

# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

JANUARY, 1954

VOL. 8., No. 85.

PRICE 1s.6d.



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



**THE BIG DISPATCH:** When the news broke that there was the possibility of a railway strike on the eve of Christmas I got a shock and no doubt some of you would say to yourselves "Will the Annual get through?" Well it certainly gave me a headache that Sunday morning, for as announced last month we had arranged to make December 18th the posting day. It struck me straight away that if the strike did come about we should be cutting it very fine and there would be a real danger of some of the Annuals for long distant destinations, South Coast, Scotland and so on, at anyrate, not getting through by Christmas, or even being lost in the chaos which would be inevitable. (Fortunately the overseas ones had been mailed some days earlier). That would have been an exasperating disappointment, a sheer calamity, seeing hitherto everything had moved on oiled wheels. However, on the Monday morning came a chat on the 'phone with the York Duplicating Services. Plans were made to speed things up. These, and in addition, some valuable help from Jack Wood succeeded, and early on Wednesday morning a van came along, the stacks of packages were loaded, and a few minutes later passed into the hands of the G.P.O. 'Twas a happy and dramatic finale. Once again the Annual had got through!

**Afterwards!** When the York Duplicating Agency 'phoned me on

that Wednesday morning and told me that the Annuals no longer ladened their tables I gave a great sigh of relief. Then came the satisfying thought, "Seeing they got away two days earlier I should be getting some reports before the Christmas break. And my word! they started sooner than I anticipated for not very many hours after the big dispatch came a telegram from John Geal. It read: "Annual terrific. Best ever. Congratulations. Convey same to Printers. Thanks Herbert. Happy Christmas."

Well, that was an encouraging start if you like and shortly afterwards the letters started to come in a continuous flow. "Exceedingly well produced; a real masterpiece, worthy of praise for all concerned" said E.P.K. Willett. "I certainly consider the whole production first rate and remarkable value. Both you and the publishers should be most heartily congratulated" commented Peter Walker. "Congratulations on what I can quite honestly say is the best Annual yet. It is simply terrific; I read it straight through at one sitting and enjoyed every page" came from that young enthusiast Anthony Baker.

And maybe I can be excused if, as I prepare the January C.D. this Christmas Day, I quote from a friend I did not know a year ago. "Annual received yesterday also your letter. Fancy finding time to write to me when you must be so busy. You are a great scout Herbert; and now I appreciate why you are held in such high esteem... Now to the Annual. I am delighted with it. I keep glancing through it, but I am determined to put it aside until Christmas and then won't I have a time..." Ernest Whitehead.

No I don't think you will think me conceited in quoting from these for I am sure you will realise what a joy it is to me that I have the C.D. and the Annual to think about as I sit by the fire on one more Christmas Day or how lost I should be if I hadn't.

\* \* \* \* \*

DEATH OF A MEMBER: I deeply regret to announce the death of S.J. Orme of Uttoreter, who passed away on November 30th. Owing to a disability he was unable to take an active part, but many of our members knew him well as a pen-friend. All will sympathise with his relatives in their bereavement.

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THE SILVER JACKET: When I heard of the new Australian paper I expressed a wish to see one if one could be obtained in London. Well we've some grand scouts, ever on the alert in the interests of our

old mag, and it wasn't long before I received a copy of the "Silver Jacket". In fact it was only lack of space which prevented me mentioning it last month. The scout was Ben Whiter. Thanks Uncle Ben.

Well, the Silver Jacket has got a most attractive cover, with a picture of an airman advertising a "Biggles" serial. The title is in red, on a panel with a yellow background. A broad silver border gives it a nice finish.

The Captain W.E. Johns serial is "Biggles Works it Out."

The most important thing about the Silver Jacket from our point of view is that Charles Hamilton is writing a Carcroft story for it. The one in the first number is entitled "Just Like Turkey". It is in the master's best style, the only drawback being it isn't long enough. Maybe this can be remedied.

There is also a brief reference to the author saying "Frank Richards is the world's most famous writer of school stories." Well, I don't suppose anyone will want to question that.

"The Silver Jacket" also contains several stories in picture form, strip cartoons and a number of interesting articles, including a graphic account of the sinking of the "Titanic" in 1912, one of the sea's greatest disasters.

"The Silver Jacket" is Magnet size, costs 1/- and is published monthly. A good effort and it deserves to be successful.

Later. Anthony Baker has won a guinea in the new paper and I have also him to thank for introducing the C.D. to its editor.

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"WHO'S WHO" REFLECTIONS: A browse over the "Collectors' Who's Who" in the Annual makes a fascinating study. It contains for instance, the ages, the vocations and the addresses.

~~Where the ages are concerned one finds we are represented from~~ Peter Webster aged 12, and other schoolboys, right up to our 'grand old man' Arthur Lawson, who still hale and hearty, fortunately, is well past what used to be considered the allotted span. Most strongly represented are the men in their "forties," who would be going to school when the First World War started and on to the days when peace had come again; the halcyon years of the Magnet, the Gem, the Nelson Lee and the Union Jack.

The vocations! How gratifying as you scan them do they prove to be for they show that our members come from every class and calling; ministers of religion, half-a-dozen schoolmasters,

engineers, civil servants, men from the factory and the plough, doctors, journalists, warehousemen, soldiers, shopkeepers and others too numerous to mention, but not forgetting quite a number of housewives, clerks, book-keepers and others of the feminine gender, who are as enthusiastic as the males. All are on Christian name terms when they get together, or correspond, to discuss the days of yore.

The addresses! Oh, how gratifying to an editor. Practically every county in England is represented, also many in Scotland, North and South Wales, Northern Ireland and Eire. A loyal reader also in the Isle of Wight. At the moment of writing copies of the Annual are also on the way to Canada, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Germany, South Africa, Ceylon, Kenya Colony, Brazil and the U.S.A. Also to members of the younger generation who are doing their National Service in various parts of the world.

One day recently I cashed four Australian money orders. Three of the four had been issued at Elizabeth Street P.O., Melbourne within a day or two of each other. Said the counter clerk with a smile as he handed over the cash "You seem to be well-known in Australia."

All in all there's quite a lot to interest a fellow who used to think he had a hobby all to himself

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The duplicating of the C.D. on tinted paper throughout, is an innovation. Please let me have your comments.

\* \* \* \* \*

To all those who have sent me greeting cards (more than ever before) my hearty thanks. I am sure they will realise it has been impossible to acknowledge all individually, so here's wishing them and all the loyal readers of the C.D. a very prosperous New Year and may your collections grow.

Yours very sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

ANNUAL CORRECTIONS - see page 9

DEFECTIVE LIBRARY: Wanted. Your price paid for any of the following numbers in good condition: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 29, 31, 33. L. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

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

My CollectionNo. 1 - HERBERT LECKENBY'S

So far no one has accepted my invitation for articles on collections so I will lead off with some account of my own.

One day way back in the early part of 1941, when I looked in on a newsagent friend of mine, he said "I've something that may interest you." Often in the years that had passed he had supplied me with back numbers of many boys' weeklies, so I waited with some curiosity whilst he went to the domestic part of the premises. He returned with a pile of - Nelson Lees, old series. I assured him that they certainly did interest me and snapped them up. Throughout my life I have usually had some old boys' books I could lay my hands on, but it so happened that at that particular time I hadn't any at all.

Well those Nelson Lees whetted my appetite and I asked the newsagent if he could get any more. He said he thought he could. He did and altogether I got about 150 copies.

That set me going, it gave me a longing to start collecting again, maybe get some of the papers of my own particular youth. I was not very optimistic, I had a fear that too many years had passed on. I little dreamt that in those that were to come I should have more through my hands than in all my life before and that in the gathering of them I was to gain a legion of friends.

Some time later I picked up quite by chance a copy of 'Exchange & Mart'. I pulled up with a jerk when I saw therein that a Mr. Wilfrid Mather, living in a Manchester suburb was offering the first three volumes of the "Boys' Realm", beloved paper of my schooldays. I found his name in the telephone directory. I seized the 'phone and soon was talking to him. We had a most interesting chat for I found he could talk about the old authors. As a result those three hefty volumes came into my possession, and also two or three volumes of "Chums". I afterwards lost touch with Mr. Mather but I often think of him as I browse over the only one of those volumes which I still possess.

A little later came another advert and again from Manchester - Harry Dowler the name. Once more I made use of that handy instrument - the telephone. It was quite a long call that evening in 1941, for I soon found I was talking to a fellow after my own heart, a fellow of my own age, who for forty years had evidently

been doing exactly the same in Manchester as I had been doing in York, collecting information about the authors and artists and interesting information about the stories we had read as boys.

In my career I have handled millions of calls, top secret calls, dramatic, tragic and humorous calls, but I don't think I ever had one of more importance to me personally as that with Harry Dowler, for to a considerable extent it changed the course of my future life. For straight away we started to correspond with the result that Harry put me in touch with many other collectors, including Alfred Horsey, Bill Gander, Reg. Cox and those well remembered veterans who have now passed on Frank Wearing and Harry Steele. Acquaintance with Bill Gander and the S.P.C. led to the C.D., so you see Harry Dowler has played no small part in bringing our fraternity into being. Not long after that first 'phone call he came over to York and spent ten days, ten days which brought blessed relief to the hectic existence I was then experiencing.

Rapidly I built up a collection again, sometimes several parcels a week. What thrills I got when I impatiently tore off the wrappers and looked upon papers I had never dreamt of seeing again. Boys' Friends of my schooldays, Boys' Realms, Boys' Heralds, Aldine Dick Turpins and Claude Duvals; Gems and Magnets; Union Jacks, Plucks, Marvels. I also got loads of 'Victorians' including copies of papers that I didn't know had ever existed. I was really amazed at the quantity of the papers of old which had been preserved, and I often wondered about the story behind them. A pile of 3d Union Jacks, Plucks and Marvels in mint condition for instance, some of them even with their pages uncut. Where on earth had they been for over 50 years?

Then in a consignment one day I came across a 'Boys' Realm' with some notes in my own handwriting. I must have parted with it over 30 years earlier and certainly not to the collector from whom I bought it. How many hands had it been through in the interval, I wondered.

Towards the end of the war I was corresponding with Arthur Marshall, who as Arthur Brooke, edited the Big Budget and Boys' Leader. On arriving at my office one morning I found a big parcel awaiting me. As I wasn't expecting one I opened it with no little curiosity. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw a bound volume of the Boys' Leader, autographed by Arthur Marshall. With it was a charming note asking me to accept the volume, one from his own private

collection as a little acknowledgment for the pleasure he had received from reading some "recollections" of mine. You can realise that that was one of my biggest thrills when I say that I had been searching for Boys' Leaders for 30 years without success, except for just one lone copy. In addition there was the oh so kindly gesture behind the gift. And that wasn't all, for shortly afterwards he sent me along a volume of the Big Budget, another paper I had been vainly searching for.

There was a tragic sequel to that one though. I mentioned my luck to Harry Dowler and he expressed a wish to see it. As it was really through Harry that I had got to know Arthur Marshall, I promptly complied. Judge of my dismay when a week later he told me it had not reached him. It hasn't done so to this day. That was indeed the other side of the medal.

I have never concentrated on any particular paper, though naturally I am fondest of those of my own schooldays. As Bob Blythe and others have pointed out, one is inclined to believe that the papers one read in one's own particular youth were the best ever. It wasn't so, of course, it's simply that they provide the happiest recollections. I, for instance, can pick up a certain copy of the 'Boys' Friend' of 1902, sit back and let my thoughts travel back through the years to an afternoon when after Sunday School two chums and I went for a stroll discussing the serials then appearing therein, and a new one that was to start in a week or two.

Or again, Boys' Realm, No. 12, how on a journey home from a visit to an uncle's during the holidays I was chaffed by an old farmer for reading a 'penny dreadful'. As I write I can see his long, white beard and burly form sat opposite me and hear his hearty laugh. Isn't the very fact that I can recall that little incident after 50 years a tribute to the appeal the papers had for us when we were boys.

One ambition of mine is to possess a copy of every boys paper ever published. I don't suppose for a moment I shall ever succeed, still I am not doing so badly.

When on my journeys I have gazed at the collections of fellows like Norton Price, Bob Blythe, Bill Jardine and the late John Medcroft, all so neatly arranged, I feel ashamed when I think of my own always in a state of chaos, wrapped in parcels any old how. I recall how Len Packman came along to my office one day and found a pile of parcels in a corner mixed up with dusty Army files and documents which were as far removed from boys' weeklies as the



poles apart, I recall with a bashful grin how Len shook a reproving finger at me, and tried to bring order out of chaos.

Sometimes I go in search of some particular papers in another place. I get to work on a pile of brown paper parcels six feet high. More than once they have been found in the parcel supporting all the rest, or possibly in quite a different pile. Ah well! if I made an attempt to get all my papers into apple pie order the C.D. might not reach you some month and that wouldn't do, would it?

My collection ebbs and flows. You see it's like this. Some weeks ago I got a letter from a new chum across the Irish Sea. He said that for years and years he had been searching in vain for Aldine Dick Turpins but had given up in despair. Well I could not resist such a cry from the heart. I sent along a few from my own little lot. The letter of appreciation I got by return post was sufficient compensation for burrowing deep in one of those piles I have just mentioned. Again you see some of my papers have come to me in similar fashion so I could appreciate how my Irish friend felt.

Reverting to those Nelson Lees I mentioned at the beginning, I asked my newsagent friend one day if he would mind telling me from whence they came, for I was rather curious. He said a woman kept bringing them in and later he informed me she had told him she had found them in an old kit-bag of her husband's and being hard up thought she might as well turn them into cash. Even though I knew if I had not bought them someone else would I felt a little remorseful. For I pictured a soldier husband coming home on leave some day, settling down for a quiet read then turning round and saying wrathfully "Who the — been pinching my Nelson Lees?". Something of the sort has happened more than once you know, for my own post-bag has told me so.

#### 'ANNUAL' CORRECTIONS

Inevitably a few errors crept into the 'Annual'. So far the following have been noted:-

Page 135: Hubbard, Ernest Alexander. Address should read 58 South View Crescent, Sheffield 7. Page 134: Last line should read Major Charles GILSON. Page 45: Hidden Hamiltoniana No. 2. No. 12 should read Cab, sir? Page 68: Hintonisms should read (cont'd. page 112). Page 107: W. Martin's advert should read: 90 S.O.L. Greyfriars before No. 200. Dreadnoughts with Greyfriars stories not Union Jacks.

# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

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We had intended to have a picture of Nelson Lee's rooms on Grays Inn Road on the cover this month, but I am sure Lee fans wouldn't mind giving way to Hamiltonians when they saw the illustration which does open the year. It was specially drawn for the C.D. by Mr. C.H. Chapman and the New Year is the appropriate time to use it.

All will wish that Father Time will be shaking hands with the Grand Old Man of boys' literature for many a long year to come.

\* \* \* \* \*

Extracts from a column length report in the "Yorkshire Post" Dec. 12th: ....Dr. Edith Summerskill won on points against Mr. Jack Solomons the boxing promoter, in a 12 round duel of wits in the oak-panelled Niblett Hall in the Temple last night, before a learned audience of barristers.

She was proposing the motion "That this house wishes professional boxing could be banned." Mr. Solomons was opposing her.

In round one, Dr. Summerskill got in some heavy blows at her opponent. "I hope no one believes that I am doing this because I am a neurotic individual who cannot bear the sight of strong men fighting" she said gravely, "I must confess I used to devour the Gem and the Magnet when I was a girl."....

\* \* \* \* \*

WAS IT JUST A COINCIDENCE? Part of the plot in "The Mystery of the Demon King" the story in No. 10 "School Cap" concerns a character who rings up Walkley's Stores from a master's telephone and who after a lot of trouble in getting through to the right department orders a Christmas pudding by imitating the master's voice.

Has the idea a familiar ring, oh ye Hamiltonians! Does it remind you of a certain rotund youth who, in the long ago rang up Chunkley's Stores at a place called Courtfield and after the same sort of trouble before he got through to the right department, ordered a generous supply of tuck in the name of a gentleman called Queloh? Yes, I bet it does.

\* \* \* \* \*

NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY: The "Daily Sketch" December 16th, contained an article with the heading -

GABRIEL GRUB

(the cad) remembers

The Folies of his Youth

Gabriel started off:- "I see that the "Head Teacher's Review" is complaining about the conduct of school parties on the Continent last summer. Apparently "riotous and sometimes even drunken disorder occurred."

"Ah! Memories come flooding back of the great Greyfriars - St. Jim's tour in my youth days, run by dear old Vernon-Smith.

"Remember the "bounder of the Remove"? We were celebrating his father's successful take-over bid for the Louvre. It was going to be turned into luxury flats for the directors of T.G. Farben." Racke and Crooke were in the party and a later par. says: "Racke fell overboard on the way home. We couldn't stop to pick him up. Vernon Smith had a date at the Gaiety." This would go to show that it was all written in satirical vein. The remark "The magnum had disappeared by the time we got back to the hotel, Bunter said he had not drunk any and that anyhow he found it rather too sweet" would seem to show, however, that Gabriel Grub did know his Bunter.

---ooOoo---

Solution of Collectors' Digest Christmas Number Crossword

Across: 1. Fishers, 7. Poem, 10. Role, 11. Ethal, 13. Atom, 14. Guard, 15. Nap, 16. Aids, 17. Me, 18. Penny, 20. Scar, 22. Hyena, 23. Spar, 24. Co, 25. Ralph, 27. Rio, 29. Levi, 31. Door, 33. El, 34. Eel, 36. Trot, 37. Val, 39. Acted, 40 & 42. Heir, 43. Ret, 44. Rocks. Down: 1. Frank, 2. Iota, 3. Sloppy, 4. Hem, 5. Reginald, 6. Study, 7. Per, 8. Old, 9. Mater, 12. Has, 16. Anna, 17. Marie, 19. Erie, 20. SP, 21. Carr, 22. Hoe, 23. Shore, 24. Clever, 26. Potter, 28. Older, 30. Veldt, 32. Rodeo, 35. Lark, 38. Ale, 40. His.

Unfortunately there were one or two small errors in preparing this cross-word for publication. However, several competitors managed to get it right, the first one coming from George Bromley, Holeywell, Estoria Avenue, Wigston Magna, Leicester, to whom the 5/- prize will be sent.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST NEW YEAR CROSSWORD

Across: 1. & 5. A handy Greyfriars junior. 9. & 12. He certainly does it with the History of Greyfriars. 15. Cutts' pal loses his soft head at a place along the coast from Greyfriars. (cont'd p.12)



in short.

(This crossword is for amusement only. But to add to the fun, a P.O. for 5/- will be forwarded to the sender of the first correct solution opened by the Editor.)

(To avoid cutting your Collectors' Digest, make a copy of the square to send to the Editor.)

Solution in our next issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Note:- This is the poem Gerry Allison recited at the Northern Section's Christmas Party. As Gerry said Quelchy, of course, has yet to retire, but if ever he did say good-bye to the Remove a scene something like the one he so feelingly describes would take place. - H.L.)

THE DAY THAT QUELCHY WENT

1. We had gathered in the form-room when the lessons all were done,  
The most part went unheeding, though some hoped to see some fun.  
The Master of the Lower Fourth was leaving school that day,  
And he wanted just to say 'Good-bye' before he went away.  
Doctor Locke had sent a message, 'Would the boys just be so kind,  
When the afternoon was finished, as to stay a bit behind?'  
So when the school was over our footsteps all were bent,  
And the Remove all took their places, on the day that Quelchy  
went.
2. We had looked upon his features many, many times before,  
And today we watched him curiously as he entered by the door,  
His eyes were not like gimlets as he stood before us there,  
They beamed upon us tenderly! It made the fellows stare.  
For boys are not emotional, although their hearts are true,  
And, generally speaking, they dislike a great to do.  
But the silence was impressive, and each boy just forward leant.  
For we wanted all to hear his words, the day that Quelchy went.
3. His voice was kind and quiet! Not like the rasping file,  
Which used to scarify our nerves. His visage wore a smile!  
He spoke about the times we'd had; the years that he'd been there.  
He had tried to do his duty; to be always just and fair.  
And then, he asked forgiveness if he'd done to any wrong,  
And said the kindness we had showed - he should think of that  
for long.  
He asked us to believe him that the best he'd always meant,  
And he hoped that sometimes we'd recall 'the day that Quelchy  
went.

4. There were some queer expressions on the faces of the lads;  
 But most of all I found it odd to watch our well known 'cads'.  
 Bolsover, Skinner, Stott, and Snoop, were quiet as could be,  
 And they gazed up at old Quelch in a way most strange to see.  
 And when he mentioned Vernon-Smith as being good at heart,  
 The Bounder bit his nether lip, and could not repress a start.  
 While even Billy Bunter's eyes were bright and innocent,  
 And tears shone on Billy's glasses, the day that Quelch went!
5. Now boys are not emotional, as I have said before,  
 But now many eyes were misty, as we gazed upon the floor.  
 And when he spoke about the kindness we had shown to him,  
 I don't mind saying that my own were positively dim.  
 And some of us began to think of kindnesses he'd done—  
 Of how he'd watched us in our games, and understood our fun.  
 And sometimes when the tasks were hard, how over us he'd bent;  
 Oh, yes! It all came back again, the day that Quelch went.
6. I thought I knew much about boys, and the natures they possess,  
 But the feeling that they showed that day surprised me, I confess.  
 But half a minutes afterwards it did one good to hear,  
 How the rafters of the old room shook with the loud and hearty cheer.  
 Ofcourse that comes natural to boys - but this was very strange,  
 And I really can't recall the like, where'er my feelings range;  
 How a lump arose in many throats, how many heads were bent,  
 While here and there a sob was heard - or the day that Quelch went.

---ooOoo---

THE RIO KID RIDES AGAIN

By DEREK SMITH

Frank Richards has told us in his Autobiography that "only one single solitary reader" ever discovered the real identity of "Ralph Redway". But no reader could ever have doubted that these stories of the Wild West came from the typewriter of an author of unusual skill and charm.

Outlaw through no fault of his own, a youth in years but a man in all else, the Rio Kid was the fighting idealist of the Lone Star State. If like Ishmael, every man's hand was against him, his hand was not against every man's. Time after time, he risked life and liberty to protect those weaker than himself - even those who would have been glad to see him in jail or at the end of a swinging rope.

It was this quality of idealism, besides the healthy excitement of the action-packed plots, which made the stories in the POPULAR

such a success. And it was a sad day when the Kid was driven from the honourable post of Sheriff of Plug Hat and rode Side-Kicker out of the pages of the POPULAR, never to return. "But he still had his guns and his mustang, and a high heart, and the world was before him."

And the handsome young man with the sunburnt face was to return - as we knew he must - seven years later in the MODERN BOY. These later stories, unlike the classic tales in the POPULAR were never reprinted. Possibly for that reason, they have been largely neglected.

Nevertheless, they deserve detailed attention. The first long series in particular surely ranks amongst Charles Hamilton's finest work.

The stories began in a remote corner of Texas, more than a hundred miles from the Frio - the Kid's own country. But he never found it easy to escape from the shadow of his wild, undeserved reputation. He was recognized almost at once. Nevertheless, his deep-rooted idealism (though he would have laughed at the word) soon sent him to the aid of the very man who had recognized and helped to pursue him. This man was the Foreman of the Lazy S, whom the Kid rescued from a murderous attack by rustlers. Grateful for the Kid's help, the wounded man did not betray his true identity, and soon the boy outlaw himself became the new foreman.

Riding for the Lazy S, the Kid soon put paid to the activities of Handsome Harris, alias Sear Face the rustler. But if, as "Mr. Carfax", he hoped to make a permanent return to the happy life he had once known, he was doomed to bitter disappointment.

An old and implacable enemy was on his trail. Mule-Kick Hall of the Texas Rangers, the man who had sworn to "get" the Kid, was the brother of the boss of the Lazy S - the rancher who had trusted the Kid and given him his chance.

The Kid fought hard against his fate, and for a while it seemed that his dual identity might be preserved undetected. But once again his own good nature betrayed him, forcing him to save the life of his enemy, and ultimately leading to his exposure and capture.

Though he left the ranch a prisoner, it wasn't long before he escaped and took to the lawless trails again. They led him - of all places! - to Hollywood.

It must reluctantly be conceded that these later (cont'd p. 17)

# adverts

FOR SALE: Boys' Friend Weeklies Nos. 562-595 - £1. plus postage. Also a few B.F.L.'s. 4/- each. WANTED: Boys' Friend Weeklies Nos. 715 onwards. Chums 1910. F. MACHIN, 38 ST. THOMAS'S ROAD, PRESTON, LANCS.

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

WON'T SOME GOOD SAMARITAN PLEASE HELP ME. I URGENTLY REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING MAGNETS. I SHALL GLADLY TAKE COMPLETE SERIES OR RUNS TO OBTAIN ANY OF THESE REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN NUMBERS 819 AND 1034. YOUR PRICE PAID OR I SHALL EXCHANGE. PLEASE WRITE AIRMAIL:-  
422, 437, 455, 456, 461, 463, 493, 546, 821/823, 826, 834, 841, 846, 854, 855, 858, 860, 862/869, 881, 882, 906, 907, 910/917, 958, 965/970, 976/979, 982/984, 985/990, 992, 994, 995, 998/1004, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1015, 1025, 1026, 1029/1034, 1035, 1037, 1038, 1043, 1051, 1070, 1090, 1115, 1132, 1134, 1174, 1177, 1194, 1204, 1205, 1208, 1223, 1226, 1232, 1233, 1236, 1255.  
I REQUIRE TOO GEMS 1922/1923 OR ANY OTHER GENUINE HAMILTON NUMBERS, AND S.O.Ls. 171, 179, 249, 253, 259, 261, OR ANY ST. JIM'S ISSUES - ALSO S.P.Cs. ANY HELP WILL BE MUCH APPRECIATED. CHARLES VAN RENEN. BOX 50. UUTENHAGE. SOUTH AFRICA.

URGENTLY REQUIRED: NELSON LEE'S Nos. 6, 16, 33, 35, 43, 44, 50. 1st New Series 1926-30. R.W. PAYNE, 5 BUGBROOKE ROAD, GAYTON, NORTHAMPTON.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, First, Second and Third New Series. Details of price, issues available and condition to:- N. PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7, LANCS.

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tales were something of a disappointment. Why? Well, let's consider.

The Kid was out of his element, of course. But the real trouble was in the disturbing loss of "period".

Though no dates were ever actually specified, the internal evidence of the stories - notably the war between the cattle barons and the nesters - plus the general atmosphere and the "six-gun" scale of values, placed the saga of the Kid firmly in the setting of the Old West. Though in the earliest stories an occasional modern reference had appeared - like the chimney pots in "Julius Caesar" - with the startling force of an anachronism, such details had soon been swept away in the main-stream of the saga. The Kid was a man of his time, and the time - in the mind of one reader, at least - had been around the turn of the century.

In this respect, the Kid was unique in the gallery of Charles Hamilton's creations. For example: George Orwell to the contrary, the author's school stories were - and are - always contemporary. Harry Wharton and his friends are as much at home, and as convincingly in character, in 1953 as they were in 1908. But the Kid, in the Hollywood of 1938, was out of place.

Moreover, the picture the author drew of the film city, engaging and amusing though it was, seemed more typical of the grand old days of Mack Sennett and D.W. Griffiths than of the stream-lined industry film-making had become by 1938.

Against these initial disadvantages can be placed the solid merits of the stories themselves, which dealt briskly and entertainingly with the Kid's good-humoured battles with Spanish John

the gangster and Brian Bennett the conceited film star. The Rio Kid achieved the distinction of impersonating himself in a film based on his own exploits as an outlaw - a notable piece of type-casting which can never have been equalled in the history of the cinema! But for once it was something of a relief when the Kid was finally exposed and was once more driven to flight. Soon "he was back on his old stamping-ground, riding the rolling prairies of Texas".

And so the Kid passed from the MODERN BOY, as he had done nearly eight years before from the POPULAR. But it wasn't quite the end. Charles Hamilton, the man who never let his readers down, had a surprise for them.

In April 1938, Herbert Vernon-Smith escorted the Famous Five and Billy Bunter to his father's newly-acquired ranch in Texas. The Bounder's life was menaced by a mysterious enemy who was eventually revealed as the foreman of the Kicking Cayuse, Barney Stone. Stone was imprisoned, but soon escaped to seek his revenge on the school-boys who had exposed him.

He cornered the boys from Greyfriars in a lonely canyon in the Squaw Mountain and did his best to murder them until restrained by the providential arrival of - the Rio Kid!

The Kid appeared in four MAGNETS only, but the stories formed a worthy climax to the long saga. Moving easily against his natural surroundings once more, the boy outlaw became the willing ally of the Remove juniors in their fight with The Man With the Hidden Face - a mysterious trail-thief who had impertinently borrowed the Kid's name.

The stories were an unqualified success. Frank Richards had - oddly enough - succeeded where Ralph Redway had failed. He had given the Kid something of that same timeless quality which surrounded the chums of Greyfriars.

So perhaps even today in some remote and lawless corner of the Lone Star State there rides a sunburnt young man in goatskin chaps, wearing a stetson hat encircled by silver nuggets.

It's a pleasant thought!

Modern Boy Nos. 502 to 523.

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MAGNET TITLES (Cont'd) 1240. Foes of the Remove; 1241. Coker's Football Fever; 1242. The Bounder's Blunder; 1243. A Brother's Sacrifice; 1244. The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers; 1245. The Unknown Hand; 1246. The Secret of the Turret; 1247. Bunter's Night Out.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

First of all I would like to express the old, old wish 'A Happy New Year' to all my readers. May those of you who are seeking those 'much wanted' papers for your collections be rewarded in your quest, and those who are lucky enough to already possess them, find time to enjoy the pleasure they bring in the reading thereof.

There is one matter I feel I should mention, particularly in view of certain rumours to the effect that Maurice Bond's Round Table has been cut out of Blakiana. This is most certainly not the case, the fact being that I have not received any communication whatsoever from Maurice since his Round Table of last July!

I feel therefore, that although Maurice has obviously been too busy during the past six months to give me the support he promised, in fairness to myself the situation should be clarified. How about it, Maurice?

J. PACKMAN.

\*\*\*\*\*

THE THREE MUSKETEERS (Conclusion)  
By JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

\*\*\*

The remaining stories featuring the Three Musketeers were written for the S. Blake Library, presumably on account of the greater scope available for a longer yarn.

In No. 19, 2nd series, there appeared one of what I should like to call 'Teed's Timeless Tales'. It is a story that is as readable today as it was nearly 30 years ago, and the plot is most certainly just as topical.

The title, 'The Great Canal Plot', is indicative of the type of story one can expect, a plot to blow up the Suez Canal, engineered by a gang of ruthless crooks, all of whom Blake has been fighting for years, and all with their own axe to grind - Wu Ling, with his desire for yellow domination over the white races; Prince Menes, head of the 'White Flag' terrorists in Egypt, aiming for the overthrow of the British. How familiar that sounds today! Madam Goupolis, in disgrace with Prince Menes and ready to do anything to be restored to his good favours; Plummer, or Sakr-el-Droog as he was known at that time, ready for anything which would line his

pockets; The Black Eagle, with his hatred toward Society in general, and finally Mathew Cardolak and his henchmen the Three Musketeers.

This gang of international crooks descends on the ancient city of Alexandria, there to discuss in full their evil plans; but all their scheming is to avail them nothing, for already nemesis in the shape of Sexton Blake is on their track.

The old familiar tale of murders and riots has already brought Blake to Egypt, determined to find some solution to the grave problem.

The Three Musketeers do not play a leading part in this story, but they are included in the plot to undermine what little real peace there is in the Middle East. They are still working under the patronage of Cardolak, who's yacht SUITAN is used for the meeting of this ruthless gang.

Once again their plans are foiled by Blake who causes the yacht to be bombed and sunk just off the coast near Alexandria, with the whole gang of crooks aboard. However, they all seem to bear charmed lives and escape from the sinking yacht, and thus we find the same crowd turning up in yet another attempt to cause trouble in Egypt.

This story, 'The Case of the Mummified Hand', related in S.B.L. No. 35, is practically a continuation of No. 19, and here again the Three Musketeers do not play a leading part. Incidentally, it is in this story that we see the end of Prince Menes. He is the cause of the plot failing, and his own plans having come to grief he poisons himself.

It seems that at times Teed grew tired of certain of his characters, and usually dropped them completely and without any further reference to them; but with the Three Musketeers, as also with Prince Menes, he disposes of them fairly satisfactorily.

~~The story of how this murderous trio are finally caught is related in S.B.L. 2nd series No. 82, 'The Night Club Mystery'. This is an enjoyable tale with plenty of action, the setting of which is in London and on the Yorkshire moors. With the invaluable help of Tinker and, for a change, Pedro, Blake finally captures the Three Musketeers. So, at last, their murderous careers are brought to a conclusion.~~

#### Finish

Footnote: For those who are interested, S.B.L. No. 19 was later published in book form under the title of 'Bottom of Suez', the only alteration being in the names of three characters. Sexton

Blake and Tinker became Grant Rushton and Tony, and Plummer was changed to Flash Brady. \* \* \* \* \* J.P.

SEXTON BLAKE. 1953.

By DEREK FORD

Last September, when I heard that three of the A.P.'s oldest comics were to cease publication, I wondered just how long it would be before a similar fate befell the Sexton Blake Library. If the present 3-D. - dull, dismal and devoid of original plot - fare continues, it won't be long, in my opinion.

Though Blake was in his sixtieth year of investigation no mention appeared in any of the twenty four case-books - comprised in the run 279 to 302 - published in 1953, or elsewhere, as far as I can find. To my reminder of this event, the Editor of the S.B.L. replied that he was in agreement with me as to the issue of a celebration number, but unfortunately 'efforts in the Past' (?) had not met with sufficient response.

Last January, in reviewing the 1952 S.B.L., I mentioned that I thought one of Tyrer's works (258) originally intended for the Oracle Library, Blake being such an incidental character. I would also place in this category his 'Secret of the Snows' (282). Other intruders were Clevely's 'Girl from Toronto' (296), principal character Bill Sykes; Jardine's 'Mystery of the Arab Agent' (297), Cliff Gordon of M.I.5, and Hunter's 'Thieves of Alexandria' (301), Captain Dack. However, the last two were good reading despite this drawback.

Anthony Parsons, as usual, was principal contributor, with five - one less than 1952 - of the remaining twenty case-books. Two of these cases take Blake abroad, to India and Egypt. He is the only author to mention the Coronation, using the occasion to bring India's 'kind of Advocate-General' over here to be mysteriously kidnapped (290). It is a lot different from Gilbert Chester's 1937 'Coronation Mystery', in which a man's murdered body is found hanging amongst the bunting, and a mad millionaire shoots the 'representative' of the Crossbow Makers' Company as he is about to make his speech to the Royal procession. Presumably Blake was able to watch it this time, from 'seats opposite the Abbey'. I rate Parsons' 'Nameless Millionaire' (300) as his best for the year.

None of Tyrer's four case-books (including the one mentioned above) were very outstanding. From his past efforts I had grown to expect something different, but have been disappointed lately.

John Hunter, Rex Hardinge, and Hugh Clevely contributed three case-books apiece. It is understood that Hunter has now given up writing for the S.B.L. Hardinge's first (283) is set in Africa, his second (286) is mainly concerned with the murderer's actions, with Blake following up what has already gone before - a type of yarn I greatly dislike; his third (291) takes place in Cornwall, with a secret uranium find at the back of all the trouble. Clevely's cases (284 and 289) seemed poor fare for Blake to handle.

Of the remaining five, two came from Hilary King, briefly: 280 the best, 292 difficult to follow; and two from W.J. Passingham, a new contributor like George Rees, author of the 'Secret of the Jungle' (302): nothing outstanding in the plot but very readable. After reading Passingham's 'Ace Accomplice' (298) I wondered if the 'W' in his name stood for Weary! The other (288), was O.K. for the boxing fans, with uranium under the hall at the root of the trouble.

For an experimental period of five months (281 to 290) two full page illustrations appeared in each issue. At the same time a first page illustration was re-introduced and has been allowed to continue. Two new artists illustrated the March and April issues. The May issues were advertised in S.B.L. 286 (April). The cover streamer '64-Page Thrilling Detective Novel' appeared on eighteen issues. There were five issues with 'Magazine Corner'.

Just to complete the record, the weekly two-page Blake yarn in the 'Knockout' ran for twenty-four weeks (713 to 736) and was then replaced with the strip again - now not so well drawn, in my opinion.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY - DECEMBER ISSUES

No. 301. "The Thieves of Alexandria"

John Hunter

When it was announced some months ago that we should have no more stories by John Hunter, I did not comment, but twisted my lips in a sour, wry, disbelieving smile. This veteran author is still turning out his stuff for the Western Library and S.B.L. and I do wish he would stop.

The above book, which re-introduces Capt. Dack, and the 'Mary Ann Trinder', is a laborious yarn which I threw on to the fire when I had struggled as far as page 50. And as for Hunter's Blake! Well, give me Herlock Sholmes of Shaker Street. He was a far better detective, and was funny, too.

No. 302. "The Secret of the Jungle"

George Rees

A new author, and a fanfare of trumpets for him, Tarantaramaaaa!

The best S.B.L. - in my opinion - for muncce, and muncce, and muncce.

I really enjoyed every page of this excellent story. Besides the logical plot and living characters, what grand scenes in Baker Street there were. The real, old atmosphere. It was like reading Gwyn Evans at his best. How do you like this extract from page 13?

"In Sexton Blake's Baker Street flat all was snug and cosy. Outside it was a chilly night with a hint of frost, and the rumble of the street traffic was muted by the heavy curtains drawn across the tall windows. Before she left, Mrs. Bardell had built up a cheerful fire, but not without complaining as she did so that 'the price of coke and anthrax these days is something contagious'."

The famous criminal investigator was comfortably relaxed in an easy chair in dressing gown and slippers, and - a rare thing for him - was reading a novel, over a pipe and a whisky-and-soda".

Isn't that the goods? And our new author even brings back Blake's great Criminal Catalogue. He goes on:- "Tinker was busy in a corner of the living-room, cutting out, sorting, and filing cuttings from the newspapers which Blake had marked earlier in the day. They dealt with every aspect of crime and criminal matters, and had to be indexed before being stored away in the green steel cabinet in the corner. It was Tinker's regular daily chore to keep these files up to date, for these elaborate records played an important part in Blake's work".

George Rees also introduces a wonderful new Yard man, D.I. Martindale, who is as different from the usual 'heavy' type as can well be imagined. He calls Blake "S.B.", and Blake calls him "Hugh". Highly recommended. GERRY ALLISON.

—ooOoo—

WAS THERE ANOTHER SEXTON BLAKE?

By HERBERT LECKENBY

In the 'Exchange & Mart' recently there was an advertisement which made me open my eyes wide in surprise, for it contained an offer of £10 for a copy of "Sexton Blake Investigator" believed published 1874. Needless to say, seeing we were celebrating the diamond jubilee of the said Sexton Blake I muttered to myself 'I'll have to get to know more about this'.

The offer appeared under a box number, but I had a hunch that it might have come from a member of our fraternity, for the advertiser also mentioned "red Magnets", a term probably only used by us. Anyway, I sent off a letter and soon after got a reply.

Sure enough it was "one of us" - Bill Lofts, and after express-

ing amusement at getting a letter from me via 'Exchange & Mart' he went on to explain. This is what he said:-

"My brother, who lives at Kings Cross, saw an advertisement 'The Sexton Blake Investigator', price 1d on the back cover of an old book dated 1874 in a bookshop near where he lives. I at once went with him back to the shop to purchase the book, only to find to my dismay that it had been sold. Imagine my disappointment in not having at least the advertisement to prove that there was an earlier Blake story. Even if my brother was confused about the date (which is very unlikely as he is well up in Blake lore) say 1884 or 1894, I have never yet seen a Blake story with that title".

Well, where do we go from there? It has always been understood that the unusual name was coined by Harry Blyth, or by someone on the staff of what was then known as the Harnsworth Press. But it is just possible, of course, that there was an earlier publication (short-lived if there was) and that the name had stuck in the mind of Harry Blyth, or the other fellows', for 20 years. There was a 'Tinker' in the Jack Harkaway stories, but that's hardly the same thing for it's the sort of name two authors could think of quite independent of each other.

Anyway, even if there was an earlier Sexton Blake he could have no connection with the one we know. Still, it's a great pity that paper was snapped up so quickly, for I am afraid now it will remain another unsolved mystery.

\* \* \* \* \*

PLEASE NOTE that the second phase of Walter Webb's 'Sixty Years of Sexton Blake', containing much informative information, will appear complete in February Blakiana.

J. Packman.

# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## L O N D O N   S E C T I O N

Christmas Meeting once again at Cherry Place and quite a representative gathering. Chairman Len opened up with seasonable greetings to one and all and this includes all postal members especially those in the overseas countries of the British Commonwealth and the U.S.A. Unfortunately C.H. Chapman was unable to be present and



the best wishes of all present go out to him for good health in the New Year.

A card from the committee of the Leeds Club wishing all the compliments of the season was read out by the chairman.

Routine business being completed, a committee of three was formed to arrange for the club dinner at Friends House, Euston Rd, London, N.W.1. Full particulars will appear in the club news letter.

Len, as the winner of one of last month's quiz, conducted his "M" test of memory. Bob Whiter and myself tied for first place and "Aldine" Charlie was third. Worthy visitor Bill Lowes was a creditable fourth.

Suitable Christmas fare was served at the feed with the hostess handing round piping hot mince tarts.

Hidden "Magnet" competition saw Bill Lowes win hands down with librarian Roger and Cliff Wallis in the places. Eileen's Advert quiz was won by Roger with Len and Bob Blythe second and our visitor Bill Lowes once again fourth. Good for Bill to uphold the north in the various competitions.

Sale and exchange was well conducted and fairly good progress was reported by the librarians.

Annual General meeting will be held at Bume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. on Sunday January 17th. The retiring officials have signified their willingness to serve another year but other nominations are invited.

And so with most of those present stating that they were keeping their copies of "The Collectors' Digest Annual" for Christmas reading the gathering gradually broke up with the long distance Bill Jardine leaving to catch his train to Brighton.

\* \* \* \* \*

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

NORTHERN SECTION CHRISTMAS PARTY

- 12th December, 1953.

This was the fourth Christmas Party and it was the unanimous opinion of those who have attended the four that it was the best of all. It certainly went with a bang from start to finish; the clock in the room seemed to be always striking, a sure sign that there were no dull moments. For this a huge share of the credit goes to Gerry Allison, that amazing fellow of ideas, who must have worked for weeks preparing the programme.

First, of course, came the tea. Here a hearty word of thanks

to Messdames Allison & Co. (you see how the name keeps cropping up) who despite being short-handed (Vera Coates, of course, was busy changing her name) put on a sumptuous show. A nice touch here. A telegram of greetings from Stanley Smith.

Came the fun and games. First "What's My Name?" - on the lines of "The Name's the Same". The team consisted of: Mollie Allison, Frank Case, Bill Williamson and myself. We were allowed five questions each and we had to try and get the name adopted for the time being by members of the audience in turn. The first - Dr. Watson - beat us, but after that we got into our stride and found 'em all. Frank Case, I almost said Frank Muir, had several real flashes of inspiration.

Then came "Greyfriars v. St. Jim's" a five game contest. At the end of the fourth the score was two each. The fifth ended in a tie, delightfully reminiscent of those Richards - Clifford contests of yesteryear. Oh no, it wasn't wangled, it did really end that way mid much excitement.

There were other games too numerous to describe in the space available.

After more refreshment Gerry (that chap again) recited a poem "The Day That Quelchy Went" he had composed himself (see Hamiltoniana) and Bill Harrison had everyone roaring with laughter over some really clever parodies of popular songs linked up with Bunter. I spotted one member simply doubled up with mirth.

Then came carols to bring a delightful, jolly evening, full of the spirit of the Brotherhood of Happy Hours to a successful close.

—ooOoo—

#### MIDLAND SECTION CHRISTMAS PARTY - December 12th

This eagerly awaited event marks the grande finale of the Year; and we certainly had the party spirit and let ourselves go on this occasion.

We greatly enjoyed the very full and varied programme. Three jolly games, a "Paul Jones", clever conjuring by our M.C. (Mr. Smallwood), a very fine accordion recital by our Chairman, (who is a master of this instrument), amusing anecdotes by our visitor, a very nice reading by Mr. Tom Porter, and as a pleasing surprise two songs beautifully rendered by Miss Turner, (a guest artiste introduced by Mr. Clack).

To sustain our energies there was a delicious assortment of comestibles. My comment last year that the "Patron Saint of Food",

(Billy Bunter), would entirely approve, applies this year also. Manly and the Bounder could hardly have a more tempting spread in their studies. "Mrs. Mimbles Greyfriars Pop" was available for lubrication.

We were very pleased to welcome the Chairman of the Merseyside Club, (Mr. D.B. Webster), who was able to be present. We echoed cordially his hope of further contacts between our two clubs.

Ten thirty came all too soon, and we ended with that lovely old classic "The Holy City", followed by "Auld Lang Syne", and the National Anthem.

We are indeed fortunate in having so many keen and enthusiastic workers who made such an enjoyable party possible. Our Chairman, our M.C., the pianists, and a very keen lady member (Miss Partridge), who decorated the room, and who also executed some very fine posters and drawings, deserve our warmest thanks.

EDWARD DAVEY.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### MERSEYSIDE SECTION

13th Dec: '53: The meeting this month was very brief indeed, and took the form of a "curtain-raiser" to the main event of the evening - A Christmas tea and social, provided and organised entirely by our chairman's good lady, Mrs. Webster - and a right royal affair it was! No less than twenty six were present to tackle a repast which would have gladdened the hearts of every fat boy in the Companion Papers, and in less than no time the clatter of cutlery was merged with the chatter of a score or more of delighted hobbyites. Various toasts were drunk, and a few members had a few words with our esteemed president on the 'phone. We were also delighted to receive a telegram of good wishes from our friends of the Midland Section and Don Webster and Frank Case conveyed to those present the regards of the members of the Northern and Midland Sections, with whom they had enjoyed equally merry parties the previous evening. Mrs. Webster was then the recipient of a gift of a teapot, as a small token of thanks from the assembled company, and thanks are also due to Mrs. Fragnell for her assistance in making the catering side of the function such a success. Then followed a succession of party games and quizzes, and for some hours the fun was fast and furious (yes, that is an overworked cliché, but it adequately describes the entertainment). Came further refreshments, and yet more games, and the hour of departure arrived all too soon, sending us homeward-bound with happy memories of a grand close to 1953, and the hope of equally pleasant experiences in the coming year.

FRANK CASE, Sec.

# NELSON LEE COLUMN



\* \* \* \* \*

By JACK WOOD  
MNSTAW, 328 Stockton Lane,  
York.

Happy New Year everyone! I hope our genial editor has made a resolution to let us have plenty of room for our monthly meetings, especially this year because 60 years ago, on Sept. 19th, 1894, in The Marvel, there appeared "A Dead Man's Secret", a detective story in which Maxwell Scott first introduced Nelson Lee!

For this first story of a man who later earned him hundreds of pounds, Scott received eight guineas!

During the coming months, I hope to trace the Nelson Lee story, which, as has already been said by Bob Blythe, can be divided like Gaul into three parts - the pre-St. Frank's era; the St. Frank's episode; and the periods when he was away from the school.

Meanwhile, here is another lighthearted article from the pen of Norman Pragnell, which he entitles.....

"— and so to the bitter end"

Those of you who were good enough to read our survey of the "Second New Series" will remember that our story ended with a slight mention of the "Fellowship of Fear" series, which brought us in February 1933 to the end of another era. This particular tale was a good one telling us of a group of near anarchists attempting to indoctrinate British Public Schools with their perverted teachings by means of kidnapping their headmasters and substituting their own. This scheme was successful until the turn of St. Frank's came. They were of course foiled and finally vanquished by the efforts of Nelson Lee and James Kingswood.

The last issue of the Second New Series, No. 161, gave us the

startling news that the Nelson Lee Library was going back seventeen years to the period when Nipper first arrived at St. Frank's. In other words, back to No. 112, Old Series. This news shook us considerably, accustomed as we were to the constant changes. Of one thing we were quite sure, that whatever bright idea our Editor had, it would not do the Nelson Lee Library any good.

And so, on a Wednesday morning in February 1933, No. 1 of the Third New Series dropped through our letter box.

We looked at it eagerly, hoping against hope that it might bear some resemblance to that famous No. 112. It didn't however, and if we expected to see the illustrations by Arthur Jones we were unlucky - they were still by the artist on whom we have already passed judgment.

However, we read No. 1 with interest as the story was new to us and we were keen to know how Nipper fared during his early days at St. Frank's. The first six or seven stories were all complete in themselves, and told of Nipper's attempts to establish himself, and of course, how he became Captain of the Remove. We must admit that we were not too enthusiastic about these reprints, for they seemed unreal to us. We certainly missed many of our favourite characters, for few of them had arrived at St. Frank's in those early days, and we just could not re-adjust ourselves to the idea of Fullwood the cad.

A rather odd story appeared in No. 8 of this series, a detective and school story combined. The notable fact about this story is the point that the character of Nelson Lee appeared in the first person. We have read some five hundred copies of the Nelson Lee, but this is the only one we have come across in which this happens. If there are others, we should be interested to hear of them. (\*)

It was number nine, that heralded the first story in the "Hunter The Hun" series. Now although we had not read this story before, we had heard of it many times. We will not attempt to describe this series - it has been dealt with adequately before. Sufficient to say that it was one of the best series ever to come from the pen of Edwy Soarles Brooks.

At the end of June we read two important announcements by our editor. The first told us that St. Frank's was being brought up to date again, and that we were to turn our calendar forward again to 1933. We accepted this change without a murmur. In the mood we were in at the time the editor could have transferred St. Frank's

to the year 2,033, and we wouldn't have raised an eyebrow.

The second announcement told us that we were to have the honour of reading the finest story ever to come from the pen of our favourite author. We were rather doubtful about this honour as we learned that the story was to feature the Waldo family - father and son. Perhaps we were prejudiced, but we certainly did not like Stanley Waldo the schoolboy, for we were suspicious of boys who could feel no pain, and could see and hear fifty times as well as anybody else. We much preferred our heroes to be like Nelson Lee, Nipper or Reggie Pitt, who could do their jobs without the extraordinary gifts enjoyed by the Waldos.

And so Rupert and Stanley, with some slight assistance from Nelson Lee and a few juniors, smashed the infamous menace of the "Brotherhood of the Brave", led by the notorious Count Zinestero, complete with his Spanish castle and collections of lions and tigers. It was a poor story and we think that Brooks would be the first to admit it. But for the editor to say this was the finest series of them all - ah well, we had better say nothing about Ezra Quirke or Eldorado.

No. 23 saw the first instalment of the "China Bound" series that first appeared in 1926. It was given to us neither as a reprint or a new story, but just another holiday series by E.S. Brooks. This obviously was the end. Instinctively without being told, we knew that this series would never finish in the Nelson Lee Library. No. 24 told us of a magnificent free gift that was to be given to us. No. 25 gave us the chassis of a super motor car. We, who possessed more thumbs than fingers tried to assemble it, but couldn't. This No. 25 was the last copy of the Nelson Lee we were to get from our newsagent. It told us the all too familiar story. The Nelson Lee was to be merged, with the Gem - two books for the price of one - blah-blah. Thus ended the fourth and last series of the Nelson Lee Library, after a short and inglorious existence of six months. And yet was it really the end?

Various stories appeared in the Gem for two or three years featuring the St. Frank's characters, and we ourselves in an odd copy noted the re-introduction of "Between Ourselves". We have been advised that most of these stories were, in the main old series re-hashed. The few copies of the Gem we have read, however, lead us to think there is more in it than that, and that some detailed research in this direction may be of interest. We are not in a

position to do this ourselves, but perhaps some good Gem enthusiast may be prepared to have a go, and give us the results of his findings. (✓)

—ooOoo—

(\* Of the Nelson Lee Libraries in my own possession, the famous detective also appears in the first person in Old Series Nos. 123 "The Island Stronghold, 127 "The Underground Fortress", 135 "The Secret Menace, and 146 "Twixt Sunset and Midnight".)

(✓ The Gem serials were White Giants of El Dorado (original), Treasure Isle (original), Ghost River Ranch (original), The School from Down Under (original), The Ten Talons of Taz (original), Hand-forth the Ghost Hunter and The Secret World (reprint of the first Northeastria series), Mystery Mill (reprint of Mystery of the Poisoned River) and The Black Hand at St. Frank's (later reprinted as a Norman Conquest yarn.) - J.W.).



GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM FRANK RICHARDS

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea, Broadstairs,  
Kent. December 23rd, 1953.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,  
Many thanks for the December C.D., the Annual and your letter: a very cheery trio at Christmas time, all of which I was very glad to receive. The Annual I think goes better and better: and I must say I like specially Eric's Rockwood article which reminds me of many happy things that were growing a little dim: and equally well, Roger's "Christmas with the Magnet" in the C.D. "There was always seasonable weather in the Magnet at Christmas time!" says Roger. So there was: which proves a theory I have mentioned somewhere in my Autobiography, that fiction beats fact every time!

I am very interested to hear that Chapman's picture will be on the cover next month. I have seen it already, as he sent me a copy by way of a Christmas card, which is to be framed to hang in my study. It is, as you say a delightful sketch, and draws a cheery

grin to my venerable features every time I look at it, and behold F.R. shaking hands with Father Time. — quite a harmless old gentleman so far as I am concerned!

I don't know whether you have seen a "Silver Jacket" yet. I have just had the third number from Sydney, and it appears to be going strong. You can guess what a pleasure it is to me to see "Carcroft" running in an Australian magazine. By the way, there is an item of news that may interest you: we are discussing the serialization of the Bunter Books in Australia and New Zealand, and this may materialise in the near future. Needless to say I shall be happy to see W.G.B. in serial form down under. There were some difficulties in the way: but these seem now to be happily cleared up. So it is probable that our fat old friend may soon be re-starting his plump career among the kangaroos and dingoes, in that "beautiful isle of the sea".

Best of wishes for Christmas, my dear boy, and to all readers of the C.D. the happiest of happy New Years.

Kindest regards, Always yours sincerely, FRANK RICHARDS.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE SILVER JACKET

Published by Beaconsfield Productions  
Pty. Ltd., 149 Castlereagh Street,  
Sydney. 25th November, 1953.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I have just received a very interesting letter from Anthony P. Baker of Barnet, Herts., telling me that he has obtained a copy of our magazine, THE SILVER JACKET from Mr. B.G. Whiter, Secretary of the London Branch of the Old Boys' Book Club and that he first heard of this publication from a letter from Frank Richards being published in your "Collector's Digest", November issue.

As you can no doubt appreciate, I am most interested in Frank Richards, his work and your Old Boys' Book Club and I would very much like to receive a copy of your November issue of the "Collector's Digest" and would also like to subscribe to this magazine. Would you kindly advise me the cost involved so that I can airmail you a bank draft?

You may be interested to learn that our new boys' magazine, THE SILVER JACKET is having wonderful sales over here and we expect it to go on sale in limited quantities in England early next year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

Yours faithfully,  
BEACONSFIELD PRODUCTIONS PTY. LTD.

A. D. GORFAIN,  
EDITOR & PUBLISHER.