

# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 12, No. 138

JUNE, 1958

Price 1s.6d.

\* \* \* \* \*

FROM "THE SURPRISE" No. 32, OCTOBER 8th, 1932



# BILL MARTIN

WORLD FAMOUS  
FOR OLD BOY'S BOOKS

93 HILLSIDE : LONDON N.W.10

Phone: ELGar 3230

Cables: SUPERB USED, LONDON.

Nugget Libraries: 12 Different  
Tufty Stories. 6/- each or  
£3 the lot.

Boy Friend Weekly - 8 numbers  
between 30 - 75. 10/- the lot.

4 Young Britons, 5 Plucks, 2  
Greyfriars Herald. 10/- the lot.

12 Rockets - 9/- the lot.

16 Jesters 1915-1917 - 3/- each  
or 40/- the lot.

6 Boys Own Paper 1923. 3/- lot.

10 Different Aldine Boxing  
Novels - 15/- the lot

Miscellaneous lot - 1 Buffalo  
Bill, 4 B.F.L., 4 S.B.L. 1 Dick  
Turpin, 2 Diamond Libs.,  
2 Sports Budgets. 12/6 the lot.

12 Sexton Blake 1915-1920.  
30/- the lot.

CASH WITH ORDER

Magnet Weekly - 30 Different from  
1916 - 1933 - £5 10s. the lot.

8 Populars, 1 Dreadnought.  
12/6 the lot.

2 Green Gems, 10 Blue and White  
30/- the lot.

31 Boys Magazines 1922-1926  
22/6 the lot.

18 Fals, 1922-23. 20/- the lot.

12 Marvels, 12 Nuggetts, 12  
Sexton Blake Libraries.  
30/- the lot.

11 Nelson Lees between numbers  
18 and 263, vintage 1915 and  
1920 this includes 3 Christmas  
numbers. 50/- the lot.

Schoolgirls' Own Annual, 1930.  
25/6

Champion Annual, 1934. 15/-

School Friend Annual, 1936. 15/-

POSTAGE is essential at these  
prices.

# -THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST-

Vol. 12 No. 138

Price 1s. 6d.

JUNE, 1958

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

o r

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

---

## From The Editor's Chair

---

GIVE A HELPING HAND. On another page you will see an advertisement giving details of papers members of the Golden Hours Club, Sydney, are keen to obtain. Now our friends "down under" are at a disadvantage in the usual way, for when papers are offered for sale in our columns they are almost always snapped up before those so far away have a chance to reply. So, if any of you have any of the papers asked for - please do all you can to help.

\* \* \*

THE TWELFTH ANNUAL. At the Northern O.B.B.C. Meeting last month Ron Hodgson gave a very interesting talk on the Packsaddle School stories which appeared in the Gem with some reprints in the S.O.L. Now these stories were in Charles Hamilton's best style, but so far they have been rather neglected in the Hamilton saga. So as soon as Ron had finished I snapped up his manuscript for use in the coming Annual.

Then I shall soon have in my hands Breeze Bentley's "The Fourth Form at Rockwood", and Don Webster tells me he is busy on "Hi! Fag" a title which rouses ones curiosity.

Well there's a good start for Hamiltonians. In addition Geoff Hockley's article on Buffalo Bill will soon start off on it's journey across the sea. Bill Hubbard, way out in Kenya, is hard at it on a

review of the Wycliffe stories, and Harry Broster is busy on the other Pentelaw schools which will be good news for the no inconsiderable number who admired the stories which appeared under the pen-name - Jack North.

\* \* \*

NEW ZEALAND PUBLICITY. Last month I said I had heard that an article had appeared in the Auckland "Star" that I thought it might be a reprint of the "Manchester Guardian" one, and that I had asked Geoff Hockley to try and get me a copy. Well Geoff succeeded, as I felt sure he would. The paper is on its way to me by sea mail. In his letter Geoff says, "It is as you thought a reprint from the "Manchester Guardian", it's a tribute to you that a New Zealand paper thought it worth while featuring. It's a splendid article and you have every reason to be proud of it." Well, I certainly got a good show, but was even more pleased because our fraternity in general was well in the picture also. Geoff also says another paper is on the way too, with an article "The Fat Hero, Billy Bunter, Survives."

Thanks Geoff hands across the sea again.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

\*\*\*\*\*

"S.O.S." from "DOWN UNDER" - The members of "The Golden Hours Club" of Sydney, Australia, wish to obtain the following items - can you help? Details please to The Secretary, Miss Bette Pate, 8 Day Street, Drummoyne, New South Wales, Australia.

Boys Own - 1916, 1918, 1920. Chums - 1892, 1895, 1912, 1914 to 1915, 1915, 1916. Detective Weekly - 2, 4. Gems - 1064 to 1068, 1505.

Magnets - 193/4, 798, 810, 864, 910, 913, 917 (2 copies), 918/9.

Nelson Lee (Old Series) - 267, 269, 286, 288/9, 290/1, 294.

Penny Popular - 9, 69. Rangers containing GrimsLade stories.

Sexton Blake Library (2nd Series) - 243. Story Paper Collector, 3, 8, 10, 23 and Index to Volume 2. Thrillers - 525 to 529 (incl.)

Union Jacks - 1179/80, 1237/8, 1240 to 1243, 1251, 1253.

FOR SALE - Some hundreds Lees (old series) and Union Jacks. S.A.E. with wants lists please.

F. VERNON LAY, 167 WATFORD ROAD, HARROW, MIDDLESEX.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Blakiana . . . .

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

In March Blakiana I gave a list of UNION JACK titles for July to December, 1917. Unfortunately however, for some unaccountable reason, I did in fact include June as well. In this issue will be found the titles for January to May, 1917, which will of course complete the year.

I have already expressed my thanks to Derek Adley for his fine work in connection with "Frank Lelland", but I take this opportunity of thanking him again (and also Bill Lofts), on behalf of all those readers who, like myself, are interested in this side of the Blake field.

It is a long time since Victor Colby's work appeared in these pages. I feel rather guilty about this, because I received some articles from him quite a while ago. However, I am putting this right as from next month.

JOSIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE BIRTHPLACE OF SEXTON BLAKE

by Herbert Leckenby

Bill Lofts, in his interesting article "Please Don't Forget the Chef", in April Blakiana, gave some extracts from letters he had received from Mr. H. W. Twyman. In these Mr. Twyman related some intriguing behind the scenes happenings whilst he was editor of the "Union Jack".

Well, recently I have also had the good fortune to receive some extremely interesting letters from Mr. Twyman, and in one of these he made some comments on something I had said in the C.D. some time back. In fairness to him I am giving the relevant paragraphs.

"I suppose," (you suggested on p. 323 of November, 1953 issue) "it will ever remain an unsolved mystery." You were discussing the matter of the first Sexton Blake story ever to appear and whether the UNION JACK'S claim that this was in No. 2 of that paper, 4th May, 1894, was genuine on the part of those connected with the Union Jack; or whether they were wilfully concealing their knowledge that the veri-

table first Blake story appeared four months earlier in the MARVEL, thereby flouting truth and stealing credit.

As it happens that I am the only one person on earth who can give the answer to that - an answer unluckily delayed four years by the chance of circumstance - I am writing this for the record.

I was editor of the U.J. when the erroneous claim was made, preprating it in my editorial page of the 1,000th number as far as I can recall, and perhaps on other occasions too. But those I have forgotten. However, in all instances it was my actual belief that Sexton Blake's No. 1 was in No. 2 of U.J.

There was a practical but mistaken reason for that belief. In explaining the situation it should be emphasised that the editorial routine of producing a packed paper every week, with little assistance hardly leaves time for research. An editor's facilities are not those of the historian.

But on this 1,000th number occasion I did consult the first U.J. volume, mainly for the purpose of obtaining the first Blake cover for reproduction. While doing this I turned up what my predecessor had had to say in No. 1 about his forthcoming attraction in No. 2. Regrettably I haven't copies of these pioneer issues handy at the moment and cannot quote verbatim, though perhaps one of your fellow collectors will be able to do so, incidentally shedding some light on the earliest Blake date questions and also on the literary origin of Sexton Blake himself.

Again relying on memory, he described the type of character this new detective was to be, suggesting that he was modelled on the Sherlock Holmes of Mr. Conan Doyle. (This was of course before Holmes' creator got his knighthood.) There was also other information, such as that the Union Jack would never publish stories of a kind to encourage boys to run off with their employers' money, which I quoted in the 1,000th Number editorial, but of which I likewise have no copy at hand, so cannot be more precise. The acknowledgment of Sexton Blake's literary paternity I judged it better not to emphasise.

Now the implication about all this is that I knew nothing of any previous appearance of Blake in the Marvel, which is the fact. There was a volume of the Marvel on the same shelf as Volume 1 of the Union Jack, but I doubt I ever even handled it. I was not interested in the Marvel. So that the assertion - for which I alone was responsible - that Blake first saw print in our No. 2 was a genuine assertion. I was motivated by no wish to claim false credit, and the late Walter Dexter's historic Marvel discovery was as much a surprise to me as to collectors generally. I was led astray by that editorial in No. 1.

It was a case of pure ignorance - inexcusable except that hard-driven editors can only envy rather than emulate the leisured, scholarly approach of the collector. Had it been other wise in my case, this dark suspicion of fact-concealment and credit-taking would never have arisen, but I am happy, even at this late stage, to be able to dissipate a mystery that threatened to remain for ever unsolved.

\* \* \* \*

### THE FRANK LELLAND MYSTERY

Bill Lofts' article in last month's Blakiana, on the mystery surrounding the identity of Frank Lelland, was of great interest to me.

Like Bill, I myself had long been seeking the solution, and now that it was known that this author's work was submitted through Stephen Aske's Literary Agency I felt that a step had been made in the right direction.

I now began to tackle the problem from another angle. Firstly, I listed something like 1,600 O.B.B. authors real names and pen-names; I then extracted the names of all authors who I thought could possibly have been the mystery man Frank Lelland.

After much research I eliminated hundreds of these authors because of their rather limited experience, for I was accepting the Detective Weekly editor's statement that Frank Lelland was a really well known **writer**.

After much delving into Who's Who, Authors Who's Who, and many other such works, I had reduced my list to something like thirty authors, most of them well known and the majority of them having a very varied experience.

Eventually I got my mind set on one man, namely, A. M. Burrage, for he certainly seemed to me to have been capable of writing these stories - he was, incidentally, the author of "Poor Dear Esme" (published by Newnes in 1925).

My next search was to find his full name, the difficulty being that so many of these books listed him simply as A. M. Burrage.

Then at last I found his full name in a reference book in the library, and on seeing this I was positive that I was on the right track, for his name actually was Alfred McLelland Burrage.

I thought then that I could possibly write to him and ask him if I was right in my assumption, and to my greatest surprise - and to clinch matters - I found his address given as: c/o Stephen Aske Literary Agency.

Making a telephone call to this firm I spoke to the manager who, in the course of conversation, told me he was confident that this was the true identity of Frank Leland. He told me that his firm had handled practically all of A. M. Burrage's material and that it was indeed of a varied nature; he also informed me that A. M. Burrage died about a year ago.

For the record here is a short extract from Who's Who, 1914:

"Alfred McLelland Burrage was born 1st July, 1889, the son of Alfred Sherrington Burrage. He began to write and sell stories while still at school, and at seventeen was for some time the youngest professional author. He wrote articles, stories and poems for nearly 150 publications including Strand, Pearsons and Tatler."

Incidentally, Alfred Sherrington Burrage was for some time editor of "The Young Englishman" and also author of many of the Aldine "Robin Hood" stories. He sometimes wrote under the name of Alf Sherrington, which of course derived from his real name.

This means that Alfred McLelland Burrage was the nephew of the famous Edwin Harcourt Burrage of "Ching Ching" fame.

DEREK ADLEY.

\* \* \* \*

ANSWER TO MEMORY TEASER NO. 11 (May, 1958 C.D.)

The extract last month which featured Blake and Pedro came from S.B.L. No. 313, issued in June, 1954. It was written by the well known writer HUGH CLEVELY, who contributed eleven Blake stories during the period 1952/1955.

To the best of the writer's knowledge, this story is the last one published which mentioned Pedro.

\* \* \* \*

HOW'S YOUR MEMORY? - TEASER No. 12

By E. V. Copeman

These days apparently one of the prime demands by readers is that the stories they read should contain action. To members of the Sexton Blake Circle this isn't really anything new, because the Sexton Blake stories have been founded as much on action as they have on deduction or characterisation. Therefore old-timers shouldn't have too much trouble identifying the style of the author of the story from which the following four extracts are taken.

No other clues except that he was once a "top-liner" in the Blake world and is still alive - though unfortunately not writing. And the yarn appeared in the UNION JACK.

EXTRACT NO. 1 (The opening paragraphs of the story).

Another bullet zipped through the already shattered window and buried itself in the plaster of the far wall.

Sexton Blake, the celebrated criminologist of Baker Street, heard the whine of the bullet unpleasantly close to his ear. He turned with a thoughtful smile to his assistant.

"Shooting at random, of course; but that one was uncomfortably near. I am beginning to think, my lad, that this place is intended to be a death trap."

EXTRACT No. 2 (Still taken from Chapter 1)

Blake and Tinker have scrambled up through a trapdoor in the roof with the hope of eluding their prospective murderers. They have climbed to the top of a large water tank fitted with a wooden cover.

"On to that tank," said Blake. "It is our only chance. They'll search the ceiling with the machine-gun."

He was right.

Before a minute had passed, the house below was full of men and the ceiling of the upper floor was disappearing under the searching fire of two machine-guns firing continuously.

The bullets passed up through the plaster and shattered the tiling of the roof, which fell in showers around them, but the bullets ricocheted harmlessly from the bottom of the tank. And apart from the fact that they were compelled to breathe clouds of dust, the detectives remained unscathed.

EXTRACT NO. 3 (Taken from Chapter 5)

In different parts of the room a dozen men were watching Sexton Blake. Several of them were covering him. Some of the men there had personal reason to hate the great detective. They had double reason to fear him now that he knew of their associations with the murderous crook.

The fear at the back of each man's mind was that he might fail to inflict a fatal injury.

Blake had a name for swift reprisals. Notorious gunmen of the underworld had attempted Blake's life before. The underworld knew what had happened to them. Any man who fired and missed was going to drop to the floor with Blake's bullet through his brain.

It was not a time when Sexton Blake could afford to be squeamish.

He would shoot to kill, and when Blake shot to kill there was a funeral.

EXTRACT NO. 4 (Still in Chapter 5 - and giving the "lie-direct" to the present-day editorial claim that the Blake stories needed "pepping-up!")

The attack materialised exactly as Blake had suspected. His imagination showed him the waiting gunman, the heavy cosh raised in the air above his head.

He judged to an inch or so the location of the almost noiseless footstep upon the boards behind him.

He moved his head so little that the life-preserver touched his ear and in its descent.

He threw himself backwards; and as he fell, spun round so that his face came to the floor.

As his hand touched the floor he rebounded and sent his two hundred pounds of bone and muscle hurtling towards the doorway.

Well, what was the name of the yarn and who wrote it?

\* \* \* \* \*

UNION JACK TITLES - YEAR 1917 (JANUARY - MAY)

No. 691	The Mark of the Thumb.....	A. Blair
No. 692	The Sunken Schooner (Yvonne and Rymer).....	G. H. Teed
No. 693	The Clue of the Bowler Hat.....	M. Osborne
No. 694	The Lost Journalist.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 695	The Mystery of the Missing Manager.....	R. Murray
No. 696	The Treasurer of Sonova (Losely).....	C. Hayter
No. 697	The Broken Span (Jim Potter).....	G. H. Teed
No. 698	A Case of Arson (The Bat).....	R. Murray
No. 699	The Stolen Factory (Lawless).....	A. Murray
No. 700	Sexton Blake in Armenia.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 701	The Black Rat (Yvonne and The Black Rat).....	G. H. Teed
No. 702	The Typewriter Clue.....	A. Blair
No. 703	The Emerald Necklace.....	G. H. Teed
No. 704	The Mystery of Cell Six.....	R. Murray
No. 705	The Mystery of Fallowside Farm.....	A. Murray
No. 706	The Crest of the Flood (Yvonne).....	G. H. Teed
No. 707	The Opium Smugglers (Black Rat).....	G. H. Teed
No. 708	The Grimsdale Abbey Affair (H. Begge).....	A. Murray
No. 709	The Two Imposters (The Bat).....	R. Murray
No. 710	At the Full of the Moon (Marie Galante).....	G. H. Teed
No. 711	The Great Office Mystery (Kestrel).....	L. Jackson

(Number 691 is dated 6th Jan, 1917, and Number 711 is dated 26th May, 1917.)-

LATE NEWS - Further to the Sexton Blake film mentioned last month, Bill Lofts has had the privilege of seeing it in production and he reports there have been changes in the cast to those previously announced in the newspapers and film magazines, and the leading players will be:

Sexton Blake - Geoffrey Toone  
 Tinker - Richard Burrell  
 Paula - Jill Milford  
 Susan - Barbara Shelley

The film is adapted from W. Howard Baker's "Crime is my Business" which was published in the Sexton Blake Library.

It was produced by Delta Films, and directed by Francis L. Searle.

It is now finished and will be released in the autumn. Look for it.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 100 S.O.Ls. S.A.E. Lists. "Boys Pocket Libraries". ANNUALS "Young England" Vo. XIV. "British Boys" "Herbert Strangs" (16th year) "Storyland" "Chatterbox" 1900, 1917, 1925, 1928. "Champion" 1933. "Boys Own Paper" 1911, 1934 Xmas Argosy. 1912 "Child's Companion" (Christmas Number). "Munsey's Magazine" 1919, Hundreds pages. All above 11/6 each.

Western Story 1929. "Big Book Western" 1934. "More Bad Boy Memories" "Family Friend Annuals" 1902 - 6 7/6 each. Pre-war "Rovers" "Skippers" "Adventures" "Valiant" "Hotspur" "Bluebird". "Diamond Libraries" Paper and Annuals.

WANTED bound "Magnets" - "Greyfriars" - S.O.Ls.  
 LAWRENSON, 44 BLEAK HILL ROAD. ST. HELEN'S, LANCS.

WANTED: S.O.Ls. 9, 40, 58, 157. also mint replacements only for 48, 55, 57, 62, 66, 67, 68, 81, 185, 198, 211, 226, 227, 228, 234, 235, 292, 304, 319, 328, 411.  
 T. W. PORTER, OLD FIELDS, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs. 1st and 2nd Series - any numbers. Also Union Jacks 1917 to 1933. Boy's Friend Libs. 1st Series No. 669. 2nd Series No. 79.  
 JOSIE PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

# HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

THOSE NAMES AGAIN. Frank Vernon Ley has sent me a cutting from the Harrow Observer, May 8th. It states that Mr. Horace Thomas Ralph Coker was charged with a motoring offence for which he was fined £2 and his licence endorsed. Mr. Coker asked for leave to appeal and this was granted.

And, according to another cutting from Frank Case, there's a firm of chartered accountants at Horley named - Vernon Smith and Co!

\* \* \*

I am also indebted to Frank for the loan of John Macadam's new book "The Macadam Road". On page 18 there's this interesting par.

"The Gem and Magnet were absolutely taboo in my home, and I had to catch up with Tom Merry and Harry Wharton on the hill behind the house or in bed with a lethal candle under the blankets at night. I coped with that situation all right and even now, at the turn of the years, I will quote you from St. Jim's or Greyfriars with almost as much facility as the late great Ian Mackay could. Many a time I could stop a homeric tirade from him in a Press Club argument by fixing him with the nearest I could get to a steady look saying "Harry Wharton pushed back his cuffs....." and suiting the action to the word. That would always stop Ian."

Dear old Ian Mackay! No Hamiltonian who saw it will ever forget that whimsical delightful article he wrote for the News Chronicle. He was indeed one of us.

John Macadam's book is a jolly good one on all sorts of sports.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LESLIE AYRE TELLS A GOOD STORY

### THE EVENING NEWS

5th May, 1958.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Very many thanks for the Jubilee number of Collector's Digest - which, I'm glad to say, did arrive safely this time! It was most kind of you to go to so much trouble to get another copy.

Yes, I have always been an enthusiastic follower of the happenings at Greyfriars and those other scholastic establishments, from the days when I used to wait anxiously for the newsagent's shop to open on publication day. Your little book, which revives so many memories, has given me a great deal of pleasure during the week-end.

You might be interested in one little story about Charles Hamilton.....I once asked him if he kept a card-index of the characteristics of the great many personalities who people his stories. His answer was brief and to the point: "Do you keep a card-index of your friends?" He is a remarkable old chap and when I spoke to him a week or two ago he was, I'm glad to say, in fine health and spirits.

Kindest regards to you, and again, my warmest thanks.

Yours sincerely,

LESLIE AYRE

\* \* \* \* \*

FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT

Here's the clever problem squares compiled by Gerry Allison -

N H C E E I D V E R  
 S U R H F L L O S O  
 G I Y R E R N I B L  
 F E R B R E L E O N  
 T N D O R N V Y A T  
 G I W E W E L B H R  
 B N L D N M U U E W  
 I U L P S O N T A R  
 B W Y E E O D T N M  
 L E D N F L D U T O

By moving from letter to letter, adjacent of course, horizontally, vertically or diagonally, you can get sixteen names by using all the hundred letters, once only. To make it easier, they are all members of the Greyfriars Remove. Surnames only.

I'll let you know what they are next month.

\* \* \* \* \*

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own view superficially.)

If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

#### No. 15 DID ANY OF THE SERIES OVERSTAY THEIR WELCOME?

A sigh, tinged with regret, was a very different thing from a sigh of relief at the end of a series. A good variety artist leaves the stage while his audience is still demanding more. In my view, a good series should do the same.

Up till about the end of 1934, many of the series seemed to form a long serial, with the plot and characterisation being carried further with each succeeding instalment; later, the main plot was sketched in the opening story, and subsequent yarns of the series each presented an episode, complete in itself, in connection with the main plot. For instance, if you read one story from the middle of the 1925 Harry Wharton, Rebel, series, (10 weeks), you would be anxious to obtain the earlier and the later yarns of the series in order to learn what had led up to the situation and what had happened after. One story alone would be sadly unsatisfying. But if you read one story from, say, the Caffyn series (9weeks) or the Carter series (12 weeks), you would find an episode almost complete in itself. No doubt this policy had its advantages, but it also had drawbacks which I have not the space to consider here.

Whether or not a series overstayed its welcome depended on whether the subject matter appealed to the reader. If some of the stories seemed padded and the episodes contrived, merely to spin out the series, then that series was clearly overstaying its welcome. Length alone could not make a good series, but it marred one or two of them.

I greatly enjoyed every yarn of the 16 week Hollywood series, but it may have seemed too long for those who preferred the boys in the school setting. The 11 weeks China series did not seem a word too long, because it was packed with incident and ever-changing local colour, and the suspense was built up to a mighty and satisfying climax.

By contrast, the 8 week Putnam Van Duck series was far-fetched and rather absurd, which would not have mattered had characterisation, incident, and dialogue been attractive. In 8 weeks it overstayed its welcome, though it might have got by with shorter presentation.

The 14 week Smedley series was so beautifully constructed and handled that it could not fail to ring the bell, in spite of, and not because of, its great length. But in the 16 week Mr. Lambe series of 1939-40, keen interest in the early tales of the series was apt to give place to impatience as the theme dragged on and on.

The Silverson series was the only very long one in the last 18 years of the Gem. This was a new version of the Smedley plot, it ran for 17 weeks, and, good though it was, it suffered from repetition and there was just a suggestion of contrivance to spin out the series. It never built to a grand climax (as it could have done) to justify its great length, and one felt that, in real life, Silverson, like Mr. Lambe, would have been exposed much sooner for the crook he was.

On the other hand, the Gem's 8 week Old Bus series had no plot at all, its charming sequences being only linked by the shining Thames from Kingston to Oxford. When the series ended, every reader must have been sorry to see it go. Which was just as it should be!

Would such wonderful yarns as "Bought Honours" or that pair about the Mysterious 'X' have been improved had they been extended to cover a long series? It's possible, but I wouldn't bank on it.

I enjoyed most of the very long series, but, generally speaking, I think that 8 weeks was long enough for any series. If a theme was none too appealing, as I found the Crocker series (11 weeks) and the Warren series (12 weeks), then there was always a risk that, even if the plot was not exhausted before the end, the reader's patience might be.

It's just my point of view. What's yours.

\* \* \* \*

#### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

#### NO. 13 WHY DID THE GEM'S CIRCULATION DROP AFTER 1914?

ROGER JENKINS writes: "The drop in the circulation of the Gem in white cover days is something of a mystery. My first impulse is to suggest that it was caused by too much attention to minor characters but the Magnet was doing much the same at the time.

It may be that too many new characters were being introduced; Grundy, Trimble and Manners Minor had arrived at the end of the blue cover era, while Racke, Clive, Levison minor, Cardew and Wildrake were the more prominent newcomers of white cover days. When it is realised that the St. Jim's stories were curtailed even more severely than the Greyfriars ones at the time, I think it can be seen that the St. Jim's scene was undergoing a radical transformation which could not fail to alienate some of those who remembered and preferred the old order.

I think that the period from mid-1921 to mid-1923 which I like to call the Indian Summer of the Gem) was its finest hour, and because of this I can regard the re-organisation of the white cover days as

not wholly wasteful."

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "I believe the decline started when the Gem was reduced in size from 32 pages to 16 pages, exactly half its normal size. I honestly believe the grand old paper maintained its usual high standard to the end of its blue covers, and probably for a while during the white covers. As a matter of fact, I consider 1915 one of the Gem's vintage years - 3 double numbers in one year must be a record for any paper.

Reynolds was a grand artist, second only to Macdonald, as he proved himself with his excellent portraits in the St. Jim's Gallery. To sum up briefly I believe the war, and Tom Merry and Co. taking a back seat for new characters to appear during 1917-18, were the main reasons for the decline in the Gem's circulation."

ERIC FAYNE writes: "The reduction in size, the poor quality paper, the cramped printing, occasioned by the prolonged war, were not the reasons for the Gem falling behind the Magnet, for the Magnet suffered equally from the paper shortage.

Discussing this matter further, Roger and I came to the conclusion that it was far easier to write a Greyfriars substitute story than a similar one of St. Jim's. For some reason or other, the Magnet substitutes do not grate on the nerves quite so drastically as those in the Gem. It could be, therefore, that the Gem suffered more than the Magnet from publishing so many sub stories.

Don Webster suggested that the eclipse of the Gem may have been due to the early Tom Merry tales appearing in the Penny Popular. Personally, I think this very unlikely indeed.

My own opinion, as I have stated before, is that the new policy of white cover days did not meet with general approval, and the circulation drop was the result. In passing, what a beautiful metaphor that is of Roger's when he calls the 1921-1923 period the "Indian Summer" of the Gem.

\* \* \* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 29 - Gems 988-991 (S.O.L. 214)

So often did the Gem feature a series revolving around Talbot and an old acquaintance of his from days long ago that it came as a pleasant surprise when, early in 1927, a Talbot series was published which featured no extraneous characters at all,

Talbot and Crooke were cousins, and their uncle, Colonel Lyndon,

liked Talbot as much as he disliked Croke. Readers who remembered "The Housemaster's Homecoming" of the previous decade knew that Colonel Lyndon had become Talbot's guardian in order to make amends for the way he had treated his sister, Talbot's mother, in the past. There was nothing that the Colonel would have denied Talbot.

When the series commenced in Gem No. 988 Croke was discovered heavily in debt to Bill Lodgey, to the tune of £50. In desperation he turned to Talbot, who agreed to ask the Colonel for the money, a request which was later granted. In the meanwhile, however, Croke came into possession of the key to Mr. Railton's desk and could not resist the temptation to abstract the necessary money from the house funds. The theft was later discovered, since Croke had been unable to find the key again in order to replace the money, and suspicion fell on Talbot whose request for £50 from his uncle had become known. The remainder of the series was devoted to sorting out the mystery.

The series was well above average, and the novelty of a theme depending upon the relationship between Talbot and Croke was a distinct advantage. Even so - the anomalous position which Talbot occupied at St. Jim's could not be glossed over, and was well exemplified in the following passage:-

"Tom Merry did not doubt - he would never have allowed himself to doubt. Talbot was his chum; and Tom was not likely to doubt his chum's honour. But he looked troubled and dismayed as his search failed to find Talbot in the House. And Manners and Lowther exchanged some very uncomfortable glances as they accompanied Tom in his search."

I was not unknown for the Fistical Four or the Famous Five to disagree, and there was an occasion when Jimmy Silver's advocacy on Oswald's behalf once led to a rift in the lute. But nowhere else was one member of a Co. persistently more friendly with an outsider and to the exclusion of his old companions. The unity of the Terrible Three suffered a greivous blow when Talbot arrived, and Tom Merry's persistent trust in Talbot (a trust which Manners and Lowther were not always able to share) served as a constant reminder that the old order had changed. Whether the new scheme of things was an improvement is a question that must be left to the readers to decide.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now here's another contribution from the Midland Club's "Greyfriars Herald."

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

By Monty Newland (Ted Davey)

It's a small world really, and chance encounters with old friends occur fairly often, so that what could be more natural than that Inky of Greyfriars, and the Swell of St. Jim's should each have arranged a visit to London, quite unknown to the other, and then meet face to face?

"Bai Jove, it's Inky" exclaims Gussy. "How are you, deah Boy?"

"The pleasurefulness at seeing your esteemed and radiant countenance is truly terrific, absurd and natty friend of my youth. How do you do?" return the Nahob of Bhanipur with a dusky grin.

"I twust that all are well, and that Chewwy has wecovered from that spwain he sustained in the Inter-Schools match with us last Wednesday?" enquired Gussy.

"The recoverfulness of honourable and esteemed Bob is terrific - in fact, the estimable sine qua non," replies Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his inimitable English.

"But bai Jove, it weally was a wippin' game," went on Gussy, "although, do you know, deah boy, I weally thought at first that I should-not enjoy it. I was not weally satisfied with the cwease the tailah had made in my new flannels. Howevah it didn't weally affect my game after all, and bai Jove, wasn't it a near thing as after all we only lost by wun wun?"

"The photofulness of the exciting and absurd finish to the esteemed Battle Royal was truly terrific. Although I am bound to say that as far as you men were concerned the luckfulness to the esteemed and celebrated mugs was terrific, as esteemed and ludicrous English proverb would say."

"Oh wats" retorted Gussy, "Howevah Inky deah boy, it has been a great pleasah seeing you, but, Bai Jove," added Gussy, glancing at his watch, "Excuse me deah boy, but I must fly as I have a vewy important engagement with my Hattah in a few minutes. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, my esteemed and natty Gussy," returned Inky, and with this they went on their respective ways.

\*\*\*\*\*  
WANTED URGENTLY - I offer 10/- each for any copy of Chips from January, 1916 to October 28th, 1916. In good condition.

LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

FOR SALE - Collectors' Digest, Nos. 1-24 (lacking No. 3) Loose issues good condition. £2/2/0 post paid. L. STONE, 28 ELGIN STREET, GORDON, N.S.W. AUSTRALIA.

# Old Boys Book Club

## LONDON SECTION

The May rendezvous was at Hume House, East Dulwich, where incidentally the two never to be forgotten visits of Edwy Searles Brooks took place. Despite the lack of public transport eleven members attended, everyone present co-operated to make great the success of the meeting, including the hosts, Len and Josie Packman!. We disposed of a very varied agenda, quite a lot of decisions were taken including that of accepting Horace Roberts' kind invitation to have the June meeting at his residence at Streatham, on Sunday 22nd. Len Packman's Christian Name quiz was a good one and the four sections were won by the following:- Greyfriars and Rookwood by Eric Lawrence, St. Frank's by Bob Blythe, Sexton Blake by Josie Packman, and for the St. Jim's section both Eric Lawrence and Bob Whiter were first. The 'Grand' winner was Eric Lawrence, a very worthy performance indeed. Roger Jenkins gave a very good reading from "Rivals and Chums." Testing those present on a list of titles of the 22 Bunter books issued saw Eric Lawrence and Bob Whiter give the most. Truly a very good meeting with a happy wind up round at number 27.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

\* \* \*

## NORTHERN SECTION MEETING - MAY 10th, 1958

Perhaps a little quieter than of late, nevertheless a very enjoyable meeting. Bill Williamson, for his first full evening in the chair got off to a good start for he extended a cordial welcome to still another new member, Frank Hancock of Crossgates. It was plainly evident that Frank felt at home straight away.

The Chesterfield meeting with Midland came up for discussion again. It is almost certain that this will be on June 29th. We are hoping for even a bigger gathering than last year, and the presence of King Sol in the town of the Crooked Spire.

Then Roger Hodgson took over to give his talk on "The Pack-saddle Bunch," an account of the quaintest of all the Hamilton Schools. So interesting was it that there's likely to be a demand for the Gem's containing the stories by those who have not read them. Followed a reading by Gerry Allison of an essay "Bunter the Boy Detective"

written by a pupil of Cyril Bank's daughter, Christine. This caused considerable amusement. Immature, and naive of course, he had only read one Bunter book, yet it showed he had the idea. He had been cute enough to note that though Bunter thought nothing about stealing tuck he would not steal money. To close the evening Gerry Allison gave us a name building game. It was very cleverly compiled so much that I decided to use it in Hamiltoniana so that all can have a go.

Next meeting - June 14th - Ladies' Night.

HERBERT LECKENBY

Northern Section Correspondent.

\* \* \*

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING - April 28th, 1958

Despite the fact that the "Greyfriars Jubilee Challenge Cup" was on view, only twelve of the old brigade were present for this special occasion. Illness and business calls as usual.

We are glad to hear Jack Ingram is himself again but were very disappointed he was unable to turn up to take his usual place at the head of the table. Fortunately Jack Corbett was on hand to deputise and also to give us a very interesting account of the history of the Club. He brought along some very fine cuttings from the local papers to illustrate early highlights of the Club which he himself formed away back in 1951. The first meeting of what the "Birmingham Mail" thought fit to call the "Billy Bunter Club was held at the Queen's College on April 17th, 1951, when 20 enthusiasts attended." This inaugural meeting was followed by a dinner at the "International Centre". In the October of that year Mr. C. H. Chapman, the illustrator of the Magnet, came along to give the new Club a boost. This was followed by a magnificent Christmas party. The monthly meetings were being held at the Townsend Club in Snow Hill. The first A.G.M. saw a re-shuffle of the Officers and difficulties with the Clubroom necessitated a move to the Chambers of Commerce. About this time the Club was honoured with a second visit by C. H. Chapman who brought along with him Mr. C. M. Down, one time editor of the Companion papers. From July 1954 to March 1955 the Club held their meetings in the Chairman's office in Hill Street. Then another move to the palatial premises of another member of that time, Mr. John Handley, in Suffolk St. A happy time was spent there till August, 1956, when certain events beyond our power, forced us back again to our present accommodation in the Chambers of Commerce. Amongst many pleasing anecdotes of this

interesting account of the Midland Club's history, it was specially brought to the assembled company's notice that our worthy Treasurer, Norman, had never missed one single meeting from the inception. A fine record indeed. Many foundation members were present and supported the Chairman at various stages with apt remarks. The supporting item was a talk on "Cliff House", a change from Greyfriars. This was in the hands of the Secretary, and went down very well.

The last item was Jack Corbett's contribution to the winning Greyfriar's Herald - Quelchy's Mad Time. Enough said (it helped to win the Cup).

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

\* \* \*

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - SUNDAY, MAY 4th.

The May meeting of the Merseyside Branch opened to a flying start after the Chairman had given us the financial position. A discussion was soon under way regarding the character, good or otherwise, of Hazeldene. It seemed to all present that there was very little to say in his favour.

A letter was then read by the Secretary from Bette Pate, of the Australian Branch O.B.B.C., aptly named "The Golden Hours Club." Direct contact has been made with them, and our best wishes go to our fellow members in Australia. As was arranged at the April meeting we split up into three teams, Greyfriars, St. Jim's and St. Frank's, for the first round of our new series of competitions. Great credit must go to Frank Unwin for the very fine work he has put into making a coloured chart to record the progress of this competition. The first part was quite simple, but new - a "spelling bee" based on words from Old Boys Books. Quite a few points were dropped as we pondered over the question as to whether some words ended with an 'E', or if they had an 'H' near the beginning. Result - Greyfriars 9, St. Jim's 8, St. Frank's 6.

Following on at once was Don Webster's reading of an original story by himself, giving an account of the football match between the Greyfriars Junior Team and the Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C. There was great laughter at Don's account of the match. Sorry to say we lost 6-1. Tea and library business followed and we then tackled Frank Unwin's non Book Club Quiz. It was quite a problem to identify the names of some twenty well known characters from their photo. Very interesting this, and well won by George Riley. At our June meeting the motion "That we suffer from too much Bunter" will be debated, and on this Sunday we hope to have a visit from two or three of our Midland friends.

This will be a special meeting and we ask all members to arrive promptly at 5.45 p.m. Date - 8th June.

NORMAN PRAGNELL

Secretary,

Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

\*\*\*\*\*  
WANTED - Green Copy of Young Folks Tales - dealing with Prince Pippin and Madcap Mag. Reasonable Price Please.

P. J. LAFFEY (Merseyside O.B.B.C.) 102 ANTONIO STREET, LIVERPOOL 20.

7/- EACH OFFERED for following numbers of the Magnet (or exchange for certain Nos. between 800 and 950 or for S.O.Ls.) 950, 958, 960, 962, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 970, 971, 973, 985, 986, 988, 989, 990, 992, 993, 994, 997, 1005, 1008, 1009, 1011, 1015, 1035, 1062, 1083, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1096, 1100, 1108, 1111, 1112, 1116, 1118, 1119, 1121, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1132, 1135, 1138, 1140, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1146, 1147, 1149, 1158, 1175, 1179, 1188, 1191, 1193, 1194, 1203, 1204, 1235, 1239, 1244, 1245, 1247, 1257, 1277, 1278, 1300.

5/- EACH OFFERED for following numbers of the Gem: 1320, 1321, 1322, 1325, 1327, 1348, 1367, 1538, 1565.

D. BROVD, 10 BEAN ROAD, BEXLEYHEATH, KENT.

\*\*\*\*\*  
S.B.L. REVIEWS

JUNE 1958

Nine O'clock Shadow (No. 407).....Jack Trevor Story

This is the story of several dramatic hours in the life of Harry Jukes, the present day type of playboy whose sole object in life seems to be the pursuance of the noisy excitement to be derived from the various groups of jive, rock 'n' roll and skiffle, so popular amongst our teenagers. According to the way you react to youths of Juke's type you may wonder if it was worth all the trouble Sexton Blake took to establish his innocence of the terrible crime of which he was charged. But of course, it was because somewhere at large roamed the real murderer, who was quite content to see another hanged for his crime. Jukes was unworthy of the love of a girl like Jenny Beeton, and it was due to his vanity and desire to show off before her that

led him first to the dock on a charge of killing a policeman on the public highway, and from there to the condemned cell. So hopeless is his defence that defending counsel gives up the ghost long before the verdict. But Blake has uneasy doubts as to the justice of it. Yet the task of proving Juke's innocence proves nearly too much even for him.

Here's Jack Trevor Story with a change of style and a difference in mood, a transformation so effective as to prompt the question: Is this the best Blake he has yet done? My answer is a definite yes. Strongly recommended.

Rating.....Excellent.

\* \* \*

Crime is my Business (No. 408).....W. Howard Baker

Brighton was front page news not so long ago; it hits the headlines again here. It begins with the murder of an official of the Western Europe Military Authority by an agent of the all powerful Syndicate. In its war against nationalism the Syndicate's present objective is drug smuggling. Particularly the truth drug - neuromyocia. The hypnotic therapy of the drug with its life giving properties has given new hope and opened up new possibilities for many crippled children. It also affects the workings of the brain in such manner as to render it impossible for its owner to speak without telling the absolute truth at all times. But when the Syndicate through the medium of their numerous agents start to steal huge consignments of the drug the security of the nation becomes gravely threatened, and, inevitably, production of it is ordered to cease. Blake's job is to discover the identity of the top man representing the Syndicate operating in the area of WEMA.

How Blake makes use of the drug in order to do this makes both a fitting and amusing climax. Incidentally, this is the novel on which the forthcoming Sexton Blake film is based, and to which Peter Noble was referring in his talk in the Sunday Afternoon B.B.C. feature Movie-go-Round three or four weeks ago.

Films of the old Blake were hardly a success; this story should go a long way to restoring the balance.

Rating.....Very good

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stocktom Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

\* \* \* \* \*

Unfortunately, some of Jim Cook's closing notes had to be omitted last month owing to space difficulties, but as they are so interesting I am giving them this month.

In addition, I am also carrying on with some of our resident correspondent's latest gossip from St. Frank's. More readers tell me how absorbing and nostalgic they find these peeps behind the scenes.

Herewith, then, the continuation from the May letter.

Although I heard nothing during the night I understand the alarm was raised, a fire having been in Study B.

This study belongs to Gore-Pearce and was on my list to visit next as I told you in my last letter. Well, as there appears to be some damage which will necessitate redecorating the room throughout my invitation will have to be postponed.

Gore-Pearce, Hubbard and Teddy Long were summoned to the Head to explain why such a large fire had been left in the grate after they had gone to bed. As the rug in front had been destroyed it was assumed a live piece of coal had fallen out and set fire to it.

The usual practice is for the boys to rake out their fire grates on retiring. It was obvious the occupants of Study B had not done so. Consequently, Gore-Pearce and Co., will have to fork out the cost of a new rug. But for the sharp eyes of Mr. Pycraft who was prowling in the Triangle and who had seen the unusual glare in the window of Study B may well have been the cause of a much larger blaze.

P.C. Sparrow has called on the Head, I understand it is in connection with a motoring offence. Handforth failed to produce his licence when challenged in Bannington High Street after he had run into a stationary lorry. There was hardly any damage to speak; Handy's Austin A35 was untouched, but the lorry's off-side wing had received a scratch. Names had been taken, Police called and the usual fuss that accompanies such adventures.

Handforth eventually produced his licence and Sparrow was satisfied. I met him in the Remove passage, and the somewhat maligned

Policeman who upholds the law in Belton passed the time of day. Since I wish to have a word with everybody here I went with him and we got talking.

It was very seldom, he said, that he was called to the school, but there had been many extraordinary happenings at St. Frank's since Nelson Lee and Nipper arrived there some years ago. As a result his name had often gone in officially connected with criminal cases. And very often Mr. Lee had recommended him to his superiors. But this had not brought about the desired effect, and it was still P.C. Sparrow.

Yet I doubt if he would move from Bellton. He is quite happy safeguarding the village from danger and fear, he is no fool, far from it. He has the countryman's patience which is often mistaken for stolidity, but before he joined the Force he was in the Army and came out with honours.

\* \* \*

A little incident occurred which I think may interest you. It concerns Mary Jane, the maidservant - who can be seen at all times of the day with her dust pan and broom - and the junior Enoch Snipe.

Clarence Fellowe, Timothy Tucker and Enoch Snipe were leaving Study I in the Ancient House, and Snipe collided with Mary Jane, who was attending to something on the passage floor. Something fell which sounded as if coins were dropped, and straight into Mary's dust pan went something with a clink. What happened next happened fast. Snipe dived for the dustpan and tripped over T.T. who in turn butted Clarence Fellowe in the stomach. Mary Jane screamed as she fell, and into the vortex came Willy Handforth, who had streaked along the passage and failed to pull up in time.

It was a glorious mix up, and I gave what help I could extricating the servant from the boys. Nobody was really hurt, but Mary had to regain her breath in Timothy Armstrong's Study chair. Enoch Snipe after grovelling in the dust, regained his penny!

His weak watery eyes gleamed with satisfaction on getting his money back. Well, I suppose it was his. I think you have to go far to see another Enoch Snipe in this world! You both pity and escape from him.

\* \* \*

I meant to visit Calstewe but, of late, the weather has been very windy and squally. I intend walking three miles to this little shipping town on the coast because you see much more that way.

The vicar of Bellton, the Rev. Ethelbert Goodchild, has come into my orbit. He is of the old school...he looks like a vicar and

acts like one. You feel you could confide in him and he would put you straight. He told me Mr. Brooks often visited him when the latter was down here. He, the Vicar, is a mine of information, and knows quite a lot about St. Frank's. In fact, on one occasion, he was invited to one of Lord Dorriemore's famous trips abroad, but declined, owing to the length of time the holiday would take. But he has been to a Christmas party which Dorrie held last year at Dorriemore Hall, Norfolk.

The vicar is a very busy man just about the time these lines are written. It's the time when weddings come thick and fast, and the income tax man opens his heart.....I mean, his purse.

I did the same for the Rev. Goodchild. And he was very pleased with my donation, towards which a new Church is to be built.

\* \* \*

This month Jim Cook writes -

Today the boys have been streaming back to St. Frank's after their short vacation. The Easter holidays are over, a new term begins, and the old school is beaming in the spring sunshine. The chestnut trees in the Triangle are in full blossom, and there's a general air of expectancy everywhere.

This is a delightful spot, and I feel I want to stay here forever, I cannot convey to you by pen the pristine glories that abound here. Progress had not prowled into this quiet corner of Sussex; no concrete hills of Council flats have been permitted to cast their shadows over this beautiful retreat, only the buds may bloom here, and only the weather, change.

The juniors are boisterous, lordly seniors talkative, and the sedate masters in a tolerant mood. I saw Tubbs, the page, doing a roaring business. This is the sort of day when the fellows feel very generous, and the page of St. Frank's gets all he deserves for he works very hard and is an obliging soul.

Nothing really settles down the first day, but the following day was an eye opener for me. I saw the school from an entirely different angle. There's the business of settling down to study and school discipline after a period of holiday-making - which is difficult at first - of masters getting out rolls, questioning the new boys, and a hundred and one other matters that require their attention when school re-opens.

I felt uncomfortable and in the way, so I visited the Bannington Palladium which as you may remember is owned partly by the juniors. This is a first class cinema, and in spite of the monopoly that it

enjoys only the best films are shown.

I am always on the look out for character I know, but have never seen, so that sometimes it is extremely embarrassing to people here when I stare at them in my efforts to associate them with some situation that has occurred in the past. Such a moment happened as I entered the cinema. A few people were before me at the ticket box and I listened as I waited, perforce, to a conversation that was going on in front of me. One gentleman in a loud check suit was referred to by his neighbour as Mr. Porlock and a light of understanding suddenly dawned on me. This was, of course, Jonas Porlock, who owned the White Harp, a dingy public-house in Bellton, and who was a bookmaker on a small scale.

His check suit should have told me who he was, and incidentally, why do these sort of people wear such loud clothes?

We quickly moved up and received our tickets of admission and Mr. Porlock and his horsey friend veered off to another part of the cinema. Evidently there was no racing in Bannington that day, and at the White Harp must have been poor. But the cinema can be a meeting place for other than pure entertainment. Many a shady deal has had its origin in the least likely places. And a cinema can offer a rendezvous with comfort. Nevertheless, I hope I shall be pardoned by Mr. Porlock if I have misjudged his reason for visiting the Palladium for other than amusement.

\* \* \*

Cecil de Valerie had an alarming experience when he was returning from Bellton the other evening. Being fine he decided to walk the short distance to the post-office in the village, and it was while coming back through Bellton lane that he heard what sounded like the soft patter of footsteps behind him. The foliage from the trees have now begun to cast some deep shadows in the lane so that de Valerie kept on seeing shapes where there were none. The tiny footsteps continued to dog him, but every time he looked round he could see nothing. And he was arriving at the point when he would start running to the school gates when from out of the lonely lane came a few leaves from last season. He realised what had happened. A slight breeze had swung the dead leaves along the lane making a pit-a-pat rustle behind the junior and understandably he missed them in the gloom as they followed him along. He certainly had a scare, for Cecil de Valerie does not forget his experience with Dt. Karnak some time ago. I myself, am a little nervous going along this lane when it is dark.

Now with the coming of the cricket season all signs of football have vanished. The goalposts have been removed from Big side and Little side and the gardeners have been busy getting the ground prepared for cricket. Boots, jerseys and shorts, shin guards and footballs have all been shoved away, and the oiled bats are taking the place of the winter sport. Already the fellows are at the nets and, as usual, Handforth is going to make the first century of the season!

\* \* \*

They're not a very bright lot in the East House. They were challenged to a Test Your Knowledge Quiz by the Modern House and the latter won hands down! Snipe, Merrill, Marriott and Griffiths failed to reveal the whereabouts of Brindisi, and Holroyd, Clifton, Freeman and Kemp were unable to give a rough estimate of the date when Pompeii was destroyed. They all thought it was B.C. Poor old East House! Timothy Armstrong should try and put some shape into it.

\* \* \*

Nelson Lee is back. Tubbs informed me Mr. Lee would like to see me in his study and I learnt that news had been received from Lord Dorrimore. It appears the trip to New Anglia is off. Something has happened to create a change in the summer holidays arrangements. I will give more details in my next letter.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another piece from Midland Club's "Greyfriars Herald"

S H O T S   A T   G O A L  
by our Sports Editor, Norman Gregory.

The big event at Greyfriars before we broke up for the Christmas hols was the cross-country run for the Juniors. As old boy has presented a magnificent silver cup for what is to be an annual event and all juniors are to participate unless excused by Dr. Pilbury. Bunter did one of his best performances of someone in mortal agony but to no avail as he couldn't deceive our school doctor.

The race was for three miles, starting and finishing at the school gates and a pretty gruelling course had been laid out and resulted in an unexpected winner. Wharton and yours truly were named as hot favourites but both of us had just recovered from 'flu. The first to reach the gates - his long legs going like pistons - was Toddy!