

The Collector's

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Digest



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



FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

THE 'ANNUAL' BALLOT: Elsewhere you will see the result of the voting. Though I am no punter I'll just for fun adopt racing parlance and say it was a photo finish. With a furlong to go my entry had a slight lead over Breeze Bentley's "Levison", but it proved to have more stamina and was first past the post. Roger Jenkins' "Bunter" which had been lying a good third came with a rush at the finish and mine had to be content with third place. Harry Homer & Co's. "Blakiana" was a gallant fourth. The next best supported entries were well in the running; of those not mentioned in the betting all had friends, not one being tailed off. And now I'll revert to the style with which I am most familiar.

It was really a most exciting and gratifying contest. The only snag was that there were a number who were eligible to vote who did not trouble to go to the poll. However, that's always the case in any contest.

There was very little criticism. A few suggested there was too much of one section, or too little of another - the one they were particularly interested in, of course. I do think, though, we could say it was fair shares for all as far as was humanly possible. And now to

'THE NEW 'ANNUAL': With this issue you will find the now familiar forms, and with them I should like to have a little heart to heart talk. You know that in the early months of this year I had to reluctantly make public the fact that quite a lot of subs were owing (a few still are, even now), I was so sorry I had to do so, especially as there were special circumstances which I frankly explained.

Now, as the order forms go out so early, I don't think it reasonable to make it a condition 'cash with order', but I have at least a right to expect 'cash on delivery'. So please send order and questionnaire forms as soon as ever possible - that is a great help - and cash, well - a gentleman's agreement, shall we say?

As for articles - well my file is beginning to look very attractive. Len Packman has already sent along "Cedar Creek - the School in the Backwoods". It's good. Then Len has spent quite a lot of time at Fleetway House obtaining information for the "100 Years of Boys' Weeklies" feature. He hasn't left many gaps to fill in, but there are just a few dates I may ask for your help with a little later on.

From Jack Murtagh in New Zealand, has come along an article on the St. Franks stories in the 3d. Nugget Library. Charlie Wright has completed his on the famous Aldines and complete is the right word. Another well-written effort which will particularly interest old-timers is "Some Jack Sam & Peter Reprints" by W.T. Thurbon.

An 'Annual' would be poorer without Roger Jenkins, but that won't happen this time. He is busy on "Red Magnet Magic". An appetising flavour about that, isn't there? Mervyn Lewis whose cover sketches for the C.D. have been so much admired has sent a page of "notable Greyfriars characters". They made me sit up and take notice, I can assure you, for they are really delightful.

So you'll see we've got nicely going. That isn't to say there won't be room for yours.

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A VETERAN AUTHOR INSPIRES A NEW ONE: In our May number we published the first article by Derek Smith. As I said at the time

to myself when I read his manuscript, "My word! this chap can write!". Well, evidently, someone else thought so too, for, as you will see from the "Letter Box" he has just had a detective story published. It was a nice gesture to dedicate it to Frank Richards. The title sounds intriguing and I am sure you will all wish him luck.

Derek tells me he is now busy on a novel.

* * * * *

PERSONAL PAR. Just after I had sent off the June C.Ds. my own mail brought a pleasant surprise - a Coronation Medal. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking those friends who, getting to know, so promptly sent me congratulations.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

BUNTER ON T.V. AGAIN! Said Robert Cannell in the "Daily Express" June 10th, referring to "The Course of Justice" series; "Among last night's actors was a man T.V. viewers know well in a very different role. Actor Gerald Campion, playing a barrow boy has been seen before - as Billy Bunter, hero of the famous Greyfriars schoolboy stories. While rehearsing for last night's programme, Campion has been getting ready for another Bunter story. Just one for the time being."

Hero, you'll note Robert Cannell calls him. Been called a few other things in his time, hasn't he?

Later. It's on July 7th.

* * * * *

Most of you probably take the "Radio Times" and would thus spot the letter which severely "admonished" Douglas Robinson for his alleged ignorance on the Hamilton papers. As most likely you don't keep your copies, however, and as some may not have seen it,

it is worth putting on record here, for to us who can claim to know a little of Hamilton lore it was very amusing. Here it is:-

THE ORIGINAL 'CAD': The item in "Both Sides of the Microphone" about "Cardew the Cad" is interesting, but I think that "listeners who remember will agree with me that the original character was called Carthew not Cardew. The school concerned was Rookwood not St. Jims and although the "Gem" occasionally carried a Rookwood story, it was principally in the Popular that this school was featured under Frank Richards' second pseudonym of Owen Conquest. Perhaps Mr. Douglas Robinson should divert some of his research from Red Indians to pre-war schoolboy literature! J.G. Halliday, Harrogate, Yorkshire.

Well, having chuckled over that, especially the last sentence, I bet many of you lost no time in getting off a letter to the editor of the "Radio Times". Ben Whiter, that alert secretary of our London Club certainly did for his reply, putting Mr. Halliday effectively 'on the spot', appeared a fortnight later, the earliest possible moment.

I wrote somewhat sarcastically, I fear, saying "seldom had I seen so many mistakes in so few lines" and closing with the comment "Mr. Halliday really shouldn't have written that last sentence".

Mr. Halliday is apparently a Yorkshireman. If his full address had been published we of the Northern Club would have felt inclined to cordially invite him to a Leeds meeting, to restore his memory and show him a few "Cardew Gems".

Anyway here's what 'Uncle Benjamin' said.

"Your correspondent, J.G. Halliday writing about the original "Cardew the Cad" has his information badly mixed up. The Rookwood stories by Owen Conquest first appeared in the Boys' Friend No. 715 dated February 20th, 1915, whereas the Gem was first published in 1907. There was a Mark Carthew of Rookwood, but he was only a minor character. Ralph Reckness Cardew was in his heyday about the 1920's - the "Golden Age" of the Gem.

We number great authorities on old boys' books among our members and I can assure you that Mr. Douglas Robinson's facts about "Cardew the Cad" are correct. This is vouched for by our president Charles Hamilton - the author of the stories in question. Benjamin G. Whiter, Hon. Sec. Old Boys' Book Club, London, N.22. "Congrats. Ben. That'll learn him.

Last August we quoted extensively from an article which had appeared in the "Sydney Morning Herald" written by Mr. Edward C. Snow, who for some years had been a sub-editor on the papers with which this column is concerned. Well Mr. Snow saw a copy of that August C.D. and recently I had the pleasure of receiving a long and very interesting letter from him. I had ventured to suggest that his memory had failed him in one or two instances as when it seemed to appear that Bunter wasn't at Greyfriars when the Magnet started. Mr. Snow took my criticism in good part but assures me that the heading "Then Bunter Arrived" was not in his m.s. but was inserted by the Literary Editor of the newspaper. Mr. Snow goes on to say that owing to this and some other alterations or additions that were made to his article, a controversy arose in the columns of the paper, and the editor declined to publish Mr. Snow's explanations. Well, without going as far as to use any Bevanisms some of us can feel for Mr. Snow for we have been misquoted by reporters who knew not the Gem or Magnet, (it honestly is true Jack and George and any other member of the profession who will be reading this) and it can be exasperating.

However, Mr. Snow goes on to tell of some interesting items of news concerning his activities on the papers. For instance: "I had eleven sketches published being the maps of Greyfriars and St. Jims in the Holiday Annuals 1922-3 and in the Gem St. Jims News Aug-Dec. 1921. I was the originator of the St. Jims News supplement and its chief contributor for the first nine months. The Who's Who in the Holiday Annuals 1921-2-3-4 were also mine."

Well, quite a lot of Hamiltonians greatly value those Who's Who's especially, and they will be interested to hear whom they have to thank for them.

Mr. Snow also says that the companion papers had an aggregate circulation of a million and a quarter at their peak and that as far back as 1916 in the bad weather of the Battle of the Somme and its overflow into southern England, the Companion Papers were found to be the best antidote to the 'blues' - being of more lasting stimulation than alcohol".

Mr. Snow often met Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Chapman in Room 57 at Fleetway House and is interested to hear that there are hopes of an autobiography from Mr. Chapman.

In a comment on the U.J. and the Nelson Lee Library, Mr. Snow is of the opinion that the introduction of American gangsterism spelt the beginning of the end for both.

Well, I am hoping to hear further from Mr. Snow ere long.

* * * * *

THAT "REPLY": You won't, of course, have forgotten that epistle the Merseyside Club received from Fleetway House in response to their appeal for the return of the Magnet. It caused no little uproar and several of our members were not content to let it rest there. One who wrote strongly was Stanley Smith, and he succeeded in drawing, at least a reasoned reply. He kindly gave it to me to publish for you all to see.

27th May, 1953.

"Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for your long letter of the 17th which I found very interesting. As editor of the Comet I was very interested in your comments regarding the Greyfriars stories. These stories I took out of the Comet because I found little or no response to them from our modern generation of children. The letters received from readers at the time they were running indicated a disappointingly small interest, and since taking the stories out I have not had any letters protesting about it from the present generation of Comet readers. I have, however, had a few letters from people like yourself whose memories of the writings of Charles Hamilton are very precious. We have come to the conclusion that the interest that undoubtedly exists in Greyfriars, St. Jim's, etc., is a nostalgic one.

I think the above explanation probably covers the point you raise regarding Mr. Webster's letter. I can only think that the original reply he received from us must have come from one of the General Correspondence Departments.

Thank you again for your very considerable interest.

Yours very sincerely,

E. HOLMES.

"

Now the faithful may not entirely agree with what Mr. Holmes says to Stanley, but he does straightforwardly give the A.P.'s point of view. Some may argue that the stories in the 'Comet' were too short for a fair trial, and point to the success of the Bunter Books which can't all be bought by the older generations. Still personally, I can't help wondering. I spend my days among National Servicemen. In barrack rooms and guard rooms I find copies of

comics, both English and American, and the long lived Thomson papers 'Adventure' and 'Hotspur'. At times I have brought out a Magnet and asked a lad of eighteen or so if he had ever seen it. Invariably he has looked blank and said "No". So quickly has time passed that I am apt to forget that thirteen years have gone since the Magnet died. If only it and the Gem had managed to survive the last war as they did the first, they may still have been serenely running on, as much thought of by present day boys as those of three earlier decades. But, if the Magnet was revived today could it recover the lost years and tempt boys away from the literature they have been brought up on? It's a big problem you know.

* * * * *

Among some very useful notes Jim Southway sent me some time ago I noticed one particularly interesting item. It was that No. 461 Boys' Friend Library (1st Series) "The Pride of the King" was written by G.R. Samways. This on the authority of Fleetway House. Now the interest point is that this was a reprint of the serial which ran in the first series of the "Greyfriars Herald", the author being given at the time as Mark Linley. What I am getting at is that if someone could swot up the story and study the style he could then perhaps be able to trace some of the Gem and Magnet stories Mr. Samways also wrote, for we know he was responsible for quite a number. Any volunteers?

* * * * *

POTTED PERSONALITIES. NO. 8.

By Eric Fayne

* * *

MR. SELBY. It has been suggested, with some truth, that the masters of St. Jim's did not make so interesting a collection as those at Greyfriars. Of the St. Jim's "beaks" Mr. Selby probably presents the best character study. He was more human, and consequently more believable than Horace Ratcliff, who was depicted in too exaggerated a style to ring the bell with any but the very young. It should be added that Mr. Ratcliff was considerably modified in the post-war St. Jim's stories.

Mr. Selby presents a picture of a true-to-life schoolmaster of a certain type. One who had grown old on his job, who has never really understood boys, who has lost any illusions he might once

have possessed, who has expected the worst from boys and has probably found it. A rather pathetic study, Mr. Selby.

The Third Form Master featured in some stories which must be classed among the Gem's best. In blue-cover days we find him in "SHOULDER TO SHOULDER", a fine tale of the more serious type, in which Mr. Selby lost his temper when dealing with D'Arcy Minor. Wally, goaded beyond endurance, according to Martin Clifford, lassoed his master and bound him to a tree. A well-remembered yarn, for both Tom Merry and Gussy told lies to save Wally, - "the first that Tom Merry had ever told". In the graphic account of "THE FLOODED SCHOOL" we found Mr. Selby in feud with the Terrible Three, and Tom Merry booked for a flogging, - till he dived from the study window to rescue the irritable form-master in the flooded quadrangle.

Many years later came the fine series where Mr. Selby, who had been speculating on the foreign exchanges, lost his thousand-franc banknote, and accused Frank Levison of stealing it. Though this was really a story featuring the Levison brothers, it was the fine character painting of the embarrassed and worried schoolmaster that captured the imagination, - at any rate, for the more discerning reader.

Roughly of the same vintage was "MANNERS HOLDS HIS OWN" in which Manners took a photograph of Mr. Selby listening at a key-hole, - and the Shell fellow veritably blackmailed the master by holding the incriminating snapshot over his head. Some clever pen-pictures here. (Manners had done the same thing, years before, in a lighter story, - "THE SCAMPS OF THE SCHOOL", but the character work was more developed in the later yarn, - and in any case, the plot was worth repeating).

Later came the SNEATH series, in which Mr. Selby was truly blackmailed by a rascally lawyer, and saved from disgrace by Wally D'Arcy and his friends.

Though on rare occasions the Master of the Third was over-written (particularly by the substitute writers who mishandled many fine characters), he was a believable schoolmaster, and worthy to take his place among Charles Hamilton's greatest.

* * * * *

THE STATELY HOMES OF GREYFRIARS

By Eric Humphries

The above caption, as most Magnet lovers will well know, once

headed a series by the "Greyfriars Rhymster", that ran for a few weeks through some of the latter Magnets.

They say, "every man's home is his castle!". So it is with the Greyfriars chaps, be they high or low. When vacation time came round at Greyfriars, Billy Bunter was a great "fisher" after invitations to one or the other chaps home, preferably Mauleverer Towers, Wharton Lodge or with Smithy on the spree. We always ended up, one way or the other, at Wharton Lodge. Bunter used to say to Toddy - "We would not be found dead at Toddy's humble home!" and Toddy replied, "he would be, if he came there!".

But we - not being like Bunter, or so I hope, will pay them all a visit, and unlike Bunter, will find ourselves really welcome.

It will take a very big car to hold us all for our journeys, but this being found, we are off on our way.

The sun shines brightly in a sky of blue as we enter the sleepy old village of Friardale; past Uncle Cleggs shop, and to a certain cobblers shop, the home of Dick Penfold and his father. We would find the white-haired old cobbler very busy amongst his boots and shoes, and Dick, no doubt, giving him a helping hand. The old cobbler would peer at us over the top of his glasses, and give us hearty welcome; but we can't stay long as we have far to go, and must get on our way.

From Friardale, our car runs swiftly up to the fishing village of Hawkscliffe; a tiny hamlet on the Kentish coast, set high among the chalk cliffs. We rattle and bump over the old cobbled street, and far below there is a view of the sea, glimmering and glittering in the summer sunshine.

The last few yards to old John Redwings' cottage are too steep for a car to climb, so we have to do it on foot. We enjoy the walk though and finally arrive at the cottage to find that old John is away at sea.

Tom is there to welcome us, and we are glad to be able to shake hands with one of the best fellows in the Remove. The cottage is spotlessly clean, and Tom was obviously as proud of it as if it were the finest mansion in the land.

It was a thrill to look around, and to recall the adventures that have happened there in the past; but the time came for us to go, and Tom waved us a reluctant farewell.

As we come away from Hawkscliffe we pass through the little village of "Pegg", and past the front door of a little cottage belonging to Dave Trumper the fisherman, and his son Dick of

Courtfield Council School. Many's the time old Dave has hired his boats out to the Greyfriars chaps.

Our car speeds on and we find ourselves in Surrey. We have no little difficulty trying to find a place called "Bunter Court", which, on closer inspection, turns out to be "Bunter Villa". Our knock on the door is answered by Mr. Bunter, who, from his looks, seems to have been having trouble with his income tax. However, he invites us in, and we are introduced to his good lady, Mrs. Amolia Bunter. Mr. Bunter seems to be in somewhat of a hurry, and has to rush away and leave us, as he goes we hear him muttering something about, "bulls" and "bears"! Mrs. Bunter tells him, "to be careful dear!" but seems somewhat relieved to see him go.

Of course, Billy, Sammy and sister Bessie are all there, and looking fatter than ever. Billy is rather worried because Bessie keeps getting on to him about a certain half-a-crown he seems to owe her. We take our farewell of the Bunters, and as we leave, hear something about a postal order, but have heard that one before.

Still in Surrey, we pass through the town of Wimford, on through the village of Emdale and finally to Wharton Magnus itself.

We very soon find Wharton Lodge, and Wells the butler announces us to Col. James Wharton and his sister Miss Amy Wharton. Harry is there of course, and we find ourselves very welcome and very much at home. Another chap we meet at the Lodge is old "Inky", who says, "the gladfulness to meet us is terrific!" and are we glad to meet him.

After a few words with Col. Wharton in the library Harry takes us to his den, and there we go over a few of the old adventures together. We mentioned Bunter, and Harry, laughingly, recalled the Christmas when Bunter butted into the Lodge and hid himself in the attic. "Although!" he said, "I did not find it a laughing matter at the time!".

Inky told us about his home in far off Bhanipur, and mentioned the wise old moonshe, Mook Mookerjee.

But, all too soon the time came for us to go, and we bid them a regretful farewell.

From Wharton Lodge in Surrey, to Mauleverer Towers in Hampshire, is a goodly step, but this is our next destination. We certainly seem to be covering a great deal of ground on these journeys of ours, but we remember they are magic journeys, where time stands still, and distance is no object.

Of all the "stately homes of Greyfriars", Mauleverer Towers is, without doubt, the most stately. It is about 10 miles from Winchester, and we have a little feeling of awe, as we approach the great gateway, flanked by two great pillars surmounted by stone lions. Just inside the gate is a lodge, and an immense drive twists and curves away between oak and beech trees towards the distant house, which is on rather high ground.

We get a welcome fit for royalty from Mauly's uncle and aunt, Sir Reginald and Lady Brooke, and then Mauly exerts himself sufficiently to show us round. We wander round the grounds, which are very extensive and cover many acres, and Sir Reginald needs many keepers, of whom Jardine is head, to keep them in order.

After our wander round the grounds, Mauly shows us the Towers themselves. The residential parts have been modernised, but the rest, of which an old turret is part, have not been changed for centuries. An old winding stair of stone leads the way into the turret, and this goes into an old square room, which is reputed to be haunted. Mauly says, that he himself has never seen the "Ghost", nor has anyone else at the Towers.

We continue our journey, and a quick run into Devonshire brings us to "Hilton Hall", which is within sight of the great convict prison of Blackmoor. Hilton greets us well enough, but we receive a scowl from his chum Price, so do not stay long.

From Devonshire into Dorset, we call at "Cherry Place", near the Dorset coast, and are glad to hear Bob Cherry's cheery "Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" and meet his father Major Cherry.

Up into the Salisbury plain, to call at the home of Mr. James Nugent near Amesbury, where we see Frank Nugent and his minor Dicky, and meet their two sisters.

Our journey now takes us northward, and as we travel along, think of all the Greyfriars chaps we haven't been able to visit. Old Hobby of the Shell, who's father, Sir James Hobson, M.P., is a gentleman farmer in Devonshire. The one-and-only Horace Coker, who lives at "Coker Place" in Surrey, and not of course forgetting Aunt Judy. Coker's chums - George Potter who lives in London, and Wm. Greene, on the Sussex coast.

We think too - of Peter Hazeldene and his sister Marjorie, living near Brighton. Also of Monty Newland, at Hove, with his rich uncle Isaac. The old Bounder - Smithy, and his father Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith at No. 3 Courtman Square, London. Tom Brown

from far off Taranaki, New Zealand, where his father is a sheep farmer.

By this time we are getting into Lancashire, and our steps lead us to the town of Bury, where Mark Linley lives near the river Irwell. His father is not well-off and works in a cotton factory, and Mark, who came to Greyfriars on a scholarship had, at first, a hard time from certain elements in the school. But we are well entertained by Mark and his family, and leave feeling much cheered by our visit.

Now we visit Yorkshire - the land of the tyke - the home of Johnny Bull. Johnny's home is called "Moor Fell" and is in the West Riding of Yorkshire. His father is a cloth and woollens manufacturer, and owner of many mills. We also meet Johnny's uncle and aunt, Mr. John Arthur, and Miss Tabitha Bull, and are entertained in - "rect good style". It is only when Johnny wants to play his cornet for us that we decide it's time to go.

It's nearly time now to come to the end of our tour, but before doing so, we really must call at the famous old city of Chester and see dear old Wingate at his home besides the river Dee. Wingate tells us that he spends a great deal of his time on the river, so we can quite understand why he is such a good man with the oars. His father is, I believe, a member of the governing board at Greyfriars.

A good place, and I think a very fitting one to finish off, would be at dear old Greyfriars itself. We would get a very kindly and gracious welcome from Dr. Locke, and be presented to Mrs. Locke, and their daughter Rosalie. After tea in the Head's house - for we would be invited to stay for tea - Dr. Locke would no doubt conduct us round the school, and maybe we would meet Mr. Quelch, who would give us kindly, if somewhat frosty greetings. Afterwards a walk in the Head's garden, where we would see Mimble the gardener hard at work.

Our tour is now over, and it is with something akin to sadness we see old Gosling close the gates of Greyfriars behind us. As we turn up Friardale Lane we here him mutter to himself, "Wot I says is this 'ere!" and something about "Ought to be drowned! Drowned, that's wot I says! Drat 'em!"

NELSON LEE COLUMN

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

Following up Bill Champion's article last month, Neil Gourley gives further evidence of the influence of Dickens in E.S.B's characterizations. He deals particularly with the Willards Island series and the advent of the one and only Archie Glenthorne. As this series may be someone's favourite all may not agree with what he says, but there is no doubt that Neil has given us something to think about.

THE COMING OF ARCHIE

A Review by NEIL C. GOURLEY

The subject of this article is the Willard Island series of Nelson Lee O.S. 349-357, reprinted in the S.O.L. as No. 366 "The St. Frank's Cadets" and No. 369 "Hidden Gold".

I am not making any claim that this particular story is worthy of E.S. Brooks' best work. It is not. The Willard Island series is uninspiring in much of the writing and weak in plot. It belongs to the earlier half of the Old Series, before the author had fully developed his style. In part, the plot is more of a straight detective yarn with a school story background, than the reverse. Nevertheless the series deserves attention for three characters. Two of these characters Curtain Niggs and Bon Croke were only temporary dwellers on the St. Frank's scene. The other one, Archie Glenthorne, became one of the three greatest schoolboy creations of Brooks.

The plot deals with the situation in St. Frank's after a terrible thunderstorm has wrecked part of the Ancient House and flooded the surrounding countryside. Since their sleeping quarters are ruined, those of the Remove who are in the St. Frank's Cadets, obtain permission to camp out on Willards Island in the River Stowe. This island was once the home of old John Willard a local eccentric who was reputed to have carried out strange experiments in an old house, now in ruins, on the island. Old John's son, an orphan, is the ward of Dr. Stafford, Headmaster of St. Frank's. This boy does not know his real name and passes under that of John

Martin. He camps with the Remove on the island.

The villain of the story is a nephew of Old John Willard called Hudson, who believes there is hidden treasure on the island, and is determined to kidnap John Martin; he will then find and claim the treasure as next of kin.

To accomplish these ends Hudson enlists the aid of two barge-men Niggs and Croke, who are in search of easy money. He also stirs up the manager of the Glenthorne estate, to which Willards Island now belongs, to evict the St. Frank's juniors from their camp, so that he can search for the hidden treasure.

These schemes are, of course, foiled. The Remove Cadets remain on the island, with the moral support of a certain Master Archibald Glenthorne, youngest son of the Colonel Glenthorne, who owns the estate. Nelson Lee uncovers the secret of the island and the crooks suffer their just reward.

As I stated above the story moves very slowly. Neither the characters of John Martin nor Hudson are very interesting. Nelson Lee, himself, has not very much to do and the revelation of the island's secret is unnecessarily "far-fetched". Despite these heavy disadvantages there is much to admire in the various incidents and characters. Handforth, as usual, is very amusing in his position as Cadets Sergeant. His dictatorial misuse of power leads him into trouble from the start. Before long he is handing thick-ears out wholesale, and only action by Captain Nipper stops a riot. A likeable trait in Handy's character is displayed after his too free talk has given away one of the island's secrets to the enemy. He is unexpectedly contrite and admits fully his fault before retrieving it in a typical Handforthian manner.

Another character who plays a minor role is Enoch Snipe. This is a real Brooks cad. He is a sneak, sly, a snob and a toad. In Brooks' own words - "Enoch Snipe was a Worm. His back appeared to be somewhat hunched and he possessed a long scraggy neck, which caused his head to project forward. His features were sharp and foxy with protruding eyes that had red rims. Altogether a most unpleasant looking junior." ...

Such a description reveals the strong tendency in Brooks to create "humours". This name is given to the sort of character who is flat but sharp. A humour displays only one or two facets of character, but these facets are sharply delineated and exaggerated out of proportion to make a vivid impression on (cont'd page 210)

ADVERTS

Nelson Lees (O.S.) for sale or exchange, WANTED Nos. 312, 319, 357, 391, 523. L.M. ALLEN, 3 Montgomery Drive, Sheffield, 7.

FOR SALE: Nelson Lees 1928, 118-139, also odd Magnets 1932-40. Gems 1928-30. Triumph and Gem 13 numbers. Also WANTED Gem 1576. Will buy or exchange 2 earlier numbers for it. Write C.L. LEMPEY, 27, Heather Close, Kingswood, Bristol.

WANTED: "The Boy Without a Name". Boys' Friend Library No. 288, 1st Series. Your price paid. GERALD ALLISON, 7 Summerfield ardens, Bramley, Leeds.

NOTICE: 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, London, S.E.22.

EXCHANGE: Greyfriars Holiday Annual, 1939 for Nelson Lees 1919-25 H.A. is in excellent condition. J.W. COOK, 4 Swanston Path, South Oxhey, Watford, Herts.

Do you require 1 book, or 1,000? Please sent me your "WANTS" List. If not now in stock they will come along! AVAILABLE: Holiday Annual 1930-1940. Double Xmas, Special Numbers etc; Boys Friend, Boys Realm, Union Jack, Cheer, Boys, Cheer, Photo Bits, London Life. Number 'Ones'; Rocket, Robin Hood, Black Bess, Photo Fun, London Life, Film Pictorial, Britons Own, Children's Newspaper. Volume 1, Illustrated Films Monthly (1913). Bound Volumes: Boys' Comic Journal, Boys' of England, Captain Kettle, Junior, Tom Wildrakes Schooldays, Aldine Tip-Top Detective. ALSO: Boys' Herald, (1921), Boys' Realm Football Libraries (1909), Marvels (1893-1920), Magnets (1917-1940), Boys' Realms (1914-1928) Boys' Friend Weeklies (1913-1925), Bullscoyes. 50 other types also available. EXCHANGE suggestions welcomed! S.A.E. requirements, please! SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. T. LAMBERT, 347, Gertrude Road, Norwich.

FOR SALE: Collector's Digest Annual 1952 6/-, Collector's Digest, February 1952 to June 1953 16/-, Goldhawk Series of St. Jim's (11 numbers) 12/-, Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1936 5/-, Tom Merry's Own (Latest) 6/-, Magnets 1442, 1443, 1446, 1447, 1448, 1449, 1554, 1561, 1567, 1569, 1570, 1572, 1635, 15/- OR LOT £2.10.0d. G. JENKINS, 7 Caederwen Road, Neath, Glam.

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THE "ANNUAL" BALLOT How They Finished

1. Levison at Greyfriars 188.
2. The Amazing Career of Billy Bunter 185.
3. There Were Other Schools 183.
4. Kings of Crime 159.
5. Roamings of the Rio Kid. 139.
6. The St. Franks Saga 138.
7. Stand and Deliver 105.
8. Single to Happiness 91.

MAGNET TITLES (Cont'd) "S" denotes substitute. 1175. The Menace of Tang-Wang. 1176. The Peril from the East. 1177. The Foe from the Sky. 1178. All Aboard for China. 1179. The Hand of the Mandarin. 1180. The Terror of the Tong. 1181. The Scourge of the Red Dragon.

the reader. Most of the great Dickens characters are humours. After reading about Micawber, the Veneerings or Mrs. Gamp, we often think "He reminds me of so and so who is a bit like that!".

The fact that many Brooksonian characters are humours rather than fully three-dimensional beings, is not a defect. It just shows the author has the ability to spotlight the chief traits of a certain type of person, and the skill to invent a character to symbolise them. A cartoonist like Giles or Strube works in a similar manner.

Enoch Snipe is very like Uriah Heap. Once more we have a proof that Brooks is greatly influenced by more famous authors. One of the pleasures in reading the St. Frank's saga is to try and spot the origin of many of the characters. The three authors whose influence is greatest are Dickens, Rider Haggard and P.G. Wodehouse. Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi remind one of Allan Quartermain and Unslopogous from Rider Haggard. The other two writers come to one's mind after reading the Willard Island series.

As mentioned above Snipe can be equated to Uriah Heap the snivelling hypocrite from David Copperfield. There is also a strong resemblance between the two villains Niggs and Croke and the famous Punch and Judy showmen Codlin and Short of "The Old Curiosity Shop". Just as Codlin and Short run each other down so do Niggs and Croke. Here are their descriptions as visualised by Brooks in a true Dickensian manner.

.....One (Niggs) was big and burly, attired in a blue suit of thick, coarse material with a blue sweater. An ancient peaked cap rested upon his head at a rakish angle. He had a rugged, weather-beaten face and was clean shaven. His companion (Croke) was much smaller - a wizened up specimen of humanity, with a rough blue suit and sweater, similar to his companion but wearing an ordinary tweed cap. He had a black patch over one eye, and two of his front upper teeth protruded from his mouth, even when the latter was closed.....

The continual back-biting between Codlin and Short is echoed by this dialogue.

....."Pore old Ben" said Niggs, "He's only half a man, so to speak, and this exposure will just about put the finish to him. I don't suppose he'll live arter the mornin". Ben gave a grunt. "If I don't live ten years longer than you, cap'n I ain't every-thing. Why, strike me timbers a man what's composed of blubber

an' flabbiness ain't no 'ealthy bloke at all!"

These short extracts, whether or not they prove my point, should arouse interest in these two quaint persons.

The main reason why the Willard Island series will be always remembered among readers of the St. Frank's Saga is that it introduces us to Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne. Undoubtedly he is derived from P.G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster; he even has his own Jeeves in the shape of the "one and only, indispensable Phipps". I believe he is a greater character than Wooster. Archie is more developed, and certainly more sympathetic. He is anything but "dumb", and, despite his mannerisms, he proves, on many occasions, that he is to be relied on for help in a tight corner.

The chapters of the present series which introduce Archie are among the most humorous ever written by his creator.

Here is his description as he enters St. Frank's for the first time. "A tall youngster between fifteen and sixteen, with fair hair, a fresh complexion and aristocratic features. True, his nose was rather large, and his chin correspondingly small, but he was aristocratic nevertheless. He was attired in a superbly cut lounge suit. He wore a high collar and a necktie that positively shimmered with silken glory. A soft hat was set at a somewhat rakish angle at the back of his head and he swung a whippy cane over his arm. His feet were encased in patent leather shoes which glittered like jet and his ankles literally flowed in a pair of socks with green and yellow check".

The effect of the above apparition on the Romojo juniors, especially Handforth, can be imagined. Archie is first introduced into the story when Nipper and Tommy Watson go to Glenthorne Manor to get permission to camp on Willards Island, despite the harsh action of Mr. Grady, the estate agent, in ordering the Cadets off. The only member of the family at home is Master Archibald, whom the butler infers is "queer". Nipper and Watson meet him lying on a sofa in 'fearfully coloured silk pyjamas'. His first words are typical ... "Oh, there you are then!" he observed "That is, I mean to say, what?" ...

Despite the fact that he falls asleep twice during his conversation with the two St. Frank's boys they impress him. He decides to join St. Frank's as a pupil. Hence the above apparition when Archie arrives to interview the Head. This interview is, in Glenthorne's own words, "priceless". To quote once more.

... Archie stepped into the Head's study. He was facing Dr. Stafford who was seated at his desk regarding Archie over the tops of his glasses. "Dear me" said the Head mildly.

"Well, here we absolutely are!" said Archie chattily. "How are you, Sir? Feeling fit and so forth? Looking top hole, I might say. Or to be precise, the health business is going strong.".....

Such is Archie Glenthorne. The result of the interview with the Head nearly results in his being placed in the Fifth Form. Archie having decided to go into the Remove, however, in his usual way persuades the Head to alter his decision. And in the Remove he remains till the last St. Frank's story was written. His importance cannot be over emphasised. Perhaps Brooks did derive his characters from other authors, but to the best of them he gave something fresh - something which deserves the adjective "Brooksian".

Nipper, Tregellis-West, Fatty Little, the Trotwoods, Reggie Pitt and Fullwood may all be weaker than their Hamiltonian opposites. However, Handforth is not just another Coker, nor Glenthorne another Gussy, and William Napoleon Browne is completely original. It is these last three characters who became the chief support of the later 'Nelson Lee'. Without them there may be much truth in the accusation that St. Frank's was mere imitation St. Jim's. With them - combined with the mystery-school adventure style - the St. Frank's Saga is unique in the field of school stories. The Willard Island series has a claim to our interest in that it illustrates the strong, as well as the weak side of E.S. Brooks' work.

* * * * *

It's some time now since I sent out an S.O.S., but the time has come for me to send out another. In other words, I'm getting short of material. Just enough for another two issues in fact. So unless you want to see some of my ramblings appear again - and I'm not sure that I want to, for believe me I'm luxuriating in this well earned rest - than I must ask you to get your thinking caps on and go to work ----- please.

P.S. Would you mark on your M.Ss. the total number of words. It makes it easier to estimate the amount of space it needs. Ta!

(cont'd from page 224)

saw it, for wasn't he supposed to have sold newspapers in the street?) - H.L.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

May I begin my chat this month by thanking all those of you who were kind enough to write and say such complimentary things about my first effort in editing 'Blakiana'.

I do feel, however, that any credit is not due to me but to the contributors for their articles, and also to the Agency and Herbert Leckenby for the excellent printing and layout.

Please remember I welcome your suggestions for the improvement of 'Blakiana', so don't be afraid to write to me!

This month I include articles by both old and new contributors to 'Blakiana', and I am sure you will all agree with me that we must hear from them again.

Next month, among other things there will be the first half of a two-part article, a topical theme pertaining to the Coronation - by our old friend Walter Webb. The second part will appear in the September issue.

Now, what about more of you getting down to writing an article? How about giving Tinker a show? I am sure he deserves it - and Pedro, too! So out with your pens and paper. Cheerio for now.

JOSEPHINE PACKMAN.

* * *

SYD WALKER AND SEXTON BLAKE

By DEREK SMITH

"Day after day,
I'm on me way,
Any rags, bottles or bones?"

Everybody, I am sure, remembers the late Syd Walker. No broadcast of "Band Wagon" was quite the same without him. Every week "Big Hearted" Arthur Askey and "Stinker" Murdoch would interrupt their comedy and hand over the microphone to the genial junk man.

Mr. Walker's speciality was a weekly humanproblem - and it really was a problem, too. In each show he would introduce a brief

sketch which concluded with the chief character in a believable and apparently insoluble dilemma. Then Syd would invite his listeners to submit their answer on a postcard, and give his own solution the following week. As he put it himself - in those rich, fruitily familiar tones: "What would you do, chums?"

The man behind the scenes - the author of the sketches - was Ernest Dudley, better known today as the "Armchair Detective" and the creator of Doctor Morelle. In March 1939 he took his partnership with Mr. Walker a step further. He teamed radio's philosophical junk man with our old friend Sexton Blake!

The Editor of the "Detective Weekly" was justly proud of his scoop - though for some obscure reason only two stories in the proposed new series appeared in the pages of Blake's Own Paper. Both tales, however, were rattling good yarns which deserve to be remembered.

Mr. Walker was introduced in the character by which he was known to millions - the rag-and-bone merchant who was perpetually "bumping inter some queer 'ow-d'yer-do's".

The circumstances of his acquaintance with Sexton Blake were briefly referred to as "that evenin' down at Long 'Arry's" when "but for the intervention of Mr. Walker at a critical moment, his (Blake's) interest in the future might have ended there and then". A tantalising allusion this, as provoking as Dr. Watson's famed references to the unpublished cases of his friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

Blake's first recorded case in partnership with Syd Walker was an intriguing affair. It began with the murder of a jeweller in his shop in the Commercial Road. Mr. Walker trundled his way into the mystery unknowingly, for "amid that pile of junk that heaped his barrow high... was the one clue that would have revealed the identity of the... murderer!"

After the lady in the case - whose fiance had been arrested for the crime - had confided in Syd her (mistaken) impression that her father had actually committed the killing, Mr. Walker decided to hand over the problem to his friend in Baker Street.

The story ran its exciting course to a surprising denouement. Judged by the strict standards Ernest Dudley would almost certainly observe today, the tale did not play fair with the reader: Blake withheld the essential clue till after he had unmasked the murderer. This criticism aside, however, the tale was a success. It had the advantage of some excellent Eric Parker illustrations, and the

character drawing was particularly well done. The author gave us a warmly human Mr. Walker, a creditable Sexton Blake, a gruff Inspector Coutts, and a fine comic foil, for the junk man in the redoubtable Mrs. Bardell.

But alas for Tinker! He wasn't mentioned at all in the first story, and appeared only off-stage in the second.

In the second yarn, a man was found dead in Mr. Walker's own house, and the rag-and-bone man was only saved from arrest by the timely intervention of Sexton Blake. The cause of his troubles this time was - an aspidistra!

Blake found "these problems of yours...remarkably interesting...I hope if you get hold of any more queer cases, you'll let me in on them".

Mr. Walker responded cheerfully: "Anythink ter oblige, chum. That's me all over".

But it was a promise which was never kept.

The two stories reappeared in a book published by Wright & Brown a little while later. Though the junk man survived the necessary revision, copyright requirements forced the exclusion of Sexton Blake. He was, alas, replaced by an unattractive imposter with an improbable name and - as I remember - the face of a living corpse!

Mr. Walker Wants to Know!

Detective Weekly No. 318.

What Would You Do?

" " " 325.

* * * * *

GEORGE MARSDEN PLUMMER

By CHARLES WRIGHT

As far as we know, Plummer was created by Mark Osborne and taken over by G.H.Teed. *It has been stated that Mark Darran was the original creator and that Osborne took over from him, and then Teed took over from Osborne; but be that as it may, it was G.H. Teed who developed the character with whom we are most familiar*. He it was who linked Plummer with Huxton Rymer, Vali-Mata-Vali and others, and it was also Teed who wrote the "Hawk of the Peak" series of stories in which Plummer became an Arab chieftain. He is, I believe, the only criminal to be featured in all three 'Blake' publications, Union Jack, Sexton Blake Library and Detective Weekly, and has also been featured on the stage and screen.

In Plummer, Blake is pitted against a man with a fertile and deductive brain falling very little short of his own; so that when they meet, a strenuous battle of wits follows as a matter of course. But for an accident of birth, Plummer would have been the Earl of Sevenoaks with an annual income of £60,000, and having a criminal kink he resented this and decided to recompense himself from society. He joined the London Police as a young man and showing marked signs of brilliance he became in a year or two a detective sergeant. On reaching this point, he no longer tried to restrain his criminal impulses and went crooked. Knowledge gained in his detective work gave him a hold over several rich persons and he commenced a system of blackmail which caused him to be greatly feared in many honoured families. His inside information of the workings of the 'Yard' enabled him for a long period to outwit the police and he soon amassed great wealth, and was able to live in the luxury he loved. It was of course Sexton Blake who discovered the double life that Plummer was leading, and exposing him sent him for a 'stretch' to Bleakmoor Prison. Plummer escaped and recommenced his criminal activities, and joining forces with John Marsh, an ex-financier, planned huge swindles which would have startled the world, but Sexton Blake always stepped in in time and nipped his schemes in the bud.

Plummer was very clever at disguises and impersonations and would have made a brilliant character detective-inspector and actually took his place for a week or more at Scotland Yard. No one there had the least suspicion, and his exposure only came about by Blake noticing his eyes. In these eyes there is a peculiarity which even Plummer, with all his skill at disguises, cannot alter. Normally they are steel-grey, but when he is angry or excited they change to agate green with the pupils contracting and dilating like those of an enraged cat.

Plummer was cold, cunning and ruthless. He also had the power to overawe and rule the lesser lights of the criminal world, and the whole globe was his hunting ground. One of his most amazing exploits was when he adopted the Mohammedan religion and lived in the Riff country of Morocco for several years as an important man in the army of Abdul Krim, taking the name of Sakr-el-Droog (Hawk of the Peak). He actually helped his country once during the 1914-18 war, in the story "The Case of the German Trader" - Union Jack No. 575, wherein Blake remarked that George

Marsden Plummer had all the pluck inherent in a Britisher; but this praise did not prevent Sexton Blake from hunting him and nullifying his schemes, and many were the battles fought between these two formidable opponents.

*I have it on very reliable authority that Plummer was created by Lewis Carlton (vide "The Man from Scotland Yard", U.J. No. 222), and that Osborne did not take over until U.J. No. 315 "The Swell Mobman". J.P.

* * * * *

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

JUNE ISSUES

No. 289 The Case of the Smuggled Currency. Hugh Clevely.

This tale is a smasher - a 'gang-smasher' - in fact. There is no one to beat Hugh Clevely for a genuine crook-thriller, as distinct from the usual tiresome who-dun-it. In this ripping yarn he rivals Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler for exciting action, and convincing situation. The characters are all excellent; the crooks, the people involved with them, and the police. Blake is admirable.

There is never a dull moment in the whole book, which is the best S.B.L. we have had for months. I have no need or desire to dissect it in any way. Just read it for yourself. Oh! and note the beautifully-drawn cover by Eric Parker.

No. 290. The Secret of the Indian Lawyer. Anthony Parsons.

Determined to be topical, Parsons places this story during the Coronation. Unfortunately, he has Edward Carter - ugh! - doing his 'pools'. Perhaps, however, they were the Australian series.

Actually, this is quite a good tale, and, apart from a few lapses similar to the above, I quite enjoyed it. Blake did his stuff quite efficiently, but was over-shadowed by that Coker of Scotland Yard, 'Scoop' Claudius Venner. After Clevely's sensible and convincing Inspector Fosdyke, the clowning of Venner seemed crass beyond words. He has all the Coker attributes, including the courage, but would be better placed in the Fifth-Form, rather than Scotland Yard.

Two queries. Surely, if Leeson could read the car number on page 47, he should have been able to see the faces of the crooks and the colour of the chauffeur's livery. And what on earth is a grin of pure raffishness. Anyway, Tinker achieved one on page 20,

but it seems a shocking contradiction in terms. Lucus a non lucendo.

GERRY ALLISON.

* * * * *

THE ROUND TABLE

July 1953

(Correspondence to H. M. Bond. 10 Erw Wen. Rhiwbina. Cardiff.)

I have had several letters from Blake fans remarking on the recent "Daily Sketch" serial "Sinister Sequence" to which I referred in these columns last month. It certainly was spotted by our mutual good friend Herbert Leckenby, who, in a recent letter remarked "What about 'The Next Move'"? Well, as I told you, I wrote to the Editor of the "Sketch" telling him all about the old U.J. serial and suggesting that this time his newspaper was NOT handing out something 'new and original' as they claimed. Some weeks (yes weeks!) passed and I gave up hope of ever receiving a reply to what was, of course, a letter which was hardly complimentary to a national newspaper; and then a short while ago came this reply:-

Dear Mr. Bond, Thank you for your letter. I was very interested to hear about the serial story in "Union Jack". However, since this was a good many years ago, I feel that the idea will be new to the majority of Daily Sketch readers. Many thanks for writing to me. Yours sincerely, H.E. Clapp. Editor.

Of course, this is the kind of reply that was to be expected, but I am still under the impression that the old U.J. serial gave somebody an idea. If this was so the "new and original" claim was misused, but if, on the other hand the person responsible for the "Sequence Sinister" did think it out for himself then here is another example of a "great minds think alike" coincidence.

I have just returned from a fortnight's holiday in Blackpool, and, as on previous years, I was able to really get down to reading some of the Blake stories which I have necessarily had to "shelve" during the last twelve months. It was indeed good to be able to lie on a sunny beach and browse over Blake and I can imagine that quite a lot of our readers will be similarly employed during the next few months. Anyway, to all those going on holiday, I say, take a pile of old and new 'Blakes' with you and have a good time.

I have a dozen or so duplicates of S.B.L. 1st series volumes which might be of use to someone, but I do not wish to sell them - I want to swop. So if any of you other fans have duplicates of 1st or 2nd series volumes, perhaps you will contact me and I will let you know the numbers and titles available. I might add that all these books are complete and are in quite good condition.

Cheerio for now,

H. MAURICE BOND.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

Sunday June 21st, 1953. Fourteen members graced 27 Archdale Road, the original meeting place of The Old Boys' Book Club. This was the first time for quite awhile, so many memories were awakened. Chairman Len was in sparkling form and his opening remarks soon made everyone welcome. As Uncle Benjamin was on his hols, it fell to yours truly to officiate in his place as secretary. Minutes etc., were duly read and signed, likewise the treasurer's report. Even with the recent expenditures, i.e., books for the library, it was seen that a pleasing balance still remained. After further discussion on various aspects regarding the library, we were treated to one of Josie Packman's bumper spreads, during which all present indulged in book lore "natter".

Next came a humorous reading "The Old Boys' Dinner" Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1932. This was followed by a General Knowledge Quiz won by Charlie Wright 22 points, second John Geal with 20, Josie and Len Packman following with 18 points each out of a possible 28. Eileen Whiter then came to the fore with a new idea in quizz's; this caused great enjoyment. Charlie Wright was in very good form, winning this competition also, with 10 points. Bob Blythe then came second with 9½. Roger Jenkin gained 3rd place with 9 points. This gave a merry wind up to another cheery meeting, enjoyed I'm sure by all.

July meeting was fixed for the 19th with the venue "Cherry Place" 706, Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London, N.22.

ROBERT "CHERRY" WHITER.

WE MET IN MANCHESTER

by The Editor

Yes, it did rain in Manchester on the occasion of the gathering of the clans on June 21st, but no more than elsewhere, and it dampened no one's spirits.

Everything went according to plan. I got in first, was met by Harry Dowler and Phil Warren and five minutes later the Merseyside contingent arrived. A little refreshment, then back to Exchange Station to meet the Leeds and Huddersfield members who arrived dead on time, and two more Manchester men. Then on to Belle Vue where we were joined by Cliff and Mrs. Beardsell. During the tour of Manchester's famous entertainment centre there was an incident. Christine, watching the polar bears feed dropped her purse in the pool. The denizens apparently finding it indigestible disdained it and it was recovered for her by an attendant. Then the score of hungry human animals also went off for a feed.

Later, the whole party was conducted by Harry Dowler to his home, where Mrs. Dowler doubtless wondered "when's the last one coming in". Anyway, the hour spent there was a happy finish to a very enjoyable day. It was a particularly pleasant occasion for me for I had the opportunity of having a peep at Harry's "den", something I had been looking forward to for twelve years.

Then all too soon came the time for departure to various destinations.

One must not forget a word of thanks to Harold Ogden for making the Belle Vue arrangements.

Yes it was another of those grand occasions when one met pen friends in the flesh for the first time.

Those who were there. Harold Ogden, Harry Dowler, Eric Humphries and Phil Warren (Manchester); Don Webster, Frank Case, Norman Pragnell, H.W. Switzer and J. Bartlett (Liverpool); Cliff and Mrs. Beardsell (Stockport); Gerry, Mrs. and Molly Allison, Vera Coates, Norman Smith and Bill Williamson (Leeds); Cyril Banks and Christine (Huddersfield) and Herbert Leckenby (York).

Northern Section Notes: Owing to postponement of June Meeting report next month.

Future Meetings: Members please take careful note, July 18th August 15th, September 12th.

Something Special: At the July meeting will start the reading

of the famous Frank Richards' story "The Boy Without a Name". It is proposed to complete it at three sittings. As only very very few are fortunate enough to possess this story, here's about the only chance you're likely to have to enjoy this epic story. Come in crowds.

* * * * *

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING

June 15th: We had a novel programme for tonight, being booked to tackle a Greyfriars crossword puzzle and some anagrams, prepared by a staunch and popular member, Mr. Albert Clack.

They were very cleverly constructed and gave us much mental exercise. In fact, I have never seen the boys and girls so quiet and good at a meeting. Quelchy would most certainly have approved of our air of peaceful industry. Even coffee and biscuits at 8.50 did not really stop us, and we spent practically the whole evening on them.

Eventually two members finished, (our Chairman's Wife and the Club Treasurer); and received their prizes amidst hearty applause. Several other members made quite a good showing.

A vote of thanks to Albert was very heartily applauded. Obviously he is an expert at the kind of thing, but even so it must have taken a considerable amount of time to prepare these for our enjoyment.

EDWARD DAVEY. Hon. Sec.

* * * * *

MERSEYSIDE SECTION

June 14th: The attendance on this occasion was a little smaller than usual, due, no doubt, to the poor weather; there were, however, sufficient members present to make a really enjoyable meeting. After the formal business had been disposed of, the chairman dealt with a number of section matters. These included consideration of the arrangements for our birthday party in September, and also of a trip to Manchester to join our Northern Section friends in a "get-together". A number of members have accepted the invitation, and it should be a most pleasant outing.

Don informed us that Herbert Leckenby has been presented with a Coronation medal, and said he was sure all present would be pleased to join him in offering congratulations to our popular

magazine editor.

After refreshments we indulged in a game of "Eliminations", which provided good fun and some ingenious solutions. The library business rounded off a very "free and easy" night, and all too soon the time for departure arrived.

F. CASE. Sec.

Letter Box

FRANK RICHARDS LOOKS BACK, AND FORWARD

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

July 10th, 1953.

Many thanks for the C.D. I like very much Eric Payne's article "Coronation Days". How well I remember writing that Coronation story in 1911. I have never seen it since: but I remember that the printer made an error in printing "das" instead of "der" in a German sentence in the story. Or was it "der" instead of "das": I wouldn't be quite certain at this time of day, but I remember that whichever it was, it ought to have been the other! I wrote the story in Vevey, on the shore of Lake Lemán. The "glittering gold sovereigns" in the Tom Merry Coronation story touch a nostalgic chord! How hard to remember now that we once had real money in this country!

You may be interested to hear that I have written a new "Billy Bunter" play for television, - quite new, not an adaptation of one of the books. As you may guess, I was very pleased when the BBC. requested the same. It is scheduled to appear on TV. on July 7th.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS.

* * * * *

SOUNDS INTRIGUING

14 Crescent Lane,
Clapham Park, S.W.4.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

12.6.53.

Many thanks for your letter.

You asked about my book. It's called "WHISTLE UP THE DEVIL"

and has just been published by John Gifford Ltd., of Charing X Road (Foyle's Bookshops) at 9/6d. It's my first - a detective story about a "sealed room" murder and another "impossible" crime.

I had a lot of fun writing it and am glad to see it in print - a poor thing but mine own, as somebody once remarked!

I took the liberty of dedicating it TO FRANK RICHARDS with thanks for many happy hours spent with the boys of Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Jim's, for obvious reasons. I could never be sufficiently grateful to Mr. Hamilton for opening the magic portals of reading for me. I began with the Magnet at the age of 10 and have been going strong ever since!

Cheerio for now,

Sincerely, DEREK SMITH.

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MR. C.H. CHAPMAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

44, Highmoor Rd, Caversham, Reading.

Dear Mr. Leckenby, 6.5.53.

Thanks for your letter and the 'Collectors' Digest'.

As you remark the Birmingham affair was a foolish, but at the same time, a malicious hoax.

Regarding the autobiography - it is slowly taking shape.

Yours sincerely,

C.H. CHAPMAN.

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MEMORIES!

24, English Street,

Longtown, Cumberland. 3.6.1953.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Herewith find P.O. value 3/3 in payment for the May and June numbers of the C.D. received.

The cover picture of the June number recalls memories of 42 years ago. I was 10 years old then, and I have a clear recollection of a friend sending me 4 Gems wrapped up in a parcel of clothing, the numbers being 173, 174, 175 and 176. I am the happy possessor of the first three, thanks to William Martin, and the closing lines of 175 read thus: "We shall have two or three hundred pounds between us," Tom Merry remarked, "and I think we'll blue a good bit of it in a Coronation celebration at St. Jim's...what!" And the juniors agreed that they would. As soon as I saw the cover picture of the June C.D., I knew that I had seen it before...42 years ago. What ups and downs since then...more downs than ups perhaps.

About the Magnet 1911 Coronation number mentioned in the June

C.D., Gem 175 contains a picture on the inside of its back cover called The King's Guest, the lines at the bottom reading as follows: "I have this day received a message from your King...your great and noble King George the Fifth." the Prince, in his quaint English. "He has asked me to young friend Harry Wharton to London, so that he may thank him in person for having saved the life of his guest!" "Hip, hip, hurrah!" yelled the juniors.

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT FARISH.

A ONE TIME DRESSING DOWN FOR HAMILTON EDWARDS

Looking through a copy of 'John Bull' for October 15th, 1910, I came across a couple of pars. which I think will interest those old-timers who remember the Boys' Friend and its famous editor. Here they are:-

From the Amalgamated Press Limited, the famous factory of the Northcliffe Weeklies, Mr. Hamilton Edwards is sending a typewritten appeal for funds in aid of a London Newsboys' Club of which the trustees are Earl Winterton, Sir Edmund Freemantle and himself. The idea of a club for the newsboy is excellent. It will provide him with dining, reading, recreation and billiard rooms. But Mr. Edwards is by no means happy in his fervour. He describes his proteges as being engaged in the sale of newspapers "the lowest, most unhappy and demoralising form of boy labour", which is rough on some of his friends. Only adults sell John Bull!

Then Mr. Edwards goes on to say "You have seen him yourself in the streets...a poor little half-starved wastrel, already in his glance the cunning of the potential criminal, familiarised from the hour of his birth with all the sordid degrading and damning crys of the submerged, flung into the streets to battle for himself so that destiny veritably drives him to swell the ranks of the hooligan, the wastrel and the criminal classes." After this it seems about time that the London newsboy bobbed up to ask his benefactor whether he's aware who he is a-insultin' of. Potential criminal, forsooth! He is no more a potential criminal then he is a potential Prime Minister or a potential director of the Amalga-Press!"

(Well I never had much time for that old rascal Horatio Bottomley when he was editor of John Bull, but I guess if I had seen his comments at the time I should have agreed with him on this particular occasion and my own favourite editor would have shaken on his pedestal. To say that his remarks were unkind and tactless would be putting it mildly. I wonder what Edgar Wallace said if he

(cont'd page 212)