

# THE COLLECTORS' Price 1s.6d

Vol. 7. No. 83. NOVEMBER 1953

# DIGEST

## Peter Jackson's LONDON



BILL MARTIN OF 43 HILLSIDE, NIX10 CLAIMS TO HAVE THE FINEST COLLECTION OF BOYS' BOOKS IN THE WORLD. HIS VICTORIAN "BLOODS" AND "PENNY DREADFULS" ARE THE ENVY OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, BUT HIS FIRST LOVES ARE THE SCHOOL STORIES WRITTEN BY FRANK RICHARDS. HE HAS JUST COMPLETED HIS SET OF ALL THE "GEMS" THAT HAVE EVER BEEN PUBLISHED—1711 OF THEM. NOW HIS AMBITION IS TO FIND THE 40 MEMBERS HE NEEDS TO COMPLETE HIS RUN OF "MAGNETS".

THESE SETS ARE LOVINGLY BOUND AND PRESERVED IN GLASS CASES, BUT THIRTY-ANDS OF DUPLICATES LITTER EVERY CORNER. "THAT'S WHY I'VE NEVER MARRIED," HE SAYS, "NO WOMAN WOULD STAND FOR IT." BUT HE IS NOT ALONE. BILLY BUNTER, P'ARCY, TOM MERRY, HARRY WILKINSON AND A HOST OF WONDERFUL CHARACTERS ARE HIS CONSTANT COMPANIONS.

REPRODUCED  
from

THE  
LONDON EVENING  
NEWS

16th September,  
1953

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Special

Sexton Blake

Diamond Jubilee

Number

# The Collectors' Digest

Vol. 7. No. 83

Price 1s.6d.

NOVEMBER, 1953

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



A UNIQUE DIAMOND JUBILEE: Readers will see that more space than usual is given this month to the Blakiana Section. There is every justification for it, for it is just upon sixty years since the first Sexton Blake story was published and those who wished to do so had the opportunity of buying the latest stories on the first Thursday of this month, remarkable record to say the least. Actually the sixtieth anniversary has not quite been reached, for that first story "The Missing Millionaire" appeared in the "Halfpenny Marvel" on December 20th, 1893, but there's no harm in being a little early, for there's too much history to get into one issue.

There is a very interesting circumstance concerning that first story as old readers of the C.D. will remember. For, time and time again the old "Union Jack" declared that it had the credit of publishing the first story in No. 2 of its halfpenny days, a story entitled just "Sexton Blake, Detective", which was published. But the editors who made that claim were wrong, and it was the little C.D. which was able to prove how much they were wrong. The real credit, however, went to the late Walter Dexter, the well known authority on Dickens. He was also greatly interested in the history of boys' weeklies, and one day, towards the

end of the war, he examined the first volume of the "Halfpenny Marvel" in the British Museum. There he found that No. 6 and two other Blake yarns, Nos. 7 and 11. We were corresponding at the time and he promptly gave me the surprising news.

No. 2 of the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d "Union Jack" did not appear until 4th May, 1894, thus the Marvel beat it by over four months.

A remarkable instance of ignorance on the part of people at Fleetway House, wasn't it? Or could it be those connected with the Union Jack did know, but wishing to claim the credit for that paper, kept quiet about the part its elder brother had played? Well, I suppose it will ever remain an unsolved mystery.

Now to the other end of the story. Many of the faithful declare that Sexton Blake is really no more and that the present day stories which bear his name are travesties.

They may be quite good 'tec yarns, but they are certainly far different to those we knew in the hey-day of the "Union Jack" when Hamilton Teed, Gwyn Evans, Robert Murray and others of their kind made the rooms in Baker Street a real living place.

As for the present day Tinker, often drawn something like a leering third-rate comedian telling a not so nice story, well he puts those who know the old loyal, lovable Tinker almost into a state of apoplexy.

Still, withal its a remarkable record and in the coming months our Blake historian, Walter Webb, will be telling you a lot about it, and on another page you will see a list of authors who have been paid cheques for writing Blake stories. Even allowing for those who have written under more than one name, there's well over 100 of them. No other character of fiction can claim a record remotely approaching that.

\* \* \* \* \*

ANOTHER CHANCE: A few months ago "Blakiana" changed hands, now comes the turn of the "Nelson Lee Column". It goes without saying that one accepts Bob Blythe's resignation with really sincere regret (he will be telling you why he is doing so himself). For years he has kept the flag of the Leeites flying, at one period he held the pass, with little support, against heavy odds. Of late, reinforcements have come to the rescue, even so Bob feels he must give up his command.

Fortunately there's an experienced lieutenant willing to take

over - Jack Wood. He is well trained in Nelson Lee lore, and possesses an extensive armoury. I am sure he will be backed up by the rank and file. And there's this about it - he's near enough to hear the report of my guns if ever he doesn't deliver the goods. I've an idea though that I shan't use much ammunition.

You've earned many medals, Bob. Into the breach, Jack!

\* \* \* \* \*

BILL MARTIN: As promised Bill is featured on our cover this month, just as he appeared in the London 'Evening News' 16th Sept., last.

The 46 'Magnets' he requires to complete his collection are:- 908-9, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 40, 46, 47, 50, 51, 58, 59, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84. 1011-12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 89. 1130.

Bill has helped many of you to fill gaps, so I am sure you will return the compliment if you can.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE LAST LAP: Last month I told you I was sure Bob Whiter was going to make a fine job of the Annual cover. Well, he has. He has drawn, skilfully, the features of the big four - Frank Richards, C.E. Chapman, E.S. Brooks and Eric Parker, and I've just got another sketch from him for inside, showing some popular Hamilton characters.

Harry Homer hurried back to Spain and there started pounding his typewriter. Not only Blake fans will admire the result of the work the members of the S.B. Circle have put in.

Yes, indeed, all goes well, but there are still some laggards where orders are concerned. Please let me repeat that it is getting imperative that I can have an idea how many to order soon. If I estimate too few it's going to be exasperating; if too many leaving some on my hands, well at half-a-guinea a time it's going to be a serious matter for me. And, I don't want to be wrestling with the "Who's Who" at the last moment, with the danger of someone being missed.

Now you'll relieve my anxiety, won't you?

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

This month is indeed a 'special' one in the history of the Collector's Digest, and for two very good reasons. Firstly because our editor, Herbert Leckenby, by kindly allocating all the extra pages to this section, has made this issue of Blakiana the lengthiest in the whole of its career; and secondly because Blakiana itself celebrates Sexton Blake's Diamond Jubilee.

I must say I feel highly honoured by having these extra pages, and it is my sincerest hope that the contents will meet with your approval.

Walter Webb's article is actually a three-part one, comprising:

1. The First Twenty Years
2. The Palmy Days of Sexton Blake
3. The Decline of Sexton Blake

As, however, each part is complete in itself, the second and third parts can appear at the beginning of the New Year without breaking the continuity.

Next month, among other things, we shall have something with a Yuletide flavour.

I shall be glad to hear from readers as to your opinion of this issue and Blakiana generally - and don't forget, I welcome any criticisms and suggestions for future programmes.

JOSIE PACKMAN.

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## SIXTY YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE

By Walter Webb

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### Part 1. The First Twenty Years

It was exactly 60 years ago that the now world-famous name of Sexton Blake appeared in print for the first time, and for the last 48 years, without a break, the thrilling adventures he has undergone in all parts of the world in his fight against crime has endeared him to millions. To have survived the first world war was no mean feat; to come through the second and most disastrous conflict

of all, what time nearly all the other weeklies and monthlies were going out of circulation, was proof enough of the enormous popularity he had built up during the preceding years.

It was a modest little story that first ever adventure of Sexton Blake, comprising no more than 15,000 or 16,000 words in length, written by a man named Blyth for the 1st MARVEL, and passed for publication by its editor, a forceful, go-ahead young man, named Somers J. Summers. Harry Blyth, an already ageing author, a round-faced, rather sleepy-looking gentleman, thick-set, with a scrubby, dark moustache, was the man who gave Blake to the world. Quite a good writer, he died in the very early days.

Blake appeared spasmodically, sometimes in the pages of the MARVEL, but more often in the UNION JACK, which paper eventually became his own, and in 1895 W. Shaw Rae took over from Blyth. Shaw Rae, whose real name was Treeton, was a cheery little man, fair-haired, with a big moustache and side-boards. A happy slave to the nicotine habit, it was rarely, indeed, that he was seen without a cigarette between his lips.

Authors who followed Shaw Rae as Blake chroniclers were, in the order of their appearance, as follows: Arnold Grahame (U.J. No. 72), Melton Whyte (No. 75), and Herbert Maxwell (No. 82). In No. 147 Shaw Rae introduced a Chinese boy named We-vee as assistant to Blake, and the little Celestial figured in about a dozen adventures. The sixth U.J. author to write of Blake was a man named Campbell Brown, then followed Paul Herring, Mark Darran, Percival Cooke, and Alec G. Pearson, the latter bringing in his own character, Maxwell Grey, the sea detective, to work in harness with Sexton Blake.

When, at five o'clock in the afternoon on October the 11th, 1899, the armed forces of two Boer Republics set to carry out their threat of sweeping the English from South Africa into the sea and so began the Boer War, it might be expected that Blake would soon be drawn into the conflict. But, as a matter of fact, very few Blake stories were published during that savage campaign, and in none of them did his authors show any inclination to draw him into it. As far as the Boer War was concerned, the plans of President Stephanus Paulus Johannes Kruger, the evil genius of that epoch, had no interference at the hands of Sexton Blake, whilst those famous British generals, Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, among others, got no material benefit from a Blake working behind the

scenes in the interest of his country.

For a period of nearly two years, Blake was not featured in the UNION JACK; then in October 1904 Alec G. Pearson brought him back, and, two issues later, Herbert Maxwell introduced Tinker for the first time. Blake now began to appear more regularly and from the 25th October, 1905 he began his unbroken run in the pages of the UNION JACK. More authors began to enter the arena of Blake writers, the four most regular contributors being W. Murray Graydon, who came across from the United States, Mark Darran, who introduced Mr. Spearing, of Scotland Yard, Herbert Maxwell and Beverley Kent. Then there was Michael Storm, still an unsolved mystery where Blake is concerned, who is known to have written quite a good number of stories. Storm suddenly disappeared in mysterious circumstances, and was then "ghosted" for by G.H. Teed, whose style of writing was similar to Storm's own. When Storm's death was established, Teed came into his own, and although he introduced Yvonne anonymously, stories under his own name appeared at intervals in other periodicals. Herbert Maxwell, a good writer, who wrote some very readable stories, dropped out of the UNION JACK in 1908, with, according to my lists, nineteen Blake yarns to his credit, his place being taken by Allan Blair, who made his debut that same year. Lobangu and Sir Richard Losely appeared occasionally; they were popular characters of the early days, and were joined by George Marsden Plummer, who made his bow in January 1908. A curious point about that first story was the fact that, although an editorial announcement was made to the effect that Plummer would be appearing again very shortly, it was eighteen months before we heard anything more about him. Then, on the 24th July, 1909, he appeared in an exploit, entitled IN DEADLY GRIP, in which Sir Richard Losely made a brief appearance. But it was not the Plummer we grow to know in later years; he was not the big, powerful, bearded villain of the first world war days, and no mention was made of his nail-biting habit, and the curious way his eyes glowed a baleful green when anger suffused him. Clearly, the man who wrote those first two Plummer stories and who doubtless, created the character, was not the same individual as he who chronicled the later ones. I have a strong theory that the man who first brought Plummer into conflict with Blake was Lewis Carlton, one-time editor of the UNION JACK, and BOYS' JOURNAL, and that he relinquished his monopoly of the

character when, owing to the great popularity of the stories which featured him, it was decided to star him in PLUCK and the BOYS' JOURNAL as well. John Bobin, later known as Mark Osborne, then took over Plummer on behalf of the UNION JACK, Mark Darran wrote about him for PLUCK, and Lewis Carlton continued to relate his exploits against Blake in the BOYS' JOURNAL. Carlton, despite his editorial duties, once found time to appear in a film featuring Sexton Blake, and his name appears in the cast as playing the part of Tinker, which points to the fact that he must have been a very young man at the time.

After October 1909, I cannot trace any more stories by Beverley Kent, so it is probable that he dropped out during that year, a retirement which left the UNION JACK a lot poorer, for Kent, a lively, convincing writer, was, in my opinion, the best of all the very early contributors. In his hands Blake was a big, genial man, brimful of energy and wit, Tinker a happy-go-lucky, harum-scarum schoolboy type.

The year 1910 can almost be described as W. Murray Graydon's year, for no less than a third of the stories of Blake published came from his pen during that period. George Marsden Plummer, sometimes in alliance with another shady character named John Marsh, gave Blake quite a warm time during the same year.

1911 is noteworthy for the reason that Andrew Murray came on the scene, and introduced Count Ivor Carlac as an enemy to Blake the following year. The second half of 1912 saw the detective in continuous action against Plummer and Carlac; and then an entirely new note was sounded in Blake's activities. In January 1913, the glamorous Mademoiselle Yvonne came to pit her feminine wiles against the machinations of the men who had been responsible for the death of her father, and, consequently, against Sexton Blake, who sought to restrain her from her grim purpose. How Yvonne's first feelings of hatred towards Blake, when he foiled her again and again in her intentions, and how that hatred turned gradually into a great respect, and finally, love, for the grim, determined detective, and how that deep affection was reciprocated, yet reluctantly spurned, when Blake put his career first, has been told in many a thrilling and human episode.

Three weeks after Yvonne's introduction came Dr. Huxton Rymer, the big, bearded adventurer, who gave Blake many a rough house in

all parts of the globe. Rymer was a great character; crook though he was he at once excited the sympathy of his reader by reason of his sterling qualities. Unlike Plummer, who was thoroughly bad, Rymer had certain scruples, and fought in accordance with them.

In June of the same year, Prince Wu Ling, of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle, brought yellow menace from the East, and now Blake's enemies began to assume very formidable proportions. It is still 1913, and that 13th year did begin to look like proving Blake's unlucky number, for one month later still another bad hat came along to further harass him, already overworked though he was. This time it was the stunted frame and big, bald head of Professor Kew which thrust themselves into Blake's province; and then to cap it all, no less a person than Maxwell Scott had to bring in another adversary, to make the odds against Blake quite overwhelming. This time it was the Scorpion, and now Blake, hard-pressed, and denied the services of Mr. Spearing, who had dropped out of the stories, could have wished for the invaluable services of his close friend and fellow-investigator, Nelson Lee, of Gray's Inn Road. But, after the case of The Winged Terror, Blake and Lee had gone their different ways, and Blake had to rely on practically the sole assistance of Tinker.

Blake's cup of bitterness must have overflowed when just before the end of the year another of the crook fraternity crossed his path. Meet now Henri Garock, known to the Underworld as The Snake.

The first faint rumblings heralding the bitter conflict that was soon to spread such chaos and indescribable misery throughout Europe could be felt as Blake continued his onslaught against this fresh wave of crime which had been thrust upon society. Even then new adversaries streamed into the arena. We met Aubrey Dexter, the gentleman crook; the big crime organisation known as the Council of Eleven; and Ezra Q. Maitland, and his wife, Kathleen, known as Broadway Kate. The Hon. John Lawliss, later known as Lawless, came along, but in his case the issue was very different; he came to aid Blake, not to fight him.

The Kaiser, who had appeared in several UNION JACK stories, and had been painted in colours other than those he deserved by one or two Blake authors whose hearts were more generous than truthful, now became an object of derision and scorn as the clouds of war grew ominously black and the feeling that a military upheaval was

now inevitable became a stranglehold. Naturally, when the storm did break, we came in for a spate of war-stories.

First among Blake authors to join up was Norman Goddard, who wrote under the pseudonym of Mark Darran. A good soldier, he was, unhappily, never to return to the surroundings in which he loved to roam.

Despite the war, there was no paper shortage at first, and double-numbers continued to be issued in the UNION JACK, and in 1915 the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY made its appearance. As the days ahead were to become a terribly grim and anxious period, so, too, were they destined to be the prelude to an era in which the Sexton Blake stories enjoyed a popularity never before achieved in the world of fiction. Blake's stock was rising to dizzy heights; his grip on the imagination of his public was ever tightening. The best stories of his adventures were yet to come - as yet the Criminals' Confederation, Leon Kestrel, Waldo, Zenith - all of these were unknown; but soon to make their bow in a long succession of popular stories, and so begin what will be known in the second part of this article as THE PALMY DAYS OF SEXTON BLAKE.

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#### LIST OF SEXTON BLAKE AUTHORS

by HERBERT LECKENBY

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The following is a list, 120 in number, of authors who have written Sexton Blake stories. They have been got together after years of research. In a few instances authors wrote under more than one name; these are indicated by figures in brackets.

As, in the early years, the stories were usually written anonymously, it is possible there may have been others. In any event it is a remarkable list.

E. Alias; D.L. Amos; R. Coutts Armour (1); John Ascott; Allan Blair; Lester Bidston; Harry Blyth (2); Stephon Blakesby; Stacey Blake; Ladbroke Black; John Brearley; John E. Brandon; E. Scaries Brooks; L.H. Brooks; Campbell Brown; T.C. Bridges; Coutts Brisbane (1); Louis Brittany; Gerald Bowman; E. Harcourt Burrage; Gilbert Chester; John Creasey; Lewis Carlton; B. Claverton; Hugh Clevely; Percival Cooke; Mark Darran; Arnold Davies; T.G.

Dowling-Maitland; Sidney Drow (3); George Dilnot; John Drummond; Maurice B. Dix; L.C. Douthwaite; Ernest Dudley; Alfred Edgar; W.J. Elliott; Walter Edwards; Gwyn Evans; C.V. Frost; V. Fremlin; Martin Frazer; Anthony Ford; R.F. Foster; William Murray Graydon; S.S. Gordon; Clifford Gates; Hylton Gregory (4); Richard Goyné; Maxwell Grant; Arnold Grahame; Cecil Hayter; Paul Herring; H. Gregory Hill (4); Rex Hardinge; John Hunter (5); C. Malcolm Hincks; R.L. Hadfield; D.L. Huddleston; A.S. Hardy; Stanton Hope; Stephen Hood (6); R. Howard; E. Holmes; Lewis Jackson (6); Warwick Jardine; Beverley Kent; Hilary King; F. Lelland; Derek Long; Hal Meredith (2); Peter Meriton (5); Patrick Morris; Robert Murray; G. Andrew Murray; Edgar Joyce Murray (3); Herbert Maxwell; D. MacLuire; O. Marland; Mark Osborne; W.J. Passingham; J.N. Pentelow; Alec G. Pearson; Michael Poole; Barry Perowne; Anthony Parsons; Arthur Paterson; John Purley; A.J. Palk; D.H. Parry; Pierre Quiroule; W. Shaw Rae; George E. Rochester; Henry St. John; Maxwell Scott; Christopher Stevens; F. Addington Symonds; Michael Storm; Anthony Skene; John Sylvester; Joseph Stamper; Richard Standish; Donald Stuart; S.G. Shaw; Hedley Scott; G. Hamilton Teed; H.W. Twyman; Norman Taylor; Walter Tyrer; H. Townley; Paul Urquhart; W.P. Vickery; Reginald Wray; Cedric Wolfe; Reid Whitley (1); T.C. Wignall; Stanford Webber; D. Woodman; John W. Wheway; Melton Whyte.

\* \* \* \* \*

THIS IS SEXTON BLAKE

by DEREK FORD

\*\*\*

In those far-off days when the editors of the 'Union Jack' and 'Detective Weekly' allowed their readers space to air their views, one occasionally came across a reader describing his first meeting with Sexton Blake. It being the occasion of Blake's Diamond Jubilee, I thought it an appropriate time to look-up those introductions and let readers of 'Blakiana' hear of some of them.

A South African first met him in hospital - as did quite a few others - where he was for 3½ years. "Reading about Sexton Blake helped on many a weary hour of the long days I lay in bed", he wrote.

You have probably read a hundred times of Blake saving a life

in fiction; in fact.....

Noticing a paper lying in the roadway a man stepped off the pavement to pick it up. Some scaffolding crashed behind him. Later, he read his first Sexton Blake story in the paper which had probably saved his life. Again, in France during the 1914-18 war, a soldier had some Blake yarns tucked under his tunic which deflected a rifle bullet fired at his heart upwards through his shoulder.

Mention of the 1914-18 war reminds me of the soldier who found his 'introduction' on a German p.o.v. he was searching.

Two Canadian meetings now. Pulling into a railway station, our correspondent threw his newspaper out of the window on to the platform. He must have made a hit for, just as the train was starting again, someone tossed back a bundle of "Union Jacks" to 'relieve the monotony of my journey'. Another, during a blizzard at Calgary, Alberta, rescued a man from a snowdrift. Back at the ranch-house, seeking to identify him, he found a copy of a Sexton Blake paper in his rucksack.

"Railway". That reminds me of the writer who found his first copy in a desolate Devonshire railway waiting-room, and another who bought his from the bookstall of a small hill station in India.

Another South African wrote that his mother, back in England, always sent him a cake she had baked herself on his birthdays. No, the cake didn't include his 'introduction' but the packing at the bottom of the box did.

One writer actually received his 'first' from the editor of the Nelson Lee Library. Unfortunately he does not tell us whether it influenced a transfer from Gray's Inn Road to Baker Street or whether he favoured both. Be interesting to know, wouldn't it?

Several years ago I gave a youngster his first copy from out of the innards of an old settee he was watching me 'investigate'. 'Firsts' have also been found under the bedroom lino and behind the office cupboard; in Australia, a Girl Guide received it from a Boy Scout; a newsagent delivered it by mistake; another was given it at a cinema where there was a free issue, and, finally, it was once used to stop a boy getting 'fresh' with a girl in a railway carriage - 'he became deeply immersed in it'.

Now, how did you first make his acquaintance?

\* \* \* \* \*

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARYOCTOBER ISSUES

The following is an extract from a letter I have received from Gerry Allison: "I find them both completely unreadable. So you will have to do without my reviews this month".

I am in entire agreement with Gerry, and purely for the sake of records here are the titles:

No. 297. The Mystery of the Arab Agent. Warwick Jardine.

No. 298. The Case of the Ace Accomplice. W. Passingham.

J. PACKMAN.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE THREE MUSKETEERS. PART TWO

By J. PACKMAN

\*\*\*

The 'rescue' is successful, and the trio are perfectly willing to aid Cardolak in his lawless schemes.

In view of their previous exploits in Paris, it can be understood that the Three Musketeers enter France as unostentatiously as possible. Thanks to the efficient system of the bootleggers and to the presence of Cardolak's yacht just outside the three-mile limit of the coast of Massachusetts, they make a clean getaway from America. With forged passports they have no difficulty in getting through the Customs at Havre and go to ground in Paris, where they immediately set to work to discover all they can about the various religious relics housed in the Notre Dame. Many days are spent visiting the wonderful Cathedral and studying the treasures before the crooks hit on a plan which they hope will succeed; but once again they are to fail.

By one of those coincidences which so often happen in real life, Blake and Tinker have recently arrived in Paris on private business, and whilst they are strolling near the Cathedral Tinker is intrigued to see two 'brothers' emerge, one of whom is lame and walks awkwardly with the aid of two sticks. He remarks to Blake "that's the first time I have ever seen a lame monk". The interest aroused in him by this unusual sight creates a desire to visit the Notre Dame. This is the same afternoon the Three Musketeers have chosen to make their burglarious raid on the treasures stored

there, and it subsequently transpires that the two 'monks' are Algy Somerton and Reggie Fetherston.

Blake and Tinker join a party of tourists, but when they arrive at the Sibord Chapel, where the Monstrance is usually on view, they realise that something untoward has happened. On opening the chapel door the priest in charge immediately realises an outrageous theft has occurred, and at once notifies the police. All the tourists are detained, including Blake and Tinker; but they are recognised by the Prefect of Police, M. Dupuis, as soon as he arrives from the Surete. Blake's help is requested, and he and Tinker at once set about making enquiries. In the course of their investigations, whilst waiting for Blake to return to the hotel and give him instructions, Tinker whiles away the time by reading a copy of a Paris evening paper. He comes across a very interesting item which says that the steam yacht SULTAN, owned by the multi-millionaire Mathew Cardolak, had returned to Havre after a cruise in the North Atlantic.

Now Tinker, being an astute young fellow and remembering the recent trouble he and Blake had encountered in America some time before, decides that Blake ought to know about the appearance of the yacht. He knew that the Three Musketeers had escaped and guessed they were on board the SULTAN. He points out the paragraph as soon as Blake arrives, and between them they are able to work out just how the crooks have carried out the theft. Thereafter they know it means a quick chase after the Musketeers, if they are to prevent them from getting the booty aboard the yacht. They discover that Archie Pherison has gone down the river on a barge which, apparently, the three criminals are using as a temporary home. Blake secures the use of a powerful police launch to give chase, and accompanied by Tinker, M. Dupuis and some picked men, set off down the Seine in pursuit. Only partial success comes to him, for although, after a fierce gun battle, he is able to board the barge and recover the stolen treasure, the Three Musketeers once again elude him. Reggie Fetherston, after striking down Tinker in the fight, manages to escape across country and engages a car to take him to the coast before the hue and cry is broadcast. Archie Pherison and Algy Somerton also succeed in getting away, leaving Blake unconscious on the river bank. In a small village they steal a car and eventually reach Havre just ahead of the police, and going aboard the SULTAN are soon on their

way to safety. But once again Sexton Blake has foiled their plans, and they determine to 'get' him the next time he crosses their path. For the time being Blake is satisfied that he has chased the trio out of France, but gives Tinker the credit for so doing, as it was Tinker's curiosity at seeing the 'Crippled Monk' leaving the Notre Dame which had really started the investigation.

The Three Musketeers are now definitely working under the patronage of Cardolak, who has no more conscience than the murderous trio when seeking to obtain possession of any treasure which might take his fancy. After their last venture in France, they return to America in Cardolak's yacht, where 'go to ground' in the millionaire's mansion in Boston, there to remain while they plan how to obtain access to the collection of jewels which have recently been offered for sale by the Government of the Caspian Republic.

These jewels, once the property of the old Russian Government and valued at £20,000,000, have been brought to London by the Caspian representative. Among them is a wonderful jewelled Globe of the World, and it is this globe upon which Cardolak has cast greedy eyes. He is wealthy enough to buy the globe, but such is the nature of the man that he prefers to employ the Three Musketeers and acquire the jewel by illegitimate means. The full story of this episode is related in U.J. No. 1083 "The Quest of the Jewelled Globe".

Cardolak sends a formal agent ostensibly to purchase the globe, but under cover of this normal procedure the Three Musketeers make their own arrangements, which result in the murder of three men. However, all these plans go astray, as the murders bring Sexton Blake on to the scene. Blake gets to work in his usual way and eventually traces the three rogues. He catches up with them at Southampton, but they manage to get aboard the SULTAN which has been slowly steaming along the Channel. Blake does not intend to let them escape again, and he commandeers a coastal patrol-boat in which to pursue the yacht. Unfortunately the vessels are now in French waters, and in response to an S.O.S. for further aid, French police arrive and Blake has to hand the trio over to them. Knowing there are several charges against them in France, Blake makes up his mind to see that the trio are extradited to England, there to stand their trial for murder. The jewelled globe is found on board the yacht, and Blake has (cont'd p. 337)

# adverts

WHY PAY HIGH PRICES for Magnets, Nelson Loes, Union Jacks? All these may be had from the London Old Boys' Book Club Library. Apply to BEN WHITER, 706 LORDSHIP LANE, WOOD GREEN, LONDON, N. 22.

FOR SALE: Gems, Magnets, Loes, S.O.L's., Holiday Annuals.

WANTED: Magnets. S.A.E. Please. F. BOTTOMLEY, 48 DOWNHILLS PARK ROAD, TOTTENHAM, LONDON, N.17.

FOR SALE: 63 Magnets, 16 Gems, (1937-40); 1932 Holiday Annual, S.A.E. please. JOHN GEAL, 277 Kings Road, Kingston, SURREY.

FOR SALE: In good condition, 3d Gems; 1907-8; 2d Gems 1928-40; Pink U. Jacks 1905-20; Coloured Covered U. Jacks, 1920 onwards; Young Britains; American Mags; Tubby Hags; Dixon Brots; Sexton Blake Libs; Pow Boys Friend Librarios; Detective Weeklies; Nelson Loes; Modern Boys; Many more items in stock. EXCHANGES WELCOMED. Various kinds of pre-war Boys' Books required, especially Magnets and S.O. Libs. S.A.E. PLEASE: RONALD ROUSE, 3 ST. LEONARDS TERRACE, GAS HILL, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

WANTED: Schoolboys' Own Libraries and Story Paper Collector. J. BELLFIELD, 24 GRAINGERS LANE, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

WANTED: Magnets (pre-1932); Basil Storey's "Boys' World" published 1950. About 20 issues. ANTHONY BAKER, CHRIST CHURCH VICARAGE, BARNET, HERTS.

WANTED: In good condition PLUCKS 106 and 112. S.O.Ls. 214, 218, 234, 236, 273. REV. A.G. POUND, 68 FINNEMORE ROAD, BIRMINGHAM, 9.

WANTED: S.O.Ls. and S.P.Cs. J.F. BELLFIELD, 24 GRAINGERS LANE, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

AVAILABLE: (Cash or Exchange. Most types pre-1940 Magazines required). Nelson Loes 1917 onward. S.O.L. Bound volumes, St. Franks, St. Jims, single copies St. Franks. Boys Friend Weekly 1903-1925. Boys Realm 1913-1928, Long runs - mint. Boys Friend Library's from number 40. Boys Magazine from number 1, long runs, mint. Boys Cinema early issues. Aldine O'or Land and Sea, Half-Holiday, 2d Detective, etc. Diamond Library 1d and 2d. (cont'd)

# adverts

Boys Herald, School Friends, 1920 mint. Ally Sloper early runs, mint. U.S.A. Detective, Crime, Magazines 1920s. C.Ds. 37-64  
C.D. Annual 1952. Magnets, Gems, Populars, Marvels, U.Js., etc.  
Annals Holiday 1922, Playbox 1922, 1924, Tiger Tims 1925. What offers for Daily Mirror No. 1? (1903). S.A.E. requirements please. Re-fund guarantee. Offers of books always appreciated. (Your price usually paid!). T. LAMBERT, 347 GERTRUDE ROAD, NORWICH.

(cont'd from p. 335).

the satisfaction of handing it over to Scotland Yard. It is there that the globe is examined. On pressing a diamond stud at the peak of the Himalayas, the globe opens and its secret is revealed. It is a giant diamond, before which the Koh-i-nor, the Cullinan or the Orloff pale into insignificance. It was this for which Mathew Cardolak had plotted and failed.

With the Three Musketeers once again in the hands of the police, Blake hopes they will get their deserts; but alas, with the aid of their evil patron, they escape once more.

Their further adventures in France are described in S.B. Library (1st series) No.366, "The Mystery of the Seine", and in this story it is, as always, the trio's ruthless and cold-blooded murders which bring Blake and retribution on their trail.

Some years before, Cardolak had purchased a secluded villa in Poissy, a small village on the Seine, and it is here that the trio go into hiding. From this quiet spot the Three Musketeers commence a series of daring outrages which occupy the attention of the French police for some time. These acts of banditry begin with an attack on a jeweller followed by daring bank raids, in the course of which several people are callously shot down, and a well known banker is held-up in his own apartments and cold-bloodedly murdered when attempting to resist. The affair of the 'robbery of Prince Borosov' finally decides M. Dupuis to ask assistance from Sexton Blake. With his usual thoroughness Blake studies the reports of all these crimes, and then he and Tinker set out to find the authors. In the course of their investigations various clues lead them to the little village of Poissy, and it is here that Tinker is the first to discover that the Three Musketeers are at work again. Tinker becomes involved in a deadly struggle with

his 'Governor's' old antagonists. He escapes, however, and is thus able to report to Blake that the Three Musketeers are at the bottom of the recent series of crimes in and around Paris. Blake is soon on their trail, and once again is able to hand over the desperate trio to the French police, hoping that this time the murderous crooks will receive their just deserts.

\* \* \* \* \*

Report of Sexton Blake Circle Meeting, held on Sunday, 27th September, 1953 at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

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Those in attendance were Len and Josie Packman, Charles and Olive Wright, Ben Whiter, Norton Price and Archie Young.

Deputising for Harry Homer in the chair, Len explained that Harry had found it necessary to return to Spain earlier than was anticipated. He had, however, spent a Sunday with Len, primarily for the purpose of discussing matters pertaining to the S.B.C. - particularly in regard to the Circle's contribution to this year's Collector's Digest Annual. All the material having been checked and rechecked, and now held by Len, it was handed over to Harry for him to edit and forward in due course to Herbert Leckenby. The Circle's contribution this year includes the work of J.G. Brandon, A. Blair, C. Brisbane, G. Evans, C. Hayter and P. Quiroule, plus an article on 'Blake and the Ladies', and further sidelights on A. ~~Scene~~.

Charlie Wright, as Deputy Secretary, read out a letter from Bill Colcombe who, unfortunately, was unable to attend. Charlie said he had also written to Rex Dolphin but had not received a reply.

With a view to the coming year, work was allocated to those present. Progress in regard to this work is to be reported (or produced if completed) at the next meeting.

Date and venue of the next meeting: Sunday 31 January, 1954 at 12 Ashburnham Place, Greenwich, London, S.E.10.

Finally, it was agreed that Sexton Blake enthusiasts should be invited to join the Sexton Blake Circle. Subscriptions are 5/- per annum, and all applications should be addressed to Mr. C. Wright, 12 Ashburnham Place, Greenwich, S.E. 10.

LEONARD PACKMAN.  
(Deputy Chairman)

# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

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In view of the Sexton Blake celebrations it hasn't been possible to give Hamilton fans quite as much space as usual, but I am sure they'll accept the situation with good grace. In the not very distant future we shall reach St. Jim's fiftieth birthday and we shall not forget to mark the event in appropriate fashion.

However, to come to nearer the present we always endeavour to give the December number a seasonable flavour, so I should like reviews of some outstanding Gem and Magnet Christmas numbers. Would someone oblige? I can give you until November 20th.

—oOo—

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER: Here's an interesting letter which is published just as received and without comment.

24, English Street, Longtown, Cumberland.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

October 12th, 1953.

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

I have just been reading the Rev. A.G. Pound's *THE RETURN OF THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL*, and I entirely agree with him when, referring to *BILLY BUNTER'S OWN* and *TOM MERRY'S OWN*, No. 5, he says: "But why 47 chapters of Greyfriars and only 14 of St. Jim's? Tom Merry and D'Arcy are just as attractive as Harry Wharton and Bunter. The atmosphere of St. Jim's is particularly charming. And, surely, if a volume is called *TOM MERRY'S OWN* it should not be overloaded with Bunter."

Yes, there is far too much discrimination or overloading in favour of Greyfriars, even in the C.D. itself. Why, for example, do we seldom see the front cover of the C.D. illustrated with something from the *GEM*? Old Gemites will never be persuaded that the *MAGNET* was a better paper than the *GEM*, or that Harry Wharton and Co. were more loved than Tom Merry and Co. I will go further and say that at times there is more than a suspicion in my mind that Tom Merry and Co. occupy the warmest corner in the heart of their creator. Mr. Charles Hamilton may like to be known as Frank

Richards, but old Gemites will always think of him as Martin Clifford.

The year 1920 saw the introduction of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, but when the second number appeared, twelve months later, the title had changed to the GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL. Why??? Do you remember the agitation there was among readers of the GEM and MAGNET away back around 1914/15 to have a real TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY and GREYFRIARS HERALD published every week, and that it was only the latter which eventually reached the bookstalls? Again, why??? I didn't like this favouring of Greyfriars forty years ago, and I still don't like it.

"The atmosphere of St. Jim's is particularly charming," the Rev. A.G. Pound says. That is very true, but does Mr. Pound and others realise that much of the charming atmosphere is due to the art of R.J. Macdonald, who illustrated the GEM for so many years? Who could portray a country summer scene like he could? Looking through my old GEMS of forty years ago, it isn't always the stories which bring back the memories, it is the R.J. Macdonald pictures.

I suggest that GEM and MAGNET illustrations might make a good C.D. subject for somebody.

Looking back to my schooldays, spent at a Church of England village school, I wonder what I had in common with Tom Merry and Co. .... a pair of clogs and an occasional penny for me, a fancy waistcoat and many a "fivah" for Gussy.

With good wishes, Yours sincerely,

ROBERT FARISH.

\* \* \* \* \*

BILLY BUNTER'S FIRST CASE by FRANK RICHARDS. CASSELL'S 7/6d

Reviewed by GERALD ALLISON

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Three month's ago we had the pleasure of reporting on the last 'Bunter Book', and now that indofatigable genius of Broadstairs, our beloved Frank Richards, has produced yet another - the 13th in the series.

What can one say "Billy Bunter's First Case"? To call it 'the mixture as before' sounds somehow derogatory, but why should that be so? An expert chef takes practically the same materials as an

army cook, but what a difference there is in the finished product. The magic art is in the mixing, and we come up fresh to every meal.

This tale has the customary ingredients, therefore, including plenty of jam and treacle. A missing 'tenner' also figures prominently in the story.

The villain of the piece this time is Price of the Fifth, but you will never guess who - in my opinion - is the hero. None other than our old friend, Joe Banks! Not only does he save Price from the sack, displaying a hitherto unsuspected magnanimity, albeit disguised as fear of the police, - but at the end of the story he is still £10 out of pocket. Is this a loose end, or does it promise a sequel? I never expected to hear Joey Banks say, "You needn't worry about what you owe me - I can wait". He is certainly improving.

Bunter is in his element as an amateur detective, and Coker adds mightily to the merriment. The Removites are there in full force, and even Tom Brown's radio acts up to its well established character. Yes, you will find 'Billy Bunter's First Case' quite up to standard.

Just two spots of criticism. I just couldn't swallow Mauleverer's not having heard of Sherlock Holmes. Fair do's, Mr. Richards. After all, there are some new Holmes tales coming out this year, and the authors might retaliate by making Watson say, "Who's Billy Bunter"!

And what about the picture facing page 79? On that page we read - "an inky glare into the interior of the cupboard revealed no cake, or anything else of an edible nature. The cupboard was as bare as Mother Hubbard's."

Well, just look at the illustration opposite! There is the great iced cake, staring you in the face. Also a huge jam of strawberry jam; a ten pound tin of biscuits, bread, butter, and pickles; and a plate piled with cooked sausages, besides other comestibles dimly seen in the background. Tut-tut, Mr. Macdonald!

—oO—

IMPRESSIONS OF THE "1d GEM"

By ANTHONY BAKER

Much has been written about the Gem from 1915 onwards, but the very early stories seem to have been overlooked. Though comparatively few collect these numbers seriously, surely all

Hamiltonian readers should try to obtain at least a few, rare though they are, for the 1<sup>st</sup> Series of the Gem formed the basis of the great 'New Series'. The stories themselves were, of course, reprinted much later, but they were often condensed or altered, and anyway it is more interesting to look at them in their original format.

Though these tales are very good and very readable, I do somehow prefer Martin Clifford's later stories - chiefly, I think, because I miss the series of stories, which were a feature of later years. However, this minor fault obviously lies with the reader, for the boys of 1907 certainly lapped them up.

There has only ever been the one immortal Gussy, and it is interesting to note how little he has changed in forty-six years. Thus in No. 44, "Tom Merry & Co. in Town", we learn that he did not even know what the Tower of London looked like. In the same issue, he enquires whether Beefeaters live on beef. Again, in No. 21, "The Triple Alliance", where the Terrible Two, Blake and Co. and Figgins and Co. unite to produce a play, we find the following passage:

"Who's there?" said Tom Merry.

"It is I, deah boy."

"Is it D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why can't you say so, then, fathead? Come in!"

The door opened. Arthur Augustus did not enter.

"Come in, fathead!"

"I wefuse to entah, Tom Mewvy, unless you withdraw those extremely obnoxious expressions," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity...

This passage might be found almost word for word in a 1939 Gem, or even in a Gold Hawk Book, and not appear out of place, which shows, not only that D'Arcy has changed little, but also that Martin Clifford's style had then, as always its distinctive characteristics. Another minor, though interesting point, is that Tom Merry is always referred to as "Tom Merry" — never plain "Tom" or plain "Merry".

The first of all such series as the Stacey, Silverson, and Harry Wharton v. Mr. Quelch ones, with either Wharton or Merry in trouble, appeared in Nos. 24 and 25. Here Tom is expelled because of his rascally cousin, Philip Phipps. This is related in No. 24,

"Expelled from St. Jim's". "Tom Merry's Camp", the next number, tells how Tom camps out near St. Jim's until the truth is discovered.

Of the issues that I have, the two that I like most are Nos. 27 and 30. The first is entitled "The Return of Monty Lowther". Lowther, who has been taken away from St. Jim's, is staying at Laurel Villa, with Tom Merry's old governess. Miss Fawcett being (as always) worried about dear Tommy's health, Lowther tells her that if he returned to school, he could send her daily reports of Tom's health, and see that he took his pills and medicine regularly. To deceive Monty's uncle, who took him away, he returns disguised under the name of James Edward Jessop. The illustration in the centre of this issue shows 'Jessop' being introduced to Tom Merry and Manners - all wearing six inch collars - by what appears to be a middle-aged bearded Frenchman in evening dress, who turns out to be Mr. Railton. In the course of his adventures there, Lowther succeeds in putting one of Miss Fawcett's pills in Tom's mouth while he is asleep - with dire results.

Lowther's secret is discovered when he is ducked in the river by Figgins and Co., which of course washes off his disguise, though he is allowed to remain at St. Jim's. This is a really good tale, and one is bound to regret that it was not expanded into five or six issues. After all, thirty years later, in the Magnet, Wibley managed to remain undiscovered for five issues, when he returned as Archibald Popper, after being expelled for guying M. Charpentier.

No. 30, "A Regular Rascal", tells how a Mr. Jex sells various goods to St. Jim's boys, to be paid for by instalment. After paying the first instalment, the articles, when used, are found to be no good, but Jonas Jex will not take them back, insisting, however, on the remaining instalments being paid. Eventually everything is set right by the simple expedient of adorning Mr. Jex with treacle and feathers.

The worthy Percy Griffith, first Editor of the Gem, always seemed to be worried about the circulation, and did his best to ensure that the following week's issue had the maximum amount of publicity. Each issue carried a headline advertising the following week's tale, at the top or bottom of each page, in addition to a reproduction of its cover on the back of the issue. Percy also made the next story the sole subject of his letter - if you can

call three lines and a "P.S." surrounded by a fancy frame a letter.

The illustrations I think varied tremendously. Making allowance for the extraordinary dress they wore then, some of them are clearly and effectively drawn, for example the covers of Nos. 27 and 47, and the middle pictures of Nos. 30 and 36. But perhaps the best one is the inside one of No. 30, showing the Terrible Three searching their pockets for cash. This has the same "freshness and charm" as the one chosen by Roger Jenkins from Gem 86, in The Story Paper Collector No. 44. Other illustrations are, to say the least, shocking. Fatty Wynn must surely hold the distinction, or otherwise, of being the worst drawn; look at the cover of No. 25.

The issues carried few actual outside advertisements, but there were numerous ones for the Boys' Friend Library, Marvel, Pluck, etc., often illustrated, and bearing such captions as: "This picture depicts a thrilling incident in this week's exciting story." What outside adverts there were read very amusingly today; a complete gramophone for 9/6d., with two cylindrical records free; a bike for £3. 19s. 6d; grow a nice manly moustache with the aid of "Mousta" for 6d!

By present day standards; the covers seem to have an unnecessary number of trappings, and why the inside heading should be adorned by a hunter and three lions in a school story magazine is somewhat of a mystery. Probably a relic of the half dozen adventure stories that appeared in the first ten issues.

Taken generally, I feel sure that the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d Gems deserve to be more in the picture than they are at present. They laid, as it were, the foundation stones for future stories, not only of St. Jim's, but also for Greyfriars. And what strong foundations they have proved to be! Even Percy Griffith could not have foreseen that nearly half a century later two 10/6d. Annuals would be published with stories about the same characters as who appeared in the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d Gem.

\* \* \* \* \*

MAGNET TITLES (cont'd). No. 1227, A Dog with a Bad Name; No. 1228, The Schoolboy Lion-Hunters; No. 1229 Jungle Vengeance; No. 1230 The Jungle Hikers; No. 1231 Kidnapped in Kenya; No. 1232 The Man-Tracker of Uganda; No. 1233 The Slave-Trader's Vengeance; No. 1234 White Slaves of the Congo; No. 1235 The City of Terror; No. 1236 Saved from the Cannibals; No. 1237 Widgers on the Warpath; No. 1238 All the Fun of the Fifth; No. 1239 The Boot-Boy's Luck.

# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## LONDON SECTION

After the Sussex Ramble of last month we journeyed into Surrey for the October meeting at the Modern School, Surbiton. It was quite a good gathering with new member David Harrison attending his first meeting. And what a grand meeting it turned out to be with host Eric Fayne in sparkling form. After all the usual formalities ably disposed of by chairman Len the company sat down to a very good spread which Madam and her lady helpers had provided. Then back to the meeting room and the entirely new competition that host Eric had arranged, "Tom Merry's Stock Exchange" and after an enjoyable tussle our old friend Len was the winner with Bob Blythe second and the other Packman partner, Josie, third. Prior to this game it was the fate of myself to give an impromptu talk as the ballot fell to me. Judging by the applause at the end, my modest effort must have pleased. It was a short concise history of my connection with comics and boys' papers and the period of secretaryship of the club. Now to the second of host Eric's ideas. "Down you Go" was played with Eric in the chair and what a success he made of it with the quotations and the clues. He only stumped the company once as the correct answers were soon forthcoming. It goes to prove how well versed in Hamiltonia were most of the "panel".

A card issued some time ago by Maynards, the maple sugar firm, with a C.H. Chapman drawing of Dick Penfold on it, was shewn round by Len. A complete set of these are owned by Peter Cushing and are very well sought after by collectors.

Another cinema show, this time in the school's Excelsior cinema, with host Eric as the projectionist. A very good selection of films were shown and the laughter caused by some of them was good to hear.

Back again for some more "Down You Go" and then the usual conversations ere breaking up for the return journey to town.

It had been another grand meeting and milestone in the club's history and the grateful thanks of all present went out to host Eric Fayne and our hostess Madam.

Next meeting at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, on Sunday Nov. 15.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, 10th October, 1953

J. Breeze Bentley presided over an average attendance.

Gerry Allison reported a record call on the library over the month. The "red Magnets" recently acquired were in great demand. Bank balance £13. 9. 3.

A few hours after I returned north after my London vacation, Gerry set off westward to represent Northern at the Merseyside dinner. According to his report a good time was had by all.

I followed with a brief review of my London travels.

Then came a 24 question Quiz set by the Midland Club. Some real teasers among them. Jack Wood came out the winner with 14 correct.

We then settled down to a further reading by Gerry of "The Boy Without a Name". One more instalment will see the end. It has been a huge success.

Next meeting 14th November.

And will all members make a note - the Christmas Party 12th December. Ideas to make it a real merry occasion welcomed. A hearty invitation to members of other Clubs too.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

\* \* \* \* \*

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING, 19th October

We are mostly Greyfriars enthusiasts but tonight we left our Alma Mater and paid a visit to Rookwood.

After a fairly lengthy discussion on business arising, such as the forthcoming Christmas Party, we settled down to enjoy a reading by a very keen foundation member (Mr. Albert Clack), of several chapters of a notable "Rookwood" story.

This story appeared in the "Penny Popular" (in August 1923), and describes how Kit Erroll saves his friend, the wayward Mornington. The latter's insistence on visiting Tickey Tapp's gambling den would on this occasion have meant complete disaster and disgrace had not Erroll got wind of an intended police raid and nobly took action to save his friend from his folly. Incidentally Morny was just beginning to realise through his friend's earnest entreaties just what a swindle the whole thing was.

A story in the true Hamilton tradition showing yet another instance of how very skilfully moral lessons were inculcated by

means of a gripping and well written story and with never a suggestion of preaching.

I'm afraid that Albert let his coffee get cold in his enthusiasm, but we gave him a very hearty round of well deserved applause for an excellent reading.

EDWARD DAVEY.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION - ANNUAL DINNER - 26th September, 1953

This was a great occasion for the members of the Merseyside Sec., as it marked the first of our annual dinners, although we are now entering upon our third year of existence. It was, we think, an unqualified success, and everything went off as smoothly as expected. Unfortunately, Herbert Leckenby and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Corbett were unable to be present, and we hereby given them notice that there will be another dinner next year!

There were over thirty present, including Gerald Allison, who made the long journey from Leeds to act as representative of the Northern Section.

The proceedings commenced at 6.30 p.m., and, after dining, various toasts were drunk, not the least of which was that to our beloved president, Frank Richards, and we made the rafters ring with our spontaneous, if not particularly melodious, rendering of "For he's a jolly good fellow". Gerald Allison, Sir Frederick Bowman, Jim Walsh, Don Webster and Frank Case each spoke a few words in tribute to the hobby and the club spirit which make functions such as these possible, and the chairman then made presentations of club ash-trays.

Then came the fun and games. Sir Frederick gave a most impressive dramatic excerpt from a famous play. Gerald contributed with an hilarious extract from the "Magnet", and Mr. Switzer surprised us all with his agility in a humorous song and dance. Jim Walsh provided the musical highlight with his selections on the accordion, and led us in our sing-song, which was indulged in by all with enthusiasm. Much enjoyment was provided by our version of a wireless game, and a quiz devised by Peter Webster was jointly won by Gerald Allison and Jim Burke. This must have been Gerry's lucky night, as he also won a raffled basket of fruit.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Norman Pragell,

who remained modestly in the background, for the work he performed in arranging the financial side of the dinner; the success of the affair was dependant largely on his efforts, and we are most grateful.

So, here's to the next time.....!

FRANK CASE.

Sec.

October 11th, 1953. This meeting marked the commencement of our third year of existence, and there were almost twenty members present; this number makes comment on our progress superfluous, and is most gratifying to all concerned.

After the secretary had dealt with the minutes, etc., the election of officers for the forthcoming year took place. The present chairman and secretary were re-elected, and Mr. F. Urwin was voted in as vice-chairman in succession to Mr. J. Walsh, who is unfortunately unable to be present at every meeting, though he has up to now rendered yeoman service.

The chairman then brought up many points for discussion on library matters, etc., and all present waded in with suggestions and hints, quite a few of which will be adopted, with, we hope, beneficial results. Our winter programme was discussed at length, and Jim Walsh moved that for the next few months the stereotyped quiz should be discarded and replaced by team games (our attendances now make this possible), and alternated by team debates on set subjects. This was carried unanimously.

There followed an interesting innovation, in which every member in turn explained how he came to make contact with the club, and many and varied were the experiences related, some of which were also quite amusing.

The library did a great trade, and this ended the meeting at 10.30 p.m. - quite one of the best "get-togethers" yet.

F. CASE.

Sec.

#### LETTER BOX

Frank Richards Explains and Gives some News of Carcroft

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate, Broadstairs, Kent. 23rd Oct. '53  
Dear Herbert Leckenby, Thank you for your letter. I should have

replied earlier to your inquiry about the BB. films, but I had to inquire myself, as I have no connection with them. From what I learn, there is a sort of toy projector worked by hand, on which very brief little films are run, these being reproductions of some of the pictures in a comic.

Did I tell you that my short stories of 'Carcroft' are now appearing in Mr. Gorfain's new monthly, the "Silver Jacket", published at Sydney. I have seen the first number, some time ago, and like it. I understand that it will be on sale over here before long.

The last C.D. is first-rate. Very interesting item about Arthur Askey, — now I know why he is such a tremendously good artist!! But the Bahamian quoted from the "Observer" does seem a little benighted. Curious that people will ladle out opinions of things of which they know nothing. But — there really are perverse persons who prefer wrong opinions to right ones.

With kindest regards, Always Yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

(Note: The Bunter films referred to were some advertised by a firm at Potters Bar. They roused my curiosity especially one called "Fun in the Scrum which seemed to suggest Rugby football.

Should anyone spot "Silver Jacket", details would be appreciated.  
- H.L. ).

## NELSON LEE COLUMN

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

I have something to say which, although it won't cause a wholesale weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth will, I'm sufficiently human to hope, cause a certain amount of shall we say regret? In other words, to stop making a mystery of it, I have decided to give up the column. It's a bit of a wrench, for apart from the period when Len Packman took over, I've been running it for six years, but I have come to the conclusion that it's high time we had a fresh mind handling the Nelson Lee side of the hobby. This is partly because after all this time I've run out of fresh subjects to write about, (you've probably noticed I haven't written

anything this year, being content to leave it to an increasing band of contributors) partly because other commitments are making inroads on what little spare time I get and partly because of the correspondence involved. It is this last that is my main reason for my decision to hand over the reins. I think I must be the world's worst correspondent. I make no bones about it. Other things have claimed my attention and answers to letters get delayed far longer than they should.

As a direct consequence a lot of goodwill between myself and a many of you has been lost and the column has suffered as a result. This, of course, is a bad state of affairs and I am the first to admit it. Hence my decision. I don't think anyone need regret it, for in Jack Wood, who has nobly agreed to take on the job as from next month, you will find an N.L. enthusiast as keen as myself. He also has a very large collection of Lee's, an essential factor in a job of this kind, where authenticity is the keynote.

Well there it is, I know you will all continue to do the very necessary rallying round. I still have another couple of articles on hand but these I'm sending on to Jack. Further articles are, of course, required and these should be sent direct to him at his address, which is:- NOSTAW, STOCKTON LANE, YORK.

Cheerio! everybody, and the best of luck Jack, may your efforts be even more rewarding than mine - and I like to think that mine haven't been slight.

And now for another lighthearted article by Bill Champion. To think that someone (who shall be nameless) once said that he could find nothing funny at all in the N.L!

HANDFORTH'S BAD BARGAIN!

BY W.F. CHAMPION

Without doubt, it was the dramatic writings of Edwy Searles Brooks that made the deepest impression on we old readers of the Nelson Lee; but I feel we must all be deeply indebted to him for his "lighter moments", when he succeeded so ably in bringing much humour into our lives at an impressionable age.

I have just been scanning what I always considered his greatest diverting yarn, introducing, of course, his funniest and most lovable character, the one and only Edward Oswald Handforth. This yarn, "Handforth's Bad Bargain!" immediately followed the holiday series of 1926, when the heroes of St. Franks had such exciting

times fighting the Legions of Foo Chow, in China.

Handy decides to travel from his London home to school in his celebrated Austin-seven, along with his chums, Church and McClure and his minor, Willy—plus half-a-dozen large suit-cases. Naturally, by the time this luggage has been piled and wedged into the small car, practically nothing can be seen of the three passengers, who are completely submerged, as it were. To add to the discomfort of these three, rain begins to fall just as they are about to set off, and this necessitates the hurried pulling-up of the hood, which makes even less space in the car.

After having miraculously avoided about a dozen serious crashes, and after having had his licence examined by at least one wrathful policeman, Handy succeeds in piloting his trusty car through London's traffic and out onto the open road past Kingston, where his unfortunate companions breathe sighs of heartfelt relief.

The rain ceases soon afterwards, and Handy stops the car to lower the hood while his pals insist on getting out to stretch their legs. They are all suffering frightfully from pins-and-needles, but their leader scornfully accuses them of making a fuss over nothing as they hobble painfully around in the road. Later on, with Guildford behind them, Handy has one of his frequent arguments with Willy, kicks him out of the car and leaves him stranded on the highway. The cheeky Third-former is not a bit worried, because he has espied a Morris-Oxford saloon some distance in the rear, with the redoubtable William Napoleon Browne at the wheel - and knows he is certain of a lift.

Eventually, the fifth-former catches up with the Austin-seven and the two cars stop. Follows a spot of banter in which Handy boats of his engineering ingenuity and his knowledge of cars. Browne, in his rather high-handed manner, resolves to teach the Removite a lesson, waits until his unsuspecting victim's back is turned, swiftly disconnects an ignition-lead, and coolly drives on.

Handy attempts to follow, finds his usually faithful little car refuses to start, and gets down to the job of locating the trouble. This, despite his former boasting, he fails to do; so he and his two long-suffering chums are forced to push the stubborn vehicle along to the nearest garage. Here, the proprietor, a certain Mr. Miggs, examines the engine, quickly locates the fault, sizes up his youthful customer and mentally decides that here is a

Heaven-sent opportunity to make a bit of quick cash. He informs the gullible Handy that the engine is "Finished. Big end's gone! Bearin's done in! Over-heatin' — that's what it is. She's melted her bearin's like candle-grease! Scrap-iron, that's all she is now!"

The cost of putting things right would be in the region of eighty pounds, Mr. Higgs goes on to say, whereupon Church and McClure, more than a little suspicious, attempt to persuade their leader to try another garage. They meant well, but, of course, knowing the obtuse nature of Sir Edward Handforth's eldest son, they couldn't have adopted worse tactics — and, after the ensuing heated argument, they walk out leaving Handy to the tender mercies of the questionable garage proprietor.

Mr. Higgs further pulls the wool over the Removitch eyes by offering him a "big car" in exchange for the Austin-seven. True, the "big car" turns out to be a vintage Ford with fairly well preserved exterior, but with possible 'vital parts tied up with string' to effect a sale. However, the demerits of this singularly ancient sardine-tin are quickly and cleverly glossed over by the cunning Higgs, who paints a really attractive picture of the big Handy seated proudly at the wheel of this "man's car".

So, a swop is effected, the luggage transferred, the worried Church and McClure ensconced in the back-seat, and off they go...

The Ford gave a sudden lurch forward. Church heeled over backwards and nearly went clean through the rear. McClure saved himself by clutching at the front seat. With a series of wild lurches, the Ford went off down the road towards Helmford, her engine roaring appallingly. And then, with a still more violent lurch, Handforth managed to get into top gear. The noise and the vibration ceased and they went sailing along with a fair amount of comfort. Edward Oswald glanced round triumphantly

"There you are!" he shouted. "How's that?"

"Fine!" said Church.

"Wonderful!" grinned McClure.

There follows a wonderful half-page, with Handy scraping a gutter and just evading one or two lamp-posts. Of course, he overlooks the fact that the throttle is hand-controlled, and cannot slow down. In a frenzied attempt to apply the foot-brake, he brings the epicyclic gearing into action again and somehow gets back into low gear. (Owing to lack of space, concluded next month)