

# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 119

PRICE 1s. 6d.

NOVEMBER 1956



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# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 11 No. 119

Price 1s. 6d.

NOVEMBER, 1956

Editor, HERBERT LECKENBY,  
12 Herbert Street,  
Hull Road, York

or

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,  
12A The Shambles, York.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

CHANGE OF ADDRESS. For your future guidance, please note that York Duplicating Services have moved to more commodious premises at No. 12A in the same famous, old-world Shambles. From there, their far from old-world - on the contrary, bang up-to-date - equipment will continue to turn out our immaculate little magazine.

From now on, however, you can if you like write to me at my home address as above. In doing so, be sure and put Hull Road as there happens to be a Hubert Street in York also and without the Hull Road letters sometimes go astray. The street, I may say, was not named in my honour!

Parcels and registered letters had better go to the business address as I am, unavoidably, often out when the postman calls.

\* \* \* \* \*

VISIT AND VISITOR. On 14th October I travelled up to Newcastle-on-Tyne where I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time Jim Hepburn and Basil Adam, with both of whom I had corresponded for years. Great occasions, these! My luck with the weather continued for it was a lovely day and we were able to sit and chat by the sea.

A week later Don Webster travelled from Liverpool to spend a few hours in my den. Why does the time travel so quickly on such occasions?

\* \* \* \* \*

BLAKIANA. Never in its long history has our Blakiana section been more interesting than just now. Last month we had the lively discussion on the modernisation of the stories; this month we have

some real inside revelations from the past. To me, one of the most surprising was that several of the Confederation stories were not written by Robert Murray. Some years ago, on re-reading, I spotted that the last one, "The Great Round-Up" was not by him and guessed it was Gilbert Chester, but I was unaware there were several others. I have the good fortune to possess a number of the "Confederation" yarns and in spare moments I propose to read them to see if I can find the others. It all adds to the interest.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE ANNUAL. Soon the newspapers will be telling you how many shopping days there are to Christmas. Well, our Annual must catch the mails several days before those shopping days are over. Orders are coming in nicely; we are slightly in front of last year but there are still quite a number of you who have not yet ordered. I should be so sorry if I had to say to anyone, "Too late," particularly as it is No. 10.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

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# Blakiana...

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I must cut my remarks short this month to make room for Bill Lofts' informative article.

Forthcoming articles include "Men of Mystery;" "On Our Selection;" "I Remember These." I also have in hand a series of "Memory Teasers," one of which will appear each month as from next January. This of course will be supplementary to ordinary articles.

The Sexton Blake Circle Feature for the C.D. Annual is 'shaping up' very nicely. The programme includes both statistics and articles.

JOSIE PACKMAN.

\* \* \* \* \*

H. W. TWYMAN - "YOUR EDITOR": UNION JACK

by W.O.G. Lofts.

Living in semi-retirement in a 300-year old (but now modernised) cottage in Surrey is the man who, from 1921 to 1933, personally knew and saw practically every Union Jack author of that period.

I have recently had the good fortune and privilege of paying Mr. Twyman two most enjoyable and interesting visits, for he was only too pleased to converse with me about the 'old paper.' He has, in fact, enlightened me on quite a few things relating to Blake authors and stories which, until then, had been very obscure.

I learned that Mr. Twyman started at the A. Press as a proof reader in 1914, but was soon appointed Chief Sub-Editor of Chuckles (H.A. Hinton was the controlling editor.) He then joined up, serving with the A.S.C. (now R.A.S.C.). On his return, Mr. Twyman was given the editorship of a new paper, the Detective Library (1919). Most of the stories were reprints, but he did write several original stories for that publication. In connection with the Detective Library Mr. Twyman was able to enlighten me on two things which I (and many others) have been wanting to know for a very long time; firstly that 'Derek Clyde' was created by William Murray Graydon, and secondly that the stories featuring Sexton Blake at Kingsmere College were written by Stanley Gordon Shaw.

The editor of the Union Jack at that time was Walter Shute (better known as the writer, Walter Edwards), and when he left in 1921 to become a freelance, Mr. Twyman took over the Union Jack from him. From that time onwards the Union Jack continued to be a great success, and although the official records cannot be stated, an estimated weekly circulation of around 300,000 copies would not be far out.

Mr. Twyman has his own personal record of all Blake writers in the Union Jack from Nos. 906 (19.2.1921) to 1216 (5.2.1927) and these, having been entered at that time, must be accepted as correct.

Len Packman and Walter Webb very kindly loaned me their books of records, and with Mr. Twyman's permission I was able to check, amend and add authors' names where necessary. (It must be remembered that the author's name was not given with the stories at that time.) Here, I would pay tribute to Len and Walter - and those who have helped them in compiling their lists - on a very fine achievement, for out of 300 odd issues I only found 38 authors' names needing correction, half of which one would never have imagined could be wrong. Some of them were practically unknown, in addition to which I discovered that ten of the 'Criminals Confederation' stories were written by Gilbert Chester, as Robert Murray was indisposed at that time. (Mr. Twyman wrote one later 'Confederation' story himself: "Enter the President," U.J. No. 1484.)

Apart from his 'official' list, he was also kind enough to give me the names of several Union Jack writers whose work had previously been undetermined.

A document even more authentic than the copied list referred to, and covering about twice the length of time (1921-1933), was the office record-book in which were entered not only authors' and artists' names, but all the day-to-day details such as press dates necessary for the running of the paper. Because it was so continuously referred to for guidance, it was jocularly known as 'The Bible.'

On our Editor's taking over another paper, it passed into the keeping of his successor, and finally was lost sight of - probably in a load of paper salvage - only to re-appear in the shape of sugar cartons or suchlike.

Thus, the definitive and indisputable answer to many a baffled collector's questions that would have been worth untold gallons of midnight oil was lost to the cause.

Mr. Twyman was very interested in my Blakiana article last year on Gwyn Evans, for he knew the colourful Gwyn better than anyone; he has in fact written an account of Gwyn's escapades and 'goings on' in the freelance market (entitled "Good Evans - Crazy as a Coot!").

Having kindly been loaned the manuscript, I must say it makes very interesting reading, and Mr. Twyman has most kindly promised that I may let Mr. Leckenby publish it in the C. Digest later on. Speaking of Gwyn Evans, my host's opinion was that was undoubtedly one of his best writers, and certainly the most colourful personality. But of course, there was a snag: his casualness and irresponsible ways made an awful lot of subbing necessary before all the loopholes were plugged and the loose ends tied up. Conversely, there were other authors - notably Edwy Searles Brooks - whose copy was as easy to read as a page of print.

Gwyn Evans wrote all his stories in a small, neat, round-hand, with a left-hand margin that rapidly became wider and wider as he got down the page. This, as any handwriting analyst knows, is a sure sign of fast, fluent writing and it is an indication of how smoothly those flights of fancy of the man who wrote "The Onion Men" and others poured from his pen.

The series most popular in the Union Jack during Mr. Twyman's editorship was that featuring the 'Criminals Confederation,' and the most popular artist was Eric Parker.

A very fine artist himself, a number of Mr. Twyman's oil paintings adorn the inner walls of the cottage. Many readers of the Sexton Blake Annual, No. 2, will remember the plan of Sexton Blake's house in Baker Street, which was also his work, though this was rather in the nature of architectural fantasy than portraiture, which is his present interest.

The reason why it was stated in the Sexton Blake Annual that the first Blake story appeared in Union Jack (1st series) No. 2, when in fact it was the Marvel ( $\frac{1}{2}$ d.) No. 6, is this: at that time it was always believed that the former was the first Blake story. Editors simply do not have the time to delve into history and research. (Mr. Twyman has more to say on this in the extract of his letter to Len Packman which will be found at the end of this article.) It must also be remembered that for years it was always understood even by Blake enthusiasts among our own circle that Union Jack (1st series) No. 2, was the first Blake story until Walter Dexter discovered the real first in the British Museum.

Mr. Twyman, who is, I would say, in appearance like the great Sexton Blake himself (complete with pipe), told me a number of amusing stories concerning readers' unquestioning belief in the actual reality of Blake as a living man. For example, there was the elderly woman

reader who wrote asking in all seriousness whether she could be considered for the job of Sexton Blake's house-keeper when Mrs. Bardell retired. Also, later on, a second lady had a similar ambition. She went further and called at the office asking to see Mr. Blake. Realising her error, Mr. Twyman gently tried to disillusion her when she addressed him as Blake, but she could not accept the idea of a fictitious detective and must have thought that her hero was going about incognito for some reason, for she persistently held to her belief. Moreover, she deduced that the Union Jack's chief sub-editor must of course be Tinker.

He also told me of a visit to Paris to see G.H. Teed, who was then living there, to talk over plots for future stories, and of how one story was inspired by certain unrehearsed events in Notre Dame Cathedral.

One of the most frequently-asked questions is as to why the Union Jack was changed to the Detective Weekly. The answer is simple - because of the decline in the sales of the former. Like many other papers, when all the plans for changing over were cut and dried, the sales began to pick up again!

Lecnard H. Brooks (I was told) was the brother of Edwy Searles Brooks, and this explains Walter Webb's statement as to the similarity of their work. Walter also told me that L.H. Brooks died in very tragic circumstances about four years ago.

Generally speaking, about two out of every three Union Jack stories were accepted for publication, the rate of payment for a story being about £28.

The knock-out blow to the Blake saga, Mr. Twyman reckons, was just before the beginning of World War No. 2: Gwyn Evans, G. H. Teed and Robert Murray all died at that time or shortly after, as did the artist Fred Bennett and Val Reading, while H.M. Lewis abruptly vanished without explanation or later trace (a job for me to solve, he jokingly remarked). William Murray Graydon was lost sight of, and perhaps died, in Paris, and that was the last seen of him. Ladbroke Black and John G. Brandon were two others who died. Clifford Gates was another, in his case after the war and as the result of a mine explosion.

In addition to the stories he wrote for the Detective Library, Mr. Twyman also wrote some for the Detective Weekly and numerous other publications, Amalgamated Press and otherwise. In the Union Jack he is represented by only two stories - "Enter the President" already mentioned, and "The Case of Cormack's Key," No. 1073. And, (for the

distasteful information of Hamiltonians) he confesses to being one of those untouchables, a substitute, with "Billy Bunter's Legacy," Magnet No. 941, and "The Temptation of Peter Hazeldene," No. 949.

It must be remembered that Mr. Twyman still writes for a living - almost entirely for the American market - and is a busy man, so that it is good of him to allow me to visit him and ask so many questions. If, however, any reader has a particular question pertaining to the Union Jack that he would like to ask, if the enquiry is sent to me I am sure Mr. Twyman will be pleased to supply the answer.

Finally, here is an extract of a letter from Mr. Twyman to Len Packman. This extract is most interesting, and both Len and myself feel that its inclusion will be a fitting conclusion to this little article....."I may say I am vastly impressed by the work, not only of Mr. Lofts himself, but of other members, in so patiently and skillfully assembling through deduction and research such a mass of information. Because of the inevitable limitations of the techniques they can use there are naturally some errors - being gradually weeded out as the wholesale research progresses - but on the other hand some of the facts I have read would, I am sure, have come as a revelation to my colleagues in the A.P., as they do to me. But of course there is a difference between the situation of the collector and that of the editorial worker; you have the whole range of the finished product before you in which to compare, compile, evaluate and detect lapses into inconsistency; whereas we lack both the opportunity and inclination for the historical approach because of deadlines and detail, the preoccupations of policy, of being harassed by authors and artists who simply won't deliver to time, and of too much work and too little staff. Yes, there is a difference between running a paper and running down the facts about it long afterwards. It is the difference between a man working with a fine-focus microscope and another surveying the scene with a telescope.

One thing strikes me as odd - the care, almost anxiety, to establish the name of anonymous writers, or the real name behind a pseudonym, when that name, when discovered, is just a name that in many cases can be associated with no known individual. There is so seldom any clue as to what he looks like, even, though I am glad to say that during my time as editor of Union Jack I did run photos of most of the writers and artists from time to time - though, what of the coarse-screen halftones it was necessary to use, even the subjects of the photos could hardly recognise themselves.

Nevertheless, it is certainly a fine hobby - not the mere accumulation of collecting, but one with an appeal to nostalgia and the glamour of the past, and with scope for acquiring fresh knowledge by observation of literary styles, by research, and by a kind of Sexton Blakish detective work generally. It's an active kind of collecting; not just acquiring things to look at. And as hobbies go, it's not expensive.

We people who laboured to produce those old papers week by week little realised the eyes that would be upon us years hence, or what custodians of a continuing tradition we were. Otherwise we might have been a bit more careful despite the deadlines and the detail....."

---

LETTER BOX

October 6th 1956.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

I am very interested indeed in the Press extracts in the C.D. The interview with Gerald Campion is specially interesting: but I fancy the reporter is rather off the mark about those "weary years": for I have the best of reasons to know that Campion enjoys his role — as what actor could fail to enjoy a role which he plays better than anyone else could? Campion is a born actor, and I believe that he could play any part he chose: and the role of Bunter is not so easy as many viewers may fancy it is. A job well done is never easy but always enjoyable.

In the other extract, it is said that Frank Richards said frankly that he still works because he must eat! Now, that is the truth, but not the whole. Certainly I have to earn my livelihood, like any other man, and I am very happy to be able to do so by means of Bunter: but if I were a millionaire, I should still write, because I love writing, and because my readers, bless their hearts, want to read what I write. If some Maecenas came along and presented me with a Sabine farm, the first article I should instal there would be a typewriter: and its cheery click would still be music to my ears just as it is now.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

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# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by Herbert Leckenby

Greyfriars fans get a good share of the limelight each month in these columns but this month I am sure they will not complain if they are kept in the wings for once to allow the St. Jims loyalists to take the full stage for once. For I don't think there's any need to remind you that just fifty years ago, on 3rd November, 1906, the very first story of St. Jims appeared in the yellow-covered "Pluck" and surely that's an occasion well worth celebrating.

In announcing it the previous week the editor wrote:

'Your second complete story will be from the pen of Mr. Charles Hamilton, our popular school story writer. Readers of his tale in this number, "The Lyndale First," will, without doubt, be more than pleased we have another story from his pen so soon.

His story for next Saturday's "Pluck" will be entitled "Jack Blake of St. Jim's," and I will ask you to read it carefully for this reason. It will form the first of a series of school stories written round Jack Blake who, I have not the slightest doubt, will speedily make himself one of the most popular characters who have ever appeared in "Pluck."

Well, according to a letter I had from Mr. Charles Hamilton about nine years ago, those words were written by Mr. H.J. Garrish that A.P. veteran who died only a few months ago. He was an optimist at the time but little would he dream that fifty years on that St. Jims would still be very much in the picture, and No. 106 of "Pluck" worth a very handsome sum.

Well, here are some recollections, starting appropriately with something from the author who started it all:

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Is it really fifty years?

An old boy who has long exceeded the Psalmist's allotted span ought, I suppose, when reminded of a story written fifty years ago, to feel that "crabbed age" has supervened at last.

Somehow, I don't feel in the least like that.

To me, the first St. Jims story, written half-a-century since,

is as familiar as the last, written a few months ago. Jack Blake's arrival at the old school is as fresh as his proceedings in "Down and Out," which won't be published till next year. Somehow or other, so far as writing is concerned, Time seems to stand still. Dum loquimur, fugerit invida aetas, says Horace: but one doesn't feel like it: at least Frank Richards doesn't.

Don't I remember sitting at a sunny window, at a No. 7 Remington, tapping out that story, lifting the roller every now and then to see how St. Jim's was getting on — that was before the days of "visible" typing! And how pleased I was by the kind reception H.J. Garrish gave it. Like our old friend Oliver Twist he asked for more: with the result that the morefulness was terrific! The boys of St. Jim's turned out to be Peter Pans: and if their author is a little more like Tithonus, why grouse?

Afterall, what's half-a-century? The other day I was reading Tennyson: and a comical parody of some of his verses in "Maud" came into my head.

What shall I be at ninety,  
With a decade still to run,  
If I find the world so jolly,  
When I'm only eighty-one!

With kind regards,  
Very sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

\* \* \* \* \*

A PILLAR OF ST. JIM'S

by

Robert Parish

Considerably the worse of wear, like myself, a copy of PLUCK No. 106 (New Series) lies before me as I write, and it was in this number dated November 10th 1906 that there appeared the first story of St. Jim's, the story telling of the arrival at the school, which was to become loved by thousands of young readers of the GEM, of that sturdy lad from Yorkshire, Jack Blake.

Surely PLUCK No. 106 (New Series) marked the beginning of an era in boys' literature, the like of which had never been seen before and which, in all probability, will never be seen again. That St. Jim's, its staff and boys should be so alive today in the hearts and minds of old readers of the GEM after the passage of fifty years is, in my

opinion, an achievement on the part of Martin Clifford which has not yet been fully recognised.

Jack Blake was always a favourite of mine, his courage, determination, initiative and reliability appealing to me in many a story of St. Jim's. He was Gussy's rough and ready guardian, and the following exchange between him and Gussy, often repeated in the pages of the GEM, never fails to make me smile whenever I come across it:-

"'You silly ass,' roared Blake.

'Weally, Blake, I wish you wouldn't wear at me. I have often told you befoah that it throws me into quite a fluttah when I am weared at.'"

Good old Jack Blake. He was one of the best and, without question, a pillar of St. Jim's.

\* \* \* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by

D.B. Webster.

GEM No. 15

THE ST. JIM'S CURATE

I don't think many read, far less remember, this story. It introduces Rev. Frank Dodds of Huckleberry Heath who turns out to be the opposite to what Tom Merry & Co. expected. Instead of being a weedy sort of individual, he is - as Martin Cliffords says- a man of fine physique and a stalwart son of the Church. His stay at St. Jim's coincides with the visit of the Greyfriars Junior Cricket Team, and George Yorke, the Greyfriars' skipper (not Harry Wharton, for the "Magnet" had not even been thought of in June 1907 when this story was written) asks permission to play a Fifth Former whose name is - would you believe it - Ponsonby! (not our Cecil, surely?). To even up matters, it is agreed that St. Jim's play the curate and the result is amazing. St. Jim's scored 100 in quarter of an hour without the loss of a wicket (Figgins and Mr. Dodds), and Greyfriars were out for NIL twice, Mr. Dodds taking 19 wickets and catching the other man off Tom Merry's bowling. What an all-rounder for the English Test Team he'd have made. As for Ponsonby and Greyfriars School, strange how forthcoming events cast their shadows before them.

\* \* \* \* \*

MY FAVOURITE PERIOD OF THE "GEM"

by Leonard Packman.

Seeing that I have been an ardent "Gem" enthusiast from the day

in 1915 when I first started reading it, the selecting of a particularly favoured period should be rather difficult; but in actual fact it is very easy.

For me, no period can compare with the first 17 blue and white issues with the two-column printing, following the original green(?) cover.

The serial numbers run from 437 to 453 inclusive, and let me say right away that the fact of seven of the stories being written by J.N. Pentecost means nothing to me now - any more than it did when I was a boy. In those early days, I knew nothing about substitute writers, although at times I, no doubt in common with others, found some of these 'less appealing.' So far as this little 'run' is concerned, however, I always have and always shall consider them all delightful stories.

Let us take a very brief glance through the titles and see what sort of fare the stories provided:

No. 437 "A Strange Secret" was a sequel to 436, "Under Gussy's Protection," featuring Valentine Outram (Purkiss, the extremely strong Reformatory lad).

No. 438 "A Schoolboy's Sacrifice" featured Wilkins, and 439 "The Snob of the School" found Percy Mellish playing a leading part in a story about his soldier cousin.

In No. 440 the War Profiteer's son Aubrey Racke arrived, the title of the story being most appropriate: "Moneybags Minor."

No. 441 "Too Clever by Half" found St. Leger and Trimble in the limelight (much to their regret), whilst 442 "The Schoolboy Reporter" starred Dick Redfern, one of the trio of scholarship-boy chums.

No. 443 "Grundy the Detective" was a typical G.A.G. yarn in which he applies his 'genius' to the task of finding Harry Manners missing camera.

No. 444 "Every Inch a Hero" is a story that I am very fond of, for it introduces a charming girl athlete by the name of Sylvia Carr.

No. 445 was entitled "The Patriots of St. Jim's," and No. 446 "Kildare's Enemy," in which Sydney Clive arrived at the school.

No. 447 "Holiday Camp" was another special favourite story of mine, for Sylvia Carr was featured once again, as also was the case in the following issue "Heroes of the Fourth."

No. 449 "Friends or Foes?" featured Talbot and Crooke.

No. 450 "Levison on the Warpath" was another story I liked very much. This is one of the yarns in which Ernest Levison composed one

of his cunning limericks unfavourable to Tom Merry and which Tom, in all innocence, inserted in 'Tom Merry's Weekly.'

No. 451 "Levison Minor" saw the arrival of Frank Levison, the boy whose influence had much to do with his elder brother's ultimate reformation.

No. 452 featured Dick Redfern again in "Redfern to the Rescue," and No. 453 "By Cousin Ethel's Wish" ends the little run.

Truly a fine assortment of stories, and all of them illustrated by my favourite artist, Warwick Reynolds.

Many stories in other periods rank high in my esteem, particularly during the years 1917, 1918 and 1919 but, for me, these blue and white two-column "Gems" will always be - real gems!

\* \* \* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 21 - Gems 743-747 - Rogue Rackstraw Series

1922 was one of the best years of the Gem, and the Rogue Rackstraw series possessed all the requisite ingredients of a good tale, including a novel and ingenious plot. Despite all these auspicious concomitants, however, the series failed to ring the bell. Perhaps the shortness of the stories was the cause (they seldom exceeded nine chapters at this time), or perhaps the author was not up to his usual form. At any rate, the epic was told in a jerky manner which did less than full justice to the originality of the theme.

The story revolved around a remarkable series of kidnappings, which began with Tom Merry and Kildare. Dr. Holmes paid £500 to ransom Tom Merry, and then further kidnappings occurred - Lowther, Gordon Gay, Inspector Fix, Mr. Railton, Manners and Talbot. The real hero of the series was Wildrake, and it was he who guessed half way through that the culprit was Mr. Brown the miller, of Wayland Moor. Wildrake became the confidante of Inspector Fix, and he played the game on his own later when the Inspector disappeared, being responsible in the last number for the successful dramatic climax.

It was pleasant to have Tom Merry more prominently featured once again and there is no doubt that the atmosphere of tension and anxiety was well depicted. Yet it was perhaps too large a theme to be handled successfully in some forty odd chapters. The events were too rapid and the characters too numerous to allow the reader to take in fully the bewildering sequence of disasters. Hamilton fans with a taste for this type of story would be better advised to turn to an earlier, and far superior, series in Nos. 906-911 of the Boys' Friend

(reprinted in No. 20 of the Schoolboys' Own Library), where the manner in which the Fistical Four disappeared one by one was related most eerily and with consummate skill on the appropriately smaller canvas of Rookwood School. The Rookwood series was as compact and intimate as the St. Jim's series was amorphous and impersonal. One of the drawbacks of the Gem was that the author began with plenty of space but was cut down severely and permanently after the first ten years. The Rookwood stories were always on a small scale, a factor which helped them to retain a much more consistent standard. A disappointing series like that of Rogue Rackstraw would thus not have occurred in the Rookwood saga, but, though the series was not up to standard, it was not a failure, and the reader who prefers study No. 10 in the Shell passage will find a good deal in this series to please him. For a lover of the old blue Gems, this is a recommendation which covers a multitude of sins.

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF "THE TOFF" STORIES

by

George Sellars

Reginald Talbot, "The Toff," the boy who passed from shadow to sunshine, is in my opinion one of the most popular and greatest characters in Charles Hamilton's Gallery. A series of stories entitled "The Call of the Past," "Cast out from the School" and "Loyal to the Last" to my mind are about the most powerful of all the "Toff" stories which is saying a great deal. The first story tells how St. Jim's is in the grip of an epidemic of "Flu" caused by the juniors playing football in a torrential downpour of rain. The Staff in the sanatorium is not adequate of course to deal with all the patients and extra work so Dr. Holmes is compelled to engage another nurse to help Miss Pinch in her duties. Talbot and D'arcy go to the station to meet Miss Smart, "The Little Sister of the Poor" as she is called, and "The Toff" receives a great surprise when he recognizes Miss Smart as an old associate of the Angel Alley gang of crooks and his own dark past. None other in fact than Marie Rivers, the daughter of John Rivers "The Professor" and head of the gang of criminals of which Talbot only a short time ago was a member before he earned the King's Pardon. Marie uses all her charming influence to persuade "The Toff" to return to the old life and the gang, but Talbot is resolute and remains loyal to the trust and faith his friends have placed in him.

Instead, he in his turn tries to persuade Marie to give up the

life of crime and the gang, but she scorns the idea and says she will never desert her father. "The Professor" also fails in his attempt to lure Talbot to return to his former life, which makes Marie's father more determined than ever to carry out his plans at St. Jim's, thereby placing Talbot under suspicion and his return to the old life. He employs Marie to do his rascally work for him; several robberies occur at St. Jim's and Talbot warns Marie that if her father continues to carry on with these thefts at the School he will inform the Police that "The Professor" is in Rylcombe. Also that he will take the blame for the robberies rather than see the girl arrested with her father, for Marie is determined that if her father goes to prison she will go with him. However, "The Toff" is resolved to tell "The Professor" what he intends to do. Talbot leaves the girl in a remorseful mood and very unhappy, for "The Toff" was to suffer in her place - to save her. That was his return for her share in the plot against him. Eventually "The Professor" is beaten in a battle of wits by Talbot threatening to phone Inspector Skeat and himself to take the blame of plundering the School. John Rivers is compelled to leave in a hurry leaving "The Toff" to return the stolen plunder, and St. Jim's believing the whole affair to be a practical joke.

(To be continued)

\* \* \* \* \*

NOTE:- As we were about to go to press, a long and extremely interesting article came along from Eric Copeman entitled "Those Early Gems - Some Stray Thoughts." They may be stray thoughts; they are certainly well put together as you'll agree when you read the first instalment next month.(H.L.)

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 B.F.L. 427. "Pete in Peruvia."

GERALD ALLISON, 7 SUMMERFIELD GARDENS, BRAMLEY, LEEDS, 13.

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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

328 Stockton Lane, York.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some time ago, we had a number of attractive character sketches by our Canadian member, Bernard Thorne. Here is another, about one of Edwy Searles Brooks's most interesting characters and one of the leading lights of the St. Franks' scene.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ST. FRANK'S CHARACTERS

### No. 4. Ralph Leslie Fullwood

Ralph Leslie Fullwood, with Reggie Pitt the most famous of Edwy Searles Brooks's "reformed" characters, was at St. Frank's at the introduction of that school in Old Series No. 112, and was still a member of the Remove Form when Mr. Brooks and the Nelson Lee Library made their final bow. An extremely talented soccer forward and an above-average cricketer, Ralph was one of the leading lights of the Junior School. But it was not always so: Brooks has rarely portrayed a more black-guardly character than Fullwood as he was when Richard Bennett, as Nipper was then known, came to St. Frank's in Old Series No. 112.

At that time, Fullwood was junior captain of the Fossils, and the Ancient House had never known a worse skipper. It is a puzzle to us, who followed the life of the "Lee" through thick and thin, that even with the backing of Gulliver and Bell, De Valerie, Merrill and Marriott, Fullwood was allowed to reign supreme by Handforth, Watson, Tregellis-West and Co. But someone had to lead and we wonder if Mr. Brooks did not feel that it was better for Nipper to depose a tyrant than one of the fellows who were to become his staunch friends.

Be that as it may, Fullwood, after a bitter duel during which Nipper was sent to Coventry, ducked in the Fountain, and generally mistreated, was defeated. And that overthrow was the commencement of a series of misfortunes for Ralph that finally terminated with his redemption. In O.S. 141, Cecil De Valerie, known as the "Rotter" and one of Fullwood's staunchest allies, finally severed the friendship and went over to Nipper and Co. In O.S. 167 and 168, Fullwood set out to

discredit a new boy named Browne, only to have his schemes rebound when the new boy proved to be none other than the Duke of Somerton. The coming of Reggie Pitt in O.S. 170 gave a fresh impetus to Fullwood's mean and vindictive nature. Pitt, dubbed the "Serpent" by his Form-mates, had a more spiteful make-up than Ralph, and until "The Serpent's Redemption," O.S. 178, the Pitt-Fullwood combination proved to be a thorn in the side of the other Fossils.

Even with the redeeming of Reggie Pitt, Fullwood continued to be a pretty thorough rascal. Although, we believe, preferable to Claude Gore-Pearce and Bernard Forrest, he had a revengeful nature which was shown to the full in O.S. No. 206, when Nipper, faced with expulsion and disgrace, was the helpless target of his spiteful triumph.

"You're kicked out, you stinking cad!" Fullwood shouted jeeringly. "You're sacked from the school - and good riddance! You thought the Head would let you stop, didn't you?"

Again Mr. Brooks paints Fullwood in very black colours when he left St. Frank's to join Beechwood College run by the Hon. Douglas Singleton. And again when he was made to show a complete loathing for Umlosi because he was coloured, and Solomon Levi when he learned that the new boy was a Jew. No boy entered the school for the first time without becoming the butt of his sneering remarks and vindictive nature.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood's change in character came well over half way through the life of the Nelson Lee. The change was first noticed by Nipper during the yacht Wanderer's cruise in the South Seas (O.S. 530-536), and when the juniors returned to St. Frank's the difference in Fullwood was obvious to Gulliver and Bell. He no longer smoked cigarettes, nor did he show any great desire for their company. In O.S. 537, E.S. Brooks describes this change, and we cannot do better than quote his words:

".....Fullwood was realizing it strongly. Gulliver and Bell grated upon him. Formerly he and they had pulled together as one. But now, for some strange reason, they irritated him beyond measure... They were different - they were unutterably caddish and mean. He realized it in every word and action.

And Fullwood, with a jarring jolt, realized that it was he who was different. Gulliver and Bell were just the same as ever - and not so very long ago he had been just the same! Now in some subtle way, his view-point was altered. He looked at life from a different angle.

Was it because he had spent so many pleasant weeks in the company of Nipper and Pitt and Christine, and all the other decent fellows?...."

It is difficult to say with certainty what did begin the change in Fullwood. Certainly we do not believe it was as a result of Nipper, Pitt and Christine's company during those weeks in the South Seas. There can be no doubt that Clive Russell had some influence, as had also Ralph's old although half-submerged love for soccer.

Then came the news of his cousin Eustace Carey's unsavoury adventure at Oxford where he assaulted a fellow undergrad and fled with two hundred pounds. Gulliver and Bell had discovered Carey's relationship to Fullwood and had been quick to use the information to blackmail him; and it was as a result of the realization that when he was in trouble, his cronies and study-mates either ignored him or used his secret as a means of extracting a little cash, that brought Fullwood to his senses. On the other hand, the decent fellows whom he had always held in contempt now came forward with a genuine desire to let bygones be bygones. They discussed football with him and Nipper even dropped a hint that if Ralph improved his play, there would be an opening in the team for him. But hard on the heels of his new-found happiness came the frightening news that Eustace Carey was in hiding from the police at Moat Hollow and expected Ralph to assist him. And because Carey was his cousin, and also because of the change in his nature, Ralph did not hesitate; although realizing fully the fact that he was putting himself in jeopardy with the school and the law.

Eustace Carey proved to be a thorough scoundrel, and Fullwood's anguish was intensified when his cousin appeared in the guise of a new member of the Sixth Form, having waylaid and imprisoned in Bellton Priory ruins a young man named Stanley Clavering. But Ralph had a staunch friend in Reggie Pitt's sister Winifred, who had first become attached to him during the South Seas' cruise. Clive Russell had also become the tower of strength, having further cemented their friendship by offering to share Study H with him. This offer Ralph had refused, but had not forgotten the sincerity that lay behind it.

Much happened before the cloud of his rascally cousin's crimes was lifted from his head. But finally in O.S. 541, Ralph won through and faced the future at St. Frank's with a new feeling of calm and happiness. Clive Russell had vacated his own study to join him, and Winnie Pitt had shown him that she valued his friendship; lastly he had become a valuable member of the Junior Eleven. Old Series 541 closed on a cheerful note:

"Fullwood rose to his feet, stretched himself, and looked out into the gathering dusk.

'This is my first term at St. Frank's!' he told himself softly. 'There was another fellow here before that - but he's dead now - and good riddance to bad rubbish!'"

So we come to the new Ralph Leslie Fullwood - a Fullwood that is familiar to later readers of the Nelson Lee Library - a Fullwood that stood stoutly at the side of Lord Dorrimore, Nelson Lee and Nipper in their fight to rescue Yung Ching in the China series - a Fullwood who became a prominent member of the Vigilantes formed by Nipper to thwart the rascality of Bernard Forrest and Co. in the First New Series No. 26, and fought successfully against his old folly of gambling. This was a Fullwood far removed from the old days of the Fossils and Classics - a Fullwood that we grew to love with Handforth and Pitt, Archie Glenthorpe and William Napoleon Browne, Willy Handforth and Vivian Travers.

Today we have no St. Frank's as others have Greyfriars and Rookwood; we have no Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton, Vernon Smith and Gussy; but as we pass happily along our well-filled bookshelves, selecting here and there one of those gaily coloured papers that have given, and always will give us so much happiness, we thank the powers that be for Edwy Searles Brooks, who for all his critics, gave us St. Francis College and its Schoolboys, and not the least - Ralph Leslie Fullwood.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here are the answers to James Cook's memory tests in last month's C.D:-

1. Page 22 - Coming of the Serpent - Series No. 175; 2. Page 8 - Colonel Clinton - Series No. 189; 3. Page 17 - The Bullies' League - Series No. 200; 4. Page 21 - Nipper's Expulsion - Series No. 207;
5. Page 8 - Singleton the Spendthrift - No. 240; 6. Page 22 - Remove Master's Delusion - No. 256; 7. Page 27 - El Dorado - No. 269;
8. Front Page - Schoolboy Cinema Owners - No. 287; 9. Page 31 - Schoolboy Communists - No. 348; 10. Page 16 - South Seas - No. 374;
11. Page 12 - Alf Huggins - No. 410; 12. Page 19 - Buster Boots - No. 438; 13. Page 14 - Dr. Karnak - No. 450; 14. Page 14 - William K. Smith - No. 460; 15. Page 7 - Moat Hollow - No. 502 and 16. Page 6 - Ezra Quirke - No. 546.

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# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## LONDON SECTION

There was a very excellent attendance of 17 members at the October, East Dulwich meeting. The Packman trio of hosts were in sparkling form and excelled themselves with the only quiz of the evening. This was a very good effort and a worthy winner was Charlie Wright. A close second and third were Bob Whiter and Frank Vernon-Lay respectively. Globe Trotter, Alan Stewart, gave a very good talk on his travels, telling of his meetings with Les Rowley in Tokio, Brian Holt in Iceland and Jimmy Iraldi and Fred Griffin in New York. It is a great pleasure to be able to announce that at the meeting at Kensington on November 18th, Alan will be projecting some of his coloured slides that he took on his world wanderings. Also at this meeting, host David Harrison will be giving a cinema show. Alan's talk was very well enjoyed by all present. Then Roger Jenkins gave us a few interesting chapters from the Bunter Court series of the S.O.L. and judging by the laughter these were greatly enjoyed. The usual sales and exchanges took place and great interest was taken in a Swedish and Spanish edition of the "Sexton Blake Library." Thus on to the usual happy conclusion and the look forward to the Kensington, November meeting.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

\* \* \* \* \*

## NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, 13th OCTOBER, 1956.

The date was the 13th and the number of members present was 13 but no-one seemed at all worried.

In the absence of J. Breeze Bentley, the Chair was taken by Herbert who had the pleasure of welcoming back to the fold Harry Barlow, one of the founders of the Northern Section.

Due to the ill health of Mrs. Bentley, Breeze had regretfully asked to be released from his position as Chairman. He suggested the appointment of a temporary Chairman until the next Annual General Meeting. Acting on this, Gerry proposed Stanley Smith and this proposal was seconded by Ernest Whitehead.

Taking the chair, Stanley thanked all the members and hoped that Breeze would still be able to manage to get to some of the Meetings

and that Mrs. Bentley's health would rapidly improve.

The rest of the business was soon dealt with and we then all settled down leaving the main event of the evening to Herbert - his talk being "Papers from 1900 - 1910," and a nice interesting looking pile he had on the table in front of him.

It was in August 1899 when Herbert was playing with a few friends that a Mrs. Porter asked him to run an errand and rewarded him afterwards with two papers - The Boys Friend and a Nugget. From that day, Herbert graduated from comics and started on boys' papers. The Boys Realm, Boys Herald, Surprise, Boys Leader, Big Budget, Marvel, Union Jack, Pluck, True Blue Library and dozens more. Then with pride, Herbert held up a copy of that first Boys Friend he had read. More happy stories and not so happy, as the one in which his uncle took two papers he had just bought, tore them in shreds and scattered them in the road. He not only read the English books but also some American 5 cent books which he used to buy from the second-hand bookstalls in Leeds market after cycling over from York for them.

All too soon it got near refreshment time and Herbert's most interesting and enjoyable talk drew to a close and as he said, "What is there in this hobby of ours which makes such memories re-appear with such ease and as clear as if they had occurred only yesterday?"

A well-deserved round of applause closed the first half of the programme.

Following the refreshments, we had a quiz set by Gerry Allison, the first two past the post being Mollie Allison with ten points and Jack Wood a close second with nine points.

We wound up with a double acrostic also set by Gerry, but sad to say, no-one got anywhere near completing it. Make it slightly easier next time Gerry, please!

Next meeting 10th November, when we shall have a Controversial Discussion Session on a number of set topics of which the members each have a copy. A few interesting likes and dislikes should be aired at this meeting.

R. HODGSON.

\* \* \* \* \*

MIDLAND BRANCH - SEPTEMBER MEETING

This was held 24th September at our new headquarters in the Chambers of Commerce, New Street. Attendance was low owing to holidays and illness. Formal business consisted mostly of appreciation of the good work by the Chairman in securing the room. Also the Chairman added his own personal thanks to those expressed by the Club in

general, to Mr. Ted Davey for his past services as Secretary.

The programme consisted of two subjects for debate proposed by the writer. Item one drew attention to the unique fact that Frank Richards' total number of Masters and Headmasters at his three main schools numbered 19 bachelors out of 22 in all. Only the three Head "beaks" were married men. Was this an oversight or was there any bias against married masters? A very enjoyable debate ensued. The next item was: Did Frank Richards' selection of names for his various characters hint of a certain snobbishness, a good example being Highcliffe where we look for snobbery. Mostly all there have aristocratic sounding names. On the other hand, the lesser fry, such as secondary character, servants and local tradesmen have more or less common sounding names. Another interesting discussion followed. A few agreed that the names fitted the characters or vice versa. Some agreed that Frank Richards followed on in the Dickens' pattern.

These two items were finished off by an enjoyable reading from "Teddy Lester" and so ended a very satisfactory first night at the new "home".

\* \* \* \* \*

W. H. BROSTER.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14th

The meeting was opened by the Secretary reading the September minutes and the financial state of the branch. A satisfactory sum was announced to be in hand, and it was agreed by all that some of this should be used to make further purchases of books to build up the library.

The Chairman, Don Webster, then told us that it was to be very much regretted that Mr. C.H. Chapman would not be able to attend the meeting but, as the next best thing, would judge a competition for us. All members of the Merseyside Section, present and absent, are asked to do a sketch of W.G. Bunter and bring them to the November meeting. These will then be sent to Mr. Chapman who will judge them and award a small prize for the winner.

The Chairman also announced that Herbert Leckenby had said he would be only too pleased to accept the invitation to become Vice-President of the Club.

A very fine and unusual quiz sent by an absent, but well-remembered friend, Frank Unwin, was then tackled. We were supplied with a list of characters from which we had to deduce the title of the book and the name of the author. Many of the questions were outside the normal range, and the results revealed a surprising knowledge of literature

in general. The result showed Mr. G. Windsor first, Mr. Walsh second and Mr. G. Riley third. Next month's quiz to be presented by the writer.

After tea and biscuits an informal discussion took place as to whether the scope of our quizzes should be enlarged. It was felt by some that we were relying too much on Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's, and that we were not covering all the other Old Boys' Books as well as we should. It was agreed, however, not to go outside the range of what are generally to be considered as "Old Boys' Books."

Next meeting: Sunday 11th November (7 p.m.) and don't forget the sketch of W.G. Bunter.

NORMAN PRAGNELL,  
Secretary.

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#### OBITUARY

#### Edward Ernest Briscoe (1882-1956)

Ernest Briscoe was a gentleman of the old school and although I had only known him a matter of some nine months, his passing has meant the loss of a personal friend. A great lover of the country, he liked nothing better than to tramp for miles across the Weald of Kent and he often walked the legs off far younger men. Of late years he had chiefly concentrated on painting water colours mainly of country scenes centring on Bruges in Belgium for which town he had a special fondness. He was never satisfied with his own work and like the true artist regarded money only as something to be got to enable him to paint as and when he wanted.

For many of his early years he was one of the main artists associated with the Boys' Realm and practically every sporting story over a long period (including the famous "King Cricket") was illustrated by him. Much of his work appeared in the pink days of the Union Jack and a study of some of these drawings shows the immense care and detail he put into all his work. At a later period between the Wars he did hundreds of illustrations (mainly historical) for the Boys' Own Paper but to most of us he will be remembered for the very fine series of British Schools that appeared in the Old Series of the Nelson Lee Library and his wonderful drawings of St. Frank's and its environment. He certainly gave a fine air of reality to the Old School, so with his passing let us take off our hats to a "very

gallant gentlemen."

F. VERNON LAY.

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UNCLE BENJAMIN by Leonard Packman

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I am sorry if the title is misleading, so far as Greyfriars' enthusiasts are concerned, for it is not about the Uncle Benjamin respected so highly by the one and only Alonzo Theophilus Todd but Ben Whiter, Secretary of the (London) Old Boys' Book Club.

My own present status in the club, coupled with that of Chairman of the Sexton Blake Circle, admits of taking up quite a lot of my free time, but until I had reason to call on Ben recently - I usually only see him at our club meetings - I had no idea of the magnitude of his secretarial activities: to be honest, I was really astonished.

A quiet, unassuming chap, 'Uncle' Ben's postbag would daunt anyone (except Herbert Leckenby), and when I say that every letter is answered promptly, every question raised therein and every request (where possible) carried out equally speedily and meticulously, it may be estimated as to how much of his free time is devoted to this facet of the hobby. But this is only part of his backstage operations. Each new 'Bunter' or other Hamiltonian book released finds 'Uncle' Ben staggering home with a load that would 'crease' me, each and every copy wrapped, addressed and posted to our many postal members throughout the country and overseas; added to this he is frequently asked to obtain copies of earlier of these publications. Thus, 'bang' goes practically the remainder of his leisure time; but to top it off he keeps a detailed record of all financial incomings and outgoings relating to these purchases (as distinct from his brother Bob, the Club's admirable treasurer and C.D. artist, of whom more in the near future).

'Uncle' Ben's profession entails a lot of hard work (how I shudder!), and when one realizes that he has been the club secretary for nearly eight years (almost from the beginning) and has never 'cased up' on his secretarial work, it may be judged how much - or rather how little - time he has to himself for personal matters. Throughout the whole of this long period he has never once been heard to grumble or suggest 'a change', and I hope to goodness I am not putting ideas into his head in that direction.

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G.W. WAKEFIELD - A MYSTERY SOLVED!

by W.O.G. Lofts

One of the biggest mysteries in the field of Hamiltonia - and controversial, too - concerns the artist, G.W. Wakefield, for many years the illustrator of Rockwood stories in the "Boys' Friend" (the old "green 'un"). He also did a lot of work for a number of other papers, particularly "Film Fun" in its earlier years.

Wakefield's style was unmistakable, his characters always being depicted with cherubic faces.

For many years it was generally understood that this artist was a man, but a well-known collector (and late A.Press artist), now dead, was under the impression that it was a woman - Grace Wakefield. Now this collector rarely made a mistake, but in this particular case I am afraid his memory was at fault, for I am able to reveal that the name was GEORGE WILLIAM WAKEFIELD!

This official information was recently given to me by an A. Press editor (not H.W. Twyman), who also told me that Wakefield died some years ago.

Like the late E.E. Briscoe, Wakefield did not visit the A.P. very often, hence the comparative obscurity.

Thus, another mystery has been solved.

Whilst on the subject of artists, the following may interest 'comic paper' enthusiasts.

In a recent C.D. article, I said that "Tiger Tim" and the other famous "Bruin Boys" were created by H. S. Foxwell. On this point my informant was incorrect, for - after a lot of research - I can state quite positively that these characters were created by J.S. Baker and taken over by Foxwell during the first year.

Foxwell, who also drew "Teddy Tail" for the Daily Mail, died during the last war; J.S. Baker is also dead.

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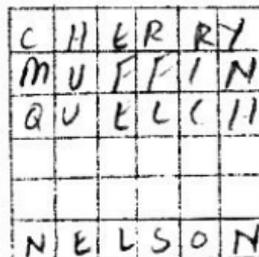
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COLLECTOR'S DIGEST "TREASURES." No. 1. Set By  
Eric Payne.



Look at Clue No. 1. Decide on the answer, and write the word against No. 1 in the second square. Mark off these same six letters in the first square. Do the same with the other clues. You will then have struck out 36 letters in the first square.\* These, correctly arranged, spell the treasure. Write the name of the Treasure on a postcard and post it to the Editor. 5s. Od. will be awarded for the first correct solution received. If the prize is not won this month, the amount will be added to that offered for the solution of next month's puzzle.

CLUES (each answer is a 6-lettered word)



1. A boy with a heart of stone.
2. A Rookwooder for tea.
3. Not just a beast, but just a beast.
4. Greyfriars fifth-former.
5. Miss Priscilla's maid.
6. Mr. Lee of Trafalgar Square.

\* You will  
find that 6  
letters  
remain.

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