

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 143

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NOVEMBER 1958

FROM "THE SURPRISE" No. 53, NOVEMBER 4, 1923



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-THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST-

Vol. 12

No. 143

Price 1s. 6d.

NOVEMBER, 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

IT WON'T BE LONG NOW. I mean the Annual needless to say. I'm thinking of little else just now, and, my word, things have been happening since I wrote about it last. For instance, I've received Gerry Allison's "Skinner, Snoop and Stott" which as a talk, has already been heard by Northern and London members, and enjoyed. Then Mr. H. W. Twyman, many years editor of the Union Jack, has sent me a most intriguing article which he calls "Men at Work". In it he tells how several popular Blake authors went about writing their stories. His description of E. S. Brooks on the job will particularly interest his fans.

And talking of Nelson Lee, there's a real winner by James W. Cook. He calls it "Kalahari Secret". All I'll say about this is that if ever the A.P. thought of reviving the Nelson Lee Library and E. S. Brooks wasn't available they could find a worthy successor in Jim Cook. You'll agree when you read it.

Still another article which will be in type when you read this is Harry Broster's "Pentelow's Other Schools". This is a well done job in response to the requests of many J.N.P. admirers. And I've just been looking at the "100 Questions" set by the four Clubs. Some real teasers here for you, and no error.

To come, there's another Lee article by Charles Churchill and the usual big feature by members of the Sexton Blake Circle. Yes, indeed, something for everybody.

And oh, just a word about the cover. Going along the road one day I suddenly had an idea. Why not, for a change, sketches from photographs of leading members of our fraternity? I put it to Bob Whiter, and straight away that old reliable said he would have a go. Well, I think we can leave it to Bob.

Now, just a word about orders. They are coming in satisfactorily; there's quite a number from new chums, but there's still a lot of regulars who haven't actually ordered or sent in their "Who's Who" forms. I should be grateful if they'll let me have them as soon as possible, as I must place my order soon. I am hoping that once again it will be a record one.

* * * *

THE GREYFRIARS CUP CONTEST. Would London Club members who are writing stories please send them to Frank Vernon Lay, 167 Watford Road, Harrow, Middlesex?

* * * *

CHANGE OF ADDRESS. Donald B. Webster now resides at 23 West Park Road, Kew, Surrey.

* * * *

LOOK OUT FOR THESE. George Mell has two stories in Annuals this year, "Against the Clock" - a motoring yarn in the "Daily Mail's Boys' Annual" and "Ghost Town Gold" in "Eagle 8". "Eagle" has also accepted a school story for next years. Nice work George.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERY LECKENBY

QUERY CORNER - Can anyone give any information about a book called, I believe, "Tom Strong"? It concerned a boy who won a scholarship to Claybury School. The author was probably Gunby Hadath. Highlight of the story was a match at Lords against Lyttleton School. Can only give period as early years of the century. Shall be grateful for any information.

R. GUEST, 5 RALEIGH GARDENS, BRIXTON HILL, LONDON, S.W.2.

Blakiana

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I feel that a tribute of appreciation should be expressed to Mr. W. Howard Baker, as Editor of the Sexton Blake Library and author of many of the stories, for his efforts in keeping the Blake flag flying. True, some of we old-timers will never "take" to the new set-up, but we must not lose sight of the fact that had not Mr. Baker modernised the whole framework of the S.B.L. we would undoubtedly have said good-bye to Sexton Blake long ago.

In relation to circulation figures, we readers of the C. Digest are few, and here again Mr. Baker is to be thanked for his efforts to please us in bringing back such as Huxton Rymer, Mrs. Bardell, "Splash" Page (now Kirby) etc.

Mr. Baker has had to put in a lot of hard work, but from what my husband tells me - following his recent meeting with him at Fleetway House - the "new" Blake is fast becoming the popular figure he was in the past. As proof of this, Blake's adventures are now translated into many foreign languages, such as Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Hindustani, etc.

And so, on behalf of readers of Blakiana, I say "thank you, W. Howard Baker, for your good work."

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * *

I REMEMBER THESE

by E. V. Copeman

I began to read Sexton Blake stories in 1929 and in those twenty-eight years I have built up quite a storehouse of memories. Memories that are precious to me. Memories that no doubt explain why I am still (and always will be, I hope) a Blake fan. Memories of authors, of characters and of particular stories. At best I can only ramble, for memories are, after all, elusive things, but in my own humble opinion no better foundation could have been laid with me than was laid by the authors I now intend listing. Purposely I have left out the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY and culled all my references from the UNION JACK, since it was per medium of the latter paper that I first came in contact with Sexton Blake. And these are the men who introduced me to him:

1. ROBERT MURRAY. Most Blake lovers think of Robert Murray primarily as the writer of the Criminals' Confederation stories. For my part, I remember him best for the Paul Cynos series and the Doctor Satira series - and for those two excellent yarns which were published in U.J. Nos. 1394-5, FRAMED and THE UNKNOWN, in which Blake was imprisoned on the charge of murder! As for the Confederation, its tale had been told before I started reading the UNION JACK. In retrospect it wasn't quite the same and in any case it was years before I was able to get the earlier part of the series, but I did realise that the reprinted yarns in 1931 and 1932 were but a shadow of the original. Now that I possess most of the stories I still intend one day reading the series right through, then no doubt I will be able to discuss the subject more intelligently. However, there are two things that prejudice me. Firstly, I know that Robert Murray didn't wind up the series himself, and secondly, after the terrific build-up old readers have given it, I'm scared stiff I'll be disappointed! There was a yarn of Robert Murray's that was given a terrific advance "plug" by the Editor of Detective Weekly. It appeared in D.W. No. 123 as THE FLAMING TERROR, and was a nondescript effort that left me quite cold. I wasn't even interested enough to read Murray's next yarn, THE CRIME AT LONE HOUSE (D.W. No. 127), which I believe now was the last Blake yarn he penned. It seemed to me such a flat finish for such an outstanding Blake writer.

2. GWYN EVANS. Here was an author whose work I loved. I enjoyed all his stories, even when he waxed poetic for line after line on description! I liked Splash Page and Ruff Hanson and his very human presentation of Mrs. Bardell and Inspector Coutts. And I revelled in the atmosphere of the Christmas stories. Of all Gwyn's Christmas stories I think I liked most the two in 1929 (we were lucky that year) in U.J. Nos. 1365-6, THE MISTLETOE-MILK MYSTERY and THE MASQUE OF TIME. And what better picture of the real Coutts can you get than in SUSPENDED FROM DUTY (U.J. 1519)? Two other excellent stories, THE GREY PANTHER (U.J. 1398) and DISGRACE (U.J. 1399) told once more (with in a surprisingly few weeks of Murray's efforts) of Blake being arrested and charged with murder. Four other Gwyn Evans' stories I'll always remember are those of the Mister Mist series, THE MAN WHO WALKED BY NIGHT (U.J. 1277), THE PHANTOM OF SCOTLAND YARD (U.J. 1278), THE GREAT BUDGET CONSPIRACY (U.J. 1280) and THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING MACE (U.J. 1281). And then there were the Miss Death stories.....I could go on and on.....

3. R.L. HADFIELD AND DAVID MACLUIRE. I've sandwiched these two

writers in here because each contributed just occasional isolated "straight mystery" yarns and both are seldom mentioned in Blakiana. I read most of their stories and liked them. They were interesting and competently told. Most remembered are Hadfield's SOME PERSONS UNKNOWN (U.J. 1343) and BURDEN OF PROOF (U.J. 1371) and Macluire's THE FOURTH MUMMY (U.J. 1408) and LOOT (U.J. 1429).

4. GEORGE HAMILTON TEED. I think I've voiced much of my appreciation of this excellent writer's work in my article TURN BACK THE CLOCK. Particularly I enjoyed Wu Ling, Huxton Rymer and George Marsden Plummer yarns. But there are two old stories I recall very vividly and they are these: (a) a Japanese one with Huxton Rymer and the Japanese earthquake, called THE GREEN PORTFOLIO (U.J. 1066) and (b) an Indian one called THE LIZARD MAN (U.J. No. 1081). A Plummer yarn I can remember vividly is PLUMMER'S DEATH RAY (U.J. 1093) but I'm given to understand that Teed wasn't the author. In it there was an intensely interesting game of chess. I liked too the way Teed always showed Blake's humanity - his gently progressive romance with Mademoiselle Yvonne (and later with Mademoiselle Roxane), Tinker's romance with Nirvana the dancer, and the very real father/son relationship between Blake and Tinker. G. H. Teed and Gwyn Evans both seemed to see the Baker Street pair as human beings first and detectives second. It certainly made them very real.

5. REX HARDINGE. I've read lots of Rex Hardinge's African yarns and enjoyed them; yet, strangely enough, it isn't his African work that remains in my memory so much as two isolated little tales with an Indian background. These are THE MAN IN THE DARKENED ROOM (U.J. 1344) and THE MAN WHO SOLD DEATH (U.J. 1406). Another of his stories I'll never forget (I read it during a terrific storm) is SAY IT WITH GUNS (U.J. 1416). The latter was one of the few Blake stories illustrated by that excellent artist, E. Hubbard.

6. EDWY SEARLES BROOKS. Waldo was always a prime favourite with me and I've dealt with him to some length in my article WALDO LIVES AGAIN but I remember Brooks too, for his Blake yarns which featured that engaging personality, the Hon. Eustace Cavendish. Useful Eustace appeared in three particularly good ones, THE CASE OF THE THREE BLACK CATS (U.J. 1354), TERROR BY NIGHT (U.J. 1357) and THE FROZEN MAN MYSTERY (U.J. 1364).

7. GILBERT CHESTER. Gilbert Chester's Union Jack stories were usually good. Most were straight mysteries without special characters but these I can still think about with pleasure: THE LIFT-SHAFT

MYSTERY (U.J. 1138), THE NEGATIVE ALIBI (U.J. 1142), THE STRANGE AFFAIR OF THE REJUVENATION CLUB (U.J. 1300) and THE GNOMID (U.J. 1362).

8. COUTTS BRISBANE. Writing in the Union Jack under the name of Reid Whitley, Coutts Brisbane introduced me to Doctor Ferraro and that bland, smiling Chinese student of European banking, Ah Wo. Who could fail to enjoy such stories as THE MYSTERY OF THE DYED RATS (U.J. 1242), HANDS UP, LONDON (U.J. 1290), THE MYSTERY OF THE FOUR BUFFALO BILLS (U.J. 1332), THE GAS-RING MYSTERY (U.J. 1352) and THE JUDGMENT MEN (U.J. 1367)

9. ANTHONY SKENE. Skene wrote usually of Zenith the Albino and I found Zenith a fascinatingly interesting foe for Blake and spent many happy hours reading of his exploits. Maybe I was sorry for him but I was always glad he got away because it would mean further clashes of wits in the future! Names that flash to mind are THE PLANT OF PREY (U.J. 1171), ZENITH DECLARES WAR (U.J. 1174), THE HAUNTED HOTEL MYSTERY (U.J. 1245) and WRY HOUSE (U.J. 1479).

10. C. MALCOLM HINCKS. I don't remember seeing this writer's name specially mentioned in the "C.D.", yet I can't forget some of his stories in the Union Jack such as THE CARNATION WREATH MYSTERY (U.J. 1287), THE SHADOW MAN (U.J. 1346) and HIDDEN FANGS (U.J. 1377). He didn't contribute frequently but when he did, it was usually a rattling good yarn.

Well, that's it. Ten from my storehouse. Ten reasons why I like Blake. Purposely I've left out the modern writers. I can deal with the modern team later, but the ones I have named here were the men whose spadework not only introduced me to Blake and Tinker but forged a bond of friendship that has stood the test of time.

My only regret is that they are not all still writing today. Four Libraries a month and a U.J. every week! With new stories by the old familiar names! Wouldn't it be Utopia?

* * * * *

UNION JACK TITLES - YEAR 1916 (JANUARY - JUNE)

No. 638	The Case of the Prisoner of War.....	A. Blair
No. 639	At the Turn of the Hour (Yvonne).....	G. H. Teed
No. 640	A Marked Man (Humble Begge).....	A. Murray
No. 641	The Case of the Chinese Mascot (Kestrel).....	L. Jackson
No. 642	The Case of the Morphia Patient.....	M. Osborne
No. 643	In Darkest London.....	W.M. Graydon
No. 644	The Circle of Steel (Plummer).....	M. Osborne

No. 645	One War Service	C. Hayter
No. 646	The Case of the Missing Airman (Kestrel)	L. Jackson
No. 647	The Affair of the Allendon Plate (Begge)	A. Murray
No. 648	The Case of the Forged Passports	?
No. 649	The Great Sapphire Mystery	?
No. 650	The Case of the Khaki Armlet	M. Osborne
No. 651	The Case of the Aniline Formula (Kestrel)	L. Jackson
No. 652	The Place of Fire (Losely)	C. Hayter
No. 653	The Martel Square Mystery	?
No. 654	The Strange Case of Mr. Justice Jannifer	A. Blair
No. 655	The Affair of the Dutch Merchant (Kestrel)	L. Jackson
No. 656	The Island of Fear (Yvonne)	G. H. Teed
No. 657	The House in the Willows (Bliss Cranston)	A. Murray
No. 658	The Prisoner of Portilla (Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 659	The Curious Case of the Missing Boy	A. Blair
No. 660	The Parrowby Will Mystery	A. Blair
No. 661	Besieged in Kut	A. Murray
No. 662	The Mystery of Martin Esher (Kestrel)	L. Jackson
No. 663	The Case of the Missing Princess (Yvonne)	G. H. Teed

(Number 638 is dated 1st January, 1916, and Number 663 is dated 24th June, 1916).

 EXCHANGE/SALE: bound/loose O.S. Lees, Magnets, S.O.L's, etc. etc.
 WANTED: Magnets, Greyfriars, S.O.L's (coverless S.O.L's welcomed if story complete and clean.
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WANTED: Runs of Magnets particularly 1930-1940. Holidays Annuals, C.D. Annuals, S.O.L's. Any stories and novels by Gunby Hadath, particularly those on Claybury School. I have choice Cricket Library to exchange if required, including rare and beautifully bound volumes.
 R. GUEST, 5 RALEIGH GARDENS, BRIXTON HILL, S.W.2.

URGENTLY REQUIRED TO COMPLETE RUNS FOR BINDING. Magnets, numbers 1433, 1471, 1472, 1491, 1556, 1535. Will purchase or exchange with bound "Stacey" series (12 copies) in excellent condition.
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 Condition must be fair and all complete with covers. Swops considered. Many exchanges, if not will buy.

The Voodoo Drum (No. 417)Peter Saxon

Sexton Blake and Marion Lang in the West Indies. An introduction which in how many will it fail to revive memories of Blake's past colourful adventures amongst the vast islands dotted about the Caribbean particularly the negro republic of Haiti, that extremely hot and dirty town, in which he was often pitted against the beautiful octoroon, Marie Galante, known as the High Priestess of Voodoo?

Drug addiction is an evil Blake had set himself the task of stamping out on several past occasions, so the theme of this novel is by no means an original one. A certain drug, many times more potent than any other the Yard has had experience of, is being brought into this country by Jamaicans coming over in the emigration boats. Depraved and corrupted, the addict, whilst showing no outward symptoms of the havoc it is tearing within him, becomes completely enslaved as all moral values disintegrate.

Superintendent Grimwald, in making unofficial enquiries in Jamaica solicits the aid of a beautiful quadroon, named Maria Sainte, a one-time member of the Liverpool C.I.D. When her body is washed ashore in Montego Bay, the harassed Superintendent seeks Blake's help in smashing the dope ring and bringing Marie's murderers to book.

With Tinker and Paula busy on routine work at home, Blake decides to give Marion Lang a little more experience in crime investigation. Superstitious natives - sadistic killers - the rituals of Voodooism - the extent of the girl's ordeal may well be imagined when even the hardened and experienced Blake fails to master his loathing of the cult. Not the best of the Saxon stories.

Rating.....Good

* * *

The Frightened People (No. 418)Jack Trevor Story

Jack Trevor Story starts his leg-pulling right from the first paragraph, with the result that an opening chapter with promises - something in the way of fireworks ended in a damp squib. But, thereafter, the author is in grim mood, as he described the extent of the terror that can occur in a radioactive village. Three toy guns of a certain make, sold from a shop in the High Street of a village called Stoke Penton, are found to have been manufactured from metal charged with radio-activity. Two of the guns are found, but not before one of them has nearly caused the death of a little boy for whom it was intended as

a birthday present. A newly married couple are in possession of the third. The use to which they intended it for - that of intimidation in the execution of a robbery - has a boomerang effect, resulting almost in the death of the husband.

In their investigations into the source of the radio-active metal and the blackmarket dealer and other crooks who are involved in the disposal of it, Paula has one great moment when she outwits three thugs who are bent on murder, what time Tinker is coming an awful cropper at his end of the enquiries. Paula's coolness and efficiency in a crisis proves just how great an asset she is to the firm in general and to her chief in particular.

A quiet case, rather, with Blake working calmly, yet remorselessly in bringing the criminals to the justice they deserve.

Old friend Coutts of the Yard, albeit much more subdued these days, and no longer a "star" performer, makes a welcome appearance.

RatingVery good

WALTER WEBB

FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED - No. 9

By W. O. G. Lofts

E. S. Brooks - Old Boys Book Collector

I often receive requests from readers to try and dig up something new on E. S. Brooks; and often the query as to why I don't try and interview him as he lives like myself in London. As a writer of only original information I must point out that a full report of Mr. Brooks' work for the Amalgamated Press was given in a C.D. some years ago - when he visited the London Old Boys Book Club. However, perhaps the following information will interest readers taken from the "Union Jack" No. 145 (second series) dated July 26th, 1906. I have been told that Mr. Brooks has in his library all copies of his "Nelson Lee" yarns, and it seems as if he also collected Old Boys papers in his youth.

From the U.J. Editors Chat

"I am asked by E. S. Brooks of Windsor House, Langland Bay, Glamorganshire, to state that he will pay 2/6 and exchange 120 clean copies of 'Pluck' and the 'Marvel' for Nos. 1-66, 71, 72, 75 and 76 of the 'Union Jack' and 1-132 of the 'Boys Herald', Will any reader who has these copies send Mr. Brooks a postcard?"

They Wrote of Flying Stories

Five of the best known writers of Air-stories for boys in the pre-war period were Captain W. E. Johns; George E. Rochester; Captain Robert Hawke; Hedley Scott; and John Brearley. They all wrote for such papers as "Boys Own Paper", "Chums", "Modern Boy", "Pilot", "Ranger", "Boys Friend Library" and the Thomson papers. Of these writers I should say that Captain Johns has easily become the most famous, with his name a household word today.

His Biggles yarns bring him in thousands of pounds each year in royalties alone - apart from the proceeds in bound books - picture-strips - and other writings. Captain Johns served as a Flight-Lieut. in the Royal Flying Corps during the 1914-18 War.

Of George E. Rochester I have had the pleasure of meeting him several times. A full report of one interview was given in the October, 1955 C.D. No. 106. Being very slight in stature and now just on sixty, it seems hard to believe that during the first world-war Mr. Rochester handled flying bombers - and was shot down by German anti-aircraft guns behind their lines - and was a prisoner of war. Also held the rank of Flight-Lieut. During the last war served in the R.A.F. Regiment. Alas, for us these days he is writing womans' fiction. Before starting writing in the 1920s worked as a golf-caddy! Last time I saw him he contemplated going to the U.S.A. to write where his family live.

Captain Robert Hawke and Hedley Scott - were one and the same writer! Or to give the real name of the two - Hedley O'Mant, very well known personality at the A.P. before the 1939 war. Mr. O'Mant served also in the Royal Flying Corps as an officer and in the last war held the rank of Squadron Leader though this time on non-optional duties.

Writer of many of the substitute "Magnet" yarns - he was at one time a sub-editor in the "Magnet" Office. Later in the '30s he became Editor of the "Ranger" and "Pilot" where many of his flying stories appeared featuring Baldy's Angels. He was also the author of the flying stories which appeared in the first issues of "Radio Fun" though in this case no name was given. He seems to have disappeared completely these last few years and no trace of him is likely.

The last name on the list of writers of Air-stories is John Brearley; unfortunately the only information gleaned as yet on this writer is that his real name was John Gerbutt. I don't think he wrote after 1940 for the boys papers - though he has been reported as having written a Blake story in the "New Zealand Chums" several years ago.

As I have not seen this story, it may be possible that it is a reprint of an earlier yarn.

 WANTED URGENTLY: Sexton Blake Libraries 1st series. Nos. 17, 105, 109, 197, 198, 201, 202. Sexton Blake Lib. 2nd series. Nos. 8, 25, 102, 111, 129, 213, 236, 243, 272, 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Boys Friend Libs. 1st series. Nos. 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. Boys Friend Libs. 2nd series. Nos. 392, 396. Union Jacks. Nos. 881, 1041, 1098.
 MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

FOR EXCHANGE: 100 Magnets, mostly pre 1934. Also 40 S.O.Ls (1937-8) and 50 Gems (1937-8).

WANTED IN EXCHANGE: Magnets prior to No. 517 and Populars (new series) 101 to 568, especially Nos. 380 and 381. Please state exchanges available and send S.A.E. for lists to:-
 F. COCKROFT, HAWBER HOUSE, SILSDEN, NR. KEIGHLEY, YORKS.

FOR SALE: Union Jacks from 1108 to end in almost mint condition. Price 1/6 each. Send your want lists to:
 F. V. LAY, 167 WATFORD ROAD, HARROW, MIDDLESEX.

WANTED: School Girls Own Annuals.
 BELLFIELD, 24 GRAINGERS LANE, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: B.O.P. Annual, 1885, bound weekly parts, soiled covers, otherwise perfect. Magnets 1422, 1424, 1425, 1426, 1427, 1428, 1429, 1456, 1546, 1547, 1548, 1549, 1581, 1602, 1603, 1632, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1642. Gems 47, 1422, 1442, 1566, 1594, 1595. Offers. S.A.E. please.
 GREENWOOD, 63 GRIFFITHS DRIVE, WEDNESFIELD, STAFFS.

A GOOD IDEA: Ray Bennett struck on what I thought was a very good idea - a talk called "Desert Island Books" based, of course, on the radio feature "Desert Island Discs". He has given his talk in Birmingham and London. With each selection he gives a brief explanation as to why he chose it. Seems to me there's a chance here for some excellent articles.

How about it?

HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

FRANK RICHARDS - IN LATIN. "ACTA DIURNA" is the only Latin newspaper in the world. It consists of 8 large pages, beautifully printed on high quality paper, profusely illustrated by excellent artists, and the remarkable thing about it is that every word in the entire production is Latin. The Editor and Producer of "Acta Diurna" is Mr. G. M. Lyne, M.B.E., B.A., who has been a close friend of Eric Fayne's for many years.

The latest issue is of interest to us, as it contains "Carmen Navale" by Frank Richards - an excellent Latin translation of Sir Joseph Porter's song. An editorial news-letter (in English), which accompanies the Latin paper, makes the following comment: "Those readers who are accustomed to turn eagerly to the last page in order to read - and hum to themselves - the latest "carmen" by Didymus will this time find unfamiliar initials below a spirited rendering of Sir Joseph Porter's song "When I was a lad I served a term" in H.M.S. Pinafore. It should not be inferred from this that Didymus has abandoned his lyre, but rather that he has yielded place on this occasion to a rival bard. Those of our English speaking readers who were schoolboys long ago - and many who are schoolboys now - will rejoice to hear that the initials are those of Mr. Frank Richards, creator of that well-known student, William Bunter."

We, who are also well acquainted with William Bunter, wonder whether this is the first time that Frank Richards has appeared in print in Latin.

* * * * *

FRANK RICHARDS WRITES AGAIN:

September 23rd, 1958.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the C.D. May I mention that in my letter in this issue a misprint made the word "work" read "word" which must have perplexed some readers. These little things will happen!

I am very interested in Eric's article on the subject of criticism. I couldn't agree more with his conclusion that it is a good thing. It may keep an author up to the mark; it may give him new ideas; and a new slant on things. Only Lord Bacon was able to say "I have taken all knowledge to be my province"; the rest of us have to be content with a much smaller territory; and even after

eighty a writer is never too old to learn.

But as to whether a critic should be "dogmatic" I agree less with Eric. I really think it would be wiser for the critic to give his view not as an unassailable fact, but as an opinion. For example, I myself can see little merit in Byron's verse; but would that justify me in stating "Byron was no poet!" I don't think so. My view of Cicero is that he was very much of a windbag. But could I state "Cicero was a windbag", and leave it at that? Surely a spot of diffidence is not out of place in such matters. Let the critic go all out in criticism; but let him also remember Cromwell's appeal to the Scottish elders: "I do beseech you to consider that possibly you may be mistaken!"

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 views 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. 20. PET AVERSIONS.

The Hamilton papers catered for all tastes. The stories were so varied, the characters so diverse, that it would have been little short of a miracle if every reader had liked every yarn which appeared. It would be impossible to list every type of story that the average Hamilton fan delighted in, for such a list would include most of the stories from 1907 to 1958. Therefore, it is interesting, and I hope, not too carping, to consider the type of story which an individual reader disliked, remembering, of course, that one man's meat is another man's poison.

Was there any type of story which you could class as your pet aversion, among the vast majority that you enjoyed so much?

There were three types of story which I, personally, disliked, and oddly enough, none of them comes from the Gem.

Pride of place among my "betes noires" goes to the "Upstart" series, which left an unpleasant taste in my mouth. No story of this type is to be found in the Gem's pages, but yarns of upstarts were set at both Greyfriars and Rookwood. At Greyfriars, Timothy Perkins, a

footman's son, came into money and took the name of Algernon De Vere. This 4 story series was well-written, but it made me squirm. No more palatable did I find an 8 story Rookwood series concerning George Huggins, a revolting upstart who turned up at Rookwood as Cuthbert Montmorency. It ended, unpleasantly enough, with a brief sequence where Jimmy Silver, on holiday, saw Montmorency, now a fawning waiter and still an upstart, in a big hotel.

Upstarts exist - they are the most despicable of snobs. They exemplify the truism that breeding tells. Yet these series turned the spotlight on a frailty of human nature which I, at least, did not enjoy in a school story.

Secondly, I did not care for the early Magnet stories which told of abject poverty of certain schoolboys. The poverty, the extreme snobbery of the cads, and the near patronage of the better lads made uneasy reading. At St. Jim's, Redfern, Owen and Lawrence were introduced as scholarship lads, in a delightful series which totally lacked the embarrassment of the Linley and Penfold tales.

What a strong contrast with those early Magnet yarns is the Gem's magnificent "Schoolboy Pug" series, with its restrained characterisation and its perfect pen-pictures. Here, in remarkably true-to-life sketches, the chums of Study No. 6 showed, unintentionally, their disgust at the new boy's table-manners. A splendid piece of writing which exemplified something which I am certain is true - that schoolboys judge another boy by what he is, and not by his lack of material possessions or the shortcomings of his family.

The poverty of Linley and Penfold was embarrassing; how different from the author's lighter, delightful touch of later years, when he mentioned that "Bunter's fees were never paid till the end of term." The contrast is that of exaggeration with the superbly natural.

Finally, I was never quite happy over barring-cut stories where the theme seemed to get a little out of hand, and the best boys handled their regular master. For this reason, the vision of Mr. Hacker being compelled to wash up, during the Hacker rebellion, struck me as rather unfunny. Yet I greatly enjoyed the Gem story which told of Wally, goaded by injustice, lassoing Mr. Selby, and binding him to a tree. Possibly my illogical viewpoint is due to the fact that the Hacker episode was intended to be justified and amusing, while Wally, in a story of strong drama, was shown to be guilty of a breach of good taste in handling his master, a man old enough to be his father.

These three isolated types of story, then, were my own pet aversions. I mention them because no author can please all of his readers all the time. The remarkable thing is that our star author

pleased all of his readers most of the time, a record which few writers will ever equal.

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

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ASK ME ANOTHER - No. 4.

1. Who was Ethel Maynard?
2. Which paper was "The Firefly" amalgamated with?
3. Who invented Psmith, and what was the title of the first story in which he appeared?
4. Who was Dennis Carr?
5. What was the title of the first Gem to have a coloured cover?
6. Who owned a race horse named "Maharajah"?
7. Which member of the Famous Five played a concertina?
8. Who was Augusta Anstruther-Browne?
9. What was "The Limit" in St. Jim's stories?
10. Where did Peter and Patsy live?
11. At which school was Delamere the captain?
12. In which series did Mr. Chard feature?

5/- to the sender of the best list of answers first received by the Editor. 10 points to his Club Branch, if he belongs to a Club. Points will be totalled each month. Which Club is the best informed on hobby matters? Closing date - November 19th.

Answers to set No. 3.

1. "Lucky for Parkinson" - (Holiday Annual, 1926)
2. Lumley-Lumley. 3. Arthur Mee. 4. The Happy Mag.
5. Hero of "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's". 6. Fisher T. Fish.
7. Bob Cherry. 8. Nelson Lee. 9. Artist, prominent in A.P.'s Girls' papers, before First World War. 10. 1919. 11. Mr. Quelch.
12. Charles Hamilton.

5/- has been sent to W. O. G. Lofts, 56 Sheringham House, Lisson Street London, N.W.1. The London Club has earned 10 points. Totals - 10 points Northern; 10 points Merseyside; 10 points London.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 18. WE WHO CRITICISE!. Are we over-critical?

ROGER JENKINS writes: "I think you have hit the nail on the head squarely. The hobby cannot live on sentiment alone, and we cannot go on sharing our happy memories indefinitely. Facts can be very interesting, and a reference to the plots of various stories is unavoidable, but the main stimulant can only be a reasoned criticism, the personal viewpoint of a collector who feels that he has something to say. A novel criticism will make me want to read the story myself to see if I agree with the critic: a mere summary of the plot with no personal criticism at all only makes me feel that the story has been spoilt for me in advance.

We are all adults who are still interested in papers written mainly for the juvenile market. As adults we have developed critical faculties far in excess of those we had when young. It would be grotesque to claim that we should suspend all our critical faculties when we read the Magnet and Gem, and pretend that we are children again. The only lasting source of pleasure to be had from the hobby is the realisation that many stories, written primarily for children, are capable of yielding great satisfaction when read by older people - a test of merit which applies to many books from "Alice in Wonderland" onwards.

To sum up: don't pretend to be a child, and do write about the hobby from a personal angle with plenty of reasoned criticism and original thought.

In short, I agree with you all the way."

TOM PORTER writes: "We are not over-critical. Any author who offers his work to the public of necessity invites criticism and must be prepared to receive it and face up to it. It is natural for the public to criticise, and an interesting author who fears criticism and resents it would do well not to publish.

Next, and arising out of my first, we critics should beware of what we mean by criticism. True criticism means rather appraisal, assessment, evaluation than pulling to pieces, and if we practice the latter rather than the former we might quite justifiably expose ourselves to a charge of being over-critical, from an indignant and outraged author.

Finally, bearing in mind the true meaning of criticism, the marvellous thing is that the stories which delighted us so much when we were young, should still work their magic spell on us now that we have reached 'man's estate."

If to strive to understand and explain this magic, to seek and find examples of it, and to point out these examples to others with

joy and enthusiasm is to be over-critical - and in my connotation of the term, "over-critical" means only this - then I am unashamedly over-critical".

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "It is human nature to criticise, and it is not really a bad fault. If there were not critics, the world and the C.D. would be dull indeed. Looking back down the years at Frank Richards' work, from the present day to 1907, I suppose that his output must have been one of the greatest of any author, past or present. Any writer, with such a record, would indeed have to be a superman, if all of his stories were beyond criticism. Even so, I think that nearly all of his stories in the Gem, Magnet, and Boys' Friend were faultless.

I am delighted to see that the master himself has entered into the spirit of "Let's Be Controversial" for I have often wondered what he thought about these "Echoes", I sincerely hope that he will continue to do so.

Are we over-critical? Yes, I think so, at times put on the whole, not too much so."

* * * * *

BUNTER THE WITNESS

by E. J. Davey

It is a well known fact that Bunter is the immortal character in the Greyfriars stories; just why this should be so is not altogether clear; although no doubt one could hazard some reasons.

His characteristics are well known, and among them his propensity for deviating from the truth is deplorably (and funnily), prominent. As Inky would say, "The fibfulness is terrific". Often and often has Mr. Qualch whopped our unvarnished Fat Owl. He has also described Bunter as the most untruthful boy in the Form. Only too true even if Bunter does say, protestingly, "Oh really, Sir".

Bunter fibs may be classified thus:-

- (1) Boasting; usually of the glories of Bunter Court, or about his wealthy and titled relations, or of his own unexcelled prowess at anything which happens to have been mentioned. (Sad to relate - all existing entirely on his own imagination).
- (2) When accused of a misdemeanour, for example, purloining comestibles from a senior boys study.

Bunter's incredible obtuseness, plus his inability to tell a

plain and straightforward story, and his very palpable falsehoods, all combine to his undoing as a witness of events. Not a little of the tremendous humour of the Fat Owl as a character arises from this situation. As a witness he persists in the same story, which in itself is strong evidence that he is telling the truth, but in view of his unenviable reputation, and often a villainously damaging combination of circumstances, is just not believed.

A number of examples could be quoted of Bunter the Witness, as not least important of his functions in the stories is to be an unseen witness of events not meant to be generally known; and not a little humour arises from such incidents.

Thus for example, in the 1936 "Wild West" series, the Co., and Bunter were in Texas staying with Smithy at a ranch which had been bought by Smithy's pater. Several stories concerned a trail thief who hid his face with a flour bag. On one occasion Bunter fell off his horse (a not unusual occurrence), and was left by the wayside. Here, hidden by the foliage, Bunter watched the trail thief remove his disguise. When the Co., returned to collect the Fat and fatuous Owl, Bunter produced the flour bag and told his tale. Obviously true as proved by the flour bag. But unfortunately, Bunter could not describe a single feature of the man's appearance when subsequently questioned by the Sheriff, although he could and did recognise him later.

"I didn't notice particularly" was the substance of his replies. As Bob Cherry remarked - "Sure he had a face Bunter? Sheriff Lick will catch him easily on that description."

In the foregoing Bunter's stupidity put him completely out of Court, but in the "Bounder's Double" series, circumstances completely discredited the Fat Owl on one occasion. Vernon Smith was being held a prisoner at Lanthom Chase whilst his cousin who was exactly like him in voice and appearance, took his place at school. Punter's fat leg had been pulled hard and a very wrathful Owl goes over to Lanthom Chase on vengeance bent. He arrives just as Smithy who has made a desperate attempt to escape, is struggling with his captor in the Hall. Shouts the Bounder to Bunter - "Tell Redwing I'm kidnapped." Bunter is of course, hustled away before he can rescue Smithy from the bold, bad kidnapper, and duly passes on the message to the usual accompaniment of laughter and disbelief. Just as Bunter is suggesting that they should tell Quelch and that Smithy won't come in for Roll, in walks "Smithy" (Vernon dressed and looking exactly like his cousin). Bunter is completely discredited, and very naturally, also most aggrieved and amazed. "Why, Smithy you beast, what did you say you were kidnapped for when you weren't?" Why indeed?

It is very amusing to notice in these incidents that people might well believe Bunter simply because he persists in the same story and, very significantly, keeps on repeating exactly the same details.

Nevertheless, one can hardly blame the cheery chums of Greyfriars for being such Doubting Thomases; and Bunter the Unseen Witness's tale in a "Water Lily" series story for example, passed all bounds of credence.

Who could possibly believe that the Knutty Ponsoy of Highcliffe would help Shifty Spooner to steal the boat? And yet that is just what Pon did in his bitter malice and desire for revenge on his old enemies. No wonder that Shifty's amazed curiosity was aroused.

Doubtless other examples could be quoted worthy of Bob Cherry's comment on the occasion, "My only sainted Aunt Sempronia, do you really expect us to believe you, Old Fat Man?"

A philosopher has said that the most real things in the world are the "imponderables". You can't see or touch such moral and spiritual values as morale, honesty and truth, although demonstrably they are all-important in the life of Men and Nations. Frank Richards has said that the best way of inculcating the virtues is by means of a good story. How right he is! The examples quoted of "Bunter the Witness" are only a few showing part of Frank Richards' great skill in "pointing a moral, to adorn a tale", so unobtrusively and painlessly with a truly superb use of the powerful aid of humour.

Old Boys Book Club

LONDON SECTION: When Gerry Allison wrote to me and said he intended to attend the Wood Green meeting and asked whether he could give his, as we all now know, excellent treatise on "Skinner, Snoop and Stott," I replied "certainly." Indeed Gerry was one of the guests of honour. The talk was thoroughly enjoyed by the large attendance which included the Bristol contingent, Fred and Norah Rutherford, Eb Worsell and family Ray Bennett from Tipton, Roy Parsons together with Roger Jenkins from Hants. It was very pleasing to learn that Gerry's effort will be probably included in the C.D. Annual. Ray Bennett, always pleased to see our friend from Staffs, gave us his "Desert Island Books" which was greatly enjoyed and received the "gratters" from all present. With Eileen and Kathleen doing the catering honours, time passed all too quickly. Nevertheless, it is Streatham for the combustible November meeting and those intending to be present are asked to let our

worthy host on this occasion, Horace Roberts, know so as to facilitate catering arrangements. With grateful thanks to all present, to the hosts, and Gerry and Ray, it was time for call over and homewards bound with further happy memories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

NORTHERN SECTION: Meeting at 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, 12th October, 1958. This was one of the most enjoyable, and certainly the busiest meeting for some time. We were all very glad to see Bill Harrison back with us, after a spell in the infirmary. The Chairman welcomed him back into the fold, and also expressed pleasure in seeing Stan Smith with us.

Secretary and Librarian/Treasurer made their reports, and yet another donation to the library, of four 3d. B.F.Ls in mint condition, from Bill Thurbon of Cambridge was gratefully received. Then we discussed the Greyfriars Cup contest, and laid our plans to win it for Northern this year. Herbert Leckenby then gave us his usual titbits of news from many sources.

Herbert also provided the piece-de-resistance of the evening. This was entitled "Peeps into some Victorian Bloods". Very soon, the room was ankle deep in gore, and groans, screams and diabolical curses rang out. But like little Audrey we just laughed, and laughed, and laughed.

Then followed refreshments, to take away the taste of blood, and soon we were ready for an Elimination Quiz on "MR. QUELCH". In this for the umpteenth time, Jack Wood was the winner. All the placards in Leeds have lately asked all sorts of questions as to whom is Jack Wood. As if we didn't know!

Next meeting, Saturday, November 8th, with J. Breeze Bentley as the star turn. Roll along, ladies and gentlemen.

GERRY ALLISON

O.B.B.C. MIDLAND SECTION: Report of meeting held 29th September, 1958, in the Chambers of Commerce, Birmingham. A goodly number of the tried and true turned up to give a warm welcome to Herbert Leckenby. Deep regret was felt that Jack Ingram and Ted Davey had business appointments but we know they would have been there at the least chance possible. The and the few others we did expect were very unlucky as this night's programme turned out to be one of the best of the year. We were compensated for the absence of those mentioned by the very welcome first appearance at the club of John Tomlinson and Joe Marston from Burton on Trent. We hope both of them will come often.

After business had been settled and a 16 question quiz of mine

(Hamiltonian subjects) had been jointly won by Tom Porter and John T. with both all correct, we sat back to enjoy Herbert's talk on Boys paper of 1900-1910. His account of how he came to read his very first boys paper away back in 1899 brought back similar memories to a lot of us. To illustrate his talk he produced quite a pile of these old "gems". What a wonderful sight they were as he held them up for inspection. Old, maybe, but to us priceless. Boys Friends, Realms, Union Jacks, Plucks, Nuggets, Empire Libraries, Buffalo Bills, Claude Duvals, Dick Turpins, even a few from far off America. Well spiced with personal anecdotes, this descriptive talk went on till it was time to switch to other subjects. Thanks Herbert. In short, we have to feel very grateful to Herbert for coming down from York to give us this valuable talk. Also appreciation was expressed by the Chairman of the hospitality shown by Rev. A. G. Pound to Herbert.

After John Tomlinson and Joe Marston had given a short talk on their experiences of old boys books, the company relaxed to hear Norman read a descriptive article on Highcliffe and Ponsonby and their relations with Greyfriars. This had been prepared by myself; Norman read it because I had to leave early. I hear it went down well.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

REPORT OF MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - 12th October. This was supposed to be our Annual General Meeting but, owing to the packed and varied programme for the evening, it was decided to postpone this until next month.

Firstly, members were given a very pleasant surprise when, upon arrival, they were introduced to that "King" of Comic Paper collectors Mr. Arthur Harris. This was Mr. Harris's first visit to Merseyside, and we were delighted that he had decided to bring his charming wife on the journey from Llandudno. Needless to say, his talk on the Comic Papers was one of the two highlights of the evening, especially as it was illustrated with specimens of these grand old papers. His talk concerned the years from 1890 to 1914, and we learned that he has a collection of 3,000 comic papers, including Number One of Comic Cuts and others. A most enjoyable talk, and, not to be outdone, Mrs. Harris asked whether we possessed any books by Harold Avery, we were happy to oblige.

The other highlight was the fine gesture by Pat Laffey in taking all the trouble to bring his film projector and screen, and delighting the meeting with a series of coloured films, some of which had been "shot" by himself whilst on holiday in Devon. Many of the scenes

were really beautiful, and even when Pat himself appeared on one or two of the films, it did not spoil the scenery! Thanks, Pat, for going to all this trouble, the pleasure you gave made it well worth while.

During the evening three of the completed Cup Competition stories were read out, and it was generally agreed that they were sufficiently varied and interesting as to give the other Sections a jolly good run for their money. But what a job to condense a story into four pages! One other item: a letter was read from Mr. Switzer regretting that, due to ill health, he would not again be able to attend the meetings. To lose a stalwart like Mr. (Turpin) Switzer is a sad blow, and we know how very much he used to love the meetings. We shall be keeping in touch with our old friend, and ensuring that he receives a copy of the C.D. every month. Good luck, Mr. Switzer, and warmest wishes from us all!

Next meeting - 9th November, 6.30 p.m.

FRANK UNWIN

THE GOLDEN HOURS CLUB - Sydney, Australia: Our meeting held on 10th October at the Sydney Y.M.C.A. at 6.30 p.m. got away to a wonderful start as we had an almost complete roll up - only members absent were Frank Jones and Mr. Cameron. We had the pleasure of welcoming Jack Murtagh on a visit from New Zealand and Mr. Gorfain formerly editor of the Silver Jacket, our guest speaker. In the past week our Club has received some publicity in the Sydney Morning Herald and four guests swelled our numbers as a result. Another paper The Telegraph is also interested and sent along a reporter to interview our Chairman Arnold Keena and later several photographs were taken of members and their treasured books. After a warm welcome had been extended to our guests by Arnold, Stan Nicholls opened the evening's entertainment by a deeply interesting lecture on boys literature from 1850 to the turn of the century. Victor Colby then took up the thread of history - our aim was to show the field of boys papers for the past hundred years and from the foundation of the early "Bloods" Victor built up a detailed and absolutely true history of Sexton Blake and the publications in which his cases have appeared. One amusing observation that he made literally brought the house down - Sexton Blake will be 100 years old in this year of grace and is still remarkably spry for this venerable age! Syd Smyth then carried on the talk with his very bright presentation of the history of The Gem and Magnet from their creation to their regretted demise in the last war....various other books featuring Hamilton stories were also discussed and then, with the stage set for

our guest speaker Syd Smyth, retired amidst appreciative applause to make way for Mr. Gorfain. Quite obviously one of us at heart he soon had his audience journeying with him to southern England to meet the illustrious Charles Hamilton - we shared that wonderful interview with him. Most generously he had brought along copies of the "Silver Jacket" and these were distributed to the members amidst excited chatter as everyone discussed the interesting talks given this evening, and it was on this happy note that the meeting broke up about 10 p.m. - all too soon of course - we had anticipated a wonderful evening but it had exceeded all expectations.

B. PATE - Secretary.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

By JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane,
York.

Phone: 25795

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Well, the lads are back, and, as Jim Cook reports, they had a tumultuous welcome. back to the old school. Our roving correspondent tells the story - and whets our appetite for the feast to come in the C.D. Annual.

St. Frank's College,
Bellton, Sussex.

Slowly and proudly the London express train entered Bellton station. Then, at a signal given on a drum, the band on the platform commenced playing. It was a grand musical welcome to the crowd of boys and men who alighted from the train.

For St. Frank's had come to Bellton to meet St. Frank's from Africa!

We were back from one of the most glorious adventures ever imagined. We were back, safe and sound, in old England, in quiet old Bellton and St. Franks!

Tanned a dusky hue, and carrying battle scars as evidence of battle, we must have appeared a strange mixture as we assembled outside the little forecourt of Bellton station.

Yet we were whole. No losses to report except those of the other side, who, given their way, it would have been us, not they, who now

lie picked clean by vultures, bleaching by the sun in the Kalahari Desert.

I cannot command space here to tell the whole story of our African adventure. I shall need time to gether my notes and other material germane to the expedition, and possibly a contribution from other members of the party - perhaps Mr. Lee or Lord Dorrimore.

So I intend to set it all down in the Annual where space permits greater freedom.

Our homecoming was certainly an event. The sleepy little station at Bellton was swarming with enthusiastic schoolboys, some of them from other schools in the neighbourhood. A huge "welcome home" banner was held up and somehow or other we found ourselves formed into a column ready to march.

I don't think we intended journeying to St. Frank's that way, but somebody had the idea of making our last leg of the journey from South Africa one that would go down in memory for all time.

People were at their doors and outside their shops as we marched through Bellton Village. The tremendous welcome from the villagers was a special one as they looked upon the occasion as one directly concerning them. For St. Frank's was Bellton, and Bellton was St. Frank's!

The huge crowd, now swollen, filled Bellton Lane, and after we had entered the famous old Triangle, old Josh Cuttle was forced the close the lodge gates and shut out the happy crowd.

The entire school was now gathered in the Triangle, and bursts of cheering went up at frequent intervals as friends came together. It was one huge mass, shaking hands, talking, laughing and yelling. They were all there, the domestics and the gardeners, the grooms and the bootboys and pages. The masters and the seniors and the juniors. Not forgetting the Third. They were very much there!

It was indeed a great welcome home. The happy faces and the flush of delight from everybody made this an historic occasion.

From the steps of the Ancient House stepped a figure. And suddenly it was quiet. The babble ceased. The hum subsided. Not a foot moved. The sun shining out of a cloudless sky reflected a silvery corkscrew effect on the water of the fountain from where I stood. A slight rustle came from the leaves of the chestnut trees as a departing summer breeze tore through them. Then a mighty roar broke the silence.

A wave of excitement starting as a chain reaction of shouting and cheering surged through the dense crowd, shattering once again the afternoon.

Somehow the press tightened towards the figure on the steps and surrounded him.

An upright and sturdy gentleman, grey haired and wearing pince-nez glasses, his kindly face wreathed in smiles was soon in the centre of the milling throng. But he was more pleased than ever!

It was Dr. Stafford! Headmaster of St. Frank's! Returned to the old College. It was a double event! It was the final touch. The end of a perfect day.

"Welcome home boys" Dr. Stafford said, addressing us all. "It was not very dignified of me to waylay you here, but I captured some of the enthusiasm of the crowd and I simply could not contain my impatience." A roar of cheering went up.

"Are you coming back to St. Frank's, sir?" yelled Handforth. Dr. Stafford pointed to his gown. "I can assure you I am back in harness, as you can see" he smiled.

Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore and Dr. Brett then appeared on the steps and after a prolonged bout of cheering and clapping escorted the Head into the Ancient House.

How can I describe the memorable afternoon. Fellowlike Gore-Pearce, Bernard Forrest and Teddy Long bell in with the general happy mood. Gulliver and Bell, one-time chums of Fullwood, were just as excited at seeing him as everybody else. Kenmore shook hands with Nipper, and Enoch Snipe welcomed Handy by offering his hand.

Thus the return of the wanderers was completely and definitely accepted!

But it was an indication of the feeling that ran through the school. And after Dr. Stafford had gone through to the study, the boys went to their studies, some to prepare tea for special parties, some to look over familiar places that at one time, out there in the desert, caused many a moment of sadness and home-sickness.

Now it was all over. Tired and triumphant, we had returned home. After the appalling hardship we had endured these last weeks it is a miracle anybody is normal. Nelson Lee warned us a period of reaction would set in, but for the moment, we lived for the day, and tomorrow would take care of itself.

Many of the juniors and men had escaped death so many times Lord Dorrimore declared the boys of St. Frank's were indestructable! They were immune from the final disaster that overtakes all mortals.

Later on Dr. Stafford announced from the dais in the Big Hall he would once more be taking on the post as headmaster. He explained he had recovered from the illness that forced him to leave St. Frank's and he was now fit and well.

The tremendous ovation he received was proof of his immense popularity. The old hall rang with the cheering, and Nelson Lee, bronzed, a picture of health, sat behind him, highly satisfied. Many were the stirring events that must have risen up in Lee's mind as he went over the years of his association with Dr. Stafford.
to be continued.

ODD ITEMS OF INTEREST -
By E. V. Copeman

PORTRAIT GALLERIES

A POPULAR FEATURE of the A.P. papers from time to time was the Portrait Gallery. I can recall more than one Greyfriars Gallery in the MAGNET drawn by C. H. Chapman. Reynolds and Macdonald did St. Jim's Galleries in the GEM. Wakefield did a small Rookwood Gallery. Arthur Jones and Kenneth Brookes each did a St. Frank's Gallery. Another St. Frank's Gallery appeared in 1929/30 but I can't recall the artist's name. Eric R. Parker did a small Gallery for The D.W. sowing Sexton Blake, Tinker, Coutts, and a few others, not forgetting old Mrs. Bardell.

These Galleries were good and we remember them vividly. In the 100th issue of the C.D. in April, 1955 we had one contribution to a C.D. Gallery; it being a pen sketch of our Editor, Herbert Leckenby, specially drawn for the occasion by C. H. Chapman.

We'd like to suggest more submissions for a C.D. Gallery; those of us who are on the other side of the world would like to get some idea of what well-known contributors to the C.D. look like.

(As will be seen from an earlier page, Eric will be getting his wish by way of the Annual cover. H. L.)

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LAST MINUTE FLASH: The contributors to the Sexton Blake Circle feature in the Annual are: Josie Packman, Walter Webb, Victor Colby, Bill Lofts and Derek Adley - a grand team!

Have You ordered Your Annual yet? If you haven't take action at once.

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