was able to do what was wanted.

Thanks for this month's C.D.--- as good as ever if not a little better. Our friend Gerald's verses are very entertaining. I was extremely interested in the extracts from "Live Letters" in the Daily Mirror. I do not always see that paper and had missed it. "Live Letters" is a very "live" column. The editor, Edwin Radford, is the author of "Encyclopaedia of Phrases and Origins", which is a mine of useful information, and has a place of honour on my bookshelf.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS.

And Bunter at Buckingham Palace

Stonebridge Park,
London, N.W.10.
July 12/52.

Dear Editor,

When the Duke of Edinburgh was ill with jaundice I sent him some Magnets and S.O.L's to read.

I have just had them returned and I thought you would like to see the very cordial letter I received with them from the Duke's private secretary thanking me on his behalf for the loan of them.

Yours sincerely,

BILL MARTIN.

Mr. Chapman Explains

44, Highmoor Road,
Caversham,
Reading.
10.7.52.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Many thanks for your July No. In reply to your enquiry it was in March 1911 that Arthur Clarke died and I took over the illustration of the Magnet until 1928 when Mr. Shields helped me out - we more or less worked together, as he used to take long holidays and then I took over and fill up the gaps. He usually did the covers. In 1936, Shields, being about 70, more or less retired, and I worked at the office until 1940 at Tallis Street. I got to like him very much and we were great pals.

He died in 1947, a very hard-working and charming colleague.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
C. W. CHAPMAN.

A Lady Speaks Her Mind

783 Rathdown Street,
North Carlton, N.4.
Victoria, Australia.
9/7/52.

Dear Editor,

Your splendid little mag is really better if possible than before. Everything in the May issue is splendid.

But I am not so pleased with Mr. Richards' late work. He's altered Cardew very much for the worse, also removed Levison from the team and sent him into oblivion. Also I was very much annoyed by Tom Merry's idea that Manners was a much better fellow than Cardew. I've read too much about Cardew's capacity for loyalty and self-sacrifice which far exceeds anything of which Manners is capable to think anything of the kind.

You will greatly oblige me if you would publish these sentiments about Cardew and Levison.

I was disappointed too in the Autobiography - for these reasons. It was like reading the life of a cricketer or diplomat where instead of talking about their cricketing and diplomatic experiences which made them famous, they simply

(Contd. foot of p.232.)

B L A K I A N A.

AUGUST 1952.

Edited by H.M. Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, S. Wales.

THE ROUND TABLE.

Our usual heading had to disappear again this month due to pressure on space. Unfortunately our production costs will not allow us to be too lavish with the number of pages, so we have to cut down on fancy and unnecessary trimmings. My thanks to all those who have written in this month. Blakiana correspondence has most certainly increased during the summer months and as a result we have had some interesting ideas and some rather revealing information to the bargain. Walter Webb was interested deeply in Herbert's article "The U.J. at it's Peck" and writes to the author to some length on his ideas on the the subject. In the course of this letter Walter mentions one or two things which will be of great interest to most Blake fans. I was going to print his letter in full but I think that it would be better if I treated it as a full length feature and so I have decided that we shall print it in the next issue of the C.D. in order that we shall not have to cut out anything. Reader J.W. Cook of Watford sends in a postcard to say "The SRL Reviews" YES, PLEASE! It was the ONLY postcard of the month despite our request for one from each reader. May I again ask you all to send along that card. I want to make quite sure that the S.B.L. reviews ARE wanted. I will deal with your request re the Confederation story very soon Mr. Cook. Don't think it is forgotten. Last month Wilf Darwin asked about the G.H. Toad story "Five in Fear". Well, our old friend Bill Colcombe writes in to say that he is of the opinion that this story is a reprint of S.B.L. No. 41 (2nd series) "The Island of the Guilty". He said that he came across it in his local Public Library sometime ago. I hope this answers your query O.K. Wilf.

Well, the S.B. Circle "came to life" just after we went to press last month. I had hoped to print the minutes of the second meeting in the July number but it was quite impossible. It is appearing in this issue.

Bill Colcombe also sent along a smashing article on one of the famous G.H. Tood characters "The Black Eagle". I hope to be able to print this in the September issue. It will be nice to have another feature from Bill and even more interesting to read about an old favourite who has been somewhat neglected in past articles. Has anyone discovered anything about a brother to George Marsden Plummer? Bill Colcombe says: "In compiling a list of Tood stories I came across mention of G.M.P.'s brother Larry Plummer, this was in S.B.L. No. 415 (2nd series) "Murder in Manchuria". He plays quite a prominent part in this story but I can find no mention of him in any previous or subsequent story". Perhaps someone else can help here? The next letter comes from far off Australia. Jim Marralls writes:- "I have been reading the April edition of the C.D. and was interested in one or two remarks made in the "Round Table". You invite comment well, here goes. I once thought that Walter Webb's articles were very fine but now am heartily sick of them - no more please! I would not like to see the reviews of the current S.B.Ls back because the stories do not merit any attention in the magazine. I agree with Anthony Baker when he asks for the revival of numbers of the SBL. However it would be far better to revive numbers of the U.J. (A move in this direction will be made in the near future, thanks to the S.B. Circle. ED). Jim wishes all readers of Blakiana and members of the S.B. Circle much success and good hunting. Two very interesting letters have come along from (a) W.O.G. Lofts of London and (b) Frank Willison of Cradley Heath. I am sorry I can't deal with their remarks in this packed issue but will give them more attention in the September issue. In the meantime I will be writing personally to both. I wish I had 12 pages instead of 6 this month! Anyway I hope you will continue to write in and let me have your news and views and of course, your criticisms. In the meantime I trust you will all have had a good reading summer and have enjoyed old Blake to the full. More next month.

Cheerio for now.
H. MAURICE BOND.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE UNION JACK. by WILFRED DARWIN.

The Union Jack, even towards the end of publication was still the best detective story paper on the market. The old authors, whose names had become by this time, almost synonymous with that of Sexton Blake, were still very active. What is more, the same old formula, Plummer, Zonith, Waldo, Rymer, Wu Ling etc, which had been followed so successfully in the past, was still adhered to. One or two new authors had also joined up. These were generally of a mediocre quality though one, in fact, showing any real brilliance. The exception was Donald Stuart, whose great Sexton Blake stage play brought the Baker Street detective before the public eye as nothing else could have done. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the U.J. was "The Green Jester". A strange name for a criminal indeed for there is nothing amusing about murder. Many new ideas were tried out in the latter days of the U.J. obviously with the intention of increasing circulation. Old characters were revived and new ones were created. One successful experiment was the resurrection of the Reece character and the Criminals Confederation. Certain alterations were made, however, to the original text, which, to me at least, was not exactly agreeable. Even the titles were changed. I shall always maintain that "The Hidden Headquarters" was a better title than "The Squoaler". I missed the old illustrations too. Up to about 1930 the quality of the stories varied little. There may have been odd occasions perhaps, when an author was not quite himself but these were few and far between. After 1930, though a certain amount of rot seemed to creep in. It seemed as if either the authors or the publishers were losing their grip. In the old days there had been a style and dignity about the U.J. which the reader did not fail to appreciate, a state of things which was in marked contrast to the years which led up to it's final closure. For one thing, the U.J. like a few other periodicals of the time, had given way to the influence of gangsterism. Gilbert Chester and Anthony Skene were the chief offenders. In my opinion "Sexton Blake saves Blackpool" and "Sexton Blake cleans up Chicago" were very poor stuff indeed. There was a cheapness about these stories which hardly did credit to the

papar or to Blake. Small wonder, I think, that the Blake tradition became almost non-existent. I was always very critical of the Blake in Africa yarns too. Though I used to read them I could not quite dispel the feeling that Blake was out of his element. Characters like Lobangu and Sixpence seemed queer company for the great English detective. It was a pity though, for Rex Hardinge, who penned these stories of Blake in Africa is a good writer. Though I have not read any of his more recent yarns I shall always remember with interest that grand story of his which appeared during the latter days of the U.J. "The Man Who Sold Death". Here was Rex Hardinge at his best. Even G. H. Teed the recognised genius of the foreign travel story could not have written a better one than this. Incidentally the subject of the story was one which had shortly before been given no little amount of space in the U.J. Detective Magazine supplement - the dangerous drug traffic. It is interesting to note that several of the more famous Blake authors wrote articles for this worthy addition to Sexton Blake's own paper. Rex Hardinge wrote the last story ever to be printed in the old U.J. Unfortunately it was just another stereotyped Blake in Africa yarn. Personally I could have suggested a more fitting "finale" for what was without doubt, a grand paper.

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TALKING OF BLAKE by GRAHAM DAVIES.

Part II.

The first S.B.L. I ever bought was "The Bootlogger's Victim" by G. H. Teed, which appeared, I believe, in Nov: 1929. To my great (very great) excitement I found that there were FOUR S.B.Ls published every month, as well as the Union Jack (which I discovered a few days later) which appeared weekly. What boy could have refrained from asking, at the first suitable opportunity, if he might be allowed to have the S.B.L. delivered regularly every month from the newsagent, with the other papers? Especially as he was quite willing to go without his pocket money for chocolate, which did him more harm than good anyway. The boy's father, however, objected on two grounds. First, because the stories were trash, and would only put undesirable ideas into his head. (In later years I discovered

some S.B.Ls in my father's bedroom. I wonder how they got there?) Secondly because the small print would ruin his eyesight. On this score, I must admit, his objection was to a certain extent upheld, but luckily, as it happened, in the beginning of 1930 the Sexton Blake Library was published in an enlarged form, with much bigger print than had been used previously, and the boy's eyesight was thereby saved from possible permanent impairment. In any case the boy's kind mother promised him that he could have the four stories every month, and (oh, indulgence!) that he could also have the U.J. every week if he wished. How the monthly books and the weekly paper were longingly awaited and lovingly treasured! Each U.J., having been read, being placed carefully at the bottom of the ever growing pile (so as to keep the earlier dates and memories fresh); and each S.B.L. placed in its correct place according to number. And then, in 1932, there was published the New Series S.B.L. with 96 pages and a coloured cover. I remember that I was in bed, recovering from measles, when the first four of these bigger and better S.B.Ls were delivered by our newsagent's boy. I heard them drop through the letterbox, and my mother brought them to me in bed, four new, unopened, matchless Sexton Blakes

THE SEXTON BLAKE CIRCLE. Minutes of a meeting held at 256 South Av. Southend, on Sunday 25th May 1952 at 3.p.m.
 Members present: Bob Blythe, Bill Colcombe, Rex Dolphin, Harry Homer, Norton Price, Charlie & Olive Wright, Ben Whiton, Archie Young. 1. Minutes of last meeting read by Harry Homer. Norton Price proposed their acceptance, Bill Colcombe seconded, and the proposal was carried. 2. Rex Dolphin notified expenditure of 3/9d since last meeting, the sum of 5/3d being still in hand. 3. Proposed work for G.D. Annual 1952. Suggested the following items be submitted to Maurice Bond for possible inclusion. (a) A very interesting letter from Anthony Skene to Archie Young, bringing out among other things his personal attitude to his work, and the origin of Zenith. Archie Young proposed its submission, Harry Homer seconded this, and the motion was carried. (b) A list of titles of John G. Brandon's work to be prepared by Bill Colcombe and checked by Norton Price.

(c) A list of E.S. Brooks titles, to be prepared by Bob Blythe and checked by Norton Price. (d) A puzzle corner item by Rex Dolphin. 4. Work Done and to be Done. Other author-lists are in preparation, and it is intended eventually to have a complete list for members' refs: of U.J. S.B.L. and D.W. titles in numerical order; and a complete list of each major author's works with mention of the characters featured. While it is hoped to publish the author-lists in subsequent editions of the Annual, it is felt that this would spread them over too long a period, while the monthly C.D. is not so handy as a permanent reference guide. By a vote of 5 to 3 it was agreed to restrict such lists to U.J. S.B.L. and D.W. up to No. 120. Bill Colcombe is preparing a list of G.H. Teed's work; Rex Dolphin is working on Gwyn Evans and Gilbert Chester, assisted by Norton Price on Gwyn Evans. Lists when checked can be submitted to Harry Honor or Rex Dolphin for multiple copy typing. 5. Next Meeting. Hospitality was offered by Norton Price and Charlie and Olive Wright and voting was in favour of holding the next meeting at Greenwich, 12 Ashburnham Place, Sunday 12th October at 3.p.m. 6. At 4.45 the meeting was declared closed.

SEXTON BLAKE IN THE EDWARDIAN ERA. (12) Walter Webb.

The occasion was an important one, for new science buildings had just been added to the school & the Prince Of Wales was coming down to open them. Nelson Lee, in honour of the occasion, had decided to give the first public exhibition of his aeroplane by flying to St. Ninian's and circling round the new buildings whilst the ceremony was in progress, the idea being to give the Prince and everybody else a thrilling surprise. There was no sign of Lee when Blake and Tinker arrived, but Nipper was there in Khaki uniform - one of a detachment of the school rifle corps, who were awaiting the Prince and who were to form a guard of honour whilst the address was being presented. When matters were explained to him it occurred to Nipper that Hansoll might choose that moment to attempt to take the Prince's life, but Blake was confident that the crack would not start work so quickly.

Chapter 13 will appear next month.