

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 141

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SEPTEMBER 1958

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-THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST-

Vol. 12 No. 141

Price 1s. 6d.

SEPTEMBER, 1958

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

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

From The Editor's Chair

ANNUAL PROGRESS: Quite a lot has happened since last writing. First Roger Jenkins sent me a list of the S.O.Ls in numerical order with all the Magnet, Gem, details filled in. It was in Roger's usual immaculate style. It struck me that whilst we were about it, - it would be a good idea to have the Rookwood and St. Frank's details also. Authorities on the two schools are already working with this end in view. Then there were a few S.O.Ls concerning lesser known schools. There were the Grimslade stories from the Ranger for instance. Can anyone supply the details? St. Kit's from School and Sport have already been promised.

It will be the first time we have had the details of the S.O.Ls all in one article and it should prove to be one of the most useful ones we have yet published.

Then from Eric Copeman has come a most interesting article in which he gives clear proof that many of the Bullseye stories of the 1931-34 period were really revisions of those in Fun and Fiction of 1911-14. No reason why the A.P. shouldn't have done seeing a new generation had sprung up.

Well, now a remarkable coincidence has arisen from this. I took the article with me when I paid the Merseyside Club a visit. Sir Frederick Bowman was there. He showed great interest in it - and no

wonder - for it turned out that he, and no other, had written many of the Fun and Fiction stories. Can you beat that? He has told me since that he had never seen the Bullseye. He also gave me the interesting information that his mother wrote many of the Martin Steele and His Twelve Lady Detectives which, as older members will remember, had a long run in "Comic Cuts". My word! we're always learning something new.

Also now in my file is Harry Broster's "Just Where Is Greyfriars?" complete with map. Harry must have given a lot of thought to this job, for I can assure you his findings are intriguing - and provocative, especially to those who remember the early Greyfriars stories when the school seemed to be within sound of the sea.

Further, a good idea has come from Gerry Allison. He suggests that we have a gigantic Quiz to puzzle out over the Christmas fireside, each Club providing fifty posers on all aspects of the hobby. Well it seems just the thing for Christmas except I think it would be best to make it twenty-five from each for space reasons. Sydney could perhaps join in if there's time. I know Midland are in agreement so how about it London and Merseyside?

Yes, indeed, things are going fine. I can already visualise bouquets coming along about Christmas Day. The only thing that is perturbing me is lack of adverts so far, as I said last month they are very necessary so how about it? Many of you who have advertised in earlier Annuals have said how useful they have been.

* * * * *

SUCCESS FOR AN AUSTRALIAN CHUM: In the June, 1958, number of "The Australian Journal" there appeared an interesting write up on one of our members, Eric V. Copeman. It states that Eric has had 170 stories published in the last nine years, one 'Gresham's Girl' was in that same issue. When Eric's first story appeared he was only seventeen. It appeared, by an oversight, without a byline. "I almost wept tears of blood" Eric confesses.

Well, we have seen the professional touch in articles he has done for the C.D. You will see it again in the one he has done for the Annual, already mentioned.

More power to your pen, Eric. May you see many more of your stories in print - complete with byline.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

Blakiana

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

Victor Colby's article in this month's Blakiana is too long for one issue, so that it will - by necessity - appear in two parts. The second part will of course be in the next issue of the C. Digest.

The subject of much controversy and writings from time to time in this section of the magazine has been the identity of the author of the first George Marsden Plummer story. The name has now been conclusively ascertained (I have seen the actual evidence) and this, together with other relevant interesting information, will be the subject of a forthcoming article in Blakiana.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * *

WAL I'M DERNED

by Victor Colby

(Part One)

However one might revere the mighty Sexton Blake, the reading of the monumental story in U.J.104 (1905) "Twice Round the World" must inevitably lead to laughter at his expense. For surely no story of our beloved detective was ever more quaint. Never at any time had the usually modest, retiring Blake found it quite so necessary to throw about his not inconsiderable weight in order to get positive action.

Let the following synopsis speak for itself.

"Send for Sexton Blake" demanded Major Entwistle of Scotland Yard.

"It will not be a bit of use sir", replied the secretary, "whoever wants Sexton Blake must go to him."

"Then send for him in the name of the King!"

But Blake was no errand boy, and insisted on being visited. The Duke of Belcaster, who had been made £10,000 poorer by some unfeeling miscreant arrived with Major Entwistle to see Blake.

"What can I do for you?" asked Blake without delay, for he had never time to waste.

Having accepted a commission from the Duke, Blake unfeelingly

refuses the co-operation of Entwistle the Yard man, and goes into action. He visited an office on the third floor of a certain building. The solitary occupant, Crawshaw, leapt to his feet.

"Great Blazes" he exclaimed, seeming hardly to know whether to grin boldly or to gnash his teeth.

"You will have to get up early before you can hope to cover your tracks from me."

"So it seems" the crook growled, in the manner of a congenial rogue whose habit is to make the best of it when caught.

Blake decided to look around for the Belcaster jewels, but Crawshaw let fly with a flying sling of line and leaden ball. Had the round of lead struck Blake full on the forehead, he must have gone down with little hope of solving further mysteries. In short, he would probably have been a dead man. However Blake was unobliging, and the wall was the worse for it.

Here we are told that not always was the strength and resourcefulness of Blake invincible. In the desperate hand to hand struggle that ensued, only the mastery of mind rising superior to mere brute strength enabled the Amalgamated Press to continue to feature its great money spinner.

Blake failed to find the jewels, but helped himself to letters addressed to his vanquished foe. He noted that they were signed with a signature that would have 'baffled all but Sexton Blake to understand'. Beginning with the letter N, it continued with three twisted lines and ended with the letter L. Entwistle, decided Blake.

Does it surprise Blake the 'man of dignity and importance at Scotland Yard' should prove to be the fiend behind the theft? No, he felt a little more curious than usual, that was all.

Arrived home, Blake finds men from the War Office and Admiralty on his doorstep, and is asked to find some stolen plans. The old country's welfare is imperilled. They try to hustle Blake.

"You must wait," said Blake, quite unperturbed, "Time is often saved by not being in a flying haste."

Blake decides that Entwistle is his man, and that his robbery of the Belcaster jewels was a red herring to disguise the theft of the national documents. Blake comforts the distraught Servicemen with a modest:

"I make bold to say that it I cannot recover them, no man can."

Blake finds that Entwistle has gone to New York to join a spy, afterwards proved to be Russian, and that Crawshaw is on his way to meet them. Blake catches the same boat as the latter, and arrived in New York bent on recovering both jewels and plans.

As Blake walked down the gangway, all he could see were New Yorkers moving around and looking as if they were in possession of the universe. He waylaid a policeman.

"Is there any train going west within an hour or two to San Francisco?" he asked.

"Guess there is" replied the constable, "I reckon the Western Ltd., will be pushing out for 'Frisco at six o'clock. She'll be carryin' these yere mails, I calkerlate, likewise any buncosteerer that can af-ford to pay the fare."

"And after that?" Blake asked again.

"A special, I reckon, fer anyone that wants to hit 'Frisco in an almighty hurry," the policeman went on, "rather guess that's how it stands, stranger."

"Then you've got to assist me" said Blake promptly.

"Hey? Did I fancy I heard you speak?" asked the American coolly.

"You did, without any fancy" Blake replied smartly, taking the policeman's breath away. "We'll have some British methods, if you please - quick command, right about face, double quick execution, and then back to the civil salute. That's British - authority, obedience and discipline! Perhaps you understand me now. You're a Public Servant on Public Duty, your mark to toe is discipline and civility. Now here's a telegram, and there's a dollar, the change from which you can keep. I represent the British Government, which you are probably aware is not to be sneezed at. You'll go to the nearest telegraph office, and send that telegram to the British Ambassador in Washington. I've got your number, and if there's no reply to that telegram inside an hour and a half, so much the worse for you."

"Wal I'm derned!" grunted the man, fairly staggered out of his senses.

"You will be if you're not quick" Blake promised in a rapping tone. "You'll be on duty for your own authorities and for the British Government - the latter, I imagine for the first time, and that's something to be proud of!"

"Wal I'm derned!" muttered the policeman, "who the tarnation are you?"

"Sexton Blake" answered Blake shortly; and in his voice was that quick firm tone of the British Officer when he gives a command.

"Wal I'm derned!" exclaimed the policeman as he hurried away to do Blake's bidding.

Blake later called at the Central Police Depot.

"Sexton Blake!" exclaimed the Chief of Police. "Elevate him right here! And let it be mighty quick. We'll just be e-equal to the

oc-casion, and let him see we're alive. Glad to see ye" he greeted, as Blake was whirled up the lift and shot into the room. "I guess ye see we hum in N'York."

Leaving the Police Chief, Blake was delayed by a trap, and arrived at the station to find the Western Ltd., had started its long journey to San Francisco fifteen minutes before.

"Then a special to the Rockies" he ordered at once.

"It will cost you 2,000 dollars" intimated the booking clerk pausing.

"A special, if it costs 10,000!" said Blake (not pausing).

The special did not catch the Western Ltd., at the Rockies, so Blake decided to continue the pursuit by special to 'Frisco.

"I must have this track on to 'Frisco" he said promptly to the railway agent.

"Then you caan't hev it" was the retort.

"Can't eh!" replies Blake pointedly. "You had better think twice about that."

"Not half a think" was the rejoinder, "We've got no other engine here."

"Then you must coal up this one, and let her go 'till she can change. That's one word as good as a hundred. Do you understand me?" Blake said with a great deal more point than before.

"Thunder!" Ye're Britisher clear! Don't reckon your British will work here! Yer won't hev no train this side Day of Judgement."

"You think not?" returned Blake coolly, "Well, you'll charge your own price, and coal up that engine within half an hour or you'll hear of it. I represent the British Government! If you don't send me away from here to 'Frisco in less time than you generally take to turn round, you won't be riding buck jumpers here forty-eight hours from now. You can't stop a telegram to your President, I suppose?"

"Waugh!" growled the agent again. "A darned sight too many candles are held to you Britishers, bekase ye hold half the earth!"

Soon Blake was on his way. Arrived at 'Frisco, he ran into trouble when he wanted to examine messages sent out from the telegraph office that day.

"No" the man snapped, "against the rules."

"Then somebody must break them" Blake replied promptly. "It's for the British Government, and your Government won't like to know that our Government has not been obliged. Settle it quickly, or I wire Washington."

The look on the officials face was as blank as his tongue was dumb. His tongue was loosened however, and Blake decided that the

pursuit of the three fleeting crooks must be extended to Australia.
(End of Part One)

* * *

M'WAMA (A MINOR HAYTER CHARACTER)

by W. T. Thurbon

I have pointed out in previous articles the debt that Cecil Hayter owed to Rider Haggard's Umslopogaas for that grand old warrior Lobangu. Readers of Haggard's "Nada the Lily" will recall the introduction into that story of Umslopogaas's blood brother, Galazi. Like Haggard, Hayter occasionally introduced a second Zulu Warrior, as a foil to Lobangu.

M'Wama appears in at least three Hayter tales. This tall, gaunt warrior, armed with his great sword, first appears as Lobangu's chief Induna in Union Jack No. 404, of 8th July, 1911, "The Flying Column" - incidentally the first Union Jack I ever read, and one which contains perhaps Hayter's best battle piece. The "Flying Column" tells how the Askari tribe have raided and all but annihilated Lobangu's frontier guards, and captured Lobangu's sister. Blake and Sir Richard Losely join Lobangu to rescue the captives and avenge the defeat. Our first glimpse is of the wounded Lobangu and M'Wama on the stricken field, awaiting the gathering of the avenging forces. "On a rocky knoll beside a muddy water hole - a mere hollow into which stagnant, brown water oozed slowly drop by drop - sat two other figures....beside one of them lay a big two-handed sword, notched and blunted, stained a hideous black colour for two thirds of its length, one of the cross guards of the handle shorn through by some mighty stroke." M'Wama's part in this story is small, but his introduction adds to the strength and colour of its characterisation. And the great sword is as much part of his makeup as is the great spear of Lobangu's.

M'Wama next appears in a Cecil Hayter serial which ran in Fluck in the early part of 1912. "The Red Beetle" is a tale of a treasure hunt, for a great ruby, known as the "Red Beetle." Though not a Sexton Blake story, this is typical of Hayter in his adventurous vein, and M'Wama appears alone as the faithful Zulu member of the party, and, not having to play second fiddle to Lobangu, takes his fair part in the story.

The third and last appearance I have so far been able to trace of M'Wama is in Union Jack No. 696, dated 10th February, 1917, "The Treasure of Sonora". Sexton Blake is entertaining Sir Richard Losely at Baker Street when an old seaman is stabbed on his doorstep.

From documents found on the murdered man Blake learns that he had been the faithful servant of the President of a small, South African republic. A revolution had arisen and the President has been murdered, but not before he had sunk in a lagoon off the coast of South America a valuable hoard of jewels and gold. Blake and Sir Richard set out to recover the loot, and Lobangu, travelling to join the party brings with him M'Wama. Now we learn more of the latter's history. Lobangu speaks: "Therefore I have brought him with me - an Induna of mine, to whom I have given the command of three of my regiments of young men, though he is not of the Etbaia, but a stranger, of a strange tribe. M'Wama is he called, M'Wama of the Sword Hand. He came to me many months ago, an outcast and a fugitive from his own people - a gaunt man, haggard and worn, but big framed and big boned as thou thyself Lukuna, and with the fighting eye, and a great sword slung over his shoulder, as long almost as my spear." Lobangu sheltered M'Wama, and when he had tried out his skill (it was a great fight, sword against spear) and Lobangu admitted that only when M'Wama's foot slipped was he able to touch him, Lobangu gave him three regiments to train in the use of the great sword.

Lobangu and M'Wama do not enjoy their trip at first, for both are very seasick, but they recover and play a big part in the finding and recovery of the sunken treasure. Together they dive into the sheltered waters of the bay and recover the chests of gold and jewels, killing a shark that attacks them in the process. And they play their full part in driving off a rival party, the President's murderers, who also seek to recover the treasure. Readers of Hayter will recall Lobangu's knack of foreseeing a fight; M'Wama seemed to possess something of the same gift. Blake and Lobangu return from a scouting expedition and find M'Wama seated a little apart from the rest, was handling his big sword, now testing the edges with his thumb, now putting on an extra keenness here and there with carefully selected stones, which were cast aside the moment they had lost their virtue, and crooning a blood-thirsty little war song to himself. In the scrimmage that follows it is Lobangu and M'Wama on the wings of the charge that help to rout the enemy.

The last scene is in lighter vein. With the treasure safe aboard and course set for home, Lobangu and M'Wama have bullied the negro cook into preparing them a private feast in the saloon, complete with Sir Richard's champagne. Tinker fills a canvas bucket with seawater and carried it to the skylight of the saloon. "There was a swish, a splash, a clatter of crockery and a perfect pandemonium of yells and howls, followed by the rush of two dusky figures up the

companion way, thirsting for blood.

But long before they reached the deck Tinker was up in the main cross-trees....crooning softly 'Home, Sweet Home' a private and insulting version of his own composition.

Certainly a minor character, M'Wama, but an attractive one and his absence would have made the Hayter gallery considerably the poorer.

WANTED: Aldine Red Rover Library; Rob Roy; Boys Leader; Halfpenny Union Jacks (Mauve cover) Numbers 420 to 488 and 494; Penny Pluck Volume three, containing "Cookey Scrubs" and also "Specs" stories; The Comic Home Journal (1897-1902). Will pay five shillings each for following numbers, 149, 203, 216, 217, 219, 252, 253, 255; The Jester, 1906, 1907; Halfpenny Wonder; Funny Wonder; Ally Sloper 1906, 1907. Pocket Budget (second series); Nuggets, 1900 to 1906; some True Blue numbers; a novel "The Lover Fugitives", "Phra the Phoenician", Victorian Bloods and Romances.
 PETTINGELL, LINDEN LEA, ST. MILDRED'S AVENUE, BROADSTAIRS, KENT.

WANTED URGENTLY: S.B.L.s 1st series 17, 105, 109, 198, 197, 201, 202. S.B.L.s 2nd series 102, 111, 243, 293, 296, 422, 520, 667. Boys Friend Libraries 1st series, 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series, 79, 392, 396. U.J. 881, 1041, 1098, 1378, 1519. Detective Weekly, 1, 2, 3, 4,
 MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, E. DULWICH.

WANTED: S.O.L. 48, 68, 232, 256. Populars 1922.

SALE: 72 Union Jacks, 1922-6. £4 10s. Od.

38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON, LANCs.

SALE: Holiday Annual 1938 12/-; C.D. Annual 1956 5/-; Strang's Annual 1923 3/-; Tiger Tim's Annual 1935 2/6; S.O.L. 330 1-9 Wonder Book of Railways, 2/6. POSTAGE EXTRA.

65 BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: Magnets: 1422, 1424, 1425, 1426, 1427, 1428, 1429, 1456, 1581, 1602, 1603, 1632, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1642. GREENWOOD, 63 GRIFFITHS DRIVE, WEDNESFIELD, STAFFS.

WANTED: THE JESTER. Any copies for years 1919-20-21.
 DAVIES, 15 KNOWSLEY ROAD, ST. HELEN'S, LANCs.

ASK ME ANOTHER. No. 2.

1. Who was Dolores Pelham?
2. What was the title of the first Gem story?
3. With what paper was "Modern Boy" amalgamated?
4. What was the name of Tom Merry's slave?
5. In which paper did Freda Foote first appear?
6. Which story of Chas. Hamilton's appeared under the pen-name of Prosper Howard?
7. Who called himself Sandy Smacke?
8. Who figured on the front page of the Funny Wonder for many years?
9. What was the name of Harry Wharton's tutor, prior to Greyfriars?
10. Who was the Rookwood ventriloquist?
11. Who lost his memory after diving into a swimming-bath?
12. Who was Mule Kick Hall?

5/- to the sender of the best list of answers first received by the Editor. 10 points to his Club Branch. Points will be totalled each month. Which Club is the best informed on hobby matters? Closing date 16th September.

Answers to set No. 1:-

1. Member of Dicky Bird's Co at Hillcrest.
2. Dreamy Daniel's Dog.
3. The Jester.
4. Leon Kestrel.
5. Sidney Drew.
6. 1711.
7. He saved a troq train from disaster.
8. Billy Bunter.
9. The Penny Popular.
10. Mate of the "Dawn" and pal of Ken King.
11. Adventures of a Three-Guinea Watch.
12. St. Winifreds on the Benbow.

5/- has been sent to Gerald Allison, 7 Summerfield Gardens, Bramley, Leeds, 13. The Northern Club has earned 10 points on an all correct effort.

(Note: The entry was rather disappointing, maybe holidays were to blame. Anyway, more entries this time please. H.L.)

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THE GREYFRIARS CUP COMPETITION 1958RULES

1. That the title shall be called THE NEW POPULAR.
2. That the finished product, on the lines of THE POPULAR, shall consist of a total of 16 pages (typed on onside only), each the size of THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL pages.
3. That the contents shall consist of four school stories, each four pages in length.

4. That the stories shall be CHRISTMAS stories only. (The action not necessarily taking place at school.)
5. That the schools shall be as follows:

(a) Greyfriars	(b) St. Frank's
(c) St. Jim's	(d) Rookwood
6. That there shall be no illustrations - and this to include no cover design.
7. That no regard shall be paid to presentation.
8. That the Cup shall be awarded solely on the basis of literary merit.
9. That the closing date shall be 15th December, 1958.
10. That the judging shall be done by Bill Gander and Tex Rickard (or, if circumstances are such, Bill Gander only.)

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LETTER BOX

A Breezy letter from a Veteran "Chums" author.

July 28th, 1958.

Morden College,
Blackheath, S.E.3.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Accept my sincere thanks for your letter and the copy of THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST, which is most interesting. It was kind of you to write your offer of the CHUMS numbers; but alas! the Sunday Times delayed publication of my appeal for about two months; and the publishers of SEAS OF MEMORY couldn't wait; so a substitute dust jacket had to be designed, in order to get the book to press in time for the Autumn market. Thanks, none the less, for your offered cooperation.

It is most gratifying to know you got pleasure from that by-gone work of mine; I fear I affected many youths with sea-fever; but as a great lover of salt-water, I couldn't restrain my enthusiasm. Even today boys are asking for the best road to the sea; which makes me a sort of unofficial recruiting agent for both Royal and Merchant Navies.

Your Digest is a novelty to me; I should imagine it fills a long-felt want; and I hope it is winning outside success.

What is York like these days? I used to live in Harrogate before the First War, and a favourite ploy of ours was to drive to York for lunch and a bit of sightseeing - behind horses, not a petrol engine, for we were old-fashioned! - and I was very familiar with the city, where I had hosts of friends, especially amongst the Scots Greys, who

were in garrison at Fulford at the time.

There is quite a bit about those spacious days in this new autobiography, which I hope you'll find as pleasurable in the reading as I did in the writing. SEAS OF MEMORY isn't to be my swan-song, I hope - although I'm eighty years old; I'm off to Lancashire tomorrow to collect material for another sea-book, THIS BREED OF MEN, which deals with the life and work of Wanklyn the submarine V.C. and which, on the evidence, promises to be as thrilling a war-book as has thus far been written.

Kind regards and repeated thanks for your kindness.

Yours sincerely,

F. H. SHAW

HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

I don't think we can do better than to start off with that delightful bit of whimsey given as a talk by Miss Mary Allison at the Northern Club's July Meeting.

"WHICH GREYFRIARS BOY WOULD MAKE THE BEST HUSBAND"

(A concoction to be taken with the proverbial pinch of salt.)

When I was pondering what to talk about at our June Meeting, the thought crossed my mind (suggested by our title of "Ladies Night") that if the critics of the so-called similar plots in the Magnet stories were to read the stories in the Ladies Weekly Papers they would never grumble again at the wide variety of plots in the Greyfriars Saga. Because, believe me, year in and year out, the theme in the stories in the ladies papers is the same - Romance with a captial R. What, I wondered idly, would the Magnet stories have been like run on these lines - obviously the only qualities looked for in our heroes would be "husband material." Then I thought "That's what I will do - after all it is 'Ladies Night' - so here is the result - no research, no analysis, no statistics - just a diversion, a flight of fancy (written I hasten to add by a woman who has no fault to find with being a spinster!) on which Greyfriars Boy would make the BEST HUSBAND!

Well, obviously one would think there is no need to look further

than the Captain of the Remove, Harry Wharton, hero of so many stories and a very good fellow indeed. He is thoughtful, sensible, clever, cheerful and generous (and handsome!) He never shirks his responsibilities and what could a wife want more? Ah, but wait - what of those times in his youth when pride and obstinacy drove him apart from his friends and he became a rebel and an outcast until his customary good sense brought him round. Do you think it possible that in older years he would still have these attacks, shall I call them? I am afraid I think he would, and no doubt his wife would have to bear the brunt of his wilful pride. Therefore, I must, rather regretfully, cross the Captain of the Remove off my list!

Now, of course, I could not entertain his friend Frank Nugent, as it is quite apparent that poor Frank will spend a great deal of his life getting his younger brother out of his scrapes, and as I should hate to stand and watch the good Frank reduced in health and means by the tiresome Dicky I will leave him to a softer hearted wife.

In the rest of the Famous Five I dismiss Bob Cherry, (apart from the claims of Miss Hazeldene!) as he is rather too hearty. I think him a grand fellow, but I am sure he would be too goodtempered and too cheerful. As for Johnny Bull - well who would like a husband who is always right and who would always say "I told you so" when his wife came to grief by not following his advice! And, of course, Hurree Singh, I think, must be allowed to return to the dusky maidens of his own land.

Well now, that disposes of the Famous Five. What then about Vernon Smith. Ah, great temptation here. How lovely to wear diamonds and mink and most of the time Smithy would be delightful, but there are, of course, lapses which poor Tom Redwing knew so much about, and if they could bring shadows to Tom's face, I should say they would mean the same to me. Then Lord Mauleverer, always a favourite of mine, yes for himself I like Mauly well enough, but - his exalted position! No, I am afraid I could never fulfil the role of Countess adequately! Bunter? Oh dear me, NO!!! I rather appreciate Skinner's occasional sardonic humour, but mostly, I detest him. And the other Removites, good, bad and indifferent fellows are too ordinary and everyday - and, of course, I want some one really special.

No, I have had to look outside the Remove for the perfect husband. (no, not Wingate - a dear fellow but just a little monotonous.)

Yes, I have found one boy who is most kindhearted and generous, honest and of the highest principles, not at all clever, but most conscientious, and with a little right and tactful encouragement might

do very well. He is wealthy, and being of an open unsuspecting nature he needs protection from his enemies - and even more so from his friends! "Where" do you say "is this paragon?" Why I find the Greyfriars Boy who would make the Best Husband in the Fifth Form, and his name, in case you have not guessed already is - HORACE JAMES COKER!!!

* * *

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 31 - Gem No. 393 - "The Housemaster's Homecoming"

Time and time again Charles Hamilton returned to a theme which had an especial attraction for him - that of an orphan who discovered a relative after enduring many years of hardship. The first and certainly the greatest use of the theme was the story of Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe, though others may remember Harry Nameless of St. Kit's and a long line of Greyfriars waifs like Flip and Skip. Undoubtedly the most famous of all such stories was "The Housemaster's Homecoming" the renowned Gem summer double number for 1915.

Mr. Railton was highly thought of because he had refrained from taking a commission and had roughed it in the ranks. In this number of the Gem it transpired that he had been wounded and was returning to the school, but despite the promise of the title he really played little part in the story. It was Talbot who had the star role.

Crooke's uncle, Colonel Lyndon, accompanied Mr. Railton to the school, and Crooke persuaded his uncle to take up the case of Talbot with the other governors. The Colonel suspected that he had seen Talbot before, and was incensed when Talbot declared he must be mistaken. In a very convincing chapter Talbot was interviewed by the Governing Board and, not surprisingly, they soon came round to the colonel's view that St. Jim's was no place for a boy with such a record. Dr. Holmes treated this decision as implying a want of faith in his judgment on the part of the Governing Board, and he tendered his resignation. As most collectors know, the situation was resolved by a chance discovery of something that Talbot had known all along - that he was the nephew of Colonel Lyndon.

Charles Hamilton has classified "The Housemaster's Homecoming" as one of his finest stories, and it cannot be denied that the cut and thrust of the dialogue still makes compelling reading even to those who know the story well. When one takes into account the fact that it revolved around a character who had so singularly stirred the imagination of the Gem readers, it is easy to understand why the story should have achieved such immense popularity. It was in fact the climax of

the Talbot saga, and if he was too popular a character to be allowed to leave then he should have been featured in roles that did not involve any more ghosts from the past. As it was, the continued output of stories about Talbot's past - many of them by substitute writers - merely constituted an anti-climax. None of them could live up to the high standard of the earlier tales, and the very act of repetition only served to sully the memory of the original sequence of tales. The fastidious reader can, however, close his mind to the future when reading the famous double number and so savour to the full the drama that is so perfectly portrayed therein. Authors are said to be faulty judges of their best works, but there can be few collectors who would deny the aptness of Charles Hamilton's judgment in according such a high place of honour to "The Housemaster's Homecoming."

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FRANK RICHARDS JOINS IN CONTROVERSY

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

August 6th, 1958.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D. May I say that I have been not only interested, but considerably amused, by the various "Controversial" echoes and re-echoes? But there is one point that puzzles me. Several of our friends seem to take it for granted that, if one story or series is longer than another, the additional length can only be accounted for by "padding". Surely this is a little unreasonable. It is as good as saying that every story is by nature a short story, and that a long story can only be made by inflating a short one like a toy balloon. The most captious critic would hardly maintain that "Paradise Lost" is "padded" because it is longer than "Il Penseroso". Or that the Aeneid is "padded" because it is longer than a Georgic! Or that Beethoven "padded" the Eroica, because it is longer than "Fur Elise!" Or that Shakespeare had to "pad" Mark Antony's oration to make it longer than Brutus's!

The actual fact is, that no writer who can write ever pads at all, or has any need to do so. Some subjects require brief treatment; some longer. The author knows, to begin with, the space he is desired to fill; he selects a subject suitable to the allotted length; and the story forms itself in his mind, with all parts in the correct proportion. Unless this be the case, he is not a writer at

all, but has mistaken his vocation.

I have written Greyfriars stories as short as 2,000 words, and as long as 45,000. The short ones did not contain a word too few, or the long ones a word too many. Once the mind has envisaged the story, it simply has to be in that particular shape. This idea of "padding" can only occur to readers who do not know what writing really is. Let them try to imagine Wordsworth expanding "Peter Bell" to the length of the "Excursion" or Carlyle expanding Sartor Resartus to the length of his Frederick; or Horace expanding an Ode to the length of one of his satires. Or, on the other hand, compressing the Excursion into the length of Peter Bell; Frederick into the length of Sartor Resartus, or a Horatian satire into the length of an Ode. Every word has its own natural length; and if an author who is turning out 25,000 word stories is asked to make them 30,000 instead, he does not "pad" the additional 5,000; his mental processes produce a 30,000 word story, which is just as easy as any other length. So there you are!

With kindest regards,
Always yours sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS

* * *

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. 18. WE WHO CRITICISE! Are we over-critical?

"It is very easy to find fault! That is why there are so many critics!"

Some months ago I suggested that we do not view the stories as schoolboys - we write as adults, for adults, and we criticise stories from that angle. Was I wrong?

The stories were written for juveniles who are normally far from exacting as to characterisation, balance and literary construction. The weekly periodical was a transient thing. So long as it had its own excitement or robust fun, it was adequate for the moment it was intended to fill. And when that brief moment was over, it was thrown out to end its day in the dustbin or as inhygienic wrapping-paper for the butcher or the baker.

Providing his work satisfied the Editor (and, judging by some of

the substitute stories, the editorial standard was not very high) an author expected no further criticism of his work. No writer in the world could have foreseen everlasting fame for his weekly tales of this class. He could never have dreamed that his stories would be reprinted over and over again, for generation after generation of juveniles. He would have been stunned had he had any inkling that his work, tapped out to entertain youngsters in 1907, 1917, 1927, and 1937, would be criticised by adults in 1948, 1958, 1968.....

Yet, we, who could not write a good Tom Merry tale if we tried for a lifetime, turn the blinding glare of criticism upon work which the writer must reasonably have thought was a thing apart from criticism. We analyse it, discuss it from every angle, expose every weakness which we think may be there. We talk about it being too long, too short, too repetitive, too melodramatic, sagging in the middle, marred by anti-climax, and so on. As youngsters we loved those stories, as adults we pick them to pieces ruthlessly. Are we wrong?

I say we are perfectly right. An article which does not please or annoy, which has no original thought, is like a sausage roll without a sausage. We pump life-giving blood into the general interest in the old stories with every new slant that we can take, with every fresh appraisal we make.

Sir Stanley Unwin says "Not one author in a hundred wants aught but praise for his offspring", and I do not doubt it. But if we restrict our writings to nothing but sycophantic praise, we deserve the label of "Idol worshippers". Worse still, we stifle the interest in the old stories which we yearn so earnestly to keep alive.

If we are wrong to criticise, then what is left? An amateur precis of a plot (perhaps at great length), extracts from the context, a few amateur stories introducing the master's characters and settings? Are these things enough? They are not. Without continual fresh slants of appraisal, the interest would die - and the C.D. would die.

The most magnificent bouquet, the most sincere compliment is handed to Charles Hamilton in the form of the criticism and appraisal of his work. Only really first-class work can be analysed, only tip-top material is worth criticism, only the best will stand like a rock, waiting for more, in the face of constant critical appreciation.

It is no compliment to the substitute author to say "You enjoyed a sub story when you were a kid, leave it at that". In effect, you are saying that the substitute stories were merely kid's stuff - and so they were. They are outside the pale of any real criticism by adults, and so is the work of most of the authors who wrote for the

boys' paper of yester-year. There is no reflection on the writers in this; they wrote for children, and providing their work was wholesome, it was never meant for criticism. The work of Charles Hamilton stands alone in being worthy of constant appraisal, and the C.D. proves it.

When we write, are we justified in claiming as a fact something which is really only our personal opinion? - and most of us do this, more or less. Are we too dogmatic in our writing for the C.D.?

I don't think so. Apart from the fact that the columns of the C.D. are open to anyone who disagrees (and controversy is the mainstay of this particular series), our articles would become stilted, as well as take up too much valuable space, if we prefaced every comment with "in my opinion" or "I think" or "speaking personally,,I would say".

It's just my point of view! What's yours?

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 16. IS IT POSSIBLE TO REGRET THAT CHARLES HAMILTON WROTE SO MANY SERIES APART FROM GREYFRIARS AND ST. JIM'S?

ROGER JENKINS writes: "I think you are posing an unfair question here. The fact of the matter was that the Amalgamated Press intended to make full use of their star author. and were quite happy to see him launch one new series after another without regard to whether he would be able to keep them all running simultaneously for any sustained period. If their policy had been different, we should probably have had nothing but St. Jim's and the Gem.

I think, too, that a study of the various stories shows that Charles Hamilton always tended to concentrate his best efforts on one school at a time. As a very rough guide, I should say St. Jim's up to 1915, Rookwood up to 1926, and Greyfriars thereafter. The golden period of one school never coincided with the golden period of another.

There is the further point that Rookwood and similar shorter tales provided Charles Hamilton with the opportunity to develop a new technique with a smaller stage and a smaller cast. I think this is one of the reasons why I admire the Rookwood stories so much, and I feel quite certain that there is nothing in all the Greyfriars or St. Jim's tales which provides the same delightfully intimate atmosphere. So I would never subscribe to the heresy of wishing that Rookwood had never been created."

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "Of course it was obvious that when Charles Hamilton started increasing his output the Gem and Magnet fell below their usual standard.

Substitute writers were to blame for this, most of their stories being very poor, but the worst thing they (or the Editor) ever did was to borrow the maestro's pen-names.

Rookwood and Cedar Creek stories were first-class, and I was sorry they did not last so long as St. Jim's and Greyfriars. I believe that if Charles Hamilton had written stories of these four schools only, the Gem and Magnet would not have suffered at all. The Boys' Friend stories were of only half the length of those of Tom Merry and Harry Wharton, and with only these four schools to attend to, he could have concentrated more on the Gem and Magnet."

ERIC FAYNE SAYS: "The truth of the matter is that we wish our favourite writer could have worked miracles. We love Rookwood, Cedar Creek, the Rio Kid, etc., far too much to consider for a moment our world without them; we loathe the substitute stories which kept Greyfriars and St. Jim's more or less on the map while the star was busy giving us something else to entertain us. In fact, we're an illogical lot altogether."

* * *

Here are the answers to Eric Lawrence's Crossword in last month's C.D.

ANSWERS DOWN

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Gate | 2. Arid |
| 3. Master | 4. Rainbow |
| 5. Auditing | 6. Spacemen |
| 10. Fiddling | 11. Springer |
| 14. Inkwell | 15. Gaelic |
| 18. Knot | 19. Bess |

ANSWERS ACROSS

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Grammarians | 7. Attics |
| 8. India | 9. Tin |
| 12. Bathe | 13. Impair |
| 15. Gwynne | 16. Drink |
| 17. Wee | 20. Ingle |
| 21. Linley | 22. Gerald Cutts |

FOR SALE: Magnets, Lees, Monsters, Gems, S.O.Ls. Some early Gems and Greyfriars S.O.Ls. S.A.E.

LOWES, 15 EDITH STREET, TYNEMOUTH.

CAN ANYONE HELP ME TO COMPLETE MY COLLECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE COMIC PAPERS? I need one copy only and will pay 5/- each for the following: Bo-peep, Merry Midget, Dazzler, Bouncer, Coloured, Sunny, Merry Moments, Sparkler (Trapps Holmes), Cheerful, Rocket (Comic), Jungle Jinks, Chick's Own (before 1936), Summer.

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

Dieppe 1942. The story of the biggest landing in Europe by freedom 's forces on German occupied territory since the fall of France, and the part Sexton Blake played in it. As an assignment nothing of a tougher nature ever came Blake's way. His job to completely destroy an E-boat base east of Dieppe after contacting the remnants of the Maquis with whom Louise, a British agent, is working. Louise is an old friend and a well-known character in the pages of the Library. A super-human task rendered well-nigh impossible because Blake has also to discover the identity of a German agent working within the Maquis. How he goes about his task of carrying explosives and detonators along the enemy infested roads to dynamite the base aided by only a handful of loyal Frenchmen makes a thrilling and suspenseful narrative.

The tempo is fast, but occasionally slackens when momentarily it ceases. Blake permits himself in fleeting loneliness to ponder absent friends. As for instance following an investiture at Buckingham Palace after an audience with the late King. Of Tinker on a bomb disposal unit; of Mrs. Bardell in an aircraft factory; of Pedro policing an airfield; and - surprisingly - Nelson Lee, a colleague of whom Blake fans dimly remember as part of the stories of nearly 40 years ago, now acting custodian of Blake's business whilst hostilities prevail. A war-time Blake adventure, which maintains the high standard of the series.

Rating.....Very good

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"Diamonds are a Girl's best friend" once crooned Marilyn Monroe, in one of her films of fairly recent showing. But to Simonetta Fabriano famous Italian soprano, they did not prove to be at all friendly. At least, one particular specimen - the so-called Farnese diamond - did not. The old saying that you cannot get blood out of a stone is not aptly phrased when used in connection with this particular jewel, for before Blake was finished with the case, it was to have upon the blood of several innocent, and not so innocent, people.

Amongst the latter was a Beaudelaire-like character, named Mander. But whereas Beaudelaire had a dog-like devotion for Blake, Mander's only feelings were of ferocity and extermination. The extermination process is carried out, not against Blake, however; it is the dwarf who is the self-inflicted victim when, with Blake in pursuit, he falls down the steep steps leading to the piazza on top of the Capito-

line hill in Rome, under the wheels of a touring coach. For it is to sunny Italy that the quest of the Farnese diamond takes Blake, and also Tinker and Paula Dane.

The adventures of the three leading lights of Sexton Blake investigations pass away a couple of hours or so quite pleasantly, and if the story just fails to grip, the author's knowledge of the surroundings about which he writes is authentic enough to command both a lively interest and a healthy respect.

Rating..... Good

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OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON MEETING - Sunday, August 17th, 1958. - Contrary to usual practice we held a meeting in August and what a jolly time we had. The usual business formalities having been attended to, we got down to some hard thinking over the excellent object quiz, Len had arranged for us. Direct clues, association of ideas, all played their part, resulting in a worthy win for Eric Lawrence with Don Webster and Bill Lofts taking 2nd and 3rd places respectively.

With "Watson" as key word we then got down to a tough elimination quiz which I was lucky enough to win followed by Don Webster with Eric Lawrence and Vernon Lay very close behind. We always enjoy a Mystery Debate and our latest was no exception, some ticklish queries came out of the hat, i.e. Was Coker a really credible character? Were there too many comics on the market before the war? to quote two examples. Josie presented us with a worthy feed but as usual the time went all too quickly and so ended another merry get together. Thank you Josie and Len for a famous time.

ROBERT H. WHITER

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING - August 9th, 1958. - Gerry Allison said to me on the phone before the meeting, "I shouldn't be surprised if Cliff Beardsell puts in an appearance." Well, Cliff did, and right glad we were to see him.

It was Jack Wood's night and in right good form was he. Not surprising perhaps, for he was on sure ground, his subject being "The History of the Nelson Lee Library." He told of how Mr. W. H. Back at Fleetway House was much impressed by the manuscript of a story which had been submitted, so much so that he had asked the author of it to

come and see him. The author duly came along and Mr. Back was surprised at his youthful appearance. The author was Edwy Searles Brooks, and the story "The Iron Island" which later ran in the "Gem". Later E.S.B. was invited to join G. H. Teed, A. S. Hardy, Maxwell Scott and others in writing stories for the Nelson Lee Library. Later still E.S.B. was given the whole field to himself with very successful results as all Leetites know. Jack Wood told many good stories in support of his favourite author, including his gift for foreseeing events. The "Nautilus" had just completed its voyage under the ice of the North Pole, Jack, being Jack, was not slow in slipping that one in.

Came refreshments, then a good debate on points Jack Wood raised. Jack hadn't finished yet. A short 20 questions session followed with Jack forming the whole team. He did quite well under the circumstances. Yes, it was Jack's night. Next meeting, September 13th. Gerry Allison takes over with a talk on the "Unpleasant Three" - "Skinner, Snoop and Stott." Should be good.

HERBERT LECKENBY - Northern Section Correspondent.

MIDLAND SECTION - Meeting held Monday, 28th July, 1958. - Owing to holidays our numbers even less than usual this month and a nasty bout of lumbago contracted at the last minute laid Secretary Harry low, hence the unfamiliar signature at the end of this report. Those of us who did attend were able to give a warm welcome to Jack Ingram, back in the fold after a severe illness. Looking fit and well once more and a few pounds (in weight) lighter. Our genial ex-chairman took the chair in the absence of Tom on holiday and the meeting got under way without further delay. We settled down to enjoy what we have all too infrequently, a talk by Ray Bennett. We were not disappointed as Ray had prepared his talk on the lines of the popular Radio Show "Desert Island Discs" and called it "Desert Island Books". In his inimitable style, interlarded with dry humour, Ray gave us the eight boys papers he would like to have with him on his island paradise and his reasons for choosing them. For the benefit of those who were not able to hear this highly original talk this is the list of papers chosen for their variety not similarity:- 1. Magnet No. 1; 2. Any copy of Wizard, date 1927; 3. Gem No. 1097 "Two Forms at War"; 4. Union Jack No. 1210. "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve"; 5. Bullseye No. 1; 6. Nelson Lee No. 152 "Archie's Xmas Party"; 7. Boys Cinema No. 833; 8. Magnet No. 1386 "The Shadowed Billionaire". This thought-provoking item by Ray was of course well received by one and all.

The next item was in the form of a bombshell by Jack Corbett who produced a number of Magnets for sale at the record price of 9d each!

Madge then entertained us by reading some vintage newsletters and then her husband again set the room humming by producing two replies he had received from those August (no pun intended) personages the Queen's Secretary and the Prime Minister's Secretary. These were in answer to Jack's personal letter to them with regard to the inclusion of Charles Hamilton in the Honours list and the tone of those replies makes one think there may be some hope for the future.

Temporary Secretary (I hope) NORMAN GREGORY.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - Sunday, 3rd August. - A very fine gathering for this, the August Bank Holiday Meeting, and it was soon obvious that we were going to have difficulty in finding room for everybody. Fortunately an overflow meeting was not necessary. A special welcome was made by the Chairman to Beryl Russell and Tom Porter from Birmingham, and to Herbert Leckenby from York and to Sir Frederick Bowman from our own town. It was also pleasant to see Frank Case again, who unfortunately is not always able to be with us. Tom Porter gave us a twenty question quiz based on the four schools. Sharp and to the point questions were fired at us by Tom, and our brains were soon working overtime. The winners were Don Webster with twelve points followed by Jack Morgan and Frank Unwin with six points each. Following on we were presented by another edition of Frank Unwin's "Down you Go". After tea, kindly prepared by Mrs. Webster, we listened to a talk by Sir Frederick Bowman on the appeal of boys' books of the period prior to the first world war. While some of us would not completely share his views, his talk was most stimulating and interesting. The reply came from Herbert Leckenby who gave us his own point of view on some of the early books. Time was running short, and all too soon, our guests had to leave for the station. Next meeting, Sunday, 14th September at 7 p.m.

NORMAN PRAGNELL, Secretary, Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

THE GOLDEN HOURS CLUB - AUSTRALIA - A most enjoyable get together was enjoyed by the members of the Club on Friday, 1st August - although attendance is as yet still small, this was amply compensated by the lively enthusiasm shown by all. The meeting was opened by Arnold Keena who extended warm welcome to a new member, Mr. Jim Cameron who was obviously soon quite at home. The Secretary then read letters from Ron Hodgson, Gerald Allison, Don Webster, and Harry Broster. A quiz from Ron Hodgson was of special interest and it will be used to sharpen a few memories at an early date - two "Newsletters" from the Midland O.B.B.C. also aroused great discussion. The main

feature of the evening's programme was then presented as each member read his favourite item portraying "Suspense" - Victor Colby, battling for Sexton Blake opened proceedings with a hair-raising extract from a U.J. by Gilbert Chester entitled "Fear" and he was ably supported by Arnold Keena who chose "The Ghost of Bannington Grange" for his selection....."Hamiltonia" was represented by Syd Smythe who gave the final reading from the Magnet. The readings were voted a great success and it was decided to repeat the entertainment at the next meeting.

B. PATE - Secretary.

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FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED No. 8......by W. O. G. Lofts

An Outstanding Record of John Nix Pentelow

One of the most discussed - and sometimes highly criticised of all boys' authors in the "Collectors Digest" has been J. N. Pentelow. Most of the criticism has been directed at his Greyfriars and Magnets stories, mainly when Editor of the "Magnet" and "Gem" during the war years. Whether readers like histories or not, they are bound to except the fact that when writing on the subject of cricket, he obviously knew what he was writing about.

I would now like to record, that out of all the thousands of different types of boys stories published - J. N. Pentelow has the rare distinction of being the only author who has had a story reviewed in the Sunday "Observer". This was one of his tales in the "Boys Friend Library" in 1927.

The reviewer - Sir John S. Squire - reviewed the tale at some length, and our editor and I have agreed that a full report, with our comments, will be published in the coming C.D. Annual.

Blake Authors and their Ambitions

One of the favourite questions I ask a Blake author during an interview is "What do you intend to do when you retire from writing?" Some laugh and say "that they never intend to retire - if they can help it" - whilst strangely enough most of them have confessed that they would like to own a small inn - or hotel - in the country.

Four at least, I know, have realised this. Firstly, W. W. Sayer, better known to Blake readers as "Pierre Quirroule" brilliant writer in the early days and twenties is mine host at an Inn near Epping Forest.

Another Blake writer - and at one time Editor of the U.J. - Lewis Carlton runs a small hotel down Devon way. He was seen in Fleet Street not so long ago. Modern readers of the S.B.L. may remember a few years

ago the very good Blake writer "John Drummond" otherwise John Newton Chance - he is now semi-retired and runs a hotel and public house in the Isle of Wight. The fourth author I am not at liberty to reveal - but another well know personality connected with the S.B.L. and U.J. for years - artist Eric Parker - has for years had the same ambition but without success so far.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane,
York.

Phone: 25795

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In his latest letter, Jim Cook writes:-

"A couple of days have passed since the arrival of Dorrie's message, and Lee haddespatched a brief note to Mr. Ridgeway at Gobabis. This place is on the extreme edge of the Wester Kalahari, and judging by the map is the last place I would want to end my days.

We were all ready to leave and the party had set out for Bellton station to catch the express for Victoria. The juniors, accompanied by Phipps, Archie Glenthorpe's valet, were to go on to London Airport and Lee and I were following on after a visit to Africa House in London. The schoolmaster detective had explained his calling at Africa House and as much information as possible was obtained about the state of affairs in British Bechuanaland, which formed a major portion of the Kalahari. We then went on to London Airport and met up with the others. The party had now increased and there were Sir Edward Handforth, who had probably come to see his two sons off - Lord Westbrooke, Tregellis-West's guardian, Sir Crawford Grey, father of Jack Grey, and Colonel Glenthorpe.

After a great deal of handshaking Nelson Lee, who seemed to be very anxious to board the plane, took Sir Crawford Grey to one side and spoke a few words to him. The boys' parents departed and we were soon on our way to the plane on the far side of the Airport.

Sir Crawford had remained behind with Mr. Lee, and it looked as if Jack Grey's father was coming with us. We took our seats in the giant Viscount and very shortly afterwards we were off. I was still very much in the dark, for there had been no time for explanations and even Nipper was ignorant of the route we were to take.

For it seemed only hours ago we were in Bellton, thinking how to spend the summer holidays and exchanging invitations. Now we had been whisked away to another world, a world high above London, and we were on our way to Africa!

* * *

Now that I have time to pause and reflect on this dash to Lord Dorrimore, who may be dead by now, I never thought I would take part in one of those thrilling and apparently safe adventures for which the St. Frank's crowd are famous. The fairy story side to these visits to other lands were supplied faithfully by the chroniclers, since no other interest would have been accepted. But it did tie down somewhat the writer who wanted to break away from the shackles of employers. I have a free hand; I am not restricted in the same way as Mr. Brooks, but whereas he had, of necessity, to toe the line and maintain an inspired interest coupled with a comic relief - for which old Handforth duly gave us - my narrative may be therefore just dull and placid.

There is something going on, out there in the Kalahari Desert and it may be that what happens will be as sensational as any St. Frank's adventure yarn. But then, it may not.

* * *

We are to make for the aeodrome at Walfis Bay, on the south West coast of Africa. We have halted at Entebbe, after changing planes three times, and we shall stay here at this beautiful capital of Uganda until Nelson Lee can charter a plane to cover the rest of the journey. I have, as you can see, written this from two parts of the world. I began at St. Frank's and finished - I don't like that word - here.

So until you hear from me again, somewhere in Africa, Cheerio.

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Apologies: Owing to pressure on space Leeites are on short ration this month. Will try and make up next month.

Reviews of "Billy Bunters' Own" and "Billy Bunter Hiker" by Jack Wood have also had to be held over.
H.L.

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