

The

Collectors'

Digest

FEBRUARY 1954

Vol.8. No.86. Price 1s.6d



Nelson Lee's Rooms in Gray's Inn Road

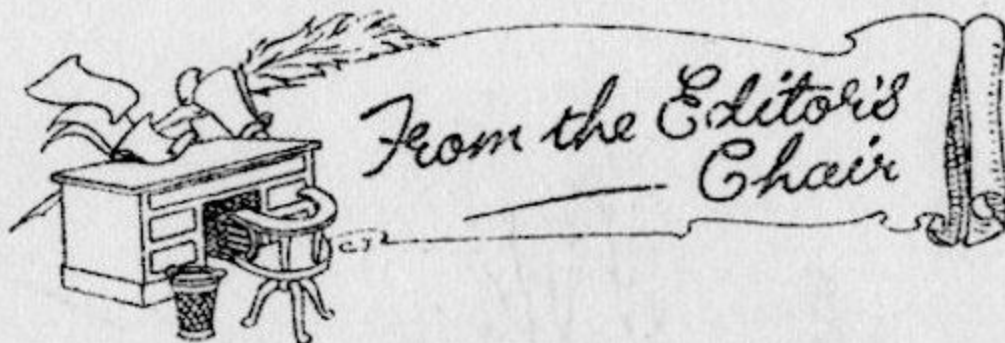
# The Collectors' Digest

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FEBRUARY, 1954

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



THE 'ANNUAL' BALLOT: As you will see from the figures elsewhere Roger Jenkins' "Red Magnet Magic" is well in the lead, but there's a long way to go yet.

It wouldn't be fair to discuss the articles generally, but I will say this. Looking through my copy after the event it occurred to me that maybe the "Gem" lovers were a little neglected. Well, steps are already being taken to remedy this. An article with the enticing title "Those Beguiling Blue Gems" is being discussed and I am hoping Roger will be writing it.

Jack Wood is already as busy as a bee with something really big for the Lee fans, even though the ink is hardly dry on the recent Annual. Well there's nothing like taking time by the forelock.

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THE "SCHOOL CAP" COMES OFF: Rockcliffe School has closed down, for the "School Cap" finished with No. 10; four numbers more than I forecast. A pity, but for more reasons than one it never had a hope of becoming a venerable school in the manner of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's, or many other schools of fiction which became as famous almost as Eton or Harrow. For one thing, if a paper is to have any chance of success, there must be advance publicity with expenditure akin to the transfer fee of a Tom Finney.

Again, where the main story in "School Cap" was concerned it was obvious that there was an attempt to model it on the lines of the Greyfriars and St. Frank's. Without wishing to be in any way unkind it didn't succeed, for the magic art of the masters were missing.

The brief story of "School Cap" is strikingly similar to that of "School and Sport" of thirty years ago.

And so alas! there is another internment in the vast graveyard of boys' weeklies.

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THAT INNOVATION: The idea of publishing the C.D. throughout on coloured paper has, on the whole, been well received. The majority who have expressed an opinion like it, but, to be fair there's quite a few who preferred the old mag. as it was, and these seem to be more emphatic in their objection to a change than those who are for it. So what's a poor editor to do? However, we are trying it again with a different colour and then we'll see.

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WITH REGRETS: I waited until the last minute hoping I shouldn't have to write this par. at all, but alas! I've got to. To my great disappointment quite a number have not kept that "gentleman's agreement," and the position is that five weeks after the Annuals were mailed just on 30 still owe for their copies. Honestly it is disappointing and does tend to dampen the pleasure I got from the enthusiastic reports of those who have been more considerate. What does particularly grieve me is that some of those who have not played up know exactly how I am fixed.

However, I'll say no more, just hope that when I write my next chat I shall be able to say "All's well".

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

THE 'ANNUAL' BALLOT

Present Position

|  | <u>Points</u> |   | <u>Points</u> |
|--|---------------|---|---------------|
| 1. Red Magnet Magic                    | 88            | 5. Carberry late of the Greyfriars' Sixth | 59            |
| 2. Greyfriars v. St. Jim's             | 77            | 6. The St. Frank's Saga                   | 44            |
| 3. The Years of Conquest               | 73            | 7. They Wrote of Sexton Blake             | 43            |
| 4. One Hundred Years of Boys' Weeklies | 71            |   |               |

"FATEFUL FICTION"

(By Sir Frederick Bowman, K.S.W. (Editor of "The Liverpool Examiner", etc.)

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My friend Frank Case, who serves the Old Boys' Book Club with such loyal efficiency as the Liverpool secretary, has asked me to write this article on how I was influenced by the papers I used to read. I comply with some embarrassment, because the implication may be that I am older than I look, and that may be fatal for the fan mail. Dear Mr. Frank Richards has the courage to flaunt his years, but I wrote my first professionally produced play when I was eighteen, and I made up my mind to stay that age indefinitely. I still believe in Santa Claus, even if it sometimes seems he doesn't believe in me....

And, of course, I still believe in Sexton Blake, Tom Merry, Billy Bunter and the girls of Cliff House, so vividly brought to life by Charles Hamilton and his best friends, Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest. My mother, Bertha Bowman, was my earliest inspiration. I saw her getting her name continually in print with poetry, articles and fiction, and I conceived a strong idea to do the same. This I achieved while still a boy at school.

Romance and chivalry were stirred in my juvenile heart by a serial called "The Woman in Scarlet" in "Chips", and for a while I wanted to follow in her tempestuous course, and become a pirate myself. Fortunately I realised in time the inevitable inconvenience incurred by such a career, and instead began to write romantic stories myself.

The great Harold J. Garrish, who told me he was part author of "The Woman in Scarlet" in his capacity as editor of "Chips", accepted and published my first detective story. He also introduced me to F.G. Cordwell, for whom I wrote a great number of stories published in "The Favourite Comic", "Merry and Bright", and other Amalgamated Press periodicals, including "Fun and Fiction" which ran my series "Behind the Scenes" for about a year. I still treasure my collection of "Gems" and "Union Jacks", and I was greatly thrilled to see on the stage of the old "Star" Theatre (now the Liverpool Playhouse) the two Sexton Blake dramas.

Many Sexton Blake stories have left indelible impressions on my mind, and some have strongly influenced my outlook and character. For example, "The Colonel's Charger" opened my eyes to the cruelties of the worn-out horse traffic between England and the

Continent, a subject on which I have written and lectured a lot ever since. The school canings and floggings so graphically described in the "Magnet" and "Gem" should be compared with the puny disciplinary methods of today in schools vastly inferior to those depicted by Frank Richards, where the sons of gentlemen learnt to take courageously birchings which are withheld from the toughest criminals who dare to terrorise society. There is far too much unruly conduct among youngsters of both sexes through official reluctance to teach them the rule of life - that if they do wrong, they get hurt.

I honour those who treasure nostalgic sentiments for the literature of their early years, and feel thankful that in these prosaic, ruthless times, such commendable emotions still survive.

## HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

HE'S ALWAYS BOBBING UP: Monica Dickens in her latest novel "No More Meadows" commenting on some American radio programme on the lines of Mrs. Dale's Diary says this:-

"They were suspended in time like the eternal Bob Cherry and Billy Bunter in the English boys' weeklies who had been in the Remove as long as Christine could remember."

And in "Buffalo Bill" by Rupert Croft-Cooke one finds on Page 10:-

"Buffalo Bill's adventures went on week after week as indefatigably as Billy Bunter's".

Incidentally in this book there's some interesting Bibliography about the weeklies in which adventures of the famous scout appeared; of which more anon.

\* \* \* \* \*

INTERESTING ITEM: Were you aware that G.W. Wakefield, the artist who drew the great majority of the Rookwood pictures in the Boys' Friend was a woman? I wasn't until I was told when in London. Matter of fact, the "G" stood for Grace. Come to think of it there was a feminine touch about those cherubic looking Rookwood fellows.

Her work was also familiar to readers of papers like "Fun and Fiction"; "Firefly"; "Bullseye" and more adult journals, which did not go in for cherubs.

THE FINEST GREYFRIARS SERIES EVER WRITTEN

By BASIL ADAM

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I have read most of the Greyfriars series, and rate some of them very high, especially the Ravenspur Grange, Cavandale Abbey, and China series, and many others too numerous to mention. But there is one series, and one series alone, that I put at the very top, above all other Greyfriars stories ever written by Frank Richards.

This is the "Harry Wharton Downfall" series, which ran in the "Magnet" from 1924 to 1925.

I have never read a school story by any other author, which gave such an insight into the characters of the boys portrayed, as Frank Richards does in this splendid series.

The proud, reserved, and headstrong Harry Wharton, good natured, sensitive Frank Nugent, sunny natured, honest Bob Cherry, blunt Johnny Bull, and the wise and patient Hurree Singh. Also, one must not forget Frank Richards' excellent pen portraits of Mr. Quelch and the cynical Bounder.

Perhaps the most moving story in this great series was "Friends or Foes", which brought out strongly the differences in character between Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. It was almost tragic, the way these two friends, of totally different temperaments, were made to quarrel all through Bunter's treachery.

I am afraid I never quite liked Bunter again since that period! The vivid description too, by Frank Richards, of Harry Wharton waiting in vain at the Blue Lion Inn, for his friend Nugent to come and collect him; Wharton's sombre bitter thoughts as dusk closes in, and his friend does not arrive.

Yes, this is indeed the best story of the finest series ever written by Frank Richards.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Note: Basil joined our circle a few months ago and when he wrote the above he was unaware that the series he chose came out first in a voting competition for the best, we ran some time ago. His article, therefore, is all the more interesting for that reason—H.L.)

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"COLLECTORS' DIGEST" Crossword, No. 3.

Across: 1. (with 27 down) A Lawless school. 5. Master at St. Jim's. 10. Hoskins has plenty, naturally. 11. Rose in the Sixth Form. 12. Levison sounds sincere. 14. Where Mr. Quelch is thin. (two words). 16. Could make more than a story connection with the Shell.

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| 10 |    |    |    |    | 11 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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| 17 | 18 |    | 19 |    |    |    |    |    | 20 | 21 |    |
| 22 |    |    |    |    | 23 | 24 |    | 25 |    |    |    |
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| 27 |    | 28 |    | 29 |    |    |    | 30 |    |    | 31 |
| 32 | 33 |    | 34 |    | 35 | 36 | 37 |    |    | 38 |    |
| 39 |    |    |    | 40 |    |    |    |    | 41 |    |    |
|    |    |    | 42 |    |    | 43 |    | 44 |    |    |    |
| 45 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 46 |    |    |

17. Danced in Ogilvy's country. 20. Sprinters might run for this. 22. Red Magnets in days of this. 23. Smother, perhaps. It will keep things warm. 26. Tom Merry is - of the Shell. 29. At holiday time, Bunter won't take this for an answer. 30. Bob Cherry will do this to Mauleverer - with a sponge. 32. You might do this with laughter at Bunter's antics. 35. The Courtfield Cracksman does it at dead of night. 38. Looks like Bunter again. 39. Let's consider. 41. A volume without an end causes a sound of disapproval. 42. What Napoleon Dupont might call Bunter.

43. Concerning a mother's boy at Rookwood. 45. Dark lie for the Skipper. 46. No gentleman.

Down: 1. Is this junior stony-hearted? Never! 2. Listen through the opening of 43 across, in a way. 3. Tubby Muffin's favourite time. 4. In the end, 45 across exists in the plural. 5. A French article. 6. Tan 26 across, and sort things out for a second fellow. 7. Fork out some pocket money for the schoolboy. A letter follows. 8. Is this Taggles' favourite pick-me-up? (two words). 9. Gold, as the Rio Kid might name it. 11. Bunter is a bit of a porker, but this could hardly describe Bunter Court. 13. Help wanted! 15. This Rookwood junior is nothing short of Snoop. 18. A period of time. 19. The schoolboy detective - and a letter to 5 down would finish him. 21. The School with four duck's eggs. 23. A girl from Bunter's fifth orange. 24. Pronoun most used in the St. Jim's tales. 25. Plenty of them go on in the Rag. 27. See 1 across. 28. Kind of officer Redwing may make in years to come. 31. It's black. 33. (with 40 down) Pegg is this. (two words). 34. Not Bunter's type of skin. 36. Mr. Ratcliff glares like this monster sometimes. 37. A short drink at the Three Fishers may cause a buzz. 40. See 33 down. 41. Coker's motor bike? 44. Was Dr. Birchmall called this when young?

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This Crossword is for amusement only, but, to add to the fun, a P.O. for five shillings will be sent to the sender of the first correct solution opened by the Editor. Copy the square to avoid cutting your C.D.

Solution of New Year Crossword

Across: 1 & 5. Oliver Kipps. 9 & 12. Quelch types. 15. Rye. 16. Ova. 18. Tee. 19. Prout. 21. Am. 23. Acting. 25. Over. 27. Calcium. 29. Ice. 30. Ely. 31. Lee. 32. Ellen. 35. Glaze. 36. Selby. 39. Gates. 40. Earl. 41. Stinger.

Down: 2. Laurel Villa. 3. Vale. 4. Etc. 6. Ivy. 7. Pie. 10. Eye. 11. Horace. 12. Tautly. 13. Pe. 14. Sam. 17. Vocal. 20. Tic. 21. Ague. 22. Breezes. 24. Nil. 26. Eclat. 28. Men. 32. Eggs. 33. Nest. 34. Flee. 36. Son. 37. Bar. 38. Yr.

The first correct solution received came from Stanley Smith, Millichope School, Craven Arms, Salop, to whom a postal order for five shillings has been sent.

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FRANK RICHARDS : VERSATILE AUTHOR

By ANTHONY P. BAKER

\*\*\*

There can have been few authors as versatile as Frank Richards. As a humorous writer, he gave us stories featuring Billy Bunter and Coker of the Fifth, and as a serious one, fine school-adventure stories. His powers of description have given us vivid pictures, not only of our own country, but of life and scenes abroad. Another great gift is that of character writing, which enabled him to introduce many new boys at Greyfriars, but all so different. And throughout every story there was always a first-class plot.

To prove these points, just look over the "Magnet" series and single stories from 1932 to 1940. Here Frank Richards used all his many gifts, and there were many excellent stories.

Probably the funniest series of the whole period was the Bunter the Billionaire one (1383-1389). Here Bunter becomes the owner of vast wealth, accompanied by the Famous Five, a crooked valet and a Chicago gangster. In 1938 we had the series where Arthur Carter comes to disgrace Bunter, and is only saved by Bob Cherry's intervention (1561-1572). This series, although a little long, was one of the author's wittiest.

"The Hoaxing of Hacker" (1617) was an uproariously funny single story, as was "The Tuck-Hoarder" (1655). A very amusing short series, featuring Horace Coker, expelled, appeared in 1939 (1656-1658).

But Frank Richards also wrote a good share of serious stories notably the Harry Wharton v. Mr. Quelch (1285-1296) and Stacey Series (1422-1433), both featuring Wharton's downfall. We also



had the Kranz Series (1354-1358), where Bob Cherry was kidnapped. The very last series of all, at Eastcliff Lodge (1676-1682), was an extremely exciting one, with plenty of Nazi spies, air-raids, and Soames.

In his descriptive stories, Mr. Richards excelled himself. Not that he gave us whole chapters of it like, for example, Scott, but the odd sentence here and there captured wonderfully the atmosphere. Of this type of series, taking place at home, the Hiking Series (1331-1340), and the "Water-Lily" one on the Thames (1643-1650), are outstanding. In the Travel ones, the one featuring Harry Wharton & Co. in Egypt is the best (1277-1284), from which one can learn almost as much as from a text book! Second comes the Texas one (1573-1582). The Wild West does, however, seem a little too wild, with stage-coaches and Red Indians on the warpath.

Twelve new boys were introduced between 1933 and 1939, but they were all very different - showing the author's gift of character writing. The best was the Stacey Series, already mentioned, where Wharton's cousin and double came to Greyfriars to disgrace him.

Jim Valentine, Dick the Penman, was featured in a very fine series (1297-1307; S.O.L. 394, 397, 400, 403), as was the schoolboy smuggler, Valentine Compton (1499-1504). Another "doubles" series featured the Bounder's double, Bertie Vernon (1631-1642), although Vernon is not perhaps so clearly drawn as some others.

Many school-story authors have confined themselves to one side of school life, such as the games side, or stories of detection or humour. Very few have been like Frank Richards and written all types; still fewer have written all types and succeeded. In this short article I have tried to show that this was - and still is - true. Frank Richards is, in fact, the King of All School Story Writers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gilbert Harding, in his "Treasury of Insult", recently published, gives the following which he claims to be an extract from "Bowling Out Bunter" by Frank Richards, (by permission of the Amalgamated Press) :-

"Lend me that paper, Peter, old fellow--". Billy Bunter spoke in honeyed tones.

Peter Todd, his study mate, glared at him across the study table.

"Shurrup, you fat ass", he roared. "Dry up or I'll make potato scrapings of you".

"But look here, Peter--"

Peter Todd reached for the ruler.

"If you call me Peter, you fat clam, I'll rap your fat napper with this ruler".

"I'm surprised at you, Toddy", said Bunter. "You're jealous, Peter--"

Crack.

"There, you pesky galoot", snorted Peter, throwing the ruler on the table. "I warned you, didn't I, you fat grumpus".

Well, that may be genuine Frank Richards dialogue, but it reads distinctly "phoney" to me. I've never known Peter Todd to use those very "Fishy" expressions attributed to him by Mr. Harding, comments Eric Fayne.

\* \* \* \* \*

### REVERIES

By C. L. LEMTEY

I came to old boys' book-collecting quite naturally. No one introduced it to me; I just found it out. Yet, although I did not realise it, many people were thinking exactly the same as I was. Our ideas and thoughts are not so original as we fancy. They occur to many people about the same time. They are "in the air". It was so with the idea of old boys' book-collecting.

The war had everything to do with it. People wanted peace and rest that the world would not give. I remember how, during the war, so many wanted to read "Jane Eyre" and the old Victorian classics.

The troubled post-war world kept this longing for the past uppermost. After all, what can be healthier for the mind than to escape for a time from the cares of life and rest itself in the soothing atmosphere that once pervaded our youth?

So this nostalgic longing came to me and I started to collect old Magnets. For that was my old book.. It still represented in my mind a wonderful and peaceful world of yesterday. Perhaps an illusion of the feelings, a pseudo-sentimentality! For I had changed a great deal in twenty years.

However, I was not disappointed, for these books, in bringing back the past and linking it with the present collected and broadened by feelings. They had a therapeutic effect on my mind like a minor psycho-analysis. For "escapism" (as we may call it) is not bad for us when we can realise its nature. It can be as restful as a reverie. After all, what are these old books but reveries and dreams! The Magnets, Gems, Populars, Nelson Lees, Union Jacks, all

dreams out of yesterday.

It is because the times are agitated and tormented that the idea of old boys' book-collecting comes to us. The feeling has come to hundreds. It is "in the air" and will stay so long as these times are as they are.

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MAGNET TITLES (cont'd): 1248. The Terror of the Form; 1249. Billy Bunter's Cert; 1250. Bold Bad Bunter; 1251. The Schoolmaster Cracksman; 1252. Jimmy the One; 1253. The Hunted Master; 1254. While Greyfriars Slept; 1255. The Complete Outsider; 1256. Down on His Luck; 1257. Harry Wharton's Downfall; 1258. Bounder and Captain.

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FRANK RICHARDS REBUKES A PEER

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

January 15th. 1954.

Many thanks for the C.D.—not only as good as ever this time, but, I think, even better.

I have read with greatest pleasure Gerry's verses on the day, when our old friend Mr. Quelch left Greyfriars School and went his way, but I hope the scene that he so feelingly delineates will not occur at Greyfriars till the most remote of dates. For the master of the Lower Fourth is scheduled to stay on, so long as old Frank Richards clicks the keys of Remington. Omnes eodem cogimur: and so with all my heart, I hope the day's far distant which will see old Quelch depart!

Derek's article on the Rio Kid is very pleasant reading. But why the Hollywood of 1938? I fancy the author was thinking of an earlier period.

Derek adds that "perhaps in some remote corner of the Lone Star State, even today, there rides a sunburnt young man in goatskin chaps". But there is no "perhaps" about it. That sunburnt young man is riding in the pages of "Tom Merry's Own" Annual: and will, I hope, ride many a trail in the days to come.

Which reminds me that in the near future another sunburnt young man, by name Slick Dexter, will soon be riding trails in a periodical: which causes Ralph Redway to give Frank Richards an occasional push off the typewriter.

By the way, I don't know whether you ever heard of the incident of Lord Balfour's speech in the House of Lords, in which his Lordship unhappily confused Billy Bunter with some wild and woolly Westerner who was altogether too handy with a gun. This considerably perturbed the author: who was however placated by a letter from the noble Lord expressing his regret for the error. If it is news to you, you may be interested in the enclosed copy of my letter on the subject in the "Recorder".

With kindest regards, Always yours sincerely, FRANK RICHARDS.

Here is the letter which appeared in the London "Recorder".

IT WASN'T BILLY BUNTER. - To the Editor of the Recorder

Sir, - In your report of Lord Balfour of Inchrye's speech in the House of Peers on November 27, his Lordship is reported as stating that he "turned on the Adventures of Billy Bunter and saw someone shot in the stomach". May I point out to your readers that Lord Balfour is quite mistaken as to this. As the author of "Billy Bunter", I can assure them that no such scene ever occurred in the Billy Bunter plays or in the Billy Bunter books. His Lordship must have confused some "Western" play with the Bunter plays: hence the error. Anyone who has seen a Bunter play, or read a Bunter book, can testify that they contain no scene of violence whatever.

FRANK RICHARDS. (Author of "Billy Bunter")

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea, Broadstairs, Kent.

This brought Frank Richards a letter from Lord Balfour as follows:-

Dear Mr. Richards, - You may certainly quote me as saying that; First I accept entirely what you say. Secondly that the incident mentioned was not intended to apply to your programme but another mentioned at the same time and thirdly I certainly have no wish to do your item or your reputation any harm and I should regret much if any remarks of mine had this result. BALFOUR OF INCHRYE.

Note: Further to Slick Dexter; he is to appear in a new comic called "Ace-High".

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# adverts

MAGNETS 1908-1915. Also runs 1933 onward. GEMS From number 1. NELSON LEES 1916-1933. POPULARS 1912-1930. BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY 1906-1930. BOYS' REALM 1903-1928. BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY 1904-1925. PLUCK 1908-1912. S.O.L's. All types. POYS MAGAZINE, ROCKET, PALS, CHAMPION. From first issues. NEWNES TURPINS. NICK CARTER number one. BOOKS FOR THE BAIRNS (1916). ALDINE, FIRST-RATE, BRITONS OWN, TIP-TOP etc. UNION JACKS, THRILLERS, YOUNG BRITAINS, early PLUCKS, MARVELS. Many Hogarth House Publications. (Coloured covers). BOUND VOLUMES: BOYS OF ENGLAND, BOYS OF THE EMPIRE, BRITISH BOYS, BOYS GRAPHIC, YOUNG ENGLISHMAN, BOYS STANDARD, BOYS COMIC JOURNAL, YOUNG MEN OF GREAT BRITAIN. ANNUALS: BOYS CINEMA, CHAMPION, MODERN BOY, SCHOOLGIRLS OWN. Satisfaction guaranteed. Exchange suggestions welcomed. Offers of books always appreciated (your price, usually!) S.A.E. REQUIREMENTS, PLEASE - T. LAMBERT, 347 GERTRUDE ROAD, NORWICH.

Coloured Union Jacks, Pink Union Jacks, Detective Weeklies, American Science, Mechanical and Crime Mags., Wrestling, Photographic, Horse and Speedway Racing periodicals, Modern Boys, Sexton Blake Libs., (few 1st series), Chums, 1928, Young Britain's, Black & White, etc. etc. WANTED: Magnets, Gems, S.O. Libs., etc., Over 20,000 rare cigarette cards for sale or exchange, such as American Tobacco Co., Taddys, Salmon & Gluckstien, Clarke, Smith, Cohen and Weenan, Eturatti, etc., nearly all kinds 1904-40. State requirements please. S.A.E. RONALD ROUSE, 3 ST. LEONARDS TERRACE, GAS-HILL, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

WANTED: Any of the following, in clean condition, at your price, plus postage:- MAGNETS: Nos. 462-4, 496, 500-03, 530-4, 536-7, 541-2, 546. GEMS: Nos. 1283, 1285. GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL for 1920. M. KUTNER, 4 NEW NORTH PLACE, SCRUTTON STREET, FINSBURY, LONDON, E.C.2.

Can anyone offer S.O.L. No. 5 for really worthwhile cash offer or part-exchange. These include S.O.L. 25, 29 (Greyfriars) Magnet 723 (Xmas Candles) several series inc. 1017-26 (Redwing-South Seas) 1176-85 (China) etc. Also WANTED: S.O.L. 250 (mint only). MAGNET 776, 917, 642. GEM. 724. J. WALSH, 348 STANLEY ROAD, KIRKDALE, LIVERPOOL, 20.

FOR SALE (or on Loan) GEMS: MAGNETS: S.O.L. S.A.E. REPLY PLEASE: F. BOTTOMLEY, 48 DOWNHILLS PARK ROAD, LONDON, N.17.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN  
27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

I do hope all Blakiana fans will enjoy Walter Webb's fine article this month. In popular parlance it is "smashing", and I think you should write yourselves and tell him so when you realise the amount of work he has put into it.

A suggestion for an article by all our readers, on their "favourite Sexton Blake story", has been made by Derek Ford. It may be rather hard to choose one from so many good yarns, but I feel that you can do it. So please let me have your selections which I look forward to with much interest.

Another of our friends, W.T. Thurbon of Cambridge, was good enough to send me a copy of the 'Marvel' containing a story in which both Detective Shirley Steel and Sexton Blake appear together, the author being Paul Herring. As far as I know, it is the only one; perhaps one of our readers may have further information, in which case I should be pleased to receive it.

J. PACKMAN.

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## THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY - JANUARY ISSUES

No. 303 "The Riddle of the French Alibi". Walter Tyrer.

Plenty of Blake in this tale. He is in the picture right from the first page. One of Tyrer's better efforts, despite a few slight errors, such as Blake's referring to Joyce as Sir Aylmer's daughter, on page 11 - she was, of course, his niece.

I like the way Blake and Tinker took the law into their own hands, and broke into Ritter's workshop without a search warrant - quite in the old tradition. In fact, the Baker Street man was cool, capable and confident all along, and knew what he was after.

When Ritter was arrested for the wrong murder, on page 61, after providing a perfect alibi for the right one, well, I was hoping for as brilliant a finish as there was to Francis Iles' great murder mystery, "Malice Aforethought". Blake however, managed to pin Sir Aylmer's death on to the guilty man. Yes, a jolly good story.

No. 304 "The Case of the Three Survivors" Hugh Clevely.

I think I can recommend this yarn too, although there are a few

implausibilities in it, and the scrappy style was a bit irritating. Like most of Clevely's stories however, this was quite readable, and Blake managed to turn the tables on the wily Tai Su at the very finish. (Shades of Teed's Hong-Lo-Soo!)

The denouement was pretty feeble, I thought, and that faked photograph was really raw. Lackett and Moller would never have fallen for such a simple ruse. And where did that great pile of ten-pound notes come from?

Did you notice the non-sequitor on page 62, where Tai Su said, "I could not tell the police about Jenks' body without divulging my kinsman's illegal activities". But that is just what Blake himself had done, by the simple method of an anonymous phone call! The mention of Jenks' hanging, on page three of the cover, was a misprint. He had been murdered on page twenty-four. For Jenks, read Moller.

GERRY ALLISON.

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Continuing

SIXTY YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE

By WALTER WEBB

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Part Two - The Palmy Days of Sexton Blake

As the mighty armies of the Kaiser swept across Europe, spreading death and destruction in their wake, Christmas 1914 was not the happy, carefree Yuletide as others before it had been; the unusual sight of so many young men in khaki, and the military reverses abroad, had the effect of spreading over what would otherwise have been an occasion for gaiety and joy a veneer of uneasiness and gloom.

But, for a time, at least, the stories of Sexton Blake continued to come as of yore. A double number issue of the UNION JACK, containing a story of Mademoiselle Yvonne, brought to a close a satisfactory year, in so far as that paper was concerned.

The war did not minimise Blake's popularity in the least; on the contrary it increased it to a remarkable extent, as the following facts prove quite conclusively:

September 1915 saw the birth of the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY, one volume per month being issued until July 1916 when, although faced with a paper shortage, an extra volume was added. When paper did get really scarce and periodicals, including the MAGNET and GEM, shortened the length of their contents, the demand for Blake was such that no restriction in his case was considered, and to avoid any such repetition, a smaller type was used.

It was in August 1915 that Blake readers were introduced to Leon Kestrel, the master mummer, who was to prove one of the most popular crook characters ever to appear in opposition to Blake. Jack Lewis, his creator, remains today as the sole survivor of those men who related Blake's exploits during the first world war. As the year was drawing to its close, the quaint character of Humble Begge, the mild, scholarly-looking individual known as the Man of Peace, made his first appearance.

Never before, nor since, has the old country felt such bitterness and hatred towards another as it did during that fateful year, for the atrocities committed by the Hun were such that not only did the newspapers make wrathful protests, but several Blake writers made bitter denunciations of their tactics in the stories they wrote for the UNION JACK. And well they might! there are still those who remember the horror of that occasion on the 7th of May when the Lusitania was sunk by the German submarine U20, and caused the death of 1,198 men, women and children - all non-combatants - by drowning. With so many families mourning the loss of loved ones, Christmas 1915 was one of heartache and anxiety rather than of happiness and serenity, but for the Sexton Blake enthusiast there was that usual double-number of the UNION JACK to lighten the gloom a little - a story of Yvonne by George Hamilton Teed.

1916 saw the first published Sexton Blake work of Robert Murray, famed creator of the Confederation stories. That famous and popular personage of the C.I.D., Scotland Yard, Detective-inspector Coutts, created by the aforementioned writer, also made his debut that year.

By that time stories of The Snake and The Scorpion had been told, but in their stead came Captain Horatio Peak, D.S.O., and Dirk Dolland, the gentleman cracksman, otherwise known as The Bat. The latter, from being a dangerous enemy, was to become one of Blake's firmest friends in later years.

Blake readers were digesting a story called "The Parrowby Will Mystery", by Allan Blair, when on the front page of nearly every newspaper in the world was splashed the news of the sinking of H.M.S. Hampshire, with Lord Kitchener on board. As the long and bitter battles of Verdun and Jutland raged there were few Blake stories which did not deal with the war to some extent.

It was in 1917 that Sexton Blake lost one of his famous authors, for Norman Goddard was killed in action. A transport driver, the



author was making his way up the line under heavy fire when he was struck down. It was in tales of the wild and woolly West that Norman Goddard revelled, and although never at his best when wrestling with a Blake story, one finds it difficult to recall more than one really poor contribution. His last detective story was published in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY in January 1917. It was entitled "The Man With the Green Eyes", and featured the master-criminal, George Marsden Plummer.

That same year new characters continued to be introduced. In the glamour department, there was the voluptuous Marie Galante, Glory Gale, the girl reporter, and Camille, and they were joined by Prince Menes, the Egyptian, and the crook known as The Black Rat.

Paper shortage was then acute, and both the UNION JACK and SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY were forced to cut down on their supplies, with the result that a new, smaller type had to be used in order to cram into the restricted space the same story length as before. In October we read G.H. Teed's last Blake story for nearly five years, when the author answered the call. With him went Jack Lewis, but in his case the time lapse was not so great - the Kestrel author was back with us again after two years in the navy. The loss of those two writers left a very big gap, for with the authors went also the many characters they had conceived. That gap was never adequately filled, even though Edwy Searles Brooks and Sidney Drew were introduced and brought in their own famous characters to entertain us - Nelson Lee, Nipper and Waldo, the Wonder-Man by the former, and Ferrers Lord, Gan Waga and Rupert Thurston by Drew. The author of the St. Frank's stories introduced the Letter File series, in which the narrative was unfolded by means of a series of letters written by one character to another, e.g. from Sexton Blake to Nelson Lee, and from Tinker to Nipper, and vice versa. Novel, if not particularly brilliant, those stories were attractively written.

UNION JACK readers were introduced to the sinister Mr. Reece during the summer months of 1918, one of the most ruthless characters ever conceived by Robert Murray. Mr. Reece was very soon to become president of that notorious army of crooks known as the Criminals' Confederation.

Blake fans were purchasing a copy of the UNION JACK containing a story called "The Dual Detectives" by E.S. Brooks, which

featured, in addition to the famous Baker Street pair, Nelson Lee and Nipper, when the brightest news of the war came from the Allied front. German offensives had been stemmed, the Allies were attacking on every front. Then on November 9 the revolution in Berlin, the abdication of the Kaiser, and two days later that well-remembered eleventh day - the occasion of the Armistice. Peace again, a gradual improvement in paper supplies, the introduction into the UNION JACK of the gigantic crime organisation known as the Criminals' Confederation.

During that terrifically hot summer of 1919 when the grass was burnt yellow and brown in earth baked to iron hardness in the scorching heat, came Trouble Nantucket, the American detective, and the welcome return of Leon Kestrel; the fascinating personality of Fifette Bierce, Madrano, the Spanish steeplejack, Lessing, Semi-ramis and the rest of the notorious Kestrel Syndicate. In October came the first exploit of the bizarre and very popular character, Zenith the Albino, followed six months later by that unusual personality, Count Bonalli, known as The Owl, due to his ability of being able to see in the dark. Came Cavendish Doyle, British Secret Service agent, and the small-time crook, known as Basil Wicketshaw, both conceptions of W. Murray Graydon. Sexton Blake was fast then approaching his greatest year. By 1920 the many admirers of Yvonne were happy again, for there was mademoiselle, shoulder to shoulder with Sexton Blake, in opposition to the Confederation, although whether with or without the authority of her conceptor, Hamilton Teed, it is hard to say.

The UNION JACK was sporting a new coloured cover when Granite Grant, of the British Secret Service, and the petite Mademoiselle Julie, of the French Secret Service began what was to be quite a good run in the pages of Blake's papers.

A curious point is that although Grant was featured in both, Julie never appeared in the UNION JACK. The author of those stories was W.W. Sayer, who wrote as Pierre Quiroule. As his French pseudonym suggests, Sayer was something of a rolling stone.

New characters continued to arrive. There was Dr. Leppermann, the criminal scientist, and Saburo, the Japanese detective, created by Trevor C. Wignall. We said goodbye to Glory Gale in 1919, but bid welcome to more glamour in the shapeliness of Mademoiselle Claire Delisle, who came early in 1921, followed two months later by another crime menace in Dr. Ferraro.

As new authors such as Alfred Edgar, Michael Poole, Coutts Brisbane, H. Gregory Hill, F. Addington Symonds and L.H. Brooks were introduced so did the criminal antagonists of Sexton Blake grow in number. Included among them was that unusual character, known as The Raven, who was accompanied by the Chinese, Quong Lu. The ranks of the exponents of feminine allure were still further strengthened when Ysabel de Ferre, the Black Duchess of Jorsica, with dark eyes fixed upon the presidency of the Criminals' Confederation, came to conquer, only to find Sexton Blake a stumbling block to her ambitions.

Throughout the summer of 1921, which is remembered as being disastrous for English cricket, when the burly Warwick Armstrong and his fellow Australians easily retained the "Ashes", the stories of Blake in both the UNION JACK and SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY attained a remarkably high level. Christmas of that year saw the introduction of an interesting new character - that giant of a man, known as Janssen the Moonlayer, who was the creation of Stanley Gordon Shaw, brother of the famous Captain Frank H. Shaw. Gordon Shaw stepped most ably into the place vacated by Cecil Hayter, whose long association with Blake had been brought to a close.

The year of 1922 was the greatest in the history of Sexton Blake, for during its fifty-two weeks more words of the character were written per month than at any time previously in his career. An extra volume of the S.B.L. was added to the four already being published per month, making a total output in that library alone of 300,000 words. Added to this there was a further 100,000 in the issues comprising the monthly output of the UNION JACK, which brought the figures to no less than 400,000 words per month. 400,000 words written around one character in one month is a record never equalled - in fact, nothing remotely approaching even near distance of it has occurred in the realms of detective fiction before, and it is safe to say, never will! Truly, of Blake's palmy days those were the palmiest of all! And it was at that time the Detective Supplement was added to the pages of the UNION JACK, one of the most interesting crime features of that era. In that supplement was printed the earliest work of a very young writer who was destined to make a name for himself under a pseudonym which is known throughout the British Isles. Paul Renin, author of, at least, two Sexton Blake stories under his own name and very probably writer of several of the anonymously published tales in the

UNION JACK in the 1920's, entered a different field of fiction writing when the Supplement was discontinued, and turned out a long succession of some of the most torrid sex romances ever written in that era.

The return of G.H. Teed, with some of the best work he has ever written, helped to make 1922 a year to be remembered. It was then that Yvonne was withdrawn from the company of Dirk Dolland, Mr. Reece and the Criminals' Confederation, and placed in surroundings into which she had hitherto been accustomed under the guiding hand of her original creator.

Those three amiable-looking fashion-plates, Archie Pherison, Reggie Fetherstone and Algy Somerton, otherwise known as The Three Musketeers, comprised as deadly a trio of crooks as ever crossed swords with Sexton Blake. They were also products of Blake's golden age, and it is also interesting to recollect that a famous author of Blake stories also made his debut at that time. During 1922 Andrew Murray became indisposed, and was unable to turn out his popular stories of Carlac, Kew and the Hon. John Lawless; so, in order to meet the demand, a young recruit named H. Clifford Gibbons was given the role of "ghost-writer", and it was under his authorship that several stories featuring the aforementioned stock characters were written. Later, under the well-known pen-name of "Gilbert Chester", the new recruit created those popular characters Gilbert and Eileen Hale.

Yes, indeed, Blake's stock was never so high as in that eventful year; but soon there was to come a change, gradual at first but becoming more marked as the years drifted by. The days of plenty were to slowly recede; a changing scene was to reveal the dismaying fact that the steady upward climb had been arrested and a slackening grip was ensuring only one thing - the decline of Sexton Blake!

\* \* \* \* \*

Part Three (conclusion) of Walter Webb's fine article, "The Decline of Sexton Blake", will appear next month.

J.P.

CAN ANYONE PLEASE ASSIST? Schoolboys' Owns: 1, 2, 12, 17, 19, 26, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 38, 62, 149, 160, 170, 261 required - ROGER JENKINS, "THE FIRS", EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

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# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## L O N D O N   S E C T I O N

The Sixth Annual General Meeting of the club took place on Sunday January 17th, at Hume House, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. A fairly representative attendance re-elected the whole of the retiring officials en bloc. Chairman Len thanked one and all on their behalf. Hearty votes of thanks were afforded to all the officials for their untiring work on behalf of the club and further thanks were recorded to Len and Josie Packman, Bob and Eileen Whiter for bearing the brunt of the catering at the monthly meetings.

Amongst the selective correspondence read was one from the "C.D." Duplicating firm thanking the members for their letter of thanks on the excellent work in duplicating both the monthly "C.D." and also the Annual. Another interesting letter was from Miss E.B. Flinders, the A.P. illustrator. Members will be pleased to learn that her potted personalities particulars will appear in a future news letter. A final selected letter was from Geoffrey Hockley of "Brotherhood of the Happy Hours" fame and now the proud possessor of a complete set of "Chums".

Quiz competitions were held, full marks for the composers, and four rounds of a very fine intelligent team quiz followed a very fine impromptu talk by Alan Stewart. He spoke of the early years with the old papers and how he started his collection.

Both the Hamiltonian and Nelson Lee sections of the library are progressing favourably as per the report of the librarians.

National serviceman Ian Whitmore writing from Egypt sent his best wishes to all and hopes to be home in time to attend the July meeting. The forthcoming dinner was discussed and the committee reported on the progress of the preparations. Will all members who desire to attend let me know at least a fortnight before the date, Feb. 20th.

And so another milestone in the club's history was passed and with the usual good study spread, thanks to Josie, we went our divers ways and hope to meet all old and new friends on Feb. 20th.

\* \* \* UNCLE BENJAMIN.

LONDON O.B.B.C. Grand Anniversary Dinner - Saturday February 20th, Friends House, Euston Road, London, N.W.1. The following

celebrities have been invited: C.H. Chapman, E.S. Brooks, C.M. Down, Eric Parker, Kenneth Brookes. All London members, particularly postal members, should on no account miss this. Bring your wives and friends. Cost 10/-. Please write at once to Club Sec., Ben Whiter, 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, N.22. Representatives of other Clubs have also been invited.

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### N O R T H E R N   S E C T I O N

Meeting - 9th Jan. 1953: J. Breeze Bentley in opening the meeting cordially welcomed still another new member, Ronald Hodgson of Wakefield. He also had a few cheery words to say to Vera, who since we last saw her has changed her surname from Coates to Nicholls, but who appeared to be just the same Vera we have known since we first got together.

Secretary Norman Smith in reading the minutes, gave a review of the Christmas Party of happy memory.

Then came one of those enjoyable and amusing talks by Harry Stables. On this occasion he had chosen for his subject "Some Famous Ships in Juvenile Literature". They included Lord Dorrmore's yacht, so familiar to the St. Frank's admirers; the Bombay Castle of the Duncan Storm stories and "The Lord of the Deep" on which Ferrers Lord and his crew ventured in the long ago.

Harry slipped in neatly several examples of that dry humour evident in the two talks he had given on previous occasions.

As there was nothing else on the agenda there was more time than usual for general chatter, and my word, what advantage was taken of it. We could hear the ladies who were having a meeting of some kind in the adjoining room, but I suspect no more so than they could hear us.

Next meeting, Feb. 13th, when Gerry will conclude his interrupted reading of "The Boy Without a Name". Oh, dear, there's a five week interval.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

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### M E R S E Y S I D E   S E C T I O N

10th Jan. '54: The New Year activities of the section opened with a good attendance, and we were pleased to see the return of one of our old regulars, Jim Bartlett, after his long bout of illness; he has been greatly missed.

The formal business was dealt with by the secretary, and the

chairman brought up many points of club-interest for discussion. He expressed his pleasure at the high standard of production and content-matter of this year's Annual, and he proposed that we should send our congratulations to both Herbert Leckenby and the publisher, and this was carried without dissent.

The library business then occupied us for a while, and after refreshments came our team-game, which provided great entertainment. It took the pattern of the popular radio quiz "Top of the Form", with teams representing Greyfriars and The Rest, Don Webster being the quiz master. None of the questions were too difficult, and everybody concerned secured at least some points. The result was a win for "The Rest" by a narrow margin, Greyfriars having made up a lot of lost ground in the final rounds. Next month there will be another team quiz, the participants supplying their own posers, with Jim Walsh as general adviser and referee.

The meeting ended at 10 p.m., and we dispersed our various ways, looking forward to our next meeting, which promises to be equally good.

F. CASE.

Sec.

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#### MIDLAND SECTION MEETING

19th January: We were back to Greyfriars with a vengeance at this meeting after our recent roamings to Rookwood, as our programme consisted almost entirely of Greyfriars matter.

After a modicum of formal business we settled down to enjoy a reading of three chapters from the beginning of the "India" series, (1926); the work of reading being shared between Miss Scott and the present writer. We heard something of the unparalleled unprecedented disturbance at Greyfriars when Skinner & Co. "tugged up" Bunter as an, (alleged), fearsome and sinister Hindu in order to scare Inky who had previously been troubled by a would-be kidnapper.

Unfortunately it was Mossoo who was scared and the alarm being raised, Bunter bolted for the boxroom. Prout took charge of the great man-hunt but his favourite gun was not really required when they found that it was only Bunter. Justice was more than satisfied under a steadily swishing cane in Quelch's study.

After refreshments we tackled a very attractive little quiz, (mainly Greyfriars), which had been prepared by our chairman. Both a Ladies' and a Gentlemen's prize was awarded and they were duly won by Miss Carol Scott and Mr. Jack Ingram respectively.

Now, however it was time for a farewell chat before we finished

our first meeting of 1954, the precursor we hope, of other similarly pleasant evenings of happy hours. EDWARD DAVEY, Hon. Sec.



This month we have quite a lot to chat about, thanks to two stalwart contributors who are no strangers, so I'll keep my own introductory remarks as brief as possible in order that Charles Churchill and Bill Champion can have a clear field with their very interesting gossip about our Alma Mater.

Before they take over, however, I would like to tell you about some of the good things in store in the months ahead. Next month we shall have Edwy Searles Brooks "under the microscope" with some interesting notes on his craftsmanship in more than one field.

In later issues I shall be telling you something about a grand new competition for Nelson Lee "fans", and describing the St. Frank's setting in some detail, and, I hope, with the aid of Briscoe's famous drawings, which our excellent publishers have already prepared for inclusion, either inside or on the cover. Finally, for the moment, the next Annual will include a composite tribute to Nelson Lee himself. Yes, we're planning well ahead!

Now, over to you, Bill and Charles, over.....

JUST ANOTHER BARRING OUT SERIES - OR IS IT?

By C.H. CHURCHILL

Probably the most well known Barring Out stories written by E.S. Brooks is the "Hunter the Hun" series which appeared in the old



series of the Nelson Lee in 1918. Quite a fair amount has been written regarding this in the past, but I would like to draw attention to the "Mr. Martin" series which was published in the autumn of 1919.

This series has been rather branded with the title of "Just another Barring out" series. I would add "Is this so?".

Let us look at this series of stories. First of all in No. 229 "Back to the Old Home", we read how the boys return to school after a stay in London while the damage caused to St. Frank's by fire was put right. They find Mr. Martin in charge in place of Dr. Stafford as Headmaster. Now this is different to the "Hunter" stories as the latter was only a Housemaster in place of Nelson Lee, who was absent on an investigation. Admittedly Mr. Martin "plays up" in a similar way to Hunter in his treatment of the boys, but the actual barring out is quite a fresh scheme. The Remove barricade themselves in the west wing of the Ancient House and time and again by various means manage to repel all attackers.

We then get a noval plot. Nelson Lee, having been dismissed, returns in disguise as Housemaster and by various subterfuges succeeds in helping the Rebels in many ways. At the same time he is kept very busy investigating the activities of Mr. Martin. The latter has a brother who was serving a prison sentence. Mr. Martin should have been in his place but managed to slip out of the net and get his brother involved instead. This brother has escaped from prison and Mr. Martin hides him in Bellton Priory ruins while he makes arrangements to slip away with as much as he can lay hands on at St. Frank's.

Nelson Lee gradually finds out all about this and makes the necessary arrangements to call a halt to these proceedings.

In the meantime the boys are busy repelling all comers by many manner of means. One unusual incident is in No. 234 "The Siege of the West Wing" when the Fifth Formers temporarily join in the fun and give Mr. Martin a taste of his own birch!

There is a very novel ending to the rebellion. Mr. Martin and General Ord Clayton the Chairman of the Governors (a very good example of a Colonel Blimp) obtains the services of a Troop of Boy Scouts who manage to "break" the rebellion. However when the Scouts discover that he had told them a biased version of the trouble they stand guard while the Remove repair the damage to their defences and leave the general in the hands of the rebels.

The general succumbs to all demands when faced with a "bluff" threat of being tarred and feathered and so the school returns to normal duties but with Mr. Martin still holding the reins.

In the final story of the series (No. 236 "Exit the Tyrant") we find bags of excitement. First of all a visit by Tiner! Then we have a spate of hidden passages, a fight in the Head's study, and at the finish a motor smash. All's well that ends well. Mr. Martin is off to prison, his brother's name is cleared and Dr. Stafford returns to St. Frank's.

Now no one, I think, can say anything except that this series is quite different from the Hunter one, where the boys fight their battles first in the Monastery ruins and later on Willard's Island. Mr. Hunter also turns out to be a spy. Maybe he is more of a "character" than Mr. Martin but I do maintain that the actual incidents of the two rebellions are quite different. As far as I can see the only things alike are when the boys bring the bullies to the school in "fireworks" coaches.

Probably I have nostalgic leanings towards the Martin stories as these were the first Nelson Lees I ever read. I can say, however, that after this first class introduction I became a regular reader of the Nelson Lee until its demise, which was much to my sorrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

### CONSPIRATORS, UNLIMITED!

By W.F. CHAMPION

There are many who must agree that one of the most exciting and amusing series ever published in the Nelson Lee Library was one that appeared early in the year 1919. I recall it with feelings of great pleasure, but must confess that I am a little uncertain whether to describe it as "The story of a prolonged war between seniors and juniors intermingled with the exploits of a daring crook" or "A yarn about the nefarious activities of a certain mysterious cracksman well garnished with terrific skirmishes between Upper and Lower school".

The series starts off with a bang: there is a burglary at the school, and the midnight marauder obligingly leaves his car. "The Mysterious X" at the scene of the crime. There is a spot of humour here, when the somewhat pompous Inspector Jameson accuses our old friend Dr. Brett, of doing the "job"; but, of course, Nelson Lee soon clears the air, without, however, being able to expose the real crook.

Soon after this episode, Kenmore, of the Sixth, comes down rather heavily on "Juicy" Lemon, of the Third --- in fact, he

attacks the fag viciously for some slight misdemeanour, and an indignant Bob Christine is smitten by a bright idea. He suggests that he and his pals, of the Remove, waylay the unpopular prefect and give him some of his own medicine, adding there will be no retribution where they, themselves, are concerned, as Kenmore is an Ancient House senior while they are members of the College House. They put their plan into action, drag Kenmore into Bellton Wood, and give him a dozen of the best with a cane.

This is the actual start of a conflict that continues for weeks.

Starke, of the Ancient House Sixth, leader of the bullies and friend of the licked Kenmore, decides that if the juniors get away with this unwarrantable assault, the seniors will lose their power at St. Franks; so he arranges a meeting of certain questionable Sixth and Fifth-formers of both houses. The outcome of this "get-together" results in the unfortunate Christine & Co. being given 'impots' of 500 lines or more, by Jesson and Mills, College House seniors, for trifling offences that ordinarily would have been winked-at.

When Nipper hears of this development he takes a very serious view of things, and foresees big trouble; but the next few chapters are devoted to the further activities of "The Mysterious X". Nelson Lee actually gets to grips with this illusive person one dark night, on Willard's Island -- but some falling masonry partially stuns the detective, and his adversary makes good his escape. Nipper, also, has a midnight encounter with, and succeeds in landing a hefty blow on the face of, this unknown crook. Next day, the leader of the juniors is amazed to see a big bruise on the cheek of Frinton, of the Ancient House Sixth, but nothing comes of the matter at this juncture.

During this time, the "Reign of Terror" begins to get into its stride, and Removites and Third-formers alike suffer as they have never suffered before at the hands of the bullying seniors. Handforth calls a meeting, votes for immediate drastic action, but, perhaps fortunately for him, is shouted down.

Then "The Mysterious X" strikes again. This time he holds up Mudford, the village postman, and gets away with a registered-letter for £50. Soon after this, Nelson Lee "arranges" for Teddy Long, the Peeping-Tom of the Remove, to overhear a conversation between the detective and Mr. Stockdale. Seemingly, the Housemaster of the College House is worried about a large sum of money which he has in the desk in his study, and which consists entirely of

sovereigns.

At this stage, by means of a cunning trick, Starke succeeds in getting the whole Remove "gated" on the next half-day, when there is an important football-match arranged between Hemnford and St. Frank's juniors. That same night, Nipper and his chums decide to keep vigil outside Mr. Stockdale's study-window, just in case tidings of the golden sovereigns has reached "The Mysterious X". It obviously has, and he endeavours to force an entry - whereupon the juniors attempt to seize him. He once more evades capture, and Nelson Lee, arriving on the scene at that moment, is exceedingly annoyed with Nipper, whom he accuses of frustrating all his well-laid plans, including fictitious sovereigns. Feeling very crest-fallen, the juniors go back to their dormitory.

Next afternoon, the "gated" Remove take their places in the form-room under the supervision of Starke and Jesson. Here the juniors adopt stern measures, overpower and tie-up the seniors, and the whole football eleven dash off. Unfortunately, things go wrong, the boys are ordered off the field by a master before the end of the game, and the Remove catch it -- hot!

(Owing to lack of space, this article will be concluded shortly.)

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