

The Collector's Digest

VOL. No. 7. No. 76

APRIL 1953

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M.R.

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



FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

END OF A PARTNERSHIP. As he has stated in his section my co-editor is reluctantly compelled to cease controlling it. That I am sorry goes without saying. 'Tis nearly seven years since we started to plan the C.D. and ever since his copy has come along, sometimes a little late, but always in time to take its allotted six pages. I recall him saying too "How about publishing an Annual at about 2/6d.? I'll stand a fiver towards expenses". Well we got to work on that Annual but as it developed it was obvious it was going to cost much more than "half a dollar" and I can reveal now that he had to fork out that fiver. From then on as you all know it's been a real success story.

Well we must keep the Blakiana flag flying. Fortunately Maurice hopes to contribute a monthly letter, at least; and I hope all other Blake fans will get busy with articles so that their section will get their fair quota. Please send direct to

me, for the time being at any rate.

* * * * *

YES, I'M AT IT AGAIN. Sadly I must report that there are still some 'Annual' subs to come, with me busily getting together material for the next one. Well as this is not an unsentimental business concern I am not going to send out any letters starting "If this account is --", all the same I am somewhat disheartened.

* * * * *

CORONATION! For some time now I have been working on the idea of making our June issue a special Coronation number with reviews of old papers published at the time of Coronations of the past. Eric Payne has kindly promised to deal with the Gems and the Magnets so it goes without saying that Hamiltoniana are in for something good. Going further back still, I possess a gorgeous double number of the Boys Friend published on the occasion of the crowing of Edward VII, and Harry Stabler has spent quite a lot of time turning up other papers of that period, the Jester, Chums, B.O.P. etc.

Now there may be more of you who possess papers which marked the three previous Coronations of the present century. If you have and you could send me a few crisp details in order to make the June number a really unique one, I should be most grateful.

* * * * *

FINE EXAMPLE. You will see from Frank Richards' interesting letter in this issue that he received over 250 letters at Christmas time and that he is determined to answer everyone individually. Now when one thinks of his advanced years and the hours he must spend at his typewriter turning out stories, this is a remarkable and praiseworthy resolve.

I haven't much to complain about where replies to letters I have written are concerned, but quite often fellows say to me "I wrote to so-and-so weeks ago and he has never replied." Anybody blushing?

* * * * *

BOUQUET FROM FLEET STREET. Here's what George Mell of Darlington said to me in a letter recently:-

"The editor of "Reveille" came to see me last Wednesday, and, while looking round my library I showed him your Annual. You may

be interested to know that he expressed surprise at such an ambitious publication and the general excellence of its appearance. High praise I should say!."

Encouraging, isn't it, coming from a professional? The kind of comment which puts me in good fettle for the day. We shall have to let "Reveille" editor see the next Annual.

You will be interested to hear that George has had over 160 articles accepted by that lively weekly.

* * * * *

A HUNDRED YEARS OF BOYS' JOURNALS. There's not the slightest doubt of the demand for this in the next Annual both by new and old readers, and the majority are in favour of it being in alphabetical order. Well, I've already got down to the task of preparing it, and needless to say I am anxious to make it as complete and correct as possible. Last time there were quite a number of papers of which we had no, or incomplete information. Curiously enough this mainly applied to those which were running between the two wars. There was a surfeit during those years, of course, a number having very short lives. However, a little later on I will let you know of any on which I require details and appeal for your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

SALE: Magnets, S.O.L's., Nelson Lees, Monster Lib and many similar old boys' books.

G. HIGHTON, 14 Greyhound Road, Willesden, London, N.W.10.

Various Old Boys' Papers for SALE. State wants. Wanted, pre-October 1938 "Champions" weeklies.

A. HORSEY, 60 Salcombe Road, Walthamstow, London, E.17.

WANTED: Up to 5/- each, samples Chuckles, Jester, Lot O' Fun. E.V. HUGHES, East Front Rd, Pagham Beach, Nr. Bognor Regis, Sussex.

WANTED: "Bob Cherry's Barring Out" Your own price paid, "ROBBY", 13 Raphael Road, Hove 3, Sussex.

ADVERTISE IN THE C.D. - 1d. per word.

The Men Who Wrote for Boys

No. 9 - HENRY T. JOHNSON

* * *

by HERBERT LECKENBY

No doubt some of you will remember a play produced some years ago called "Young England". It was one of those patriotic "For England, Home and Beauty" melodramas so popular in an earlier less cynical age. It was, of course, intended to be taken seriously, but alas! the gallant speeches of the hero and the threats of the moustached villain were received with cat calls and derisive laughter. All round it looked like being a complete frost. Then someone had a brain-wave. Why not play for the laughs, though pretending to be doing it seriously? The idea was acted upon; it was instantly a roaring success, it got a lot of publicity and had quite a long run.

This just to introduce Henry T. Johnson, that prolific writer of boys' stories in the days when songs like "Good-bye Dolly Gray" and "The Absent-Minded Beggar" were popular. The yarns he wrote were voted great stuff; that was evident for he was kept going hammer and tongs for years. Unlike many of the stories of our youth which have stood the test of time, H.T.J.'s. are read now with an amused smile; they seem oh, so old-fashioned, just as "East Lynne" would if put on at the Palladium. His characters were inclined to strut and make speeches, his villains were as black as pitch, his heroes 100 per cent perfect, his heroines as pure as the driven snow. Nevertheless he was a dear old chap, a good citizen and we who remember him have a soft spot for him.

His best known story was undoubtedly "The Pride of the Ring" which first appeared in the "Funny Wonder" near the close of the nineteenth century and ran for three years. There was an unusual circumstance about this story for round about 1905 it was published in book form at 6d. by the Aldine Publishing Company and again by them in the Diamond Library at 3d. Yet later still the Amalgamated Press ran it again as a serial in the Boys' Realm Sports Library with the title changed to "The King of the Ring". Here it was much abridged.

The same kind of thing happened with one or two other of Henry T. Johnson's stories. It would appear he was a good

business man and held on to the copyright.

Here are a couple of examples of H.T.J.'s melodramatic style taken from "The Pride of the Ring".

"Sir, replied Sir Henry, "whatever may be the purpose of this fiendish conspiracy in which you and your colleagues are engaged, I will ask you this - do not insult me as well as injure me, give me the name I've borne honourably all my life and which my ancestors for centuries have borne stainless before me."

The reason for the outburst was a villainous doctor had Sir Henry trapped in an asylum and would insist on calling him Mr. Smith, taking pinches of snuff the while. When the Lady Dorrington hears of her husband's plight she laments thus:-

"Ellie! Ellie! she cried, hiding her head on the breast of the girl she loved like a daughter, "What shall I do - what shall I do? He was so dear to me - we were boy and girl sweethearts! We have lived a happy wedded life, sharing each others joys and sorrows for nigh on five-and-twenty years, and they have taken him from me! What shall I do? What shall I do?

"Hope and be brave" said Ellaline.

Needless to say the devoted pair were eventually re-united, the villain got his deserts and all ended happily.

On May 16th, 1908, a serial "In the Limelight" by H.T. Johnson started in the "Big Budget". To mark the occasion the editor, Arthur Brooke, gave some interesting information about him. I'll quote:-

"Henry T. Johnson - is there any name better known in the world of popular stories? Born some fifty years ago at Wolverhampton, H.T.J. took to the pen almost as a duck takes to water. At any rate at the early age of fourteen, verses of his appeared in Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper and from that time there have been very few weeks when something of Mr. Johnson's has not been published in some paper or other. I often think how Mr. Johnson must have been everything it is possible to be in the world of letters. He has written verses, skits, humour of all sorts, plays, and I do not suppose there is a man living who has turned out more stories. He has been an Editor, and is one now for that matter. I could go on telling you what Mr. Johnson has been and has done to the end of this column. On one occasion during the run of a Johnsonian play, the leading actor, through illness, could not appear. It was the author himself who took

the actor's place and played the part remarkably well, too. Another little side story that will bear repeating is that of how Mr. Johnson saved a lady's life at considerable risk by swimming out into a stormy sea off Boulogne. For this he was rewarded by the vellum certificate of the Royal Humane Society and Mr. Johnson today is as busy as ever, a hard worker, a sportsman to his finger-tips and an all-round jolly good fellow."

Henry T. Johnson wrote several other stage stories including "Phil Gladwin - The Schoolboy Actor" in the Big Budget ten years earlier than "In the Limelight", and "Kit Kemble Call-Boy".

Hamilton Edwards, that famous editor of the Boys' Friend and many other papers must also have had a good opinion of H.T.J. for he used many of his stories. They included "The Drudge of Draycott School" (Boys' Friend) "Lonesome Len" and "Lonesome Len at Cambridge" (Boys' Herald), "The Football Kings" and "The Almost Man" (Jester), "The Boy Shop-keeper" (Boys' Realm) and several "Tales of Sigger's Circus" also in the Realm.

H.T.J. was probably at his best when writing historical yarns for there his picturesque style did not seem so unnatural and exaggerated. One can recall "Through Traitors Gate" in the Big Budget, finely illustrated by Val Reading, and "The King Shall Have His Own Again".

I think it was Hamilton Edwards who once mentioned that Henry T. Johnson had served for a year as Mayor of Hammersmith, and was very proud of the honour.

If he was about fifty in 1908 he would have been very near the century now if still alive, but I am afraid he laid down his pen for ever quite a number of years ago.

100 PENNY MARVELS for Sale. Nice copies, 1/6d. each. 1912 to 1915. Gems for Sale.

WANTED: St. Jim's Plucks, 10/6d. each offered. Penny Plucks, 1905 etc., 3/- each offered. Diamond Library Kettle & Co. stories 3/- each offered. Boys Friend 3d. Libraries wanted 10/6d. offered.

WANTED: $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Gem, No. 3, 10/6d. offered. Have No. 1 Penny Gem for exchange.

RICHARD WHORWELL, 29 Aspinden Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.16.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

March 15th 1953.

Once again we met at East Dulwich. Chairman Len opened up the proceedings in his usual good manner. As no new places for meetings have come along, East Dulwich and Wood Green remain the two alternate venues. But by kind invitation of Eric Fayne the April meeting will be probably held at the Modern School, Surbiton.

The usual formalities were soon disposed of and as there were no queries we soon arrived at quiz competition time. After an excellent repast John Addison conducted his Greyfriars and St. Jim's quiz under the agreed arrangement that the winners of these competitions set the ones for future meetings. As John won one last month he compiled a very good one and winner John Geal will compile a quiz for next month. I was second and the third place was shared by Eileen Reynolds, Bob Blythe and Len Packman. Bob Whiter, winner of another of last month's quiz' compiled a general knowledge one and this resulted in a win for Len with Uncle Benjamin second once again and John Geal and Charlie Wright in third place. Time for an eliminator, yes indeed and Nugent was the key word. Ron Deacon won this with Len second and Bob Blythe and Bob Whiter in the third place. One good effort in this quiz was Author Dickey Nugent and school St. Sam's, but as I 'Jolly Well' Lickem was not allowed in a previous effort this also was not but, judging by the laughs, it was a good effort. Chairman Len then congratulated all present for such fine enjoyment.

A fine exchange and sale ensued and then we all went home happy and contented.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * * * *

NORTHERN SECTION

Meeting. 14th March 1953.

J. Breeze Bentley on opening gave a cordial welcome to Roger Jenkins of the London Club, Charles Auckland of Sheffield, both attending for the first time and to Tom Hopperton re-appearing after a severe illness.

The minutes were read and passed, and Gerry Allison gave his

usual healthy report. The chairman, with a twinkle in his eye, commented that it would be noted that there was a substantial increase in the library balance after the raid last month - no doubt Gerry was preparing for the Annual Meeting next month when he would have to give an account of his stewardship. Gerry didn't look unduly worried!

Came the long anticipated debate. Greyfriars versus St. Jim's, debaters the star orators Breeze Bentley putting the case for Greyfriars, Tom Hopperton defending St. Jim's. 'Twas a gentlemanly contest the weapons being the rapier without any sign of the bludgeon. It was almost like sonny saying he loved both mum and dad, but mum just a bit better because she was not so strict, for you see both antagonists are loyal Hamiltonians.

Nevertheless, it was a most absorbing contest listened to with rapt attention by an audience of a score for an hour. It was a tribute to the skill of Tom Hopperton (for it will be conceded that the Magnet in the mass has more supporters than the Gem) that when the vote was taken he had a majority of one.

As the April meeting the Annual General has had to be brought forward a week, to the 4th, it may be over when the C.D. is published, but just in case not I urge all members to attend if at all possible.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

* * * * *

M I D L A N D S E C T I O N

Meeting. 16th March, 1953.

A good muster of the faithful, (and three new members), were present to hear a most interesting talk by our valued Wolverhampton Schoolmaster Member, Mr. Jack Ingram, on schoolmasters of the "Magnet". He dealt with Messrs. Quelch and Hacker illustrating their characters and behaviour by readings from sundry "Magnets".

Forty minutes went by all too swiftly, and the writer's sense of disappointment when Jack's talk was finished, was certainly shared by all present. We were very pleased to hear that another talk dealing with Prout is to be given at a future date.

Consequently we gladly gave Mr. Ingram a hearty round of applause for a most thoughtful, comprehensive, and yet entertaining account of the characters and foibles of Quelch and the "Acid Drop".

Interesting general remarks by Mr. Ingram included reference to Frank Richards genius for selecting felicitous names. How aptly Henry Samuel Quelch and Horace Hacker suit the gentlemen concerned! It was suggested that Frank Richards shares this gift with such famous writers as Fielding, Dickens, and Wodehouse, as well as being a writer of very high calibre himself. Most certainly no hack writer.

Before this talk we had disposed of some formal business. This included reference to the reply by the Amalgamated Press to the letter from Merseyside Branch regarding the re-issue of the "Magnet". This reply quoted in the March issue of the "C.D.", really leaves one speechless, like Bunter does the Famous Five on occasions.

The meeting had also agreed to a suggestion by Mr. Porter that a copy of our own Club "Newsletter" be sent monthly to each of the other Clubs.

After Mr. Ingram's talk and a discussion, refreshments and a library session concluded a well-filled and very enjoyable evening.

EDWARD DAVEY.

Next meeting, 20th April, same place, 7.30 p.m. Our second birthday meeting. It is hoped that both Mr. Chapman and Mr. Down will be present.

* * * * *

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING, 8th March, 1953

There was an excellent attendance at this meeting, more than 20 being present, including a new member, Mr. J. Burke, to whom the chairman extended a hearty welcome. Don gave us information on various section matters; this was followed by the minutes, etc. Then came an open discussion on the Magnet, Gem and Nelson Lee; their respective merits (and demerits) were keenly debated and analysed. A census of the members' preferences was taken; not surprisingly the Magnet was an easy first, but equally surprising was the number who plumped for the Nelson Lee - we must cater more adequately for this section in the library.

Bill Horton's clever quiz was won by Jack Morgan, who has figured amongst the quiz winners quite a lot of recent months.

The library did a roaring trade, and the meeting ended at 10.15. after a most pleasant evening.

F. CASE. Sec.

HAMILTONIANA

Conducted by HERBERT LECKENBY

* * *

My word! that letter from the A.P. in reply to the Merseyside Club's request for the return of the Magnet hasn't half set some of the fans fuming. If the writer's ears haven't been burning it's a wonder. The resentment is not because no hope of the return of the old favourite was given, most of the fellows were resigned to that, but because of the sheer absurdity of the reply. Here are some quotations from one staunch supporter Edward Davey who was evidently hot under the collar:-

"I am not surprised that they do not propose to re-issue the good old Magnet, but what is so unpardonable and inexcusable is the stodgy purely business like formality of the letter. Obviously it was somebody who doesn't even know anything of the atmosphere and charm (to say nothing of the literary merits) of the old stories.

For unintentional and unconscious humour due to a complete lack of understanding, the suggestion that we can get Greyfriars in the "Knockout Comic" stands alone. This egregious and piffling comic strip has been running ever since the "Magnet" stopped, but is as like the real Greyfriars as moonlight is to sunlight, or water is to wine."

Well, I don't think I need add any more to that.

* * * * *

THE COVER PICTURES. Quite a number were able to turn up the "Magnet" from which the picture on last month's cover was taken. About it Mervyn says "It was No. 1433 "Harry Wharton Wins Through" one of the Stacey series. Stacey is the third character in the illustration. In the original Mr. Quelch is seated behind a tree in the quad."

Of this month's he says "The illustration should be an easy one for Magnet collectors as it was almost the last inside one executed by Leonard Shields. Again to create confusion the illustration is reversed. The figure on the right is Monsieur Charpentier. The tramp in the centre is Bill Huggins. Who is

the character on the left and in which particular "Magnet" series did it appear?"

* * * * *

Last month I had to ask for the writer of an article on the entertaining topic "The Magnet at its Best - When?". Well, it turned out to be Ron Crollie. Here it is and having read it I am sure you will agree it is only right he should have the credit.

THE "MAGNET." 1915 to 1917 and 1930 to 1933.

by Ron Crollie

* * *

Others have already written about various periods in the "Magnet" series, and have given their opinion on which contained the best stories.

Some have frankly admitted that their choice has been prompted by sentiment, and they plump for the period during which they bought the "Magnet" as boys. Others, and we must assume that these have been lucky enough to have read the majority of the Greyfriars stories, attempt to deal with the matter from a purely critical angle.

I have only read about 400 "Magnet" stories though these range from the first to the last and include at least one from every year from 1908 to 1940. But I would like to compare my reactions to stories from two different periods that I read more or less simultaneously.

As a boy I bought the "Magnet" regularly from 1930 to 1933, a period that has been described by at least one of the unbiased critics as the beginning of the Golden Age of the Greyfriars yarns. Soon after I started reading these stories, an older cousin bequeathed me a complete run of the "Magnet" from early 1915 to late 1917. I rationed myself fairly strictly with these older issues and it was at least a year before I read them all.

Now the aforesaid unbiased critics agree that 1915 to 1917 was not a good period for the "Magnet". They say that at least twenty five per cent of the stories were by substitute writers and those by Mr. Hamilton were not up to his best form. Even the illustrations come in for some adverse criticism.

Well, call it sheer perversity on my part if you like, but

at that time I definitely preferred the earlier "Magnets" to those I was buying weekly.

For one thing I liked single stories better than series, and still do. Also I was eager to glean every bit of knowledge that I could about the Greyfriars characters. In the later issues, characters such as Squiff, Bulstrode, Rake, Micky Desmond, Ogilvy and Russell, Tubb & Co. and Dicky Nugent and his pals hardly got a mention, but they all figured fairly prominently from time to time during 1915 to 1917.

I must say I liked the earlier illustrations too. In these I could always distinguish the various members of the Famous Five from one another, but in equivalent illustrations in the thirties only Inky was a safe bet.

Now for an awful confession. Some of the so-called "imitation" Greyfriars stories published during the Kaiser's War I found not only readable but thoroughly enjoyable. Among these may I mention "Foes of the Sixth", "The Boy from South Africa" introducing Piet Delarey, a first-rate character, "Victims and Victors", "In Hot Water" and the Harry Wharton versus Peter Todd and Bolsover Series by J.N. Pentelow. Anybody who having read these avers that they are unsatisfactory Greyfriars stories must be very hard to please.

Of course they are not so good as the best of the genuine Hamilton stories, and there are some fine examples of these in this period. To name a few - "The Scout's Victory", "The Mysterious Mr. Mobbs", "Shielding a Scapegrace", "His Own Fault", "When Friends Fall Out", "The Rivals of Greyfriars", and the finest of them all - "A Split in the Study".

Of all the Greyfriars stories that I have read, I enjoyed none so much as "A Split in the Study". This yarn tells of an outbreak of temper by Wharton under provocation from Skinner which leads to an estrangement of Wharton from Nugent. In later years, no doubt the same story would have been stretched into a series lasting for eight or nine weeks, but I honestly don't think that this would have improved it.

Having eulogised these old "Magnets", I suppose it is only fair to explain why I didn't like the later numbers so well.

Well, for one thing I found the various series protracted to say the least of it. After three or four weeks I used to get a bit fed up and wanted to see the bogus form master exposed, or Harry Wharton & Co. re-united in friendship as the case might be.

Also, the Greyfriars fellows seemed to spend far too much time on holidays in general and trips abroad in particular. After all, if I wanted to read stories about adventure in China or Darkest African there were plenty available at that time in other papers. I bought the "Magnet" to read about Greyfriars. Again, Bunter came into even more unwelcome and unpleasant prominence during the holidays than he did at Greyfriars.

There were single stories in the thirties of course, but I found them slender in plot compared with the powerful yarns of 1915 to 1917, and nobody apart from Bunter, Coker and the Bounder got much of a show if one discounts the everlasting transitory new boys such as Tracy, Stacy, Cholmondeley and the rest.

I don't think that my reading of "Magnets" published during the thirties would have made me a Greyfriars enthusiast. But the stories of the 1915 - 1917 period combined with J.N. Pentelow's magnificent Greyfriars Gallery kindled in me a desire to read the earliest yarns of all. In fact, I believe that at the finish I continued buying the "Magnet" in the hope that one day they would start re-printing the old stories in the same manner that the "Gem" did with the St. Jim's yarns.

Well, there are my opinions, and though many won't agree with them, at least they cannot be open to the charge of being influenced by sentiment. I could not very well be said to be sentimental about an age I never knew.

I liked the later numbers well enough, but I thought lightly enough of them to give them all away eventually. But I have hung grimly on to most of the "Red" and the "Blue & White" "Magnets" to this day, and I still find pleasure in reading and re-reading them over and over again.

* * * * *

POTTED PERSONALITIES. Nos. 5 and 6

by Eric Fayne

* * *

MANNERS AND LOWTHER.

Though it is usually accepted that "Two's company, Three's none", the friendship which existed among the Terrible Three was one of the most convincing highlights in the St. Jim's story. Three chums of varying tastes, - Tom Merry who lived and breathed sport, Harry Manners who was mad on photography, and Monty Lowther

who was a cinema fan, - were nevertheless held together by some common bond. Such things do happen, even in real life. Probably Manners and Lowther were held by a mutual affection and loyalty for Tom Merry.

Manners and Lowther were both at Clavering when Tom Merry arrived in his famous velvet suit. For a time, Lowther dropped from the story, and Tom Merry and Manners were known as the "Terrible Two". Monty had been removed from St. Jim's by his stern uncle, but, if my memory is not at fault, he returned to the school in disguise and caused some hilarious moments before his deception was discovered. (In later years, both Lovison and Mornington followed his example, and returned to their respective schools in disguise and under other names).

From the beginning, Monty was the happy-go-lucky member of the famous trio, and possessed an irrepressible sense of humour which showed itself in bad puns which tickled us immensely as the years passed by. In the earlier tales, Lowther was the camera fiend, too.

Though Lowther always played a large part on the St. Jim's stage, it was but rarely that the limelight swung very fully in his direction. An outstanding story in which he figured, however, was "STAGE STRUCK", about 1912, when he ran away from school to play a part in a musical comedy "The Counter Girl", in which that very thirsty gentleman, Mr. Curll, was appearing as leading man. It was a grand tale, which, in later years, would have made a fine series.

On another occasion, a year or two later, we found Monty answering "The Call of the Cinema", when he became a pianist and accompanied, on the piano, the silent films. Soon after this we found his impressionable heart beating hard at the presence of Herr Schnieder's niece, but Monty was unable to resist guying the German Master in a play which the juniors produced, and he thereby blotted his copy-book so far as the fair niece was concerned. It was probably as well.

A clever pen-picture of Monty came in the early Twenties, in the excellent "Holly Lodge" series. Monty's uncle was kidnapped, and we saw that the irresponsible boy really had warm affection for the severe uncle whom he had sometimes felt to be so unreasonable in his outlook and demands.

The character of Harry Manners was more developed in the closing year of the Gem, when he seemed to be gifted with a fore-

sight, and perhaps an obstinacy, such as we often associate with Johnny Bull.

About 1912, there appeared in the Gem a story entitled "MISUNDERSTOOD", in which Manners won his famous camera by performing an heroic deed in a fire. This story was by a "sub" writer, so probably was not an artistic "Gem". But frequently in the years that followed, the genuine Martin Clifford referred to the great occasion when Manners had won that camera.

One of the finest series ever to appear in the "Gem", featured Manners about 1918. The opening yarn was "HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER", and in three magnificent stories of the serious type, we saw how Manners' parents spoiled their youngest son and asked heavy sacrifices from the older. It was a magnificent school story, beautifully written, and it would become a school classic if published in book form, as it should be.

One cannot but feel that, had the Gem continued Manners would have played a larger part in the stories. In the fine "Silverson" series with which the Gem curtain was rung down, we saw Manners as the brains of the Terrible Three, - older than his years, and with a foresight which the open, unsuspecting Tom Merry and the happy-go-lucky Lowther did not possess.

In conclusion, Manners played a prominent role in "The Scapegrace of St. Jim's", probably the best of the post-war Tom Merry series published by Mandeville.

MAGNET TITLES (cont'd)

'S' denotes Substitute

Note: No. 1003 "The Complete Outsider" was omitted.
 No. 1159 Bunter the Prize-Hunter, No. 1160 Bunter the Ink-Splasher,
 No. 1161 Rolling in Dollars, No. 1162 Gangsters at Greyfriars,
 No. 1163 The Hold-up at Greyfriars, No. 1164 Catching Fish, No. 1165
 The Mystery of the Poplars, No. 1166 Pop of the Circus.

THE 'ANNUAL POLL' - HOW THEY STAND NOW

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WM. MARTIN.

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LONDON, N.W.10. Tel:ELGar 3230

CAN ANYONE SUPPLY Nelson Lees of years 1930-1 (1st large series) numbers 22, 24, 43, 45, 46, 48, 58, 64, 67, 113, 115.

Write:- JACK HUGHES, 184 Riverview Drive, Chalmer, S.W. 3,
Brisbane, Australia.

WANTED: "UNION JACKS" Nos. 1471 and 1503.

R. CROLLIE, 8, Lytton Road, Romford, Essex.

"Marvel" 902-951 (1921-22) 50, Mint. "Marvel" (1915-19) 6 Nos. "Pluck" (1909-11) 7 Nos. "Boy's Friend", Green (1903-06) 3 Nos. 8 "Bunter", 4 "Tom Merry", 4 "Gold-Hawk" Books, All different, mint. "C.D." No. 31, Bundle very old "B.O.P.". £4.15.0. The Lot. Post Free. 17, Abergarw Rd., Brynmawr, Bridgend, Glam.

WANTED: Any issues (in good condition) DETECTIVE LIBRARY, featuring Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake, etc. Serial numbers and price to:- L. PACKMAN, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22.

WANTED: Boys Magazines Number 332 onwards.

FOR SALE: Back numbers "Collectors Digest".

W. DARWIN, 76 Western Rd., East Dene, Rotherham, Yorkshire.

WANTED: Up to 10s., specimens Magnet years 1909-1915:

E.V. HUGHES, 38, East Front Road, Pagham Beach, Bognor Regis.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Holiday Annuals 1929, 1930, 1931, 12/- each. Chums, 1931-32. Young England, 1901, 10/-. Magnets, S.O.L's.

S.A.E. for details:- E. MAGOVENY (Miss) 65 Bentham St.,
Belfast, Northern Ireland.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by H. MAURICE BOND
10 ERW WEN, RHIWBINA, CARDIFF

THE ROUND TABLE. NO. 1. APRIL 1953

It is with great regret that I have decided to relinquish the editorship of "Blakiana" with effect from this month. For many months I have been labouring under great difficulties as far as the Blake section was concerned. Not only have I had very little time at my disposal to devote to it, but also lack of support from fellow Blake fans have made it very difficult to carry on. My last attempt to stir up a little interest, the Sexton Blake short story contest, has proved a dismal failure. Out of all the supposed keen Blake addicts only three managed to put pen to paper and concoct something in an effort to win the 21/- prize offered for the best story. Before going on to other matters I have to state here and now that I have no alternative but to cancel the contest. I am very sorry to have to do this and apologise profoundly to those who sent in the three attempts, but it is quite impossible to go through with it under the circumstances.

I would like to thank all my good friends for their support to the Blake section since the start of the C.D. and would like to assure them that I appreciate their efforts. The fact that my own brand of Blakiana is coming to an end does not mean that they have to give up though. There will always be room for good articles and features relating to the detective and I shall have equal pleasure in reading them when they come along, so please do not forget that Sexton Blake is still THE character in juvenile fiction. He is the longest runner and the most written of, so there is plenty of material for you to work on. While thanking you all for letters and articles sent during the past few years I would like to apologise for any deficiencies on my part. I know I have not answered quite a number of very interesting (and instructive) letters from some of you, but assure those of you thus affected that I did enjoy receiving those letters. In the future I will either answer them by post or mention them in this new feature which I intend to conduct each month from now on. Actually it is

not an entirely NEW feature for as you know I have used it's title for my editorial chat for a long while, but from now on it is taking a slightly different form.

The new Round Table will discuss Sexton Blake matters in general. Sometimes it may consist of one article by myself, or it might often be made up of extracts from letters received. Any sort of tit bit dealing with Blake will be included and I do want to ask you all to still write to me at the old address just as if it were still the headquarters of Blakiana. But this single feature of mine will be much easier for me to control and will, I hope, be of greater interest to everyone than it has in the past.

Eric R. Parker. Last month I praised the A.P. for once again giving us illustrations in the S.B.L. and more especially so because it once again gave us more of the work of Eric R. Parker. It was therefore with surprise and with some misgivings that I examined the March numbers of the Library. When I first picked up these two new books I thought I had made a mistake. For the first time for many years Parker was missing from the cover. What a difference! I am ready to admit that the new covers are quite well done, but I had grown so used to E.R.P. work that I felt as though something approaching vandalism has been committed on our favourite magazine. Maybe it is just a flash in the pan and we may expect to see Parker's work again ere long, but I feel very uncertain about this and will not be satisfied until the Editor of the Library has supplied some information on the matter. Although the covers were quite good the internal illustrations were awful. Last month I rather thought that Parker had not done his best with the internal work, but after seeing those in the latest numbers I considered E.R.P.'s work of the highest order. Please, Mr. Editor, give that internal artist marching orders, or tell him to pattern his work on that of his master. But we can do nothing more until some definite information comes from the A.P. I will see what they have to say about it at Fleetway House.

I have just received a very interesting letter from Derek Ford of Macclesfield. He suggests that what is needed in the present series of S.B.L. is (a) topicality - Rex Hardinge's "Case of the African Hoodoo" is an example, (b) more mystery is wanted, present novels are so 'ordinary' and stereotyped, and (c) why not have two short Blake novels instead of one long one occasionally? This would probably mean a better variety of authors too. Lastly of course there is the re-introduction of the S.B.L. "Consulting

Room Chat" to bring that personal note back. It is a MUST long overdue, in his opinion. Continuing, Derek says:- Graham Davies' "A Blakian Dilemma" certainly introduces a novel point, but I think the main "dilemma" today with Tinker is the inability of some authors to feature him. I don't think there would be any need for a change if he (Tinker) were as well portrayed as in Anthony Skene's "Bronze Basilisk", which I was re-reading only the other day. There is one S.B.L. by John Drummond in which he is never mentioned. Another suggestion for the A.P. is that they re-introduce the S.B. Annual as there seems no chance of a weekly paper. Surely that shouldn't be too venturesome! I don't think it would help very much if Blake appeared in "The Champion" as was suggested, for the story, unless in serial form, would only be as long as those now running in "The Knockout" and I don't think the "Champion" has too large a circulation these days anyway. The best booster, in my opinion, would be a serial in "Answers".

Referring to the latest example of "The Secret of the Snows", this time by Walter Tyrer, Derek Ford says that this novel should have appeared in "The Oracle Library". Tyrer does not show the originality of "The Curse of the Carringtons" in his latest novels. He thinks that that first effort of Tyrer's for the S.B.L. was one of the best stories in the current series, up until now. And I am rather inclined to agree with him, for it was indeed a splendid example of the swift moving and baffling Blake story we used to have in the old days. A few more tit bits from Derek's most interesting letter:- "Gerry Allison should consult the 2nd S.B. Annual for his plan of S.B.'s home - incidentally it shows no clock in the hall! ---- Miss Cicely Hamilton has died at the age of 80 ---- John Hunter, under the 'Peter Meriton' banner is doing the story for a new strip in "Tit Bits" - I hope it keeps him busy, too busy to write any more of his brutal Blake yarns ---- The late A.J. Cruse had an article "The Man From Baker Street" in the December 1952 issue of "Chambers' Journal".

I must thank Derek for his letter and trust that the contents have interested you other Blake enthusiasts. You can write me as many letters of that sort as you like, they will provide much interesting material for our "Round Table" which I hope WILL really be the medium for general Blake discussion that I anticipate.

Your opinions of the new Blake artists, suggestions for improvements in the S.B.L. and any other matters of Blakian interest will be welcome. Cheerio for now. H. MAURICE BOND.

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. MARCH 1953 ISSUES.

Reviewed by Gerry Allison.

* * *

This month's numbers are illustrated by a new artist. The covers are quite effective, both the drawing and colouring being good. The interior pictures are a bit crude, but on the whole I think the new artist has got something. A letter to the editor, asking for the name of the new man has not yet elicited a reply. Hope nothing has happened to E.R.P. We can't do without him.

No. 283. THE CASE OF THE AFRICAN HOODOO. Rex Hardinge.

Well, I did struggle through this yarn, but it must have put a hoodoo on me, for I'm blessed if I know what it was all about, apart from an attempt to cash in on the present Mau-Mau trouble. I should skip it if I were you. If you want African yarns stick to Rider Haggard or "Sanders of the River".

No. 284. THE NIGHT CLUB MYSTERY. Hugh Clevely.

A rather jerky novelette, with a fresh chapter on every other page. 29 of them altogether in 58 pages of script. Dope dealing was the main theme, with a couple of love-affairs mixed up in it.

Blake was completely colourless, but there was one episode I found frankly incredible. In one chapter he, Blake, appears disguised as an elderly waiter at the night-club in question. He is described thus: "A tall, bent old man, with white hair, a droopy white moustache, and a big paunch". (Sounds an improbable mixture)

But, believe it or not, the following evening, Blake being otherwise engaged, Tinker makes up as the same weird character, and replaces his boss without anybody noticing the difference! I say nobody, because although we read: "Fanshaw and Mark were the only people who noticed the slight (!) difference," Mark had been tipped off beforehand.

"If you notice anything odd about Pierre tonight, keep it to yourself," Fanshaw warned him" Ergo, Fanshaw too, was in the know. Wibley will have to look to his laurels!

* * * * *

(Cont'd from p. 118)

"His Lordship's Valet", "The Missing Huntsman", "The Case of the Young Secretary", "The Footman from France", "The Obstinate Witness", "The Shadower".

FORGOTTEN - AND CURIOUS - SEXTON BLAKE YARNS

By HERBERT LECKENBY

* * *

Delving into my collection of all sorts and conditions of papers some time ago, I came across some Sexton Blake yarns which probably the majority of fans have never heard of, or if they have, have most likely forgotten, for they were not very distinguished examples to say the least. Anyway here's a little about them.

The Christmas Double Number of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Union Jack for 1899 contained a complete story called "Val Hilton's Vow". Val was accused of being guilty of a theft at Barnsmere School and the Head, Dr. Biggleby had to, reluctantly, expel him.

Blake does not come on the scene until the last chapter. We find him reading a letter he had received from Val's father, Major-General Hilton, fighting for his country in Egypt. He had appealed to Blake to clear his son's name. A most interesting case mused Sexton Blake as he summarised the letter. Just four paragraphs later (twenty odd lines) we read:-

"His quest was at an end. The last link in the chain of evidence was forged."

That must surely have been the slickest Blake case on record.

And whilst way back in those $\frac{1}{2}$ d. days, it's interesting to see how that very first Sexton Blake story in Marvel No. 6. "The Missing Millionaire" was heralded the week before. The editor gave an outline of the story and said it introduced a clever detective called Sexton Blake. Little did he realise what he was giving to the world.

There was also a tiny picture of Blake which earns a broad grin today. He was wearing a very heavy overcoat and a bowler hat. He looked just like a well-fed farmer attending a cattle market.

In Vol. 5 of the Boys' Realm there appeared a series of Sexton Blake yarns starting August 11th, 1906. At first they were about 5,000 - 6,000 words in length, but the later ones somewhat shorter. The great majority were undoubtedly written by W. Murray Graydon, but one or two may have been by Mark Darren. Here are the titles:-

"The Case of the Opium Smoker", "The Case of the Two Leopards", "The Case of Lord Avonmore's Plate", "The Case of Lord Armadale's Burglar", "The Case of the German Prince", "The Case of the City Office Boy", "The Case of the Railway Manager's Son", (cont'd p.117)

NELSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to ROBERT BLYTHE
46, CARLETON RD., HOLLOWAY, LONDON, N.7.

Jim Sutcliffe, who gave you that article on E.O. Handforth a few months ago, has turned up trumps again with a long article on that ever popular theme - Barrings - out. At the same time it is an answer to those who have said that Brock's barring-out series were mere repetitions.

Here then is :-

TYRANTS OF ST. FRANKS.

by

JAMES SUTCLIFFE

* * *

A barring out series, as has been stated in these columns before, was always a "fillip" to a journal and the fact that Brooks wrote six of these series during the 457 school stories that appeared during the Old Series, does not, in my opinion, seem at all excessive.

Although the basic idea may be the same in each series, Brooks plots were often unique and most certainly could not be called repetitions - (a criticism I seem to have heard levelled at Brooks before). For instance, no one could call the outstanding Colonel Clinton series a repetition of Hunter the Hun, or the Hugh Trenton series a repetition of the last two. The Hamiltonians will allege that some of these were far fetched, but if the Communist School series had been written today it would not have seemed the slightest bit fantastic.

Taking the series in their order of appearance, the first tyrant on the scene was Mr. Kennedy Hunter in the early summer of 1918 in O.S. 148-157, at which time Nelson Lee and Nipper were still in their roles of Mr. Alvington and Dick Bennett. "Hunter the Hun", as he soon became known among the juniors, took the place of Nelson Lee as temporary house-master of the Ancient House.

Actually the whole business was engineered by Nelson Lee with the intention of trapping Hunter, whose anti-British teachings had come to the notice of the Secret Service. (Remember the first war was still on). This Lee did, after the Remove had revolted against his tyrannical methods and had some exciting times in the Monastery ruins and afterwards on Willards Island, after which Hunter made a dramatic but fruitless attempt to escape.

The first term of 1919 started with a really outstanding series, in my opinion it was Brooke at his very best. This was the famous Colonel Clinton Series. Now it was the turn of the College House Juniors, who, at first, were sorry to hear that their popular house-master, Mr. Stockdale, had met with a skating accident, but were considerably "bucked" to find that their temporary master was a D.S.O. straight from the war!

Right from the very first moment he stepped into the Triangle, he began a regime of bullying, harsh, barrack square methods and route marches and drill parades became the order of the day, and to the more fortunate residents of the Ancient House he became known as the "freak" of St. Franks.

While all this had been going on, Nelson Lee had been keeping an eye on the Colonel, and it was soon apparent that there was a mystery here, and it was the detective element in this series (and all other Brooks stories) that made it such a fine one, and although there was no actual barring-out against authority, this series comes to a thrilling conclusion with a quarrel between Dr. Stafford and the Colonel after his dismissal, and the arrest of the Doctor on the charge of killing the Colonel. The fact that he was innocent and that it was not the Colonel who was killed, the amazing siege of Stowe Lodge, and the ultimate certifying of the Colonel as insane, all made up this fine series in O.S. 187-194.

Next on the scene came Mr. Howard Martin, a temporary headmaster in O.S. 229-236. This tyrant made a flying start by forbidding Mrs. Hake to sell any luxuries in the school tuckshop, and stopping Mr. Binks at the village tuckshop from supplying St. Franks boys at all.

Next Nelson Lee received the sack but returned in disguise in No. 231 "The Tyrants' Understudy" as Mr. Simpson Wrott, who on the surface seemed a real Tartar, but his bark was worse than his bite.

The rebellion ends with the arrest of Mr. Martin on a charge of robbery, for which his innocent brother had been wrongly accused, after a chase in which Detective-Inspector Lennard and

also Nipper take part.

We now come to a series that, if it had been written today, would have been very topical. The Communist School series, which appeared in Nos. 336-348, and which the critics always describe as fantastic. In these days, however, with the advance in the use of drugs, it seems quite feasible that one such as that used to turn Doctor Stafford from a kind benevolent head-master into a savage brute could exist.

Doses of Zaxzol, the drug administered by Mr. Hugh Trenton the new Science Master, to Dr. Stafford, produced uncontrollable fits of savage temper in the latter, and as the doses increased so these became more prolonged. The drug was incorporated in some patent throat tablets and on one occasion Nelson Lee took one without being aware of it and was discovered like a raving madman by Nipper, who barely escaped with his life. Of course the reason it turned Lee into such a fiend was because Dr. Stafford's doses had been gradually increased, whereas it was the first Lee had taken.

The Junior School divided itself into two parties - the Loyalists who were staunch to the Head-master and the Rebels who were against him.

The Christmas holidays came midway in this series and a large party of juniors, together with Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford went to Dorrimore Hall, and here it was that the Rebels, under the leadership of Armstrong, hatched their plot to seize St. Franks while the school was still on holiday.

The Rebels then dictated their terms to the Head, who agreed to accept them (actually this was a practical joke on the part of Reggie Pitt). Then the Communist School came into being with Timothy Tucker as President of the Supreme Council, and after this events moved swiftly. Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee both left St. Franks in disgrace, and Hugh Trenton became Headmaster, but by this time Nelson Lee was closing the net, and the climax came with the exposure and arrest of Trenton and his associates, in which our old friend Chief Detective Inspector Lonnard takes part.

The next rebellion occurs early in 1923, Nos. 399-407, this time against Petticoat Rule.

Miss Trumble became Chairman of the Board of Governors of St. Franks, and on her first visit to the school, found Dr. Stafford administering a well deserved flogging, which she immediately denounced as brutal. The Head resigned, followed by all the other

masters, and Miss Trumble attempted to run the school with a staff of women teachers!

At first practical jokes were played on them, but it soon became obvious that these teachers were Tartars, and gradually the seeds of revolt were sown, and the Remove began their revolt against "Petticoat Rule" in their Cadet uniforms entrenched round Fort Resolute, the famous barn which formed their headquarters, and which they held despite Miss Trumble's attempts to dislodge them, first by a band of Gypsies, then by siege, and finally by enlisting the help of the rascally Farmer Holt.

The Remove were triumphant in the end and the mistresses went and the school became normal once more. Another fine series by Brooks at his best again.

1924 brought us another excellent series in Nos. 455-463, and this time the cause of the trouble is a German-American Multi-Millionaire, who acquired St. Franks and the surrounding district for a manufacturing town for the production of cheap goods. Smith bought up the River House School and used it as his headquarters, from which he controlled the building operations at Cyclone City, the camp he erected for his horde of foreign workers. Smith compelled Dr. Stafford to resign and installed in his place Mr. Ponsonby Small who, from the start, had his knife into the Remove in particular. This naturally goaded the form into revolt, first on a minor scale led by Handforth, against the advice of Nipper. This revolt, needless to say was a dismal failure and Handy was flogged and expelled, but after a persuasive interview with Handforth Senior, Mr. Small reinstated him!

The real rising of the Remove, led by Nipper this time, followed, first the Power Station was seized but the juniors had been forced to retreat to Willards Island, which they held until victory over Smith was gained. Then followed the memorable fight to save St. Franks from the horde of foreign workers who, utterly out of control, sought to wreak their vengeance on the school. The thrilling climax to this series was typical of Brooks - when it seemed that the school was doomed the boys were saved by a Battalion of the Territorial Army, who quickly rounded up the Mexican rioters. Smith himself made an attempt to flee but Nelson Lee gave chase and he was arrested at Caistowe by Chief Inspector Lennard.

We now come to the final barring-out of the Old Series. (There was of course the Moat Hollow Mutiny, but that did not

actually occur at St. Franks).

In 1926, Nos. 553-560, Guy Sinclair, the bully of the Sixth, obtained a hold over Mr. Beverley Stokes and blackmailed him into appointing him Head Prefect of the West House, where he began a rule of tyranny, becoming virtually dictator. Needless to say he got all his cronies transferred to the West House and the Cheerio Club came into being after lights out to cater for the "sportsmen". Sinclair's reign of persecution reached the breaking point and the whole of the West House revolted, led by Morrow and Pitt. All attempts to dislodge them failed until the Governors got the brilliant idea of bringing in Commander Rudd - or the Iron Commander as he was known in naval quarters, having quelled a mutiny on a naval training ship. With Dr. Stafford the victim of a seizure the Commander was appointed temporary Head, but an accident prevented him taking up his appointment and he sent his butler, Captain Boom, to explain, but Boom was mistaken for Rudd and his vanity let him think he could control the school.

His efforts met with failure and he only succeeded in making the rest of the school join in the rebellion. The Rebels ran riot and mob rule became the order of the day, but fortunately about ten per cent kept their heads and did their best to restore order.

The rebellion ended and Barry Stokes triumphed, Sinclair received the sentence of expulsion but was given a reprieve at the last moment through what appeared to be a gallant action on his part, but was really accidental. Sinclair however was cunning enough to make the most of this chance and so remain at St. Franks.

This I think can be called a brief resume of all the rebellions that took place at the school during the Old Series, and I think it can be safely said again that none of these series is a repetition of the other and with typical Brooks' originality the events that led to these revolts were in most cases unique.

* * * * *

THIS SHOULD MAKE YOU SMILE

by HERBERT LECKENBY

* * *

Stephen H. Agnew, that author with a love of the bizarre was always credited with the later stories in the Aldine Claude Duval

Library. He was in his element when he had one of his characters in some fantastic hair-raising situation. There's a typical example in No. 40 of the Claude Duval "The Red Hand", or "The Mystery of the Monastery". I challenge you to read it without a chuckle.

The scene is a monastery in France perched on the top of a cliff with a sheer drop of several hundred feet. Claude is attacked by one Tadesco the Spaniard. The fertile brain of Agnew carries on the fight over no less than three pages. It is a fight that has everything, sword play, a knife or two, bare fists and quite a lot of all in wrestling. Towards the climax Claude was in desperate straights; half hanging over the cliff with seemingly nothing to save him from a fall of a thousand feet. Came this :-

For a moment he hung thus, and in that awful moment, what was it that struck him most! - what was the thought in his brain?

Not death!

Not Diana!

Not Claude Duval the younger!

Not the wild flight through space!

Not what would become of the Brotherhood of Alsatia when he was dead!

None of these - but this; that the chant of the monks which was still going on, was the most lugubrious thing he had ever heard in his life!

He recognised that they were singing the "Dies Trae", one of the most solemn and moving things in all music.

At that he laughed. Yes, Claude Duval laughed, suspended there above a ghastly chasm with nothing between him and death but an enemy and an enemy's will to live."

Well, needless to say Claude did not make the perpendicular journey. Tadesco the Spandiard went instead, Claude muttering with excessive emotion "He was a vile creature, but he was a fighting man." Chivalrous Claude!

The long battle scarred chapter ended;

"Then turning to the door of the chapel he entered, just as the monks broke into the triumphant measures of the "Te Deum". Claude Duval knelt."

Fantastic, naive, amusing, those 'bloods' of yore, but how we revelled in them when we were boys, and not one of us ever itched to handle a cosh.

* * * * *

Letter Box

FRANK RICHARDS' RESOLVE

March 9th, 1953.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D. Roger Jenkins readable as usual, in his reference to the two latest "Gold Hawk" books. I couldn't agree more with what he says about one, or disagree more with what he says about the other: but I won't specify which from which.

We are getting on with "Billy Bunter's Own" annual, which will be keeping company with Tom Merry's Own next Christmas. My kind friends who had written asking for more about Smithy will find quite a lot of him in T.M.O. next issue: and I am told that my Barcroft play will be included in that issue. Just at present I am busy on BBO: we have to be well ahead with our copy in these days. In connection with BBO. the publishers have mooted a very bright idea, as it seems to me: but as it is only in the chrysalis stage at present I will leave it at that.

Now there is a little matter I should have referred to before. Last Christmas, on and around Xmas Day, I received well over 250 letters. Every one of these was a pleasure to read, and everyone will be answered individually by my own fair hand: but my correspondents will realise that this is rather a matter of time, and I am sure they will excuse what may seem to be somewhat undue delay. Authors in these days cannot afford secretaries: moreover, I like replying to letters personally: it is one of the relaxations of my leisure, and I wouldn't like to part with it.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

* * * * *

In the Most Unexpected Places!

The Great Western Hotel,
Vyne Road,
Basingstoke, Hants.
1st March 1953.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Please forgive me for writing to you again, I know you must be a very busy man, but I feel I must thank you for sending me two back numbers of the C.D., the thought, I assure you, is very much appreciated.

I was delighted with the contribution by P.A. Walker to the October number, entitled "Hamilton Country", Mr. Walker has captured the atmosphere of those grand old stories to perfection.

The following may be of interest. Occasionally the proprietress of this hotel receives a news-sheet containing items of interest to the Licensed Trade, some in a light vein. Among the latter I noticed a verse, the origin of which the Editor admitted he did not know. I recognised it, however, as a verse formerly published in a "Greyfriars Herald", that in itself, of course, may not have been original, but a parody, but I have not read it anywhere else. The Greyfriars version was as follows:-

"Poor Gossy, life is RUM, I fear,
For though he was both ALE and STOUT,
Death stretched him on its BITTER BIER,
In another world he HOPS about".

Gosling, of course, did not appear in the news-sheet, and it is comforting to reflect that his alleged demise was the poetic licence of a Removite, that he is still with us, and not hopping about in that other world.

Very sincerely yours,

PERCY E. NORTH.

THEY THRILLED YOU ONCE

Note: From time to time a letter comes along from someone who was behind the scenes in the golden age of boys' weeklies. Here is one of them, it will be of particular interest to the older generation. - H.L.

Minehead. Som.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

The following few notes may be of interest to you, and any other members of the Club who remember the name of "Maurice Everard."

Born in 1882 I was interested in boys' literature from

earliest days, and read avidly such material as the Aldine Press produced, Jack Harkaway, Frank Reade stories, Buffalo Bill and as much of the output of the Brett and Henderson presses as I could lay hands on.

At 17 in spare time from working on a provincial paper I was writing for the B.O.P. followed by articles in the Boys' Champion, then edited by A.J. Ireland. I arrived in Fleet Street towards the end of the "bad old days" - illuminated by the work of masters of fiction of the type of Bracebridge Hemming : many of whom wrote in pubs for five bob a thousand lived on pints of porter and bread and cheese. I remember David Christie Murray and a few of the old timers before starting at Cassells - the atmosphere of which was'nt at all to my taste.

In 1904 I joined Harmsworths under the famous Hamilton Edwards, founder of the Boys Friend, the Boys Realm, The Boys' Herald etc. etc. I was acting editor of the Boys Herald throughout the several years of its life, and met almost everyone of note in the then-world of boys' literature. Here are a few names which occur at random (I could write reams about most of them) -

WRITERS : Ernest Trepton, Norman Goddard, D.H. Parry, - Glover, Alan Blair, Ward Muir, Sidney Drew who always sent in his copy hand-written) H. St John Cooper (who never punctuated his stuff), Cecil Hayter, Malcolm Scott (Dr. Staniforth : who counted every word and sent in his bills to the exact penny), Hugh Tuite - heir presumptive to a baronetcy which his son still enjoys, (Viscount Mountmorres - who advised us on spiritual matters), Houghton Townley, A.S. (Steffens) Hardy, very superior, with charming manners and a great love of opera), Sidney Gowing, a keen yachtsman, Old Man (A.M.) Burrage. S. Clarke Hook, Charles Hamilton of Gem and Magnet fame - whom I never met - practically all jolly good fellows of whom I retain the happiest memories.

ARTISTS : Harry Lane, Vincent Daniel - who did historical pictures : Val Reading who illustrated most of the Morton Pike stories : his brother Willis : Fred Taylor, Fred Bennett - who subsequently achieved fame as a painter in oils; Leonard Shields - who left a big fortune, Macdonald (still alive and one of the nicest fellows who ever lived : Philip Hayward, a sound chap with a vast knowledge of heraldry and genealogy : Sid Pryde, Paul Hardy (early days) etc.

EDITORS. Hamilton Edwards, an amazing man who made a fortune and lost it : Summers of Answers - brilliant; Cattle editor of

Chips, kindly and courteous, Gilbert Floyd, after, a local magnate and J.P. : Rex Haydon on the Sunday papers side, the Bros. Birnage, young Mander who lost an arm in the first World War, Maurice Down perhaps the most charming fellow who ever graced the editorial side of the A.P. and whom I am glad to learn is one of the few still left : Alfie Mann, everyone's friend : William Back a fine administrator, Percy Griffiths - clever - in fact too clever (I could say a lot about him), George Gerrish wonderfully humorous and good-hearted : beloved by everyone. Sapt - brother of Arcus who "made" the Daily Mirror, Newman Flower (later knighted) Gurney Benham - also knighted; young "Eves" still alive - I hope and many others.

I had the privilege of working with or for most of them from 1904 until 1923 when - except for a short spell when I took up the pen again during a tour of the West Indies in 1934 - I gave up writing altogether and devoted my time to the collecting of works of art of all kinds.

And now in the sunset - I cannot call it the twilight - of my days, I can look back over a very interesting and happy past : a busy life during which I wrote several millions of words of fiction under the pseudonyms you perhaps know and to which I can add a few others : Colonel North, Carlton Grey, Maurice Everard, etc.

The character of Joe Tremorne in the Polruan series which ran for several years was taken direct from life - one Joe Callaghan, an Irishman who settled in Cornwall and lived near me for a good many years when I lived at Port Wrinkle near Looe. After full service in the Navy he re-joined just before me in the first war and lived almost to the end of the second, dying in 1940-1. I saw him almost to the last... one of the most amazing characters who ever lived. I could go on for hours talking about the old A.P. days, its romances, tragedies etc. but you will have had enough, I fear. But all the best to your Old Boys' Club. If you know anyone who has for sale a bound copy of Vol. I & 2 of the Boys' Herald I shall be pleased to purchase them.

Sincerely yours

CECIL H. BULLIVANT.

This magazine, in its entirety, has been produced by :-

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