

# The Collector's Digest

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AUGUST 1953

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REPRODUCTION OF

Cover "PLUCK" No. 250

AUGUST 15th, 1909

Story by  
JACK NORTH

Sketch by  
LEONARD SHIELDS



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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". I am pleased to say orders are coming in nicely and at the moment of writing we are a little in advance of last year. I hope this will continue for the York Duplicating Agency is anxious to start running off and they can't do that, of course, until I have an idea of how many copies I shall require. So keep up the good work, won't you, remembering too, that the "Who's Who" takes lots and lots of compiling.

Mr. Gore-Browne tells me that he proposes to do the binding differently, so that there won't be any fear of it breaking loose. We are to have a new contributor this year - George Mell.

Despite the fact that he is busy filling quite a lot of space in "Reveille" each week he is going to find time to do an article on - "Mauly".

"AUSSIES" FOR LUCK! No, no, I'm not thinking about Lindsay Hassett & Co., turn to Syd. Smyth's letter on another page and you will see what I mean. Blimey! we have often sympathised with the

poor chaps "down under" thinking they were out of it when there was some plunder going this side, now they have another wind-fall which will make some of our fellows green with envy and tempted to forget the 10th Commandment.

I told you Roger Jenkins' is calling his new article for the Annual "Red Magnet Magic". Sounds apt. Anyway, hearty congrats Syd. Smyth and more good hunting.

You know it does me good to report such happenings. There's another one this month where J. Richard Traynor pays tribute to Ernie Carter for fixing him up with a years awaited Nelson Lee. And now Ernie has had his stroke of luck "Cast thy bread upon the waters" - You know the rest - I hope.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

Postscript: Just as I was completing copy for press I received another letter from nearer home, telling of more treasure trove. I am trying to get it into the "Letter Box".

\* \* \* \* \*

The following appeared in "World's Press News", July 17th.

'Chips' style comics have had  
their day, says AP director

Amalgamated Press, one of the largest publishers of children's comics in Britain, is making plans to "revitalise" some of its publications in order to compete with the slick, glossy, American-style "funnies" which have been rapidly gaining in popularity in this country.

A report on this "bookstall war" appeared in the Daily Mail last week under the headline "Children Want U.S. Style Now." The report quoted H.J. Garrish, a director of AP, as saying: "Some of the old comics like Chips and Comic Cuts have been kept on more for sentimental reasons than anything else. "But they have had their day. What is needed now is something a little slicker. There will probably be some changes soon. We may keep some of the titles, the characters, too, but many new ones will have to be evolved. Today it is the American comics that are all the rage. That's what the children spend their pennies on. Those - and comics about television." (Alas! - H.L.)

Mr. Garrish has been producing comics since they were first introduced about sixty years ago. Today, AP produces sixteen different comics every week, including the successful and modern-styled Lion.

## Stories I Remember

by HERBERT LECKENBY

No. 4 - "NELSON LEE'S PUPIL"  
(Author - Maxwell Scott)

\* \* \*

"Nelson Lee's Pupil" started in No. 2 of the "Boys' Herald", August 8th, 1903. At the time it was running it was a good, exciting yarn but not particularly outstanding. It was destined to become historic, however, for the pupil, of course was Nipper, who in the years to follow was to be a leading light in hundreds of stories and here he made his first entrance. Little would that Yorkshire doctor, who wrote as Maxwell Scott, dream as he penned that story in his study in a quiet fishing village that fifty years on his new character would still be talked about and stories concerning him collected and read with relish, even though most of them written by another hand.

In the opening sentences we meet Michael Novikoff, partner in the firm of Novikoff and Brett, Importers of Russian Furs, nearby London Bridge. The Russian receives a telegram, reads it and then turns to his partner, Julian Brett, in a state of great excitement. He tells him that his brother Paul, who had been sent to Siberia, is in England and will be arriving at Euston from Liverpool at 3.30 that afternoon.

Michael goes out for a hurried lunch and on returning prepares to go to Euston. His partner tells him that a Mr. Ivan Carlovitch has called in the interval and wishes to consult Michael about some valuable furs. Michael says he will have time to call on his way to Euston. On arrival at the premises he finds them apparently deserted. A man, dressed like a coachman, then appears, traps

Michael and locks him in a room. He escapes but reaches Euston ten minutes after the Liverpool train had come in. A porter tells him that a foreign looking gentleman, very tall, thin and very wasted looking, had been met by a coachman and driven off in a brougham. Michael bewildered and in a state of despair looks at the porter in hopeless, helpless indecision, then a light of a sudden resolve leaped into his eyes, a gleam of new-born hope. "Nelson Lee!" he muttered under his breath. "That's the man for me!". Half a minute later he was in a hansom and on his way to "the small and unpretentious house in Gray's Inn Road which served as the headquarters of the prince of detectives".

A long interview follows and Nelson Lee promises to investigate. The Russian goes off to his office and the detective telephones for his "private hansom" and makes for Euston. He finds the porter who repeats his story. Then for the first time ever we hear of Nipper. The porter goes on to tell the detective that if only he had been there he could have introduced him to someone who had followed the brougham. "Who's that?" asked Nelson Lee eagerly.

"A dirty little ragamuffin that goes by the name of Nipper" said the porter. He spends most of his time hanging round the station and is quite a character in his way. He's supposed to earn a living selling matches and carrying bags, but his principal business seems to me to be checking the cabbies and guying the police. As a rule he talks like any other guttersnipe, but now and again when he takes the fit you'd be surprised to hear what beautiful, long-winded words he can use and they arn't all English words either. He can chuck in a sentence in French or Latin or Greek, leastways he says it's French and Latin and Greek, though it may be that's all gammon, for he's sharp enough to know as none of us can understand them languages."

The porter goes on to tell at length what Nipper had told him about following the brougham to his destination. Nelson Lee is interested and asks the porter to get hold of Nipper and send him to Grays Inn Road.

Later that evening Nelson Lee's landlady knocks at his sitting room door and informs him that a dirty little scarecrow, bare-footed and in rags had just had the impudence to ring the bell and ask to see Mr. Nelson Lee. "I told him to be off or I'd box his ears for him" she said "and what do you think he answered?" "Madam" he said "such language is unworthy of a lady of your mature age and benevolent appearance. You appear to be labouring

under a misconception. My visit here is neither unexpected nor uninvited. I have an appointment with Mr. Lee".

"Quite true" said Nelson Lee. "Send him up."

Then comes the historic meeting (in juvenile literature as historic as the Stanley-Livingstone affair of real life) like this:-

"There entered the room a grimy-faced little urchin, apparently about fourteen years of age. The upper part of his sturdy form was clad in a tattered shooting-jacket, several sizes too large for him. His ragged breeches ended at his knees, his feet were bare and his hat which he carried in his hand was minus the crown and half the rim.

Despite his ragged clothes, however, and despite the dirt which encrusted his hands and face, there was something in his appearance which marked him out as different from the ordinary gamin of the London slums. His features, like his hands, were perfectly modelled, and not without a certain amount of refinement. His eyes, bright as diamonds, were eloquent of quick intelligence, of frankness, honesty and candour, of fearless and indomitable pluck."

Says Nelson Lee, "Ah! Here you are at last. You're Nipper, I suppose?" And Nipper replies "That's me. Is it right as you're offering half a jimmy for the address of the 'ouse where that carriage stopped this afternoon?"

The detective assures him that it is and Nipper goes on to give a graphic description of his ride on the back of the brougham. Nelson Lee is so amused with his comical manner, then doubled up with laughter, he says

"You're a bright specimen of a British youth. What's your name?" Then follows:

"My name is Norval. On the Grampian Hills - " began Nipper. Then he suddenly "turned himself upside down" and began to walk round the room on his hands, whilst at the same time, he gravely intoned those well-known lines of the Roman poet.

"Facilis descensus averno;

Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis;

Sed revocare gradum superasque evedere and auras,

Hoc opus, hic labor est."

The detective stared at him aghast. Here was a ragged, bare-footed urchin from the London slums quoting - and quoting quite correctly - one of the finest gems of classic poetry.

"Nipper!" he gasped, seizing him by the tail of his coat and jerking him on to his feet. "Who in thunder are you and where did you learn those lines?" Nipper drew himself up and thrust one grimy hand into the opening of his ragged waistcoat.

"Sir" he said, with a comical air of offended dignity. I must beg you to beware of trespassing too far on my forbearance. You are now endeavouring to pry into my private affairs, which is a liberty I tolerate from no man, not even from the famous Nelson Lee."

And before Nelson Lee could reply, he was on his hands again careering round the room and singing an ancient German drinking song.

And there I will cease to quote or there will be no space left for anything else. Seeing, however, that the two were to be written about for thirty years it is worth while giving a full description of how they first met. Incidentally though Nipper was to spend many years at St. Ninian's and many more at St. Franks it would appear he had already been educated somewhere.

Well, Nelson Lee and Nipper set out for the house in Milton Street to which Nipper had gone on the back of the brougham. From then on the boy of 1903 was presented with over fifty chapters of a story packed with thrills and adventures, until the finish in No. 26. It took detective and pupil through many lands and on the way cleared up the mystery as to who the extraordinary street arab was. For it appears that Michael Novikoff's brother Paul had a friend, Richard Hamilton, known as Fiddler Dick, who proved to be Nipper's father. Nelson Lee finds himself up against Count Figorski, a scoundrel who has murdered Nipper's father in order to obtain a document concerning buried treasure. The document, which comes into the possession of Nelson Lee, states that the secret of the treasure, half of which, on the death of his father belongs to Nipper, is in a pocket book, buried on an island in the Pacific. Julian Brett, Michael Novikoff's partner, turns out to be in league with the Count. Follows plot and counterplot in Maxwell Scott's best style, first the Count then the detective being in the ascendent. After numerous adventures on the island the detective and Nipper reach Suva where Nelson Lee meets an old friend, Dick Seymour, the missing heir of that story "The Silver Dwarf" described in C.D. recently. Dick has a yacht appropriately named "The Silver Dwarf" and on this they set off for Russia, then

the land of the Czars. They reach Vladivostock, travel across Siberia to Tomsk and then on to St. Petersburg, now Leningrad of course, going through many perils on the way. Maxwell Scott wrote of Russia with remarkable realism seeing he had never been there.

In the house of Paul Novikoff in St. Petersburg they at last learn that the treasure is buried in a temple at Mosul on the banks of the Tigris, in Assyria. A long journey there, a last desperate attempt by the Count, the treasure found and sudden death of Count Figorski. The treasure was brought to England and Nipper and Michael Novikoff became almost millionaires. The story concludes:

"As Nipper was only fifteen years of age, Nelson Lee was appointed his guardian, so that Nipper ceased to be "Nelson Lee's Pupil" only to be Nelson Lee's Ward. Nipper is, at the present moment at a well-known preparatory school in the west of England, from where he will doubtless proceed to one of the big public schools, and afterwards to one of the universities. Whether he will ever assist Nelson Lee in any of his cases is a question which time alone can answer."

Well as I said at the beginning dear old Maxwell Scott little dreamt when he created Nipper how many stories of Nelson Lee and Nipper he would write himself, far less how many more would be written by someone else long after he had laid down his pen. Nipper certainly went through the world of school, but he doesn't yet appear to have reached "one of the universities".

## *Hamiltoniana*

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

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Ben Whiter's letter in the "Radio Times" the other week brought him quite a lot of correspondence and as a result of that some new members for the Old Boys' Book Clubs. Nice work, Ben.

The Clubs also got quite a good notice in John O' London's Weekly for July 10th. It was linked up with a reference to the new Bunter book. After stating that Frank Richards, despite being over 80, worked at his typewriter every day, it said:

"The Bunter stories are very popular with members of the Old

Boys' Book Club, which has a thriving branch in London.

Perhaps the motto of the O.B.B.C., of which he is President gives a clue to the great appeal of the Greyfriars stories. It is Puer Manebit, which might be construed "The boy will always be with us".

Our numbers may not be legion, but my word, we do get talked about.

\* \* \* \* \*

You will remember that some months ago I asked if anyone could say in which number of the "Magnet" Mr. C.H. Chapman's first illustration appeared. Well that seemed to be very much of a poser, for no one came along with a definite answer. However, I have now received a letter from S.F. Jones of Penrith, New South Wales, in which he tells me that he feels certain that Mr. Chapman's first cover picture was No. 214, "The Fight for the Captaincy", 16th March, 1912. This illustration was repeated inside. He says, however, that two other pictures inside were by Arthur Clarke. He also informs me that a similar thing happened in 1909 when Arthur Clarke took over, for one illustration was by the former artist Hutton Mitchell. Thanks Mr. Jones.

\* \* \* \* \*

BILLY BUNTER'S BRAIN-WAVE. by FRANK RICHARDS. CASSELL'S 7/6d.

Reviewed by Gerald Allison

It is just over 8 months, since the last 'Bunter Book' - the Beanfeast of the series - was issued. Now Frank Richards offers us "Billy Bunter's Brain-Wave", which was published on July 23rd. And, by Jove, it has been worth waiting for!

Our favourite author is absolutely on the top of his form in this grand tale. The real 'Magnet' style; the true Greyfriars' atmosphere.

The villain of the piece is Gerald Loder, of the Sixth. He is up against Wingate, and descends to the depths in his plotting against the captain of the School. You know, if Walker and Carne, and the other Sixth-Formers would call Loder "Gerry", I think it would do him good. I actually felt real sympathy for him, towards the end, when he was striving - without success - to repair the mischief he had done. He is not all bad, in fact he was really keen on playing in the Sixth Form eleven in this tale, and a

friendly nickname might help.

Be that as it may, however, there is no cause for any anxiety. Billy Bunter, once again! plays his well known role of deus ex machina. I hardly know whether Wingate or Bunter is the hero of the tale. You can make your own choice. Certainly, Billy gets just the reward he deserved on the final page. It made my mouth water!

You should buy this book. It is a superb Richards opus, with all the old skill of plot construction; delightful humour; and, for lovers of literature, plenty of allusions and quotations from the classics. I spotted Byron, Dickens, Lewis Carroll, Shakespeare, and the Bible, myself, with others I couldn't identify. Yes, real value for money.

Finally, just an item of corrigenda for the Greyfriars "Who's who". George Wingate's people have left Chester in Cheshire and now lives in Sussex at a place called Belwood. I hope there is as good boating there as Wingate used to enjoy on the river Dee.

(Well, Gerry seems to have enjoyed it doesn't he? Doubtless he will be looking forward to the next. I have heard it will be ready in October and will be called "Billy Bunter's First Case". - H.L. )

\* \* \* \* \*

Later, Nancy Spain reviewing "Billy Bunter's Brain-Wave" in Daily Express, July 23rd, starts off by saying:

"Peter Pan, Sherlock Holmes, Billy Bunter; these are the three major fictional creations of our time.

And while alas we shall never again read a new adventure of the little lad who wouldn't grow up, or of the First Gentleman of Crime, at least the octogenarian Frank Richards is still going strong with his 58-year old schoolboy.

Billy Bunter, the fat boy of the Remove at Greyfriars School, who first saw the light 43 years ago in a magazine called "The Magnet", that I used to read surreptitiously in my bedroom, reappears today in a brand new adventure".

Forever Bunter, King Bunter! We have often speculated I wonder if sometime Frank Richards would tell us how it came about that Bunter in the beginning just a minor character gradually developed and ultimately dominated all others. Methinks it would make an interesting story.

\* \* \* \* \*

BILLY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOLby FRANK RICHARDSA review of the new Television play, by John R. Shaw

This play, specially written for television by Frank Richards, appeared to be superior to the series of six plays which were televised last year; the continuity of the action being such that the viewer's interest was maintained throughout the half hour.

The plot, though simple, was ideal as a medium for the portrayal of the Bunter character. Bunter's stolen toffee was confiscated in class by Mr. Quelch. After failing to persuade a member of the Famous Five to retrieve it for him, Bunter twice visited his form-master's study and eventually found the toffee, though not without being caught by Mr. Quelch. Skinner also entered the form-master's study and hid an article on the Odes of Horace, which Mr. Quelch was writing for the "Classical Review". Skinner was not found out immediately so, of course, Bunter was suspected. Fortunately Bob Cherry found the article just in time to save Bunter from a caning.

The use of soliloquies was acceptable, though they should be kept short.

Gerald Campion was superb as Bunter and the rest of the boys - all newcomers to the parts - were excellent. Ronald Adam as Mr. Quelch was, however, hardly the equal of Kynaston Reeves who acted the part so well last year.

The producer of a play of this type has many difficulties, which, in this case, were surmounted by Miss Harington with distinction

\* \* \* \* \*

And Eric Fayne says, "I saw Bunter on T.V. on Tuesday and thought it splendid. A tremendous improvement on the previous occasions, probably due to the fact that Frank Richards especially wrote it for T.V. I enjoyed every second of it and the lads were thrilled to death."

\* \* \* \* \*

POTTED PERSONALITIES. No. 9.

COUSIN ETHEL. It is my own opinion, - merely that and nothing more, - that our favourite author was never so convincing with his girl characters as he was with his boys. In some ways, girls played a larger part in the Magnet stories than in the Gem tales.

But I never found that I could be enthusiastic over the Greyfriars yarns which featured Cliff House School or those very stilted young damsels, Marjorie and Clara.

The feminine interest at St. Jim's, however, was in a rather different category. The only two young women to be featured were Cousin Ethel and Marie Rivers, and Marie, though she played a largish part in her time, dropped out of the Gem picture long ago. But Ethel appeared from time to time, from the beginning till the present day. To my way of thinking, Ethel and Marie were excellent and convincing characters in their way, though I always felt in my bones that they were really older than, officially, they seem to have been intended to be. This may have been due to the fact that girls are, mentally, two years ahead of boys, - or it may have been due to the way they were depicted in the Gem illustrations.

Cousin Ethel made her initial bow as early as No. 20 of the halfpenny issues of the Gem, - dated July 27th 1907. She was described as follows:- "A girl of about Tom Merry's own age, extremely pretty, with rosy cheeks and blue-grey eyes and sunny brown hair, and her smile was bewitching". And her name was given as Ethel Maynard. The title of that story was "TOM MERRY'S DAY OUT".

Miss Maynard appeared again in "TOM MERRY'S CHRISTMAS", the 1907 Christmas number and the first double number in the history of the Gem.

The third appearance was in "MISS PRISCILLA'S MISSION", the second issue of the penny series, - No. 2 of the Gem, new series. And she was now referred to as Ethel Cleveland.

There would seem to have been no real reason for the change of name and one can only assume that Martin Clifford had a lapse of memory on that occasion.

In the early years of the Gem, Cousin Ethel's appearances were legion. Many of the yarns, telling of Figgins' devotion to her, were real gems of their class. The theme was skilfully handled, and never allowed to lose its charm in mawkishness.

One early story of this type, about 1912, was "FIGGY'S FOLLY" in which Figgins ran away from school to be with Ethel in France, and was involved in a French train-crash. I, personally, did not like it, though that may have been my poor taste. I thought for many years that it was a story by a substitute writer, but I believe that the genuine Martin Clifford has stated that he actually wrote it. It was, however, one of the few Hamilton early

Gem tales not to be found among the re-prints between 1932 and 1938.

We found Cousin Ethel used to her very greatest advantage in the brilliant "SCHOOLBOY PUG" series of about 1924. In this splendid series, Gussy's cousin brought about a change of heart in Oliver Lynn. Grand, powerful writing.

Martin Clifford wrote "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS" for the Empire Library about 1910, when it ran as a serial. It told of Ethel's adventures at St. Freda's, and of her friendship with the wayward Dolores Pelham. It was revived and run as a serial in the Gem, about three years later and finally appeared in book form in the Boys' Friend Library.

After having seen Ethel complete her schooldays at St. Freda's, we were some of us rather shocked to find her back at school in 1927, - this time at Spalding Hall, - during that black period of Gem history between 1927 and 1931, when St. Jim's was handled almost exclusively by substitute writers.

Ethel's many adventures with her schoolboy pals are far too numerous to be listed here. But it can be safely said that the Gem would have lost some of its charm and appeal without Cousin Ethel.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Now here's an article from one of our youngest members for Anthony is only fifteen. You'll agree he knows quite a bit about Magnet lore. I have another thoughtful little article of his on hand. - H.L.)

#### THE "MAGNET'S" LAST YEARS

by ANTHONY P. BAKER

\*\*\*

It is generally agreed that the period from about 1927 to 1936 was the best in the history of the "Magnet", but the last years are well worth looking into, and it is interesting to see why perhaps it was not quite up to its former high standard.

Magnet 1434 in July 1936 saw the beginning of the extra long twenty-eight page stories. This, I think, was a mistake, although the editor said you couldn't have too much of a good thing. It made the stories just too long. No author but Frank Richards could have kept up such a high standard each week, but the fact is that there was a good deal of padding to make up the 28 pages.

Over a year later in November 1937, the coloured cover was dropped, and a salmon-pink one substituted with No. 1553. The editor said that the old coloured cover did not show up on bookstalls well enough, but I think that the pink one was taken up because it was cheaper. This was a bad move, and it made the "Magnet" look rather cheap and dirty, instead of the bright and cheery cover it had had before.

Earlier that year, in May, the sub-title "Billy Bunter's Own Paper" had been adopted with No. 1523, but although the Owl played a part in most stories, he only had one series - the Carter one - to himself in the last two-and-a-half years.

With Magnet 1640 in July 1939, a new form of cover heading was adopted, it now appearing much smaller in the bottom right-hand corner. Why they did this, I cannot imagine, for it could not have shown up nearly so well on bookstalls. Evidently the editor or the readers, or both, didn't think much of it, and the old form of heading reappeared on issue No. 1662.

On August 12th, 1939, in No. 1643, the "Greyfriars Herald" was moved from the centre to pages two and twenty-seven. This made the story slightly shorter than before, which was a good thing, as the "Herald" usually overlapped on to page 28.

I always feel that the "Greyfriars Herald" played an important part in the "Magnet". Although written entirely by 'subs.', it was quite readable and the St. Sam's stories often very good.

After three months war the Old Paper began to feel the pinch, and with No. 1660 - the first of the Magnet's longest series - it cut to twenty-four pages. The Greyfriars Herald was dropped after 373 issues. Later on, however, it reappeared at irregular intervals, though it was not numbered.

A map of Greyfriars appeared in No. 1672. Ten issues later in No. 1682, the number of pages dropped to twenty. In the Editorial of the same issue, readers were asked to stand by for an important announcement. What it was, we shall probably never know, since in No. 1683 we were told it was postponed due to paper shortage.

No. 1683 dated May 18th, 1940, was the last issue of the Magnet. No. 1484, advertised as "The Battle of the Beaks" never appeared, though it presumably still exists in manuscript at the Fleetway House. Thus ended a run of over thirty-two years and along with it died nearly all the other A.P. boys papers, the only survivors being the "Champion" and "Sexton Blake Library".

What of the stories during these last few years? To many they do not seem so readable as in the previous ten years. This was surely due to their great length, which was most probably not the choice of the poor author. These extra long stories needed a good deal of unavoidable padding, and this is why perhaps many do not find them so easy to read. Nevertheless, the stories were always very good and there were some excellent series, such as the "Water-Lily", Carter, Texas, Mr. Hacker Headmaster and Kidnapping of Mr. Quelch Series.

The illustrations during this last period were more distinct, though perhaps such things as the Bounder's nose and Mr. Quelch's long face were over-emphasised!

Perhaps it is just as well the "Magnet" died when it did, for I feel that, were it going today, it would be greatly altered, possibly without a school story of Greyfriars at all. For the day of school stories is over; if most modern boys read school stories they have to have plenty of flights to the moon and journeys to the centre of the earth. I hope that Frank Richards will never consent to write such atrocities.

Taken all round this period was not quite so great as its heyday from 1927 to 1936, but this was not the fault of the author and was due to the various points mentioned. One thing of which we can be thankful - that the "Magnet" died a worthy death and did not suffer the worst of all fates: amalgamation.

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MAGNET TITLES:(cont'd) 'S' denotes substitute. No. 1182 Greyfriars Chums in China, No. 1183 The Mandarin's Vengeance, No. 1184 The Beggar of Shantung, No. 1185 The City of Death, No. 1185 Saved from the Sea, No. 1187 Prout's Lovely Black Eye, No. 1188 Who Punched Prout? No. 1189 (S) Skinner's Narrow Squeak, No. 1190 The Schoolboy Form-Master. No. 1191 Billy Bunter's Christmas. No. 1192 The Mustery of Cawandale Abbey. No. 1193 The Phantom of the Abbey.

#### ADVERTS

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**WM. MARTIN**

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**WANTED:** Collector's Digest Annual, 1947. Collector's Digest 1-34; 56. J.F. BELLFIELD, 24, GRAINGERS LANE, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

**EXCHANGE** 1931 "H.A." for 1920, 1921, 1922, 1925, 1929 or 1930.  
**WANTS:** "SPC" 1 to 35. GEORGE MELL, 49 GRACEFIELD GARDENS, STREATHAM, S.W.16.

**AVAILABLE:** Gems, Nelson Lees, Pink and Coloured covered Union Jacks (1905-27), Tufty Nugget Libs, Comic Libs. (1912). Black and White 1.Vol (1902) Chums 1.Vol 1927-8, Detective Weeklies, 50 Bound Vols. of Punch (1/- each & post), Saucy Mags, Detective Libs, 6 Vols. The Library Shakespeare. Coloured plates (10/-) No. One Penny Popular, nearly complete run of "Combat", Mint, Vanguard (1907-9), Thousands of rare cigarette cards, etc.

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Comic Papers between 1890 and 1914 **WANTED** - HARRIS, CAYNTON, LLANRHOS ROAD, LLANDUDNO.

# ADVERTS

WANTED URGENTLY to complete small private collection - Nelson Lee original old series No. 61 "Golden Boomerang". Can any reader please help? Your price paid. TRAYNOR, 1 ROSE VILLAS, SWINDON STREET, CHELTENHAM, GLOS.

WANTS: (if reasonable) Answers Library, Fun and Fiction, Firefly (pre-1915) Popular: E. HUGHES, 38 EAST FRONT ROAD, PAGHAM BEACH, NR. BOGNOR REGIS.

T. LAMBERT, 347 GERTRUDE ROAD, NORWICH, OFFERS: Aldine Robin Hoods, Dick Turpins (1920's), Firefly (1917), Marvel (1894-1920), Popular (1912-1914), 1d Plucks, Union Jacks, Gems (1907-1937), Magnets (1917-1940). Holiday Annuals (1936-1940), Champion Annuals (1925-1930), School Friend Annual (1927), Young Britains, Pals, Bullseyes, Boys Magazines, Rockets, 1/- each. Nelson Lees', Detective Weekly, Triumph, Modern Boy 7/6d dozen. Schoolboys Own from 1/6d. Boys Friend Library (1930-1940) 1/6d. Also 1906 onward. Many Victorian Volumes. Bound volume "Knockout" American Boxing, Wrestling, Magazine. Complete year (1937). American Film Magazines (1925-1930). Album, 3,000 German Labels. "Royalty" issues (Daily Mirror, etc) 1902-1937. Souvenir Theatre Programmes. Illustrated 1888-1920. Old-time Postcards Actors, Actresses, Bathing Beauties etc. EXCHANGE SUGGESTIONS WELCOMED! SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. S.A.E. REQUIREMENTS, PLEASE.

## CAN YOU HELP ME?

I urgently require the following information in order to help complete "Hundred Years of Boys' Weeklies" for the Annual. Can anyone oblige? - (H.L.)

"Boys' Weekly" (James Henderson) Stop date and number. This paper started 3-5-1919. It was probably short-lived. "Football Pictorial" Stop date and number. It started 3-9-1935. "Fun & Fiction" (A.P.) Stop date and number. Probably sometime in 1914. "Triumph" (James Henderson) stop date and number. It started in December 1908. Not to be confused with A.P. paper of the same name. "Vanguard" (Trapps, Holmes & Co.) Stop date and number. Probably in 1910. "Rocket" (A.P.) Was under the impression it finished with No. 79, but a collector has No. 84. Can anyone go any further? "Pioneer" Start date or number on last issue 28-7-1934.

Also can anyone give titles of complete stories in "Empire Library" 1st series, 6,7,10 and 21. 2nd series, 1 to 8, 21, 27 and 28?

# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## L O N D O N   S E C T I O N

An enthusiastic audience of old boys gathered together at Cherry Place, Wood Green on Sunday July 19th. Thanks to the third brother of the Whiter family, Douglas, who kindly loaned a T.V. set, the company present enjoyed the excellent Telecast of "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School", specially written for television by our worthy president, Frank Richards. Amongst those present was W.A. Lowes, of Tyneside, he being on a visit to London. It was a strange coincidence that he drew the lot to give an impromptu talk and this he did in an able manner. His subject was how he started his collection and the greatness of Frank Richards' writings. Suitably applauded at the conclusion Mr. Lowes must have left with the happiest of memories.

Last month's quiz winner, Charlie Wright, conducted his effort as per custom and this resulted in a win for Len Packman with Roger Jenkins second and Jim Parratt third. Charlie then read an article on the "Empire Library" culled from "The Story Paper Collector". A 20 Eliminator was won by Bob Blythe with Jim Parratt second and Len Packman third.

During all these proceedings one of Eileen's good feeds was thoroughly enjoyed and after fixing the next meeting for Sunday August 15th at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22., the company broke up for the summer vacation.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

\* \* \* \* \*

## N O R T H E R N   S E C T I O N

239 Hyde Park Road,      27 June, 1953.

This meeting had been unavoidably postponed a fortnight and there was a smaller attendance than usual. Among the absentees, through illness, was Vera Coates. It seemed strange without Vera for it was her first miss. It was hoped she would be with us again at the next meeting.

The usual business being disposed of Gerry Allison commenced the reading of that fine story "The Boy Without a Name". Before he did so he announced that the copy had been loaned, free of

charge, by someone who wished to remain anonymous. In view of the scarcity and value of the book the unknown's sporting gesture was greatly appreciated.

Gerry got through several chapters telling of the fury of Ponsonby & Co., when they learned that a scholarship boy was having the audacity to come to Highcliffe; how they played a trick on him by meeting him at the station and leaving him at the gates of Greyfriars under the impression that it was Highcliffe. How he was made welcome by the Famous Five then found to his dismay that he was at the wrong school and how when he eventually arrived at Highcliffe he was unmercifully ragged in the dormitory. Gerry put it across in fine fashion making characters like Ponsonby, Bob Cherry and "The Caterpillar" in particular, most life-like. The reading was listened to with rapt attention, the only pity being there were not more present.

Future meetings: Aug. 15th. Sept. 12th.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

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NORTHERN SECTION MEETING

July 18th.

A gratifying attendance on a fine summer evening, Vera back after her one 'miss', also Jack Wood and Cyril Banks, both of whom cannot get along often.

Gerry Allison reported new and prospective members, thanks to Ben Whiter's recent letter in "Radio Times". Gerry also read a very interesting letter from a member who is on the staff of a certain college. Our member said that for the past few months he had been living in conditions almost exactly like unto that in Charles Hamilton's well known story "The School for Slackers". Under one headmaster the school had literally 'gone to pot'; the pupils did just as they liked and the name of the school had become 'mud' in the district. That head had departed and another arrived in his place, an international footballer and a dynamic personality, the exact opposite of his predecessor. A 'bucking up' regime was now in progress.

Another good hit in the Hamilton innings!

Merseyside had proposed a '20 Questions' contest between their Club and ours, the questions to be dealt with at the August meetings and unseen until then. We got down to preparing ours and aware of some Liverpool experts tried to find some real teasers.

The result will appear in September C.D.

Gerry Allison then got down to reading the second instalment of "The Boy Without a Name". So interested did all become that it went unnoticed that tea was getting cold. Came the break, then more pages. There's still at least two more instalments to come.

Next meeting: August 15th.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

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

Meeting, July 20th.

Although it was a very close and overcast evening there was a goodly muster of the clan; including we were very pleased to note a keen founder member who had been unable to be with us in recent months, due to absence at college.

Sundry items of formal business disposed of, the writer then settled down to a talk on "Frank Richards - Moralist". My desire was to show that in addition to Frank's great skill in English, story-telling powers, plot construction and superb sense of fun and humour, he also inculcated moral lessons most skilfully and unobtrusively. This latter in sharp contrast to the sturdy Victorians such as "Eric" or "Little and Little".

To illustrate this I read what are perhaps my two favourite chapters of the "Magnet". These are Nos. 8 and 9 in No. 1400 of the Mr. Prout-Headmaster, series, and deal with the fight between Mauly and Smithy when the Bounder refuses to give up his black-mailing hold on Loder.

This talk and reading were followed by a long and animated discussion. It was remarked that the ladies were very quiet, but as our chairman's wife observed very truly, they didn't get much chance!

There was just time at the end to tackle a puzzle game devised by our chairman. We had to fill in words missing in a short story about Bunter; these words all being names of members of our Club. Some of the puns were diabolical, but still, it was very good fun.

The gentlemen's prize was won outright whilst two ladies tied for theirs, the issue being decided by an eliminating question. Another evening had gone all too quickly.

EDWARD DAVEY, Hon. Sec.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION 12th July, 1953.

There was a very satisfactory attendance at this meeting, which commenced at 7.30. After the formal business had been dealt with by the secretary, the chairman brought up for discussion quite a number of club matters, but spoke first of all about the regrettable absence of Mr. Wyness, who is in hospital; he sincerely hoped, as we all do, that he will soon be out and about again. Mr. Switzer followed with an entertaining account of our adventures in Manchester, and we are hoping that such occasions will become a more regular occurrence in future. The arrangements for the dinner in September have now been completed and we expect to have a large attendance, with representatives of the other sections present; they may be assured of a hearty welcome. (I shall be pleased to supply details regarding time, cost, etc., to any who may be interested; enquiries will be promptly replied to.)

The verdict on the recent T.V. programme was generally favourable; it was considered to be better than the previous efforts. Then came a "Hidden Names" quiz, devised by Frank Unwin; this was won by Jack Morgan with a score of 100% - a really good performance which well deserved the handclaps of the rest of the competitors.

The library did a very good trade in the capable hands of Norman Pragnell, who acted as substitute for Bill Horton, unavoidably absent, and the meeting ended at 10.15.

## F. CASE. Sec.

A few weeks ago, in casual conversation, a young lady mentioned that her uncle had a lot of boys books - old ones - "about Billy Bunter"! Naturally I pricked my ears up and pressed the girl for details. She was delightfully vague, but I did extract from her the promise that she would try and borrow some and let me read them.

Shortly afterwards she presented me with a parcel. To my astonishment it contained 60 Penny Populars, 1919-20, including No. 1. A little later I was introduced to the uncle. He said he had always had a passion for hoarding papers and had a box stored at his mother's containing quite a lot. Then he casually opened a drawer and brought out about 30 Robin Hood, Boys' Friend and Detective Libraries.

What he really has at his mother's I hardly dare think. Anyway I hope to find out. Your astonished friend. K.  
(Some letters omitted due to lack of space - H.L.)

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

As promised, this month we have the first part of Walter Webb's topical coronation story, and I am sure you will agree with me it is good. (Walter's work is always good!). The second part will appear next month.

I have received an interesting article on John Hunter, and in the letter accompanying it the writer tells me it is not expected that Mr. Hunter will write again, for it appears he has had a breakdown in health. The article in the form of a tribute is, to my mind a fitting one. John Hunter has contributed largely towards Juvenile Literature as a whole, and in no small measure to the writings of Sexton Blake. I am therefore making room for the merited recognition in this month's Blakiana.

Once again I thank those who have written to me expressing their appreciation of my little efforts, although it is to be regretted that enclosures in the form of articles are conspicuous by their absence! I hate to keep harping on the same old tune, but it is essential in the planning and preparation of forthcoming issues to have a good selection of material in hand, so please DO play your part by sending me YOUR articles.

Finally, for those who are interested in G.H. Teed's work, a forthcoming feature is a three-part article on his criminal creation "The Three Musketeers".

JOSIE PACKMAN.

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## WHEN BLAKE RECOVERED THE CROWN

by WALTER WEBB

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(The following article is taken from records compiled in Sexton Blake's case-book covering the year 1906. The full story of how the investigator recovered the King's crown was contained in the story SEXTON BLAKE, BEEFEATER, and was published in UNION JACK No.120, the author being HERBERT MAXWELL.)

PART ONE: When Major general Sir William Fortescue, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, grew old and feeble in the service of his King and country there was one who saw in his failing powers a

golden opportunity to get rich beyond his wildest dreams. That man was Sir William's servant, Jarvis, a suave and most efficient man in the duties he was called upon to carry out, yet, nevertheless, one of the blackest hearted villains who was ever allowed to roam at liberty.

Jarvis became obsessed with the idea of stealing the King's crown from the show-case in the jewel-room in the Tower. From time to time the crown was removed in order to be cleaned, and on those occasions an imitation model was put in the show-case. In his advanced age Sir William could not distinguish the real crown from the dummy, and unable to resist the temptation, Jarvis made a substitution.

To get the crown out of the Tower presented some difficulty, and afraid that somebody might detect the difference, Jarvis also stole a suit of armour in order to distract people's attention from the main theft. Everybody would be so busy looking for the armour that in the fuss and excitement he would have a better chance of getting away with the crown.

But Jarvis received a most unpleasant shock when he heard Sir William telephoning Sexton Blake, asking the detective to come over to the Tower to investigate the robbery, so placed the crown inside the armour on the roof of the Bell Tower. Jarvis's next step was to enlist the aid of a man named Potter, and the latter's wife, Susan. As a visitor, Potter might be presented with the opportunity of getting up and securing the crown, whilst the voluminous garments of his wife would admirably lend themselves as a means of concealment.

Blake decided to visit Sir William as a private visitor to the Tower, and as he entered the historic fortress visions of the past were reborn in his mind. In dreamy delight, his eyes wandered over the ancient stronghold. There the Bell Tower where Queen Elizabeth, before she came to the throne, was imprisoned by her sister, Queen Mary. There the "King's House", where Guy Fawkes and his fellow-conspirators were tried and condemned in 1605. There was the Traitors' Gate, through which prisoners, tried at Westminster, were brought to the Tower by river. Queen Anne Boleyn, Queen Katherine Howard, Lady Jane Grey, James, Dyke of Monmouth and many others had passed under the fatal arch on their way to a prison or scaffold. There the Bloody Tower, where the infant princes, Edward V and his brother, the Duke of York were murdered. Yonder, in the Constable's Garden, Sir Walter Raleigh walked dejectedly during the hopeless

years of his long imprisonment. There the Wakefield Tower, the oldest building in the fortress with the exception of the Keep, or White Tower.

Such was the train of Blake's thoughts as he followed a beef-eater to a large, circular apartment where the Crown Jewels are kept. Here also were the King's crown, the Queen's crown, and the anointing spoon among many other items of interest and great value, but it was the King's crown which held Blake's attention, for it was then that he received a terrific shock. For, from the cross at the summit to the band at the base, all the jewels were false. Even the great ruby given to the Black Prince in Spain and worn by Henry V in his helmet at the battle of Agincourt was spurious, as also was the splendid sapphire bought by George IV.

When Blake broke the news to Sir William that the King's crown had been stolen, the old man wilted before the tremendous shock and collapsed. Blake instantly suspected Jarvis of the crime, but the latter, as great an actor as he was cunning a rogue, managed to temporarily dull the detective's suspicions when the latter questioned him.

Sir William, having had something in the nature of a paralytic seizure, Blake gave him into the care of his physician, Doctor Temple, and prevailed upon the latter to look after the patient at his private residence. A pastmaster in the art of disguise, Blake then took over Sir William's identity, whilst Tinker became one of the Yeoman of the Guard - in other words, a Beef-eater.

Some time a little later, Jarvis's accomplice, Potter, accompanied by his wife, was about to climb to the roof of the Bell Tower when he saw one of the half-dozen or so ravens who had made their home in the Tower of London, fly down with the great ruby, which it had just pecked out of the crown, in its beak. The bird flew down to earth close to where Tinker, resplendent in his rich red-and-gold uniform, stood on guard outside the entrance to the Jewel Room. Tinker attempted to grab hold of the object which the raven had in its beak, but the bird was too quick for him; and then Blake, on his way to the Keep, made a lunge that was almost successful. But the raven, in its anxiety to keep its plaything, attempted to swallow it as it soared into the blue and so brought about its own doom, for the great ruby into its throat and choked it. When it dropped lifeless to the ground, Potter attempted to gain possession, but Blake refused to hand it over, even when

Potter offered the fabulous sum of five thousand dollars for it. Potter, it should be stated, was posing as an American visitor to the Tower. Naturally, such an offer for a dead bird was bound to arouse Blake's suspicions, and at the earliest opportunity the detective slit open the raven's throat, disclosing the great ruby.

(End of Part 1).

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THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

JULY ISSUES

No.291. The Body on the Cliff. Rex Hardinge.

A straightforward story of adventure in Devon and Cornwall. Nothing much to say about it except that it is worth reading.

Tinker is shanghaied towards the end, and does a lovely job of escaping, on board a yacht at sea. The way he captures the ship single-handed is great. Bulldog Drummond couldn't have done any better. Thank you, Rex Hardinge, for a good tale.

No.292. The Crime at the Fair. Hilary King.

This disconnected, rambling affair was real hard labour to get through. If you like the kind of yarn which breaks off at the end of every chapter and starts somewhere else, well - - I don't.

It seemed to me as if the author was making up the tale as he went on, and hoping for the best. And just imagine having one character called Tinker, and another called Blinker!

The pithiest description of the book appears on page 50, para 1. "It did not make sense". Not recommended.

\* \* \* \* \*

GERRY ALLISON.

JOHN HUNTER

by Graham Davies

It seems that John Hunter has written his last story for the S.B.L. (The Woman on the Spot. No. 279), and I cannot help sitting down to write a few lines about one of the most likeable, most accomplished and most prolific authors of the last thirty-five years or so. Humour, pathos, drama, suspense, thrills - all these ingredients were mingled in his stories by the hand of a past-master; and to anyone who has kept an eye on what has been published in all spheres of fiction for many years, John Hunter's many-sided ability and endless output must have been a veritable source of wonder.

John Hunter was no young writer when he first started con-

tributing to the S.B.L. in 1937 or thereabouts. For a good many years his stories had appeared in boy's papers - Chums, Boys' Magazine, Boys' Friend Library, and, I believe, many others. His was the spirit of pure adventure. His tales were for the most part, in the true tradition of "blood and thunder", but without any of the shallow qualities usually associated with this type of story. He has never been completely happy in the pure detective story, and has always, in spite of himself, had to introduce an element of raw adventure which is usually absent from the work of most other S.B.L. writers. He liked his heroes to be big, tough, giants of men, who could fell an ox with a blow of their fists, and for this reason his Blake does not seem at times to be very sympathetically drawn. Blake is a little too urbane to suit him, and thus he hesitates between a Blake who is rather too tough, and a Blake who is not tough enough.

He solved his problem at first by creating Captain Dack to help Blake in his cases, and as all readers of the S.B.L. know, Captain Dack was a huge man, hard as iron, unbeatable in a rough-house. In later years, when Dack ceased to appear, John Hunter nevertheless always had some enormous tough-guy either as a friend or foe of Blake. I happen to know, incidentally, that he is a big man himself, and perhaps that explains his sympathy for this type of character.

John Hunter has been criticised by some Blake fans for various reasons: because of a sameness in his plots; because of a tendency to brutality; and because of the uncertainty of his Blake. The last point has, I think, been dealt with above. With regard to his plots, it must be admitted that there was a similarity in all the Captain Dack stories, but in defence it can be said that that particular basic plot was such a good one that its reappearance in various forms and modifications was quite justifiable.

There is, it is true, a tendency to brutality in some of his stories, but there is also a tendency to gentleness, at the same time. An author who is a good author must be able to hold before the eyes of his readers all facets of human life. And all facets of human life are not pretty ones. John Hunter could write passages that brought a shudder to the reader; he could also write passages that brought a tear.

But the reason why I like his stories as much as, if not more than, those of any other writer is because of the sense and fullness and richness of his conception of life which underlies them

all. One feels that he himself has a terrific zest for life, that he has never experienced boredom for a single hour, that each day brings for him a new opportunity to do grand and exciting things. And tender things too, for I am sure John Hunter could have been one of the greatest writers of 'love stories'.

Two of the best Blake stories that were ever written came from his pen. One is "The Secret of the Hold", 2nd series No.614: the other is "The Case of the French Raiders", 3rd series No.15. Those Blake fans who have not read these S.B.Ls. should get them and read them. They will never forget them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Please note. Maurice Bond's 'Round Table' for August not having been received by me by the 'deadline' time for delivery, I am unable to include it this month.

J. Packman.

## *Nelson Lee Column*

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

Some months ago, in May to be exact, we had an article from Ernie Carter of Australia on the reprints in the 2nd N.S. from the Sexton Blake Library. This month our old friend Jack Wood of York adds some more information on this previously little known subject. It's quite a while since we had an article from Jack's pen and as he's a mine of information on the N.L. here's hoping it won't be so long before we have another.

### Analysis of "Repeat" Stories in the 2nd New Series Nelson Lee Library

by JACK WOOD  
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The early numbers of the series contained Detective Academy stories or other main stories attributed to Edwy Searles Brooks, Robert W. Comrade, C. Hedingham Gosfield, E. Sinclair Halstead or John Brearley, all of which bear similar styles of treatment or use the same subsidiary characters, suggesting that all are in actuality Brooks' work. From 110 onwards Nos. 110,111,116,117,119,120,124, 125,140-146,150-154 and 157-161 are by Brooks.

So far as the rest are concerned, my findings are as follows: (Nelson Lee numbers first).

Nos. 112 to 115 inclusive are the repeats of Maxwell Scott's famous works *The Silver Dwarf* and its sequel, *The Missing Heir*. No. 118 *The Secret of Salcoth Island*, (Otto & Zenn). A repeat of Andrew Murray's *Illgotten Gains* (Kew & Carlac), Sexton Blake No. 2. No. 121 *Beggar of Kashapore* (Otto & Zenn), Repeat of Murray's *The Rajah's Revenge* (Kew & Carlac), S.B. No. 4. No. 126 & 127. *Plunder Ltd.* and *The Peril Trail*, repeats of Maxwell Scott's equally well-known *Birds of Prey*, *Boys' Friend* 3d Library No. 4. Nos. 131 & 132 *The Shadow* and *O.H.M.S.*, repeats of Maxwell Scott's *The Great Unknown* and *The Stolen Submarine*. No. 134 *Prisoner of the Temple*, (Bernard Steele & Dorrimore), reprint of Andrew Murray's *Mystery of 1,000 Peaks* (John Lawless), S.B. No. 124. No. 136 *South Sea Loot* - reprint of Murray's *Head Hunters' Secret* (Lawless) S.B. 108. No. 137 *House of Horror*, reprint of *The Affair of the Oriental Doctor* by Lewis Jackson, S.B. 127. No. 138 *Double Crossed*, reprint of *The Palzer Experiment* (Lawless) by Murray, S.B. 128. No. 139 *The Mystery Box* (Stone & Middle Marie), reprint of Pierre Quiroule's *The Mystery Box* (Granite Grant) S.B. 151. No. 140 *Treasure of Wu Ling*, reprint of Lewis Jackson's *Jewels of Wu Ling* (Kestrel), S.B. 111. No. 147 *Desert Foes*, reprint of Murray's *The Sheik's Son* (Lawless), S.B. 136. No. 149 *Treasure of Hunger Desert*, reprint of Murray's *Secret of Hunger Desert* (Lawless), S.B. 144. No. 155 *Secret Service* (Stone & Middle Paulette), repeat of Quiroule's *Mystery of the Turkish Agreement* (Grant & Julio), S.B. 135. No. 156 *The Gold Ship*, reprint of Jackson's *Kestrel Syndicate* story, *The Mystery of the X.O.4.*, S.B. 147.

That is as far as I can definitely go at the moment, but I add the following thoughts on the "blank" numbers.

No. 122 I have temporarily mislaid, but it is the story of the *Seal of Doom* in which I think from memory Kew & Carlac are again mixed up. Possibly *The Miser's Hoard*, S.B. 25.

No. 123 *Looters of the Far North* I cannot fix at all, but, for anyone's guidance, it has Nelson Lee in Finland with vague references to the Council of Seven.

No. 128 *Brotherhood of Vengeance*. Search by members of the Black Chrysanthemum gang for a jewel. May be a repeat of Murray's *The Barrier Reef Mystery*, S.B. 45 (Lawless).

No. 129 *The Man from Chicago*. Dorrimore & Lee on the trail of the crook son of an English earl used for revenge by his uncle. May be

a repeat of Murray's Vengeance, the story of a boy who never had a chance, S.B. 38 (Lawless).

No.130 The Fortune Trail. Again, I cannot place, but it looks like another Lawless repeat. It tells of a young lad's efforts to bring back a Pipe of Peace from the wilds of Northern Canada.

No.133 The Grey Bat. Another story of revenge, on a former British representative in Borneo. May be Murray's The Black Bat, or The Midnight Peril, S.B.42.

No.135 Case of the King's Spy (Jimmy Stone alone). The efforts of a descendant to find and suppress the Bismark Diaries which would bring scandal to an ancestor's record. May be a repeat of Quiroule's story of the same title, S.B.110.

No.148 The King Comes Back. Lee & Nipper, with Insp.Harker, restore the boy King of Dalmania. Great similarities with Sexton Blake (probably Sidney Drew as the story starts in Calcroft) and Ferrers Locke (City of Masks) serials in the Nelson Lee Library (Old and First New Series).

Well, that's all for now. No doubt Blake fans can fill in the gaps for me and possibly fault one or two of my deductions. All the Sexton Blake numbers referred to are in the first series, so good hunting! If anyone would like to lend me the originals, proved or suggested, I will take good care of them and return them safely.

\* \* \* \* \*

By now the name Derek Smith will be quite well known to you through his excellent articles in Hamiltoniana and Blakiana. This time he's turned his attention to the N.L. Actually this article was written before any of his other efforts but owing to spacing I've been unable to fit it in until now. And now that it has appeared I'll bet you'll be asking for more. Well there'll be another in a couple of months time.

### ARCHIE'S AWFUL AUNTS

by DEREK SMITH

Archie Glenthorpe was disconsolate. As he put it himself: the prospect was not merely poisonous, but absolutely too frightfully frightful!

His Aunt Sophie, who lived in South Africa, had on this occasion descended like a blight upon English soil. She promptly announced her intention of visiting her dutiful nephew at St. Frank's - and the news had plunged the genial ass of the Remove into the depths of depression. Archie had sundry aunts knocking about here, there, and everywhere, but Aunt Sophie was the One. Positively and un-

questionably, she was It. The World's Worst!

Rather unguardedly, Archie confided his troubles in Hal Brewster & Co. of the River House School who, as it happened, were in the midst of a friendly tussle with the heroes of St. Frank's.

Hal, a commendable opportunist, seized upon the information that Archie hadn't seen the old girl since he was a frightful thing in velvet - and resolved to supply a spurious aunt before the real one turned up.

Aunt Sophie was going to fulfil every one of Glenthorne's horrible expectations, because Aunt Sophie was going to be Cyril Graham in disguise - Graham being a Wibley-like schoolboy actor who was capable of putting even an Alec Guinness to shame.

The River House junior started the jape well by belabouring Edward Oswald Handforth with an umbrella. Getting into her stride, "Aunt Sophie" threw Archie's prized neck-tie into the fire, tossed his eye-glass into the wastepaper basket, deprived him of his afternoon tea, and - not content with these mortal blows - dismissed Phipps from the young master's service.

"She" had just begun to superintend the removal of all Archie's luxurious furniture from Study E when Nipper remembered he was a detective and speedily unmasked the imposter.

Archie's Aunt trouble however was by no means over.

Cyril Graham had taken to his heels with all the agility of another famous aunt - Charley's - and in the resulting confusion, the unpopular Mr. Pycraft had been capsized in the Ancient House lobby with sundry jam tarts smeared over his face.

Not unnaturally, the master of the Fourth thirsted for revenge. And Aunt No. Two chose this inopportune moment to make her arrival.

The second Aunt Sophie was the genuine article - Miss Heaton from South Africa. Those who know their E.S. Brooks won't need to be told that Mr. Pycraft promptly mistook the lady for the boy responsible for his misfortunes - with hilarious results.

Fortunately, the real Aunt Sophie was no mean hand with an umbrella, and was able to defend herself most capably against Mr. Pycraft's cane.

Even more fortunately for Archie, the lady proved to be a dragon only when roused - and all his fears proved groundless.

Nevertheless, the Glenthorne supply of aunts had not yet been exhausted. The next to arrive was Miss Cristabel Harrington-Douglas - two years later.

Archie was already in trouble, as his relations with his valet

were rather strained at the time - a heliotrope necktie with a yellow splash being the primary cause. Besides this, Marjorie Temple had displayed a distressing disapproval of the Glenthorne philosophy - like Mark Twain, Archie preferred to get most of his exercise acting as pall-bearer for energetic friends.

The Moor View schoolgirl broke off friendly relations till Archie won a place in the Junior Eleven. Since Aunt Cristabel was a kindly soul who regarded football as a fiendish type of modern warfare, her visit had her nephew splashing about in the ox-tail.

She delivered an ultimatum. Either Archie gave up the barbarous game - which meant goodbye to Marjorie - or she would engineer the dismissal of Phipps.

Archie's frantic attempts to avert either disaster were very funny and totally ineffective. Fortunately his Housemaster, Alington Wilkes, went to work on his guest and persuaded Aunt Cristabel that football was a great game. So all ended happily.

Archie bagged the winning goal, and was rewarded with a kiss from Marjorie.

Despite the machinations of the last of his Awful Aunts, Archie had scored - in more ways than one.

My Only Sainted Aunt! Nelson Lee New Series No. 126 (29-3-28)  
 Archie's Awful Aunt! Second New Series No. 31 (23-8-30)

(See also The Aunt from Bar Z in Schoolboys' Pocket Library No. 16. G.G. Swan Ltd.).



#### FRANK RICHARDS HAS NEWS FOR AUSTRALIAN FANS

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

July 8th, 1953.

Many thanks for the C.D. I found some interest in the letter on Page 199. I do not think myself that a present day Magnet would be a practical proposition. So far as I am able to judge by fan mail,

and other sources of information open to me, old readers of pre-war days form about ten per cent of the total, and while very many of these would be glad to see the old Magnet again, there is no doubt in my mind that the other ninety per cent prefer the books.

I had a very enjoyable half-hour yesterday watching our fat old friend on the TV. screen. Gerald Campion seems to me to make a good Bunter and Quelch was distinctly good. I hope you were able to give it a look in.

You may be interested to hear that "Carcroft School" may be making its debut in Australia. Nothing has been settled so far, but it is possible that 'Carcroft' stories may soon be appearing in a magazine "down under". If this comes off, you can guess that F.R. will be pleased: I just love the idea of writing for Australians in one of their own magazines.

With kind regards, Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

\* \* \* \* \*

ANOTHER BIG SCORE FOR AUSTRALIA!

No. 1 Brandon St, Clovelly, N.S.W. Australia.

My dear Herbert,

July 8th.

Did you hear of our stroke of amazing luck out here? We (Ernie Carter, Frank Jones & I) have a bookseller friend who rounds up Magnets, Gems etc., whenever possible and he has really done a magnificent job. But his crowning achievement was to present us with Magnets Nos. 1 to 102 in mint condition, a short time ago with a couple of later issues thrown in, one of which was the arrival of Smithy. Of course to gaze reverentially, at last, on No. 1 with its familiar, famous illustration of Wharton's arrival was a big thrill. We divided the spoil up evenly, and although each wanted No. 1 and 2 we eventually were all satisfied with our own third. Who got No. 1? We drew lots and lucky Ernie Carter won, so I'd be grateful if you would add him to the No. 1 'Magnet' Roll of Honour and perhaps mention our luck in a Collectors Digest? Also an early volume of 'Pluck' cropped up just after, unfortunately, the St. Jims yarns appeared. A near miss!

All best wishes, Sincerely, SYD. SMYTH.

\* \* \* \* \*

MORE TREASURE TROVE.

16th July, 1953.

Dear Herbert, An extraordinary item of news which may interest you and C.D. readers.

(concluded page 245) ...