

MAY 1950

# THE COLLECTOR'S DIGEST

no 41



Wilfred  
Darwin 1950

STOP PRESSOLD BOYS' BOOK CLUBNorthern Section

The first meeting was held at 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, April 22nd, commencing at 6.30 p.m. There was a very encouraging attendance of thirteen (we're not superstitious), six being "new chums". The auspicious event got off to a good start when a telegram was read from the London Club, a nice gesture which was greatly appreciated.

Herbert Leckenby took the chair pro tem. He gave an interesting account of the rise of the C.D., and the many thrills, pleasure, and army of friends it had brought him. He went on to tell the romantic story of the forming of the Old Boys' Book Club in London, how it had become famous, and the remarkable publicity it had gained. He gave a vivid description of the happy atmosphere and hospitality which reigned at their monthly meetings, and that as a result it was decided to start a section with headquarters in Leeds so that northerners could have an opportunity of getting together in similar fashion. He concluded by saying it looked as if we had made a very promising start.

Officials were then elected as follows: Chairman, Norman Smith; Vice-Chairman, Reg. A. Hudson; Secretary and Treasurer, William F. Sawyer.

Bill Sawyer followed with an account of his activities. It included the story of the remarkable response to a letter of his published in the "Manchester Guardian".

Then came a general discussion in which many valuable suggestions were made.

Two of those present were Harry Dowler and Clifford Beardsell who had travelled from Manchester and Stockport respectively. Others were Clive Simpson, Norman Smith, Reg. Hudson, Gerald Allison, W. L. Williamson, H. Barlow, - Price, S. F. Armitage, J. H. Dernott, Herbert Leckenby, and W. F. Sawyer. Several others have already joined the section but were prevented from attending.

The next gathering will take the form of a dinner on Saturday, June 2nd, when it is hoped we shall have with us Leonard Peckman.

W. F. Sawyer,  
Hon. Sec.



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MAY 1950

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

It's an Exciting Life! I said in January I had an idea it was going to be another eventful year. I didn't know the half of it. Since I wrote my last chat so much has happened that it is almost impossible to record it all. However, on our centre pages we are doing our best to give a selection of press cuttings appertaining to the hobby of hobbies. And here are some comments thereon.

In connection with the forming of a Northern branch of the O.B.B.C., at Leeds the Yorkshire Evening News has opened its columns to us in fine style. Then on March 30th there was a very interesting sale of Victorian penny dreadfuls in London's Chancery Lane. The press gave it quite a lot of attention, the "Daily Herald" especially had a great spread with some of our veteran members interviewed.

The following morning a reporter on the London "Daily Telegraph" rang me up. He said he had been speaking to Frank Pettingell the day before (at the sale of course) who had told him something about my activities. Quite a long chat followed.

despite the fact that it was the peak period on my switchboard. Next day, April 1st, nearly half a column appeared in the dignified columns of the "Telegraph". It was good stuff, but I should just like to make one criticism. During our chat the reporter said he understood there was great rivalry between the different groups. I laughed and replied. "My word, yes, it's quite a headache trying to please 'em all." But in his report it rather gives the impression that I said it was surprising how intolerant collectors could be. On my solemn word of honour I never dreamt of using the word intolerant. Why, bless my life, I am one of the veterans myself and am as sorry as they are that there's not more about the older papers in our pages. However, I think they will understand.

On Tuesday April 4th I got the biggest thrill of all - the B.B.C. Leeds headquarters rang me up and asked if I would go over to take part in a broadcast the following evening, - "Up-to-Date" on North Home Service, starting at 7.45. It was a real surprise (actually Bill Sawyer, disciple of Len Packman, had been at work), and rather short notice. However, after the question of getting a relief on my job had been settled we got it fixed up.

5.30 the following evening found me in the Leeds studio along with Bill Sawyer. We were met by Mr. McGarry who had my part of the broadcast in hand. Over tea and cakes we got down to working out a script. It took nearly two hours to rehearse, as we had to work to a split second. One cannot say much in three minutes, but I did manage to get in a word for the O.B.B.C., a tribute to the papers of a bygone day, and a suggestion that if such papers returned to the bookstalls, there would, perhaps, be not so much heard about juvenile delinquency.

When the time drew near for me to speak, I had an increasing feeling I was going to have "stage fright", but once I got on the air I was fairly comfortable. All the same, when I was told afterwards I came over okay I felt happier. Anyway, it was a novel experience.

By a curious coincidence, Frank Pettingell was being questioned in similar fashion the same evening on television, but he wouldn't have stage fright.

One other little point of interest: Mr. McGarry asked me to take a selection of papers with me. When I explained the history of some of them - the identity of authors in the

boys' Friend, for instance, he seemed greatly impressed, and said there was ample material for a programme all to ourselves. Bill Sewyer, with memories of a broadcast some time ago in mind, suggested it wouldn't be a bad idea to let those who knew something about the subject have a go for once. Mr. McGarry smiled and, well, we'll wait and see.

Well, as I said at the beginning, it's an exciting life these days for

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST

No.6 - "The Bullseye"

By Cedric H. Groombridge

During the third week in January 1931 posters advertised a new boys' periodical. With this rather sticky offering, the first "tuppenny" blood of the 1930's was born - "The Bullseye". Similar in size to the "Magnet" it was as alike as chalk and cheese. Twenty-eight of the most profusely illustrated pages were packed within blue covers of most striking design. The title "Bullseye" was emphasised by the slogan that it "Hits the mark every time" and a full-page illustration depicted some blood-curdling item featured in one of the yarns. And hit the mark it certainly did right from its first issue of January 21, 1931! If boys of that period were keen on yarns of the supernatural this new paper really provided them with all the thrills they desired. Commencing with No.1, one of the feature yarns was "The House of Thrills" - a most unusual house and one likely to remain untenanted even in these days of housing shortage! Built by an old miser some hundred years previously, this cheerful habitation was said to be built on the site of old prison gallows.

None dared occupy its forbidding walls until "Fearless" John Pentonville, an ex-game hunter crippled by a lion, took over the place to gain thrills that he was unable to obtain elsewhere. Not content with secret passages and ghostly shapes etc. (which invariably led to a pot of gold left by the old miser), Pentonville advertised £100 to anyone who could thrill him with a story. As this particular yarn ran throughout the life of the "Bullseye" Fearless John must have been almost "Penniless" John, as he disposed of at least £19,400 in return

for thrilling stories!

Second feature 'yarn in the old copies was undoubtedly "The Sign of the Crimson Dagger" which dealt with the activities of a secret society, heavily garbed in black with a crimson dagger emblazoned on their breasts. These sought out impending wrong-doers and after three warnings delivered in the most extraordinary manner, if the villain still persisted in carrying out his intentions, he was disposed of in a very unorthodox but effective way. This society performed successfully for some fifty-odd issues to be finally supplanted by a new series entitled "Uncanny Stories" which title alone speaks for itself.

With the coming of No.14 of the Bullseye, a truly remarkable character appeared and absolutely dominated the 1931 issues of the old blue paper. No write-up on this paper would be complete without details of "The Phantom of Cursitor Fields". This gruesome spectre was reputed to be the ghost of a highwayman hung in chains and to say it was an uneasy ghost is putting it mildly. He appeared whenever mist was prominent in the locality of Cursitor Fields, and apart from scaring all the citizens of that neighbourhood, he certainly succeeded in "putting the breeze up" all "Bullseye" readers if letters to the Editor were any indication.

Let me quote through the medium of No.14 of the paper how the Phantom appeared. I might add that the hero of the yarn, Bob Bryan, is with his father, a policeman, when suddenly——  
"Out in the misty darkness, on the other side of the narrow street, something was looming with pale, bluish glow and Bob caught his father's arm.

'Dad - look! Over there in Sword Alley!'  
He heard his father gasp, then both stood transfixed. Through the mist they saw a misshapen, tenuous form and thrust out from it was a grinning, grimacing face. It was without colour and yet it seemed to shine with a spectral blue-tinged glow. They saw glaring eyes - and they heard a babbling.

It was a weird and eerie sound, the like of which had never before come to human ears. A muted jabbering of ghostly words, and while they heard it the face grew clearer in the mist.

'It's the Phantom!' cried Bob.

While he shouted, Policeman Bryan drew his truncheon and hurled it with all his force. In the instant that the

weapon left his hand, the spectral form disappeared.

Both heard the truncheon crash against the wall of Sword Alley and drop to the ground. Sword Alley was empty save for writhing curtains of mist!"

Well, you Victorian fens, how favourably does that compare with your Penny Bloods?

I might add that we were urged weekly to read the yarn regularly as "all mysteries would be explained in the final yarn." Well, the mystery to me in the final yarn was how the author managed to explain away in three or four paragraphs how Guardsmen with machine-guns, nets, poison gas, etc. failed to make as much as a dent in the Phantom - who turned out to be quite a decent type after all really! Still, what did that matter considering the enjoyment we had every week with the Phantom?

By the time the "Bullseye" was 10 months old its qualities were presumably firmly established and the yarns seemed to get even more revolutionary in ideas. A brand new series commenced with No.39 entitled "Secrets of Stonemoor". These were alleged reprints of documents unearthed only a short while ago and depicted prison life at Stonemoor in the early 18th century. An interesting point is that these stories catered for any of the fairer sex that may have been courageous enough to read the "Bullseye", as invariably the love element was introduced as a new stimulant. Each story centred around either a convict (usually wrongfully imprisoned) or the new governor (who was changed weekly). This series ran successfully until No.65, April 26th, 1932, and was then replaced with a series called "The Black Moon" dealing with a gaming house in Paris.

These proved to be equally successful and as 1933 got under way it seemed fairly safe to assume that the good old "Bullseye" was well dug in. With stories like "Secrets of the Eritenia" (a liner series), "The Inn with a Thousand Secrets", "Phantom Tales", "After Derk", it hardly seemed possible that the Bullseye was heading for the Valhalla of boys' periodicals. In 1934, the drawn illustration on the front was replaced with a photographic type of cover. In my opinion, it was by no means as compelling as the old type of illustration. The publishers (Amalgamated Press) were apparently trying to pump fresh blood into it, but by September 1934 it was obvious that the familiar blue-covered book was about to disappear from the newsagents' rack. Very shortly after, one very dismal Friday, from my point of view, on turning over the pages of my beloved "blood", I was

confronted by the request not to miss "the brand-new boys' paper appearing next week entitled "Thrilling Screen Stories" (or something equally nauseating) -- oh, and by the way, "there would be no further issues of the "Bullseye". Thus passed another popular boys' paper into the void of Time.

Finis

DO YOU REMEMBER?

What appeared in the Comics  
January to March 1900 - 50 years ago.

By Arthur Harris

The turn of the half century seems a fitting time to reveal for a while over the old comic papers of the first three months of 1900.

First there was "Comic Cuts", the front page characters of which were Crusoe, the fat Bo'sun with their little elephant. The serial was "Private John Byrne, of the Fighting Fifth".

"Funny Cuts" had the Buzzum Pals as its front page characters and had two serials, "Jack Ashore" and "Worth Waiting For".

In "Chips" the celebrated pair, Weary Willie and Tired Tim adorned the front page and the serial was "The Spectre of the Black Rocks".

Front page characters of the "World's Comic" varied, but nearly all contained Kruger. The serials running were: "The Corsair of the Clouds" by Charles Hamilton; "The Fatal Likeness" by Captain Coleman Groom; "The Dandy Sport" by Charles Hamilton; "The Secret of the School" by Charles Hamilton; "The Shepperford Mystery" by Kennedy King.

"The Funny Wonder" had Slim Jim and Freddy Picocco as its front page characters. These were described as first cousins to Weary Willie and Tired Tim. The serials during this period were: "The Closed Chamber"; "The Human Bat", and "Knight of the Ring", the latter by Harry Arthurs.

"Larks" had Privates Carky and Sarty as its front page artists and no serials were published. Complete stories only were published.

"The Comic Home Journal" front pages were filled by Larry and Bill and the serials running during this period were "By Order of the Three" by Reginald Wray and "Dead Men No Secrets Tell" by Henry St. John.



Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy filled the front pages of "The Big Budget" and the serials running during this period were: "Dark Secrets of London" by Roy Keen; "Hard Pressed" by Maxwell Scott; "Phil Gladwin" by Henry T. Johnson, and "A World in Arms" by Sidney Drew.

"The Halfpenny Comic" front page characters were Sam, Tam and their donkey Flam, and the serial running was "The Seal of Death" by Henry Farmer.

Poodleposh and Parker, the comic detectives, were the characters adorning "The Coloured Comic's" front pages and the serials running were: "The Freebooters", "The Island of the Dead" by Hepworth-Carrington; "The Eaglehurst Chums at Oxford" by Clarke Hook and "Three British Lads" by the same author.

### THE "ANNUAL" BALLOT

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WANTED: Vol. I Dreadnought, odd fantasy type, Boys' Friend Library, etc. Henry J. H. Bertlett, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED: Nelson Lee, Second New Series. Nos. 29, 30, 34, 35, 41-46, 48, 49, 51-53, 55-58, 60-64, 69-71, 74, 78, 79, 83, 93, 108, 152-154. Single copies taken. Gordon Thompson, 133 Fernagh G.V., Whiteabbey, Near Belfast, N.I.

WANTED: Lees, S.B.O.'s. Write to Jack Cook, 178 Marie Street, Benwell, Newcastle-on-Tyne. S.A.E. please.

# The Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe.

All queries and suggestions temporarily to  
L. Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

Now that my first "Column" on Bob's behalf has appeared in print, I am waiting for the brickbats to be slung at me by him and Lee-ites generally!

In the meantime here is the second dose of medicine! As you will have read in April "C.D." I am using the Column this month by giving the titles and other particulars available regarding Edwy Searles Brooks' works other than in the Nelson Lee Library.

This is in accordance with Bob Blythe's wishes; for some time ago he asked me if I would let him have all the information I had on the subject as he thought that although perhaps somewhat off the beaten track, the stories by E.S.B. would be of interest to readers of the Column, especially as some of the stories in the "Union Jack" feature Nelson Lee and Nipper.

Firstly then, here are the "U-Jack" titles.

777, "The Flashlight Clue" (-); 794, "Waldo the Wonderman" (Waldo); 798, "The Case of the Five Hairs" (W); 799, "The Clue of the Frozen Knife" (N.Lee); 800, "The Affair of the Bronze Monkey" (-); 801, "The Shanghai Detective" (W); 805, "The Case of the Stacey Rubies" (W); 810, "The Clue of the Second Bullet" (N.L.); 813, "The Riddle of Quinton Grange" (-); 817, "The Great Spiritualism Case" (W); 831, "The Valley of the Missing Men" (N.L.); 859, "The Mystery of the Gnarled Oak" (N.L.); 865, "The Clue of the Green Stein" (W); 870, "The Mystery of the 9.12 Express" (N.L.); 874, "The Chessington Towers Mystery" (-); 888, "The Human Limb" (-); 892, "The Case of the Chinese Antique" (-); 917, "The Vases of Death" (-); 921, "The Strange Case of the Edgeware Recluse" (-); 930, "Dr. Braxland's Experiment" (-); 939, "The Clue of the Yellow Dust" (-); 942, "In the Grip of Waldo" (W); 948, "The Wonderman's Challenge" (W); 962, "Rupert Waldo - Stuntist" (W); 1054, "The Flaming Spectre of Cloome" (W); 1077, "The Electric Man" (W); 1104, "The Leopard of Droone" (W); 1118, "The Affair of the Roman Relics" (W); 1131, "The Peuper of

Pengarth Castle" (W); 1132, "The Curse of Pengarth Castle" (W); 1135, "The Great Stadium Sensation" (W); 1219, "Waldo's Wonder Stunt" (W); 1220, "The Affair of the Professional Avenger" (W); 1221, "The Case of the Second Blackmailer" (W); 1222, "The Lightning Flash Mystery" (W); 1266, "The Affair of the Bronze Mirror" (W); 1267, "The Diamonds of Devil Pool" (W); 1268, "Jungle Justice" (W); 1320, "The Case of the Shrivelled Man" (W); 1322, "The Captive of the Crag" (W); 1354, "The Case of the Three Black Cats" (Eustace Cavendish); 1357, "Terror by Night" (E.C.); 1358, "The Death Snarl" (W); 1364, "The Frozen Men Mystery" (E.C.); 1384, "Quivering Steel" (E.C.); 1425, "The Red Hot Racketeers" (W); 1433, "Sexton Blake on the Spot" (W); 1490, "The Mystery of Blind Luke" (W); 1499, "Once a Crook" (W); 1501, "Waldo's Way Out" (W); 1507, "Red Sand" (W); 1516, "Sexton Blake's Understudy" (W); 1528, "The House of Light" (W); 1530, "Village Vengeance" (W)

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The following are stories published in the "Gem" Library, all of which are considered by John Shaw to have been written by Mr. Brooks. These titles are from Mr. Shaw's records, and all credit is due to him alone for much research in order to obtain this information.

146, "The Terrible Three's Sub"; 258, "Tom Merry's Promise"; 264, "Fatty Wynn - Professional"; 268, "Hidden Treasure at St. Jim's"; 273, "The Schoolboy Informer"; 314, "D'Arcy's Mysterious Present"; 319, "The Housemaster's Peril"; 391, "A Captured Chum"; 429, "A Mission of Mystery"; 515, "Rivals in Sport"; 520, "The Men of Mystery"; 998, "The Boy from Russia"; 999, "The Siege of St. Jim's"; 1022, "Under Gussy's Wing"; 1023, "The Boy Who Held his Tongue"; 1024, "The Changeling of St. Jim's"; 1025, "Under False Colours"; 1050, "Cardew the Knight Errant"; 1059, "Handforth at St. Jim's"; 1060, "Playing for the First"; 1061, "Handforth's Third Test"; 1062, "Handforth's Triumph".

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And now to wind up, here are the usual month's quote of Nelson Lee Titles.

389, "The Wandering Jew"; 390, "When a Boy's Down"; 391, "The Demon Within Him"; 392, "The House of a Thousand Eyes"; 393, "The Boy who Couldn't Lie"; 394, "The Ghost of Somerton Abbey"; 395, "Archie's Pantomime Fairy"; 396, "Jack Grey's Temptation"; 397, "The Boxing Unknown"; 398, "The Brand of the Brute"; 399, "The School Without Masters"; 400, "Petticoat Rule";

401, "Goaded to Revolt"; 402, "Down with Petticoat Rule";  
 403, "The War at St. Frank's"; 404, "The Remoive at Bey"; 405,  
 "The Siege of 'Fort Resolute'"; 406, "The Armistice at St. Frank's";  
 407, "The Barred-Out Mistresses"; 408, "A Priceless Time";  
 409, "Alf 'Uggins Arrives".

WANTED urgently, to complete a volume for binding. Magnets  
 No's 1118 and 1119, Robert Wilson, 100 Broomfield Road,  
 Glasgow, N.

WANTED: Aldine Turpins and Black Bess. Boys' Comic Library,  
 Nugget, Peter Flint series; Diamond Kettle series; Nelson Lee,  
 1st series; Boys' Friend 3d Library, No's 32, 218, 294, 186,  
 334. Prices, etc. Boys' Own Library, Diamonds for Exchange.  
 W. H. Clough, 3 Fonthill Grove, Sale, Manchester.

FOR SALE: "Comets" with Bunter Stories. J. A. Boland,  
 12 Cullenswood Gardens, Ranelagh, Dublin, Eire - Ireland.

WANTED URGENTLY: To Complete sets. No.13 Collectors' Mis-  
 cellany and No's 7, 9, and 10 of the Story Paper Collector.  
 A. J. Southway, P.O.Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province,  
 South Africa.

WANTED: All back numbers Collectors' Digest. Also Annuals.  
 Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Schoolboy's Own Libraries featuring Greyfriars, 1/6  
 to 3/- each offered, according to age. Bill Martin,  
 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

EXCHANGE old and rare Sexton Blakes 1920-1928 for Sexton Blakes  
 with the skull on cover 1930-1939 only. William Smith,  
 57. Berkby Road, Syston, Nr.Leicester.

FOR SALE: "Billy Bunter in Brazil"; "Billy Bunter's Banknote";  
 Billy Bunter's Christmas Party; and two Tom Merry books.  
 Also Holiday Annuals. Offers. P. Checkley, 18 Tarlington Road,  
 Coundon, Coventry.

HAVE YOU ANY NO. ONES?

Collectors please report any No.Ones they are fortunate enough  
 to possess. The reason - an interesting - and provocative -  
 article for the Annual.

Old Boys' Book ClubEAST DULWICH. APRIL MEETING

The chairman's meeting, with the now familiar telephone conversation with our Herbert, proved to be highly successful. A score of members attended and these were well rewarded by a very convivial time. The minutes of the last meeting, together with the treasurer's report, were accepted and signed. The correspondence was read and discussed.

The next item on the agenda was the new block of the club crest. Three quotations were given, the lowest one being Bob Whiter's. He had drawn a new picture of the design and had a block made. This was done as a speculation, for if not suitable to the club, he would have it for his own use. However, a unanimous vote accepted the tender and J. Geel was instructed to get the crested club stationery printed. A hearty vote of appreciation was accorded to Bob Whiter for his admirable effort in getting the block manufactured. The design has been copyrighted.

Promptly at six o'clock the vice-president made his 'phone call and the usual good conversations ensued.

A fine novelty quiz devised by Len Packman was won by a new member, R. Godsave, a very creditable effort. Second place was shared by Ian Whitmore and Charlie Wright.

The postal members' ballot then took place and the four successful members were E. Cox, T. Concannon, R. Jenkins, and E. Windover. The first two win copies of "Billy Bunter's Benefit", whilst the latter two will have copies of "Rallying round Gussy" sent to them as soon as they are received from the publishers.

Bob Whiter then gave an amusing reading from Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1925 entitled "A False Alarm", by Teddie Grace.

The next meeting will be held at 706, Lordship Lane, Wood Green, N.22, on Sunday May 21st.

The Brighton Meeting has been provisionally fixed for Sunday July 16th and all members are asked to make a note of this.

The exchange and mart followed and the conclusion of a happy evening came with a hearty vote of thanks to the host, chairman Len Packman.

Attendance: M. Prier, N. Flatman, A. Young, I. Whitmore, A. Blunden, E. Reynolds, P. Pedro, R. Godsave, R. and A. Deacon, J. Geal, B. Prime, W. Lawson, R. Southwood, C. and O. Wright, Len, Josie and E. Peckman. B. & R. Whiter.

New members were M. Prier, E. Cox, A. Young, and T. Concannon.

Josephine Peckman wishes to express her sincere thanks for the many kind comments on her "Talbot" articles. She greatly appreciates them.

FOR SALE: Nelson Lees, Old Series (1919-20). 71 consecutive early numbers serial numbers 158 to 228 inclusive. 1/3 each. Leonard Peckman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

Rare items for sale to best offers. Magnets 357, 392, 409, Gems 510. All Double numbers. B.F.L. 3d. 213 "The Blot" by Maxwell Scott. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, London, N.W.10.

WANTED: Gems 819 and 946. Union Jacks 919, 920, 924, 954, 974, 975, 981, 982, 984, 985, 986, 1001, 1016, 1034, 1042, 1043, 1056, 1101, 1105, 1108. Sexton Blake Libraries: All 1st Series. No.1, 171, 199, 271, 283, 284. Mrs. J. Peckman, 27 Archdale Road, E. Dulwich, S.E.22

Bob Blythe, through the C.D., would like to thank numerous correspondents for their kind expressions of sympathy during his enforced absence from the circle.

Dr. Edith Summerskill, speaking 29th April, said: "I was brought up on the "Magnet" and "Gem".

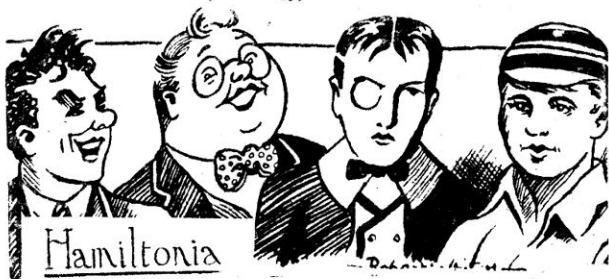
Extract from a new chum's letter concerning the Leeds Meeting:

"The Meeting was really thrilling I thought. Only drawback was it was all too short. I could have enjoyed a long conversation with every chap present.

Your talk in particular was most interesting and I could have listened to your anecdotes and news of our beloved magazines all night.

Looking forward to receiving the next C.D. and also to seeing you at the Dinner in June.

Yours cordially, Garry Allison."



Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Elsewhere I have something to say about press publicity. The amount of notice we get these days is very gratifying, but there is something I would like to say here, which particularly concerns the "Magnet". The scribes do seem to take a delight in giving the impression that copies of this most popular of all papers are worth all sorts of fanciful prices. Members of the clan know the true position, but others don't, with the result that they get fantastic ideas into their heads. In the "Daily Telegraph" interview, for instance, I ridiculed the idea that a Magnet might be worth £10, yet the statement appeared. As a consequence I have had a number of letters (addressed to me "Telephone Operator, York," mark you) in which the writers mention two or three Magnets they possess, and say they understand they are very valuable. When I have replied and told them the true value I have heard no more, the owners probably having cursed me and taken it I was on the make.

Others have written about certain papers in the hope that they too were worth a bit, whereas they are hardly worth their original value.

This has always been a vexed question. A certain Victorian "blood" might be valued at £25, whilst another of the same period would fetch hardly as many shillings, but you can't explain it all in a short newspaper paragraph.

Anyway, when there is any chance of press publicity it's best to scotch the idea that ten pound notes are being flourished about, even for No.1 of the Magnet.

# Came to England to find Bunter stories

10. 3. 50

IN view of the proposal to form a Billy Bunter club in Leeds it struck me that many of your readers would be interested in a letter I received from New York.

The writer said he had read the Magnet and Gem for nearly 40 years. He now lives in New York, and two years ago found some rare copies in a store.

They had been sold by his old interest and he had him long for life.

He searched New York through success. Then he actually worked his passage to London, with visions of going back with many of his favourite stories.

To his utter disappointment, he returned empty-handed except for the Bunter books now being published.

Here surely is a striking example of the influence these stories by veteran Frank Richards have on the boys of yesterday—Herbert Leckenby, York.

I SEE that Leeds is forming a "Billy Bunter" Club.

## 6-4-50 Happy memories

THE formation of a Billy Bunter club in Leeds will mean little or nothing to the younger generation, but to men over 40 years it will strike a chord and forge a link of happy memories and old associations with characters which, although

they respected a silent lack of richness in this part of many dead people but never thought they would go to such lengths.

The stories of the famous schoolboy were indeed forgotten and I think if they were intended to be taken seriously as some Leeds folk appear to have done.

But as I said at the beginning, the main reason for nothing lacking around Bradford.

## Rock in Greyfriars

YOUR Bradford correspondent has a gentle club at Leeds over its interest in the Greyfriars stories. But I can assure him there are quite as many fans proportionately in his own city.

There's nothing curious about that, for there are thousands of others scattered over every English county—Wales, Scotland, Ireland and all the Commonwealthe countries. For relaxation doctors, schoolmasters, citymen, successful business men, in fact, men and women in all walks of life, read them.

Why not? Isn't it the same "algebra which makes a man's path unmeasurable" as much as the younger generation to whom it is supposed to be intended.—W. F. Sawyer, Hon. Sec. Leeds Section, Old Boys' Book Club.

## "Healthy reading"

I SHOULD like to tell how I came to read my first Magnet

# BUNTER CLUB ON THE AIR

Y.E. News Reporter

5.4.50

FOUNDERS of the "Billy Bunter Club" in Leeds will go on the air to-night to tell the country about their hobby—collecting and discussing old books, now out of print. Like the Magnet and Gem, to keep "alive" the famous characters which thrilled them in their schooldays. They expect to face a few minutes' intensive, unheated interview before the microphone at the Leeds studios in the 7.40 p.m. feature "Up To Date," on the Home Service.

Chief speaker will be Mr. Herbert Leckenby, of York, 60-year-old editor of the Club's monthly magazine, "The Collectors Digest," who is reputed to know more about these classics of schoolboy magazines and their immortals like Harry Wharton and Co., The Fat Owl of the Remore, Bob Cherry and so on, and any other man in the North.

Supporting him will be Mr. W. F. Sawyer, of Farnside-drive, Seacroft, Leeds, secretary of the Leeds H.Q. (Northern Section) of the "Old Boys' Book Club" which is the official title of the Billy Bunter fans.

## Yorkshire Evening News

£40 FOR BOYS'

# ATTRACTION OF OLD MAGNET

14. 50.

## BOYS' MAGAZINE NOW FETCHES £10

DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER Men who still cling to the memories of the schoolboy magazines they read in their youth argue fervently about the relative merits of ancient and modern.

So Mr. Herbe Leckenby, of York, has discovered. He is a 60-year-old telephone operator, who did a club magazine for such enthusiasts.

Interest among collectors is increasing so much that the Old Boys' Club, founded in London for exchanging information and selling "valuable rare copies," has started a northern section, based on Leeds.

Membership already includes a business executive who has 700 copies of The Magnet. An inaugural dinner is to be held. The Magnet and The Gem ceased publication in 1940—due to paper shortages. But interest is still alive.

The club was founded in London two years ago by a civil servant and a member of a Bible publishing company. Members include a Northern Ireland Bishop, schoolmasters, and merchants. One member has 3,000 copies of "magnet works."

## FRANK RICHARDS TOO

The president is Mr. Charles Hamilton, 78, better known as Frank Richards, creator of the modern school "of Billy Bunter." Mr. Leckenby, who publishes a



I am certain that the cost of the thugger we know to-day was almost unknown 30 years ago. It may or may not be attributed to the Barton gangster films and the like, but it makes you think—Another Old Boy, *Miranda*.

## Thrillers 100 Years Ago They Did Not Make us so Bad Boys

From fifty to a hundred years ago almost every youngster read what were described as "penny dreadfuls," "blood and thunder" tales, and schoolboy thrillers. Those days were recalled when a large collection of these thrillers were among books sold by Messrs Hodgson and Co. at their rooms in Chancery Lane, London, to-day.

**FIERCE BOYS' BOOKS**  
 "Look through some of these books, which were known as fierce boys' books, or 'blood and thunder.' It is interesting to compare the youth of that generation and the present," Mr. Sidney Hodgson told a reporter.  
 "So far as one can see they produced no criminal tendencies in the youngsters who read them, and we heard nothing of the dreadful crimes which are now a daily occurrence."

"One can only think that although they bore such alarming titles, the tales were more of adventure and enterprise, and had nothing like the influence upon young minds that the cinema seems to have to-day."

"His collection for sale belonged to a man named Herbert Allum, and are being sold by order of the Treasury solicitor."

**"PENNY DREADFUL KING"**  
 "Only this morning," said Mr. Hodgson, "a man came here who knew Allum. He said that he lived in a semi-basement somewhere in Highgate, and used to collect these serials and bind them into volumes. Among them are boys' books such

as a "Penny Dreadful" letter which went out of the bookstalls. I hope it will be published again, because I think it was good, and healthy reading for every boy." W. Broomie, Halton.

with labels by the famous Barton Co., while One's signature is to be found in other volumes. There is also a typed letter from One in "The School of the Regiment."

Harry One used to describe himself as "The Penny Dreadful King," and one of his advertisements read: "Wanted always scarce Penny Dreadfuls and fierce boys' journals 175-1900; nothing goody-goody."

### SOLD FOR £4

He claimed that he had a private collection of this class of literature better than any in the world. He sold it for £4. It is believed that the greater part of the collection was given to the British Museum.

"There are a series of volumes by Jack Harkaway, describing adventures in America, India, and Australia. One is entitled 'Ned Kelly, the Ironclad Australian bush-ranger.'"

Mr. Hodgson said that the librarian from Australia House, who came to look at these volumes, said that 70 years ago Ned Kelly was as popular among Australian youngsters as Dick Turpin was among the boys of Britain.

## Liverpool Express

Interesting Letters and Reports from various National and Local Newspapers

H.L.

of every creature, including a school, I must satisfy them. It is surprising how intolerant collectors are over the varying periods in which they are not interested.

He spent most of the day in the saleroom of Hodgson & Co. in Chancery-lane, bidding for 19th century collectors' pieces—three books for boys.

For £6 12s he bought 27 volumes of "Ally Slopers' Hall Ho-day," described as "a selection, side-splitting, sentimental, and serious for the benefit of old boys, young boys, odd boys generally, and even girls."

A large collection of these books, belonging to the late Mr. Herbert Allum, a collector were sold by order of the Treasury to the boys were all collectors, and Mr. Pettigell and Mr. James Medcalf, bookselling merchants of Barking.

Mr. Medcalf spent £40 on such volumes as "The Blue Dwarf," "Sweeney Todd"—24 pieces a week of sensational romance, and many volumes of the adventures of Jack Hathaway.

Mr. Pettigell said he met Allum. These books are keenly sought after by collectors. "Nothing really like them is published these days. I used to read them when I was a boy and my parents always told me that they were not worth reading."

"But I enjoyed them and they did me no harm. I never had thought that this type of book did children any harm, although magistrates, ever since I can remember, have always been saying they do."

### DICK TURPIN'S "COSH"

Gleaning through a copy of "The Blue Dwarf" I discovered that Dick Turpin, highwayman hero of countless boys, was sometimes a "cosh" man. Here he is asking to attack a farmer: "He was well armed and for this occasion produced from inside his coat a stout heavy blunt oboedrone like that carried by Jonathan Wild loaded at the end and fastened to his wrist by a loop."

All the books abound copies of which are decorated with huge drawings of and like an battles. "Sprung from a Jack-o'-lantern 'demon' was described as 'a marvellous piece of work.'"

Collectors will pay several guineas for a copy in a series which they may be missing. First editions of "The Magnet" fetch as much as £10.

Latest inquiry about the club came from New York, where a man who had spent his schooldays in this country picked up an old copy of "The Magnet" on a second-hand bookstall. He wrote asking for more to be sent to him.

## Magnet' memories

BY all the rules Billy Bunter, the "Owl" of Greenleafs, could have died in 1946 when paper rationing caused "The Magnet" to cease publication. But 20 years on we find an organisation of enthusiasts, "The Old Boy Book Club," members of which are noted as a former Irish bishop, and a vicar, to keep alive boyish memories.

**EXISTS?** The club is based in London, but has a Northern section in formation; this will aid the swapping and sale of copies of the old magazine (a No. 1 Magnet will fetch up to £10) and increase the spate of reminiscence.

The section's secretary, Mr. W. F. Sawyer, of Tarnside-drive, Seacroft, Leeds, believes that if the papers were again published there would be less juvenile delinquency. The old yarn, he says, "pointed a moral without being gody-goody."

A wool-trade executive, who is one of the new section's first members, has 700 Magnets. He says new Billy Bunter stories as well as the fat boy's creator, Mr. Charles Hamilton, now 76 and president of the O.B.C., still turns them out, though now in book form and not so quickly, "but only connoisseurs, 'as good as dead'."

3s 3d

(Hamiltonia contd.)

Dr. Robert Wilson, staunch Hamiltonian, recently suffered a grievous blow through the death of his wife. He has also been working even harder than usual owing to the Glasgow small-pox epidemic. In a letter to me he said:

"It is a strange fact, but a true one, that the only reading I have been able to do since my loss was an occasional dip into a volume of Greyfriars stories. Frank Richards' magic alone brought temporary forgetfulness."

Could one find a finer tribute to the sterling worth of the famous stories. This, and the excerpt from the New York letter in the correspondence columns is surely an effective answer to those who scoff at the idea of men past their first youth taking an interest in their boyhood heroes.

And now for Josephine Peckman's final instalment of "The Story of the Toff". This article has received many bouquets.

### THE STORY OF "THE TOFF"

By Josephine Peckman

#### Part Three

Dr. Holmes, thoroughly convinced that the Toff has truly reformed and become one of the straightest and most honourable boys in the school, shows his complete faith in Talbot when that faith is put to the test. This is related in that finest of all double-numbers, 'Gem' No. 393, "The Housemaster's Homecoming".

Mr. Railton returns from France after being wounded, bringing with him his old Commanding Officer Colonel Lyndon, who is also a Governor of St. Jim's and uncle of Gerald Croke.

Talbot has already had trouble with Croke who, in his usual spiteful way, tells Colonel Lyndon all he knows about the Toff's past, in such a way as to greatly prejudice the Colonel against Talbot.

On first seeing Talbot the Colonel is sure he has seen the boy before, but Talbot insists that Colonel Lyndon is mistaken. The Colonel, however, is doubtful about accepting Talbot's word and, after subjecting him to some severe questioning, and hearing the Toff's refusal to disclose his father's name, he believes that the boy is still a criminal. Feeling

it his duty to go further into the matter, the Colonel decides to call a meeting of the Governors.

This meeting comes about, but Talbot still refuses to reveal his full name and insists that he has a right to do so. He is staunchly supported by Dr. Holmes whose faith in the Toff is so complete, that when the Governors decide to send Talbot away from the school he resigns his Headmastership, feeling that he has lost the confidence of the Governors.

As for the Toff, when he hears the results of the meeting, especially of the Head's resignation, he feels that perhaps he had done wrong in keeping silent for the sake of his pride, when the full truth might have saved him.

For Dr. Holmes' sake Talbot decides to seek out the Colonel and speak to him, but whilst on his way to Rylcombe where he knows Colonel Lyndon to be staying, he is knocked down by the Colonel's car and is brought back to the school.

Colonel Lyndon discovers him to be in possession of a locket containing a picture of his own sister, long since dead, and finds that the boy he has persecuted and driven from school is his own nephew. The Colonel then learns the reason for the Toff's silence, how, many years before, his father had asked for Colonel Lyndon's help, but had been refused, and consequently had fallen back into a life of crime, taking his son with him.

One can now understand with what bitterness the Toff had regarded Colonel Lyndon, but now he hears the other side of the story, how the Colonel had regretted his harshness and had tried to find his sister's husband and child, but they had completely disappeared.

Thus, Talbot naturally remains at the school, the Head's resignation is forgotten and "once more the sun shines on the chequered life of the Toff".

I am afraid I have not been able to do full justice to this story; to be able to tell in a few paragraphs what it took Mr. Hamilton nearly forty pages to relate is well nigh impossible, but I hope I have given our readers some idea of the story.

From now onward most of the Toff's troubles are brought about by the enmity of his cousin Gerald Croke, who does everything he can to try and discredit Talbot with his uncle.

One of Croke's first attempts in this way is related in 'Gem' No. 399, "A Soldier of the King", in which John Rivers returns to this country on leave. Croke, in his usual sneaking way, spies on Talbot and Marie, his one idea being to show

that Talbot is still friendly with some of the old gang, thereby hoping that Colonel Lynden will then disown the Toff. But his knavish tricks are discovered and forestalled by Talbot who helps John Rivers to escape when Crooke has sent the police after him, for, unfortunately, although the Professor of old is working out his own redemption, the past sins have still to be paid for, and the police still seek him.

But Crooke, in his enmity towards Talbot, still hopes to be able to injure him in the eyes of his uncle, and so, once more, in "Gem" No.416 "In the King's Khaki", the Toff has to renew the struggle for the Professor's safety, knowing full well that it will mean ruin to himself if it is discovered that he has helped a criminal to escape.

However, the Toff is not concerned so much for himself, but for Marie Rivers, for whose sake he assists the Professor.

The erstwhile cracksmen is badly wounded, and Dr.Holmes, realising the danger of his true identity becoming known whilst in hospital, allows him to be taken into the school sanatorium to be looked after by Marie. But the Toff is still worried for fear that Crooke will discover who "Corporal Brown", the wounded soldier, really is, and in his endeavour to injure Talbot by denouncing the Professor to the police, will bring trouble and anxiety to Marie.

Unfortunately, Crooke succeeds, and threatens to go to the police. The Toff realises that the only way out is to go to his uncle, tell him the truth, and hope that Colonel Lynden will help him.

It is a forlorn hope, for he knows how angry the Colonel will be, especially if he thought his nephew was still friendly with any of the old gang of criminals.

Crooke rejoices at Talbot's decision, thinking that the Colonel will be finished with his cousin once and for all.

However, both boys have reckoned without "Fate", and when Talbot tells his uncle about the Professor, it is only to discover that "Corporal John Brown V.C." is the man who had saved Colonel Lynden from death by German bayonets, receiving his own wounds in so doing.

In his gratitude the Colonel sets out to procure a Pardon for the man he now considers his friend, with the result that, like the Toff, John Rivers can now face the world as an honourable man.

Even now the Colonel does not realise how bad Crooke is,

and wishes his two nephews to be friends.

Talbot tries his best, and at one time thinks he is succeeding, but Croke is only pretending friendship in order to lead the Toff into further trouble.

This incident is related in Gem No.449 "Friends or Foes?" This time Croke 'cooks up' a little plot of his own. Presuming on his pretended friendship with Talbot he asks the Toff to open Mr.Linton's desk to recover a letter from Lodgey the bookmaker which he had left in a book subsequently confiscated by Mr. Linton. This, Talbot eventually agrees to do, little realising that it is a trap and that Croke hopes he will be caught opening the desk and thus turned out of the school as a hardened criminal.

But there is one fellow who is very suspicious about this sudden friendship, and that fellow is Levison, whom the Toff has repeatedly helped. The Toff had always felt that with his own black past he had no right to judge other fellows and was therefore more patient and tolerant toward the black sheep than any of the other fellows. Levison appreciated the generosity and kindness of the Toff, and in return decides to find out just what game Croke is playing.

This he succeeds in doing, thereby saving the Toff from being caught at Mr. Lynton's desk, and, at last, Talbot understands what his scheming cousin has really meant by his seeming friendship.

From this time onward Talbot has no illusions where Croke is concerned, and later, in Gem No.462 "Levison Minor's Luck", when the Colonel visits his nephews Talbot refuses to answer his cousin's accusation that he is friendly with Lodgey at the "Green Men". Croke's accusation is backed up by Lodgey who calls at the school "to see his friend the Toff". The Colonel, angry with Talbot whom he thinks has deceived him, disowns him as his nephew and departs from the school, leaving Croke chortling over the success of his plot.

But once again, the Toff has a "good angel" in the person of young Frank Levison, brother of Ernest, whom he feels has been helped to the straight path by Talbot's influence.

Frank and his third-form pals discover the plot, and when he knows what has happened Frank sets out to see Colonel Lyndon at Abbotsford Camp.

The Colonel, on hearing young Levison's story returns to the school and confronts Croke, who cannot deny his rascality. The Colonel now realises which nephew is really worthwhile,

and a reconciliation between Telbot and his uncle follows, both of them knowing at least that it is impossible to expect anything but enmity from Crooke.

This story really completes the whole of the Toff's struggles to gain recognition from his uncle that he is straight and honourable.

There are many more yarns about Telbot; some forty of them in which he is the central character. Unfortunately, a number of these stories were not written by Mr. Hamilton and suffered much in the manner of telling, so that the less said about those stories the better!

For the benefit of those who may be interested in the best of Mr. Hamilton's Telbot stories at a later date, they are as follows:-

563, "Telbot's Foes"; 564, "Brought to Light"; 686, "Telbot's Darkest Hour"; 687, "His Past Against Him"; 988, "The Black Sheep of St. Jim's"; 989, "Standing by a Scapegrace"; 990, "The Toff's Sacrifice"; 991, "True as Steel"; 1197, "The Man from Angel Alley".

In conclusion, I should like to say that I hope this "Story of the Toff" will have given the reader as much pleasure as I have had in writing it.

Finis.

Magnet Titles (contd.)

211, A Race against Time; 212, The Rivals Test; 213, The Jepe against the Fifth; 214, The Fight for the Captaincy; 215, The Rival Co's at Greyfriars; 216, The Schoolboy Outcast; 217, Schoolboys' Treasure; 218, Harry Wharton & Co's Windfall; 219, A Forbidden Chum; 220, Foes of the Fourth; 221, Honour Before All; 222, A Traitor in the School; 223, Frank Nugent's Great Wheeze; 224, The Road to Ruin; 225, Out of Bounds; 226, Down on his Luck; 227, The Greyfriars Gardeners; 228, Bolsover Minor's Bolt; 229, The Remove Form's Feud; 230, The Schoolboy Detective; 231, The Stolen Schoolboys; 232, The Circus Schoolboy; 233, Under Suspicion; 234, Harry Wharton & Co's Bank Holiday; 235, Spoofing the School; 236, The Kidnapped School; 237, The Competition Craze at Greyfriars; 238, The Form Master's Secret; 239, The Hidden Horror; 240, The Tuck Shop Raiders; 241, Coker Minor - Sixth Former; 242, The Greyfriars Insurance Company; 243, The Schoolboy Sleepwalker; 244, The Schoolboy Policeman; 245, For His Mother's Sake; 246, The Terror of Greyfriars.



Does it Foreshadow the Return of the Magnet?

April 8th 1950.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Do you remember mentioning the "Comet" in a letter some little while ago, in which somewhat dismantled reprints of early Magnet numbers were appearing? At that time I was not, as I told you, interested in the matter: but there has been a change since: as the A.P. have asked me to write a new series to take the place of the reprints. I don't like those old relics, especially in such a fragmentary state, so for that and other reasons I was glad to undertake the new series. To be quite frank, I rather pine for Greyfriars, and two or three Bunter books a year don't fill the aching void. Anyhow I am quite enjoying writing the new series, and I expect the first story, "Billy Bunter's Tea-Party", will be appearing before long, to be followed by "Stumped" and "Bunter Borrows a Bike", and so on ad lib. They are quite short stories: but writing them has made me feel that I should like to be writing the old Magnet again.

I came across quite a nice spot in the Telegraph on Saturday, in which I found you as large as life. The O.B.B.C. seems to be growing rather on the lines of Jack's bean-stalk!

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

Seems Frank Richards Does Get Some Leisure!

April 11th, 1950.

Dear Herbert Lockenby,

I had written you on Saturday, about the "Comet"; and your letter, with the C.D., dropped in on Monday morning: pleasant reading for a day of leisure.

Yes, the cover does very agreeably recall the Magnet. I like very much the continuation of the "Toff" articles. I thought myself that the "House-Mester's Home-Coming" was the best of the Talbot stories. At the moment I am up to the neck in a Talbot story for the "Tom Merry" book in September.

I am quite delighted to hear of your broadcast. You can bet I should have listened-in with all my ears, if Mr. Sawyer's letter telling me about it had reached me in time. I am extremely sorry to have missed it. I should very much like to be put wise in time if you go on the air again — or perhaps I should say "when" not "if":

I am very sorry to hear of Mr. Blythe's bad health, and hope sincerely that he will soon be on the active list again.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

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He Travelled 6000 Miles in Search of Magnets!!

(Here is an extract from a long and remarkable letter from James C. Iraldi, 14 West 82nd Street, New York. It speaks for itself. Thanks to Bill Martin, Len Peckman and others of the circle, Mr. Iraldi's hunger has been appeased somewhat, but like Oliver Twist he still longs for more.— E.L.)

Being an indefatigable book-hunter, I usually tramp about the N.Y. bookshops several times each week. (A habit which has filled my bookshelves and emptied my pockets!) One day in August, 1948, during my Summer holidays, I happened to spot on an outside stall, priced one nickel (five cents) three thin, coloured booklets which brought back a host of boyhood memories. They were early Schoolboys' Own Library's, one of each School, Greyfriars, St. Jims, Rookwood. I took them home and devoured them. I did not realize it at the time, but I had been severely bitten by the "Richards Bug" and (like the fever-breeding mosquito) the fever soon set in. An unquenchable thirst for more Greyfriars was the symptom, and a pretty bad one, too.



You see, I had no way of quenching that thirst. I read those three old-timers perhaps six or seven times in a row, I haunted every old magazine store I could find, for weeks, months without result. Then, an unexpected opportunity came for me to make a trip to Europe. I worked my passage over (as musician, exchange, for a Dutchman on board a Holland liner). I landed at Rotterdam and went on to Amsterdam, Paris, Amiens (to pay my fervent respects at the tomb of Jules Verne) and then by Cross-Chennel steamer to Newhaven and - London! What a thrill!

I fondly expected to pick up old Magnets, Gems, etc. by the carload. You know without my telling, just what I DID pick up! It still rankles as one of the bitterest disappointments of my life - the not being able to find a single one of these old weeklies.

The only rift in the dark clouds - a sort of mirage, shall I say? - was the fact that Billy Bunter was reappearing in book-form. I was fortunate enough to find them all within one week, even the very first.

=====

Oh! Harry!!

Yulden Farm,  
Heathfield,  
Sussex.

28 - 3 - 50.

Dear Editor,

If I described "The Hotspur" in my "Monograph on Sexton Blake" as muck, it was most certainly an understatement and should have read "appalling muck". If plain bad grammar, use of pseudo-American expressions in text as well as in dialogue and the constant holding-up of those in authority whether in a school or a professional football club to ridicule or disrespect is a sign of modern technical skill in writing - well, I know not who to pity most of these moderns; the editor, the writer or the poor reader who at least has to pay for it! And if either of the old-timer authors mentioned by Mr. Cook agreed with him, I should be very surprised indeed. Sorry, Mr. Cook, but I really can't swallow your arguments - like modern music, they're all noise and no melody!

Never mind, perhaps we'll meet one day and argue it out over a foaming pint!

Yours sincerely, HARRY HOMER.

(It would appear Harry Homer still does not like the "Hotspur" stories. - H.L.)

Down Memory Lane

Dear Editor,

I found your article upon "British Boys" in the March C.D. very interesting. I gather from it that I am one of the few who not only remembers that boys' paper, but actually read it for a time quite regularly.

I wonder how many knew that there was a paragraph in the "Boys' Friend" saying "Good-Bye" to a dead rival! I remember reading that paragraph ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years ago, and, with the help of your article, found, in a few minutes, that same paragraph, headed: "A Dead Rival", and read it over again. It is in the Boys' Friend, number 204, Vol.V.

I am looking forward to Good Friday morning for then I intend to open my new-found friends, The Boys' Leader volumes.

Yours truly,

R. STOREY.

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### OLD BOYS' BOOKS

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian

Sir.--Could I, through the courtesy of your paper, get in touch with anyone who would be interested in joining the Northern Section, Old Boys' Book Club? Our president is Frank Richards, creator of the world-famous "Billy Hunter," who at 78 is still turning out these stories in book form.

We of the club are of the opinion that if these papers ("Magnet," "Gem," "Boys' Friend," "Union Jack," &c.) were once again published we should see much less juvenile delinquency.--Yours, &c.

W. F. SAWYER, Secretary Old Boys' Book Club, Northern Section.

172, Tarnside Drive, Seacroft,  
Leeds, April 10.

A Letter which  
brought results

H. L.

### OLD BOYS' BOOKS

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian

Sir.--I am sure that a large number of men who were boys in the nineteen-hundreds will agree with Mr. Sawyer, the secretary of the Old Boys' Book Club, Northern Section, when he states that we should see much less juvenile delinquency if the youth of to-day were provided with sound, wholesome, amusing, and thrilling boys' papers, such as we had in our young days.

Present-day boys' papers are in no way comparable to "The Captain," "Chums," "Boys' Friend," "Boys' Realm," "Boys' Herald," &c., that gave us so many happy and well-spent hours.

It is not a question of being out of date. Boys' periodicals published today are silly, spineless productions with no intimacy or character drawing, and there is no kindly editor to tell boys how to lead full, honourable, and manly lives.--Yours, &c.,

HARRY DOWLER.

86, Hamilton Road, Longsight,  
Manchester 13, April 15.



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Readers of this section of the C.D. are again asked to send ALL correspondence relating to Sexton Blake to the Editor, H.N. Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.S.Wales.  
.....

#### THE ROUND TABLE. MAY 1950.

My Co-Editor has recently received a letter from Mr. Maurice N. Hall of London, S.W.19 who states that he has a pack of the card game "Sexton Blake" which we mentioned in our last "Round Table". Mr. Hall says that the game is played something like Whist, with five sets of cards, four gangs and one police force, with Blake and Tinker at the head. The card values run from 10 points to 120 points, with the police force as trumps. The cards are like a playing card, have a drawing of a character on each and there are sixty in a pack. The game was marketed by Messrs. Waddon Limited, who, as many of you will know, specialise in this sort of production. It would be very nice to be able to get hold of a few packs, or even one for that matter. Thank you Mr. Hall for your information.

I had another interesting letter from an old friend of the Blake circle a week or so ago. Eric Payne of The Modern School at Surbiton, who, as you know is an expert on the Pierre Quiroule stories of the 1st and 2nd series S.B.L. Eric says that he recently came across, in his

The Round Table (continued).

his local library, one of W.W. Sayers' (Pierre Quiroule) stories, and wondered if anyone else had done likewise and noticed the same point. This story told of a mysterious strangler, and during the action the scene moved to Windsor Forest and to "The Squirrel Hotel" which is actually a real establishment, and was known some time ago to be under the management of Mr. Sayer. In the story the proprietor had the initials W.W.S. which referred to some foreign name. This fictional W.W.S. turned out to be the murderer and meets his doom at the end of the story. It has struck Mr. Payne that this is quite an unusual thing and wonders why it was done. I suppose that it was merely a whim of the author that his crook should have HIS initials and manage the same Hotel, but as E.F. says, it is rather a remarkable advert, if it was intended to be one for the author.

A most heartening letter came from Mr. James Cook of Watford during the early part of last month. He had just finished reading the latest Rex Hardinge story published in the S.B.L. 3rd series and entitled "The Mystery Of The Forbidden Territory". He says that he felt like buying up all the copies of this story that he could lay his hands on and leaving them on the tops of buses and in railway carriages. It was, he continues, Blake at his best. Now, this interest in Blake pleased me immensely and I thought to myself that Mr. Cook was a fellow after my own heart. It is even more remarkable than it at first appears too, for Mr. Cook is a Nelson Lee fan primarily, but, he says, "I am interested in Blake because he is Alive today. How good it is to know that good old Blake is giving a fellow reader so very much pleasure, and it is indeed a tribute to the work of Rex Hardinge, for it is generally accepted that the modern issues of Blake are not nearly so good as those in the 2nd series before the war. Mr. Cook, and others, might be interested to learn, however, that the story referred to was published as a bound novel in January of this year by Messrs. Wright and Crown Ltd. It was then just "The Forbidden Territory" and featured, instead of Sexton Blake one Carver Inkosi. It is the first time that I have come across this sort of reprint for usually the Blake story appears first.

H.H.B.

THE CASE OF SEXTON BLAKE AND THE TITLE by LEONARD ALLEN.

Most noticeable during the long run of "The Union Jack" is the gradual disappearance of Sexton Blake's name from the story titles. Few weeks went by in the early numbers without a direct reference to the detective, most frequently denoting a new occupation undertaken to enable him to solve the crime. Nothing was beyond his powers, one of his more ambitious efforts was described in U.J. No. 224, "Sexton Blake's Championship" (Jan 25th 1905). The reader is not surprised to find the sleuth engaged in a boxing match at the National Sporting Club with the heavyweight champion of the world. Statisticians will be interested to know that Blake's weight was given as 12 stone 3 lbs, whilst his opponent, Jimmy Noet, an American, was 4 lbs heavier. After a gruelling battle Blake delivers the K.O., an uppercut whilst on one knee; he obligingly foregoes all rights to the world championship leaving him free to straighten out matters abroad the following week in No. 225, "Sexton Blake In Morocco".

Blake could never be considered a snob and he willingly takes on a humble occupation in No. 305 Aug: 14th 1909, as "Sexton Blake - Lock Keeper". This story, we are informed, being based on actual facts supplied by the detective, his only condition being the alteration of names and places. Possibly as a restorative, next week appeared "Sexton Blake In Blackpool". He assumes a far more dignified role some little time later, appearing as "Sexton Blake - Consul" in No. 313 11/9/09, accounting from brigands, ravishing a Balkan State No. 313. A more sedentary occupation follows with No. 314, "Sexton Blake, Playwright".

Patriotism was always one of the detective's strong points, No. 407, July 29/11 is sufficiently self-explanatory "Sexton Blake With the Territorials" succeeded by a sedative, "Sexton Blake, Yachtsman". The publishers apparently decided that their readers now automatically associated Blake with the "Union Jack" and this type of title appeared less frequently. Other characters were given prominence e.g. No. 490 March 1st/13 - "Plummer In Society", No. 593:- "Plummer's Dilemma" and after a number of topical adventures during the World War I period, appeared "Waldo The Wonder Man" in No. 794, December 28th/18, the first story of this popular character.

Incidentally some trepidation must have been felt on the launching of this amazing crook, as attention is drawn to a footnote which states the character to be founded on fact, on no lesser authority than "The Lancet". In addition Nelson Lee and Nipper joined forces with the resident U.J. team to combat the crook. Further stories of Waldo rapidly followed indicating his immediate popularity with readers, quite an achievement taking into account the well established crook characters of other writers at that time, such as George Marsden Plummer and "The Bat". The finest days of the U.J. dawned with No. 886 - 30/9/20, a coloured cover, pages increased to 24, still less was seen of the detective's name in the story titles. These had gradually been replaced by the more intriguing "The Case Of -----", "The Mystery Of-----" "The Adventure Of -----" type. Infrequently a concession was made to the old days, sometimes a sub-title such as No. 1263 31/12/27 "The Terror Of The Pit" - "Sexton Blake Coal Miner", or No. 1308, "Sexton Blake, Lord Mayor" surely one of his most exalted positions, although the story reveals that it was for but half an hour. More consideration was to be given to the detective's name with the 1929 year issues and under the title of the paper on the front cover appeared "Complete SEXTON BLAKE Story Each Week". Later in the year this disappeared only to reappear, in effect, at the top of the cover in bold type such as in No. 1469 (12/12/31 "SEXTON BLAKE versus MR. REECE". This policy continued until the final number of the U.J., No. 1531 (18/2/33. Strangely enough two weeks previously in No. 1529 the detective's name was again introduced into the title "Sexton Blake Wins", possibly this yarn was a reprint of a former Confederation story of early 1920 vintage, but more likely hastily written to wind up this popular series before the finish of the paper. The successor to the U.J., larger in size "The Detective Weekly" maintained more or less a ref: to Blake on the cover, primarily a sub title "Famous for Long Complete Stories of Sexton Blake" the last numbers described as "Sexton Blake's Own Paper", the final number, however, No. 379 had just a small type acknowledgement. One should be grateful that Blake still survives to-day when all others have gone, even if the acknowledgement is only stamp size on the S.B.L. 3rd Series. Possibly we shall yet see a stirring title such as "Sexton Blake and the Hydrogen Bomb".

THE END.

## THE UNION JACK FOR 1927.

Tabulated by H. Maurice Bond.

1211.	The Quest Of The Limping Man.	R. Murray.	Satira.
1212.	The Case Of The Wrestling Rajah.	L. Black.	Spider.
1213.	The Spider's Revenge.	"	"
1214.	The Riddle Of The Green Diamond.	"	"
1215.	The Spider's Lair.	"	"
1216.	The Affair Of The Were-Wolf.	A. Skene.	Zenith.
1217.	Lair Of The Limping Man.	R. Murray.	Satira.
1218.	Mystery Of Black Dan's Treasure.	G.H. Teed.	
1219.	Waldo's Wonder Stunt.	E.S. Brooks.	Waldo.
1220.	The Professional Burglar.	E.S. Brooks.	"
1221.	The Case Of the 2nd Blackmailor.	"	"
1222.	The Lightning Flash Mystery.	"	"
1223.	The Puzzle Of The Ensign.	A. Skene.	Zenith.
1224.	Adventure of the Yellow Beetle.	G.H. Teed.	Wu Ling.
1225.	Temple Of Many Visions.	"	"
1226.	Doomed To The Dragon.	"	"
1227.	House Of The Wooden Lanterns.	"	"
1228.	The Coming Of The Black Trinity.	A. Skene.	Trinity.
1229.	The Trail Of The Nameless Three.	"	"
1230.	Sexton Blake-Suspect!	"	"
1231.	Case of the Phantom Head.	"	"
1232.	Case Of the Disqualified Derby.	"	"
1233.	Problem Of The Double Four.	Evans.	King Karl
1234.	Duped By The Double Four.	"	"
1235.	The Gallows Mystery.	"	"
1236.	The Return Of Sexton Blake.	"	"
1237.	Eclipse.	"	"
1238.	Mystery Of The Ivory Boat.	"	"
1239.	Adventure of the Vanished Ships.	"	King Karl
1240.	Case Of The Friend Of May Cubitt.	A. Skene.	Zenith.
1241.	Great Yachting Week Mystery.	"	"
1242.	Mystery Of The Dyed Rats.	"	"
1243.	The Vengeance On The Marsh.	"	"
1244.	The Terror Of Goringhurst.	"	"
1245.	The Haunted Hotel Mystery.	A. Skene.	"
1246.	Adventure Of The Durrays Double.	R. Murray.	Satira.
1247.	The Case Of The Oil Pirates.	S. Blake.	Christmas.
1248.	Justice Defied.	R. Murray.	Satira.
1249.	The Mystery Of Marl House.	"	"
1250.	Sexton Blake - Convict.	"	"

THE UNION JACK FOR 1927 (continued).

1251. Trail Of The Bandaged Man.	R. Murray.	Satira.
1252. Master Creek's Messenger.	G. Chester.	
1253. The Norman Duke Mystery.		
1254. The Case Of Cotton's Hill.	G. H. Toed.	Plummer.
1235. Affair Of The Rotten Rails.	"	"
1256. The Clue Of The Second Goblet.	"	"
1257. The Mystery Of The Haunted Trail.		Furg.
1258. The Alaska Sweepstake Conspiracy.		"
1259. The Adventure of the Phantom Sealer.		"
1260. The Affair Of The Black Carol.	G. Evans.	Page.
1261. Captive Cargo.	G. H. Toed.	Furg.
1262. The Adventure Of The Green Lips.	"	Plummer.
1263. The Terror Of The Pit.		" <del>Furg.</del>

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 Carefully keep these lists of titles. When complete they will give you all the information you need about the character stories in the U.J. Information re anonymous stories above will be much appreciated.

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 We hope to give you the already promised list of amendments to the above and previous lists of U.J. titles next month.

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 NEXT MONTH:-

"WINNING HIS SPURS" The story of Blake's Test Case. written specially for the C.D. by WALTER WEBB.

I KNEW ANTHONY SKENE a new and interesting article.

The "Union Jack" for 1926 together with amendment list.

The Round Table.

Etc, Etc.

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 Coming Soon:- "Return to Baker Street by H. M. Bond.

Item:- The authors names have once again been introduced to the front covers of the current S.B.L. series. Good News!