

# THE COLLECTORS DIGEST





# Collectors' Digest.

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Wishing all our readers at home and overseas  
a Very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Six Years! Once again we have reached the end of a volume, and, as is my habit, I look back. I do so with feelings just a little mixed for there has been shadow as well as sunshine. In February, kindly Henry Steele passed on. How we miss him and his graphic recollections of the Victorian era. Then I have not yet forgotten the shock I got when the news of the death of my old comrade, Reg Hudson, came over the line.

And at the moment I am disconsolate at the thought that the six years' happy association with our publishers is drawing towards its close.

Now to the bright side. Early in the year, almost all together, came those three big events. Greyfriars on television, the Autobiography of Frank Richards, and the 1/6d. Tom Merry books. Oh, the controversy and excitement over the first named happening caused not only in our

columns but also those of Fleet Street. As for the Autobiography, well, that created quite a lot of Oliver Twists.

The Tom Merry books were popular among the faithful, but it would seem they were not a paying proposition where the publishers were concerned.

All the Clubs made progress, each without fail having its happy monthly meeting. Worthy of note was the visit of Messrs. C. H. Chapman and Maurice Down to Birmingham.

As for the C.D., it continued to make progress. Inevitably it lost a few subscribers, but more were gained, some of whom became valuable contributors to its columns.

Now, just a request. Before we say good-bye to Mr. Wood I shall have to pay him his just dues, and if I don't get in overdue subs, (and there are a good many) I shall be on the spot, particularly in view of that loss at Whitsuntide. Where the Annual is concerned, you have been under no obligation to settle as yet, but if you would now send along as soon as possible under the special circumstances, I shall be grateful.

And now to Volume Seven. Possibly we shall still have the help of Mr. Wood on the first number, but if it should be a little late, you will know the reason why.

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It's Nearly Reedy. Needless to say, I mean the Annual. At the moment of writing I'm delighted with the progress. Over 100 pages have been typed, and nearly as many run off on the duplicator. I was checking the Sexton Bleke epic the other evening, and I could not help thinking what a fine job our typist had made of it. There's twenty-nine packed pages, and there were only two or three trifling errors in the whole of them.

On another occasion I was working on the "Who's Who" until the early hours of the morning, for quite a number of you did not send in your questionnaire forms. Truth to tell, I shall give a sigh of relief when I have a completed copy before me, but I guess I shall consider all the months of labour well worth while when I turn over the pages.

Now an appeal. There's a number of you whom I am counting on who have not yet sent in their orders. Would you please rush them along at the earliest possible moment?

You will get an idea of the treat you are in for from another page.

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The S.P.C. Bill Gander is receiving anxious enquiries

because No.48 of his popular little paper hasn't reached these shores yet. He has asked me to explain that the delay has been unavoidable, but to assure you that it will reach you eventually. Would seem that publishing difficulties in connection with our magazines are general just now.

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Strange, Sad Story. The Rev. Jack Hughes of Brisbane, Australia, has sent me a cutting from the "Brisbane Telegraph" dated October 25th 1952. It concerns our hobby, and is interesting, remarkable, and tinged not a little with sadness. We are told the story of Jack McDonald, who all his life was a great lover of "Chums". For years he searched for copies all over the world, and at long last, in 1942, he found his 48th and last volume. It was one of the happiest days of his life, for his collection was his pride and joy. Then, suddenly, in 1944, he died.

His widow relates how he always wanted his collection to be given to a school. Several were approached, but none wanted them! Would you credit it? Forty-eight of those glorious scarlet-clad volumes pecked with clean, thrill-packed stories not wanted. That in these days when most boys' literature is condemned even more than in the days of the Victorian "bloods".

What a pity our Brotherhood of Happy Hours was not in being in 1942 and we knew not Jack McDonald. How he would have welcomed correspondence from breezy Geoff Hockley, Harold Griffiths, Peard Sutherland and others who appreciate the volumes with the scarlet jackets.

The collection found its way into the second-hand bookshop of Mr. V. Reed, of Brisbane, who said "Middle-aged men who have come into the shop have been greatly excited at seeing "Chums" on the shelves. They are buying copies for old times sake."

That maybe would make Jack McDonald happy.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

WANTED: Samples Funny Cuts, Lot o'Fun, Jester. Your prices. E. V. Hughes, 38 East Front Road, Paghem Beach, Nr. Bognor Regis.

WANTED, MINT CONDITION: Holiday Annual 1922; B.F.L. 557; Megnets 1175 to 1177, 1181 to 1185; Gem 393. Rev. A.G. Pound, 68 Finmore Road, Birmingham, 9.

THE "BOYS' REALM"CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER, 1906.By Herbert Leckenby

At this time of the year we usually have a look at one of those gorgeous Christmas numbers of a bygone day. For this occasion I have chosen the Boys' Realm dated Saturday, December 1st, 1906. How well I remember it! I was a young printers' apprentice at the time. How impatiently I awaited my meagre wages that Saturday morning so that I could dash off and buy my long awaited copy. What a feast of reading when I got it devoured long before Christmas. True, we boys of the period did have one grouse. We used to say, "They are diddling us. They can't count - twice sixteen is thirty-two, and there's only twenty-eight pages here." Yes, the publishers didn't quite double the normal sixteen large pages. Still, there was plenty to keep us absorbed for days and oh, what a grand twopennorth it would seem to-day.

A heading across the top of the front page exclaims in large type, "5 Grand Serials and 4 Long Complete Stories." First of the former which catches my eye is an instalment of "For League and Cup" by A. S. Hardy. It was the second serial concerning the "Blue Crusaders", and in my opinion the finest football story ever written. If it had ever been given the dignity of stiff covers it would have become a "classic", and been read as avidly by men as well as boys.

Someone once said to me that when A. S. Hardy described a football game he did it so vividly that you could almost imagine you were there in the stand or on "Spion Kop". I cordially agree. The Henry Roses of to-day could not teach him anything in that direction. The football stories by A. S. Hardy were always made more charming and natural because he introduced, with knowledge, the actual English League clubs. In this particular instalment the Blue Crusaders played against Sunderland and Liverpool, and it is worth while reproducing the names of the latter team for many of them are still remembered:

Hardy; Griffiths; Saul; Perry; Reisbeck; Bradley; Goddard; Robinson; Raybould; McPherson, and Cox.

I guess Frank Case would like to read the account of that thrilling game.

Another serial was "His First Term" by John Finmore. It was a fine story of Slenton School, a school you will hear

something about in the Annual.

Third serial was "Imprisoned for Life" by Henry St. John. That popular writer of the day was at his best with that type of story.

Fourth came "The Airship's Quest" by J. J. Beeston, and fifth, "Tom Tarter in Africa" by E. Hercourt Burrage. This was a reprint from Victorian days. A nice variety of serials indeed.

The completes consisted of "Chippity Slim's Pentomime", a tale of Sigger's Circus, by Henry I. Johnson; "Curly's Christmas Dinner" by Clement Hale (actually A. S. Hardy); "Kit Cameron's Christmas" by Sidney Drew, and "The Fighting Panthers' Christmas", one of the army "On Guard and Off" series, by Beverley Kent, a very well written one, too. He certainly knew something about army life. I have often wondered who he was. "Kit Cameron's Christmas" had the holly decorated front page, and the picture by E. E. Briscoe showed a comic football match with the players in fantastic garb, including the goal-keeper as Father Christmas.

Other popular artists of the day who contributed were Fred Bennett, H. M. Lewis, T. W. Holmes, Harry Lane, and "Vel".

There were several articles and a full page of chat by editor Hamilton Edwards. His replies to "his boys" were of a varied nature. He sympathised with one who had lost his mother and whose father had taken him from school and put him in an office, on a job he disliked. He advised another how to broaden his chest, and told a third who was sure his head was getting too big, literally - not to worry. "Boys are funny animals", commented Hamilton Edwards, sagely in connection with this latter youth's worry.

One might have reflected that editors are queer cattle too when one read what he said to another correspondent who had asked if there was ever such a person as Sherlock Holmes. He made the usual reply that Sherlock was built round the Scotch surgeon, Dr. Bell, and then went on to say, "The same explanation applies to that celebrated detective Sexton Blake. so that I may say, without revealing a secret, that he is a real living personality. He was also at one time attached to the Metropolitan Police detective department. He found, however, that his connection with a Government institution somewhat hampered him in his methods, and therefore he resigned from the Force, and is now perhaps the

leading private detective in the world, in fact, many of his adventures form the basis of the stories of Sexton Blake which are published not only in the "Boys' Realm" but weekly in the "Union Jack".

I'm a modest sort of editor, and I don't think I shall ever have the nerve to kid "my boys" with tales like that.

Nevertheless, Hamilton Edwards supplied me with many happy hours in the days of my youth, and next Christmas Day, my labours on the "Annual" o'er, I hope to settle down before a cosy fire, read this Boys' Realm Double Number at my leisure and try and recapture the days when I was not a very industrious apprentice boy.

WANTED: Numbers 3 and 37 1/2. "Gem". "Pluck" St.Jims stories, 10/6 each offered.

Penny "Plucks" containing Specs & Co., and Cookey Scrubs stories. Also School tales 1906-7-8, 3/- each offered.

"Diamond Library" Kettle & Co. stories, 3/- each offered.

"Boys' Friend 3d. Libraries 5, 29, 46, 53, 55, 59, 69 wanted. 10/6 each offered, besides others. No's 30 and 38, 30/- each offered.

Wanted Gems, Magnets, Turpins, Sheppards, etc. No.41, "Ghost of St.Jims" 1908 wanted. Pay 15/6. Many papers for sale. Gems, Marvels etc. Richard Whorwell, 29 Aspinden Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.16.

FOR SALE. Nos. 121 to date (present series) Sexton Blake Lib. 150 copies £2. Captain, Vols 18, 19, 22, 25, 26, 27, 34, 45 - £1. Boys' Friend 4d. No.534, 1/6. Dark Deeds of Old London (Brett) 2/6. No.1-9 Gold Hawk Books 5/-.  
W. H. Clough, 3 Fonthill Grove, Sale, Manchester.

WANTED: 1935-50 Magnets, Gems and S.O.L's. Complete series only. Please send details to H. Bloom, 22 Clove Road, Forest Gate, London, E.7.

WANTED: All Boys' Friends and Nelson Lees 1915 onwards. Lists to M. Johnson, 164 Amesbury Avenue, Streatham Hill, London, S.W.2.

WANTED: Schoolboys' Owns, 249, 226, 219, 211, 206, 170. Also Rookwood Stories before 160. Have 1924 Holiday Annual in exchange. Gordon Thompson, 53 Wellesey Park, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

## HAMILTONIANA

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Vol.5 of the Boys' Realm (No.209, June 2nd, 1906 - No.260, May 25th, 1907) contained several complete stories by Charles Hamilton, and the start in No.254 of that fine serial "King Cricket". Let's have a look at that.

In No.211 appeared "Cricket Chums". The school was Clivedale. A leading character was Kloumi Lal, Rajah of Rampore. His best chum is Jim Herries. He seems to have been a more accomplished cricketer than the Herries who was to remain so long at St.Jim's. The first two chapters deal with a match at the school, then with the passing of years the scene moves to India. Herries arrives on the scene and plays in a match disguised as one Jemset Singh who has been injured.

No.223 had a story "Rugby Rivals". It was just described as by a Popular Author, but as the hero was Hubert Locke, a Talbot is mentioned, a match is played against Redclyffe, and there's trouble at a pub called "The Green Men", one feels confident he could name the author.

In No.225 one finds "The Housemaster's Secret". The master is called Temple, the school is St.Hilda's, and it has a New House. There's also a Carne.

"Chums of Cerbrooke" appeared in No.231. No familiar names here. But there were in "The Cock House at Carnforth (No.244), to wit, Owen Redfern, Reggie Lawrence and Cecil Cardew. There was also a Russell and Hilton's House. The game played was Rigger which confirms that C.H. could write about Soccer's rival.

No.245 had a story called - "The Bounder", but the youth who bore the nickname was called so for a very different reason to the one associated with the immortal Greyfriars character. He was another Lawrence, and a scholarship boy, but he won the game for St.Egbert's against Lyndale and "The Bounder" became a term of affection.

"Gallantly Won", another Rigger yarn, appeared in No.249, and the story in No.250, "The Winning Boat" showed that Charles Hamilton was quite at home when writing about the annual 'Varsity Race: Oxford won.

Then in No.254, April 13th, 1907, started what was perhaps Charles Hamilton's finest serial, "King Cricket".



Lovers of the great summer game would revel in it. For weeks it was given the front page, a proof that the editor thought highly of it. The hero was Arthur Lovell who played for Leamshire. Other prominent characters were Len Valance, Colonel Hilton and his daughter, Mo. and Ponsonby, who was described as a snobbish character and friend of Lagden. Lovell's bitter enemy.

Just as in A. S. Hardy's football stories, games with English League clubs, so in "King Cricket". Leamshire played the recognised first-class counties. Unfortunately I possess only sufficient instalments to cover the games with Leicestershire and Somerset. With the former one finds mentioned J. H. King, Jayes, and Odell, and against Somerset famous players of the day in Len Braund and that elegant stylist Lionel Paisret.

Yes, a grand yarn for cricket lovers, would that I had the other instalments.

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A VISIT TO "ROSE-LAWN"

By Roger Jenkins

By a strange coincidence, about the same time that the Rev. Pound was seeing Mr. Hamilton, I was writing to ask for an interview myself. This request was most courteously granted, and on Monday October 20th I duly set off from London to Mergate. The atmosphere of the "Magnet" struck me as soon as I saw the Mergate sands along which Billy Bunter had careered in 1935, dropping sovereigns from nearby Portercliff Hall as he went.

Mr. Hamilton's den was just as I had visualised it from the various pictures I had seen, and the author himself was as pleasant and informative as I had been certain he would be.

We touched upon many topics, Mr. Hamilton agreed that his later plots were more closely constructed than his earlier ones, but he stated that he never worked out any plot in advance; he just set down at the typewriter and the stories worked themselves out to their own inevitable conclusions.

I mentioned John Shaw's opinion that his best hundred consecutive stories were in "The Gem" from 1921 to 1923, and my opinion that they were in "The Magnet" from mid 1933 to mid 1935. Mr. Hamilton confessed that dates and figures were things he never could remember; so I enumerated the

series in each sequence, and he agreed that they contained some of his finest work. On the whole, he considered that, of the stories about the two schools in question, the best were in "The Magnet" from 1926 to 1936. He agreed that the 1935 Stacey series (which he had just re-read) was his finest "Magnet" series.

In his capacity as Owen Conquest, Mr. Hamilton kindly autographed a copy of the first Rookwood story for me. The conversation turned naturally to the Hampshire school, and I enquired whether he considered it to be his most polished creation. He stated that he thought High Coombe qualified for this title, but he agreed that the Rookwood stories always maintained a consistently high standard, which the Greyfriars and St. Jim's ones did not. Apart from the question of the substitute writers, there is a great difference between an early "Gem" or "Magnet" story and a later one. It is not so esy, however, to date a Rookwood story. Not many of his correspondents, he added, mentioned Rookwood, but those who did always thought highly of it.

I mentioned Cardew, who is one of my favourite characters, and remarked that, of late, he seemed to be growing rather unpleasant. Mr. Hamilton concurred in this, and stated that he had not noticed this fact himself until he had read some of the Gold Hawk books (after publication). He then thought that Cardew had got a little out of control; he had always been an unscrupulous character, but now he was somewhat crude as well. St. Jim's fans will be pleased to know that in future Cardew will be his old debonaire self.

Alonzo Todd was the next topic, and I begged that he should be allowed to return in a Bunter book. Mr. Hamilton said that he had already received a number of similar requests, and he thought he would be able to manage it, though it would require a little care. I suggested that Alonzo might be worked into a holiday series, preferably a boating trip down the Thames. Mr. Hamilton confessed that he had a great partiality himself to writing stories about carevans.

It was inevitable that Billy Bunter should be discussed. His early and late escapades were touched upon and mutually chuckled over. Mr. Hamilton agreed that it was not until about 1927 when, as he put it, Bunter became more fatuous and less artful that he became a sympathetic character. He explained that every Greyfriars story now published must

have Bunter's name in the title, but it did not necessarily mean that the story would revolve around the fat Owl. "Billy Bunter Butts In", a dramatic story about Harry Wherton, he had originally entitled, "Down on his Luck".

Mr. Hamilton's many admirers will be heartened to learn that, in spite of the fact that he is in his late seventies, he still enjoys remarkably good health, though he suffers from falling sight and a "gammy" leg, but he tries to emulate Jimmy Silver's advice, to "keep smiling" and to remember Tom Merry's maxim, "Why Grouse?" His mind is as active as ever, and he is now engaged upon a new translation of Horace in the same metre as the original. Its publication, he added, would - like Dr. Locke's projected new edition of Sophocles - probably cause a stir in at least half a dozen studies in Oxford.

The genius of Dickens, and many other topics, we touched upon until, with a start, I noticed that I had already stayed over an hour and a half and, if I was to avoid a three-hour wait for a train, I must regretfully depart. After expressing my gratitude to Mr. Hamilton for his kindness in allowing me to visit him, I made a dash for a bus. My luck was in, and the conductor even went so far as to curtail the wait in Cecil Square by 5 minutes in order that I should be able to catch my train, which I just managed to do. And so ended a day I shall always recollect with the greatest of pleasure.

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"BILLY BUNTER'S BEENFEAST" - Cassell's, 7/6.

Reviewed by Gerald Allison

The new Bunter book by our revered and well-beloved Frank Richards made its appearance on November 20th under the imprint of Cassell & Co. The new publishers of this series have wisely maintained the familiar format and appearance of the earlier titles issued by Charles Skilton. The binding is improved, however, and the book will make a handsome addition to collectors' shelves.

"Billy Bunter's Beenfeast" is the title. When Mr. William Samuel Bunter sent his son Billy eight tickets for a day trip to the Continent on the good ship "Flemingo" the Owl of the Remove at Greyfriars became a man whom his formates delighted to honour.

Skinner & Co. made much of him, and even Fisher T. Fish

stood him a spread, and a good one too. Marshall Aid had reached Greyfriars at last! But Mr. Quelch insisted that Harry Wharton should be in charge of the party, and so, along with the Famous Five, Bunter invited Vernon-Smith and Redwing, for a certain reason.

The fact was that the Bounder had planned to have a flutter in the casino at Le Chalet, and Bunter intended to be a "rorty dog" too!

How the plan worked out you must read for yourself. Suffice it to say that the story is the most dramatic and "powerful" one which we have had from Frank Richards since he began this series of Bunter books five years ago. There is plenty of fun and farce — Coker & Co. also go along! — but the hero of the story is Tom Redwing. What a friend he proves to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Good old Reddy. I always knew you were a grand fellow, but you never showed up in a finer light than in this tale.

And believe me, one could almost imagine our author to be intimately acquainted with the Halls of Chance! His local colour, and descriptions of the play and players in the casino at Le Chalet-aux-Bois, are most realistic and convincing! Strange, isn't it?

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POTTED PERSONALITIES

No. 1. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

Lumley-Lumley arrived at St. Jim's in the summer of 1910, in a story entitled "A Rank Outsider". In some ways, he was not unlike Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who was already playing his part on the Magnet stage.

Lumley-Lumley had spent a great deal of his boyhood in the States. His father was a millionaire, very much of the same pattern as Mr. Vernon-Smith at that time.

In "A Rank Outsider", the millionaire enquires the fees at St. Jim's, and is informed "Thirty guineas per term, with no extras". Those fees would be laughable to-day.

Mr. Lumley-Lumley paid three years fees in advance, and received a written statement from Dr. Holmes to the effect that Jerrold should remain at the school for that period. As a result of this document, Lumley-Lumley was immune from expulsion. It was a plot that took a good deal of swallowing, even though, as Martin Clifford assured us, "the Head was no business man".

All the same, Lumley-Lumley was an interesting character. He appeared in many excellent stories in the Gem in the few months following his initial appearance. Far too wicked to be a really believable lad, he had much goodness in him which sometimes came to the fore. We saw him reforming, to some extent, under the influence of Cousin Ethel.

In October 1910 was published one of the most remarkable stories ever to appear in the Gem. Entitled "A Shadow in the School", it told of the sudden death of Lumley-Lumley. He had been knocked down by a car, while performing a gallant rescue, and he lay in the School sanatorium. Tom Merry stood by his bed, with tears running down his cheeks.

"I - I - I'm sorry," said Lumley low and faint. "Sorry for what I've done miss, Tom. I'm sorry. I've been a waster and a wanderer all my time, - now, - I'm going home."

And within the sick chamber, with closed blind and lowered light, lay what had been Jerrold Lumley - the Outsider of St. Jim's, - now

"A thing

O'er which the raven flaps his funeral wings."

So, with those sentiments which seemed to be so very beautiful coming from the immature lips of a boy of fifteen, we thought we had said farewell to Lumley-Lumley. For the use that Martin Clifford made of him afterwards, he might as well have left it at that.

But, in the next story, "The New Boy's Secret", Levison arrived on the scene, and, lo and behold, he knew the peculiarities of Lumley. Levison went into the vaults, where the body had been placed, and came forth with Lumley, restored to health and strength. The millionaire's son had been only in a trance. That plot took some getting down, but we were glad to have Lumley back.

In 1911 came the best of all the Lumley-Lumley tales, - those in which he struck up a friendship with Grimes, the grocer's boy. This would seem to have offered great scope for character work, but after a few delightful stories, the theme was dropped.

It was the last time that Lumley appeared with any prominence, though he has always remained at St. Jim's.

One of the mysteries of the Gem, - and there were many, - was why Martin Clifford neglected a tip-top character like Lumley, and replaced him with such people as Trimble and Grundy, who were irritating copies of Bunter and Coker.

No.2. Koumi Rao.

Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, arrived at St.Jim's in the summer of 1913, in a fine story entitled, "A Disgrace to the House".

He was quite unlike the Nabob of Bhanipur. With a cruel and domineering nature, and an over-developed view of his own importance, he soon found himself in trouble in the New House, where he had been placed.

When he wanted to play football for the Junior Eleven, he tried to secure a place in the team by bribing Tom Merry. The Junior Captain, refusing indignently, found himself landed with a bitter and implecable enemy.

As time went on, chiefly owing to the influence of Figgins, who absolutely would not take the Jam seriously, Koumi Rao gradually became a better fellow.

In "By Whose Hand?" - one of the finest stories ever to appear at any time in the Gem or the Magnet, - Koumi Rao was blamed for brutally striking down Crooke, with whom he had one of his frequent feuds. Bernard Glyn invented some splendid firework set-pieces, one of which was to announce to the onlookers that "KOUMI RAO IS A ROTTER".

It was, however, discovered that Gore was the culprit, and Gussy, assisting Glyn to correct the words in the set-piece, caused the amended announcement to read "THE NEW HOUSE IS A ROTTER".

Koumi Rao remained on the St.Jim's stage, but he never again played the lead in a story, - by the genuine Martin Clifford, at any rate. Why the author neglected this fine character for so many years is something that only he can tell us. It is another of the Gem's mysteries.

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CECIL PONSONBY OF HIGHCLIFFE SCHOOL

By W.O.G. Lofts.

Of all the characters that Charles Hamilton has created surely Cecil Ponsonby, or "Pon" as he is "effectionately" called, was the worst type of character that one could imagine for a boy.

He is totally unscrupulous, a coward, funk, liar, cheat, blackguard, sneak, snob, bully, gambler, thief, and is even without effection towards his own relatives! In fact, he is rotten right to the core.

In all his encounters with Harry Wharton and Co. "Pon",

of course, has always come off worst in the end. The good hidings, black eyes, damaged noses, etc. that he has had from various sources are practically uncountable. He is fortunate in having as a master Mr. Hobson, a snob like himself, who likes to fawn on "Pon" because he has titled relations. But even "Mobby" got a shock. Once, when "Pon" burnt his rare collection of stamps and tried to put the blame on somebody else, only to be found out in the end through Bunter using his brains for once.

Even the girls of Cliff House school are not free from Pon's malicious temper. Look how he left them stranded on Potter's Island, when cutting the rope of their boat, and setting it adrift. Bob Cherry unfortunately got the blame for this episode.

One would think that "Pon" had some respect for his own kin, yet when Harry Wharton rescued Pon's uncle, Colonel Ponsonby, from drowning, Pon, instead of showing some sort of gratitude, gave "Harry Wharton a black look, and was too bitter and deep with rage for speech." (S.O.L. 379). Here is what a crooked butler had to say about Pon in S.O.L. 382. "Mester Ponsonby is as thorough-going a young blackguard as I have ever seen. How he has escaped being expelled from his school, and even sent to choky (prison) I cannot make out. He must be very wery, he is reckless, unscrupulous, ruthless, and utterly insolent. He takes a pleasure in displaying his insolence to persons who are not in a position to answer him back."

Whilst other "bed hets" such as H.Vernon-Smith, Loder, etc. have their good points, and limits, "Pon" has no good points and no limits! But, dear Pon, wherever you are now, whether it be Bartmoor, or even worse than that, I am quite sure that you have put some excitement in Greyfriars School whenever you have appeared, although you are such an out-end-out rotter.

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MAGNET TITLES (Contd.)

"S" denotes Substitute. No.1101, The Bootlegger's Revenge. 1102, The Film Star's Feud. 1103, The Schoolboy Sheik. 1104, Harry Wharton's Peril. 1105, A Film Star's Vengeance. 1106, All Through Bunter. 1107, Farewell to the Films. 1108 (S), The Masked Terror. 1109 (S) Billy Bunter's Blunder. 1110, The Shylock of Greyfriars. 1111, The Prefect's Plot. 1112, Prefects at War. 1113, Out of Bounds. 1114, The Black Sheep of the Sixth. 1115, A Lesson for Loder.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

From Australia to East Dulwich is a far cry, but to Don Wicks the long distance did not deter the warm welcome that he obtained from the members at chairman Len's meeting at Rume House on Sunday November 16th. It was a fully representative gathering which included Norton and Mrs. Price from Margate. Len opened with remarks about the esteemed visitor and then wished both he and Ray Hopkins, who is returning to Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., God speed and happy memories of the pleasant time spent with the "Old Boys". He expressed the wish of all those present that we hope to all meet again in the future. After this the usual formalities were quickly dealt with. Then the varied programme was indulged in. Four competition quiz' were held, one was that one that G. Bromley, a postal member of Leicester, had sent. After this I read two chapters, one from "Gem" No. 1336 and one from "Magnet" No.601 that are almost identical, word for word, that the latter member had also sent. Roger Jenkins, fresh from his visit to the president, then read a few very amusing characters from "Magnet" No.640, "Bunter the Bankrupt". W. Lofts of Baker Street then gave us a few details about John Hunter, Sexton Blake author. All these items were greatly enjoyed by all and the thanks of those present were afforded to all who had contributed to the success of the gathering. Christmas meeting at "Cherry Place" on Sunday December 21st to which all members are heartily invited.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

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NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, Leeds, November 8th, 1952.

Secretary Norman Smith announced that a goodly company was likely at the Christmas Party on December 13th, starting at 4 o'clock. It's evidently going to be a reel lively do with a programme mainly compiled by the ingenious Gerry Allison. Would all members please note that the January meeting will be held on the 3rd inst., owing to the room not being available on the usual Saturday.

J. Breeze Bentley gave his long awaited talk on "Levison at Greyfriars", and was in fine form. The way he brought out the dialogue was a sheer delight. A break had to be made for refreshments, but the listeners settled down eagerly immediately afterwards for the remainder of the story.



Followed a quiz sibly compiled by Horace Twinham. For once Hemiltonians hadn't it all their own way. All the same, Gerry Allison and Stanley Knight tied for first place.

At the January meeting Harry Stables will give his talk on the once famous characters, Frank Reade and Jack Wright.. of the Aldine Invention Library. All those who heard his previous talk will know they are in for a treat.

H. LECKENBY,

Northern Section Correspondent.

=====

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING, October 27th.

The writer has to report the first part of this meeting by hearsay as he could not arrive until nearly 8.30. By this time the fun was fast and furious as a game of "Consequences" (on Greyfriars lines), had reached the final stage, and much laughter was caused as the concoctions were read out. This well known Christmas game was a novelty suggested by our Chairman; and proved a cheerful and light-hearted variation from the normal, (and more formal!), items on the agenda.

Before this game, the meeting had been opened by our Chairman, who had referred amongst other things, to a letter received from Mr. C. H. Chapman of Reading. The minutes had then been most sibly read by the lady member of the Club committee, (Miss C. Scott).

Following "Consequences" came a Quiz: and what a Quiz! Prepared by Miss Russell, it consisted of 15 difficult questions covering the very wide field of the three "Hemilton" schools and also St. Franks, and other sundry matters. I'm afraid that most of us were completely floored by most of the questions. To question one, "What is the telephone number of Greyfriars School?", the writer could only suggest "Lenthem something" which was entirely wrong. Nevertheless, three gentlemen, (Messrs. Clack, Gregory and Ingram) tied for first place, and nobly tackled the second heat of eight more questions. Hearty congratulatory to Mr. Jack Ingram, our esteemed Wolverhampton member, who proved the winner eventually. Our hearty thanks too to our Credley members who certainly produce some splendid quizzes. Incidentally, this is the first of a series of three, and we anticipate the remainder with the greatest of interest (and trepidation!)

By now the evening was (alas!) well spent, but refreshments were very welcome to cool our fevered brows and tortured brains.

Thereafter another library session, and an informal chat rounded off yet another pleasant evening of the brotherhood of happy hours.

EDWARD DAVEY.

-----  
MERSEYSIDE SECTION. 9th November, 1952.

The meeting opened at 7.30 p.m. to the largest attendance yet. It was most gratifying to see the club-room choc-a-block with people, and most encouraging to the regulars. The chairman extended a hearty welcome to all the new members, some of whom had travelled quite considerable distances, and sincerely hoped they would not be disappointed at the result of their journeys. The secretary having read the minutes, and financial report, Jim Walsh took the opportunity to pay a tribute to the work of the officers, who had, he said, done so much to make the club a success.

The chairman then gave a lengthy talk on section matters, and gave the new members all the "gen"; he answered the many queries to their satisfaction. Then came refreshments, after which the meeting was fully occupied in informal discussion; there was no time for quizzes - all fun and no games! The talkfulness was terrific, and the time passed all too quickly. Then came the library business, and the display table soon had the appearance of a tuck hamper after a visit from Billy Bunter.

The next meeting (on Sunday, Dec. 4th) will feature a discussion on the Charles Hamilton-George Orwell affair; a provocative subject, this. The meeting closed at 10.30 p.m.; we almost had to queue to get out!

F. CASE, Secretary.

Attendance: All the regulars, and new members Messrs. Jones, Windsor, Unwin, Chillingworth, Hele, Crilley, Pregnell, Bartlett, Switzer, Begley, Wyness, Leffey, Pritchard, Coldwell, and Miss Cleire Alty. (Total 22).

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LAST MINUTE NEWS:

Annual practically completed. Is packed from cover to cover, and has eight more pages than last year! Have you forgotten to order your copy? Make haste if you have.

NEILSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to Robert Blythe,  
46, Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

Two more old timers come forward this month with articles on different facets of the Old Paper. First comes Mr. Godsave of London, with some views on E.S.B. as a descriptive writer:-

One of Edwy Searles Brooks' greatest gifts as a writer of schoolboy and detective adventure stories seems to me to be that detail in his characters and descriptions. Most of his characters in the old series of the N.L.L. have a seriousness which is lacking in the writings of others. Sir Montie Tregellis-West has a keen brain with that gift, or otherwise, of being far-seeing. One similar to Tregellis-West is Reggie Pitt, although it is impossible to confuse the two. Handforth is one on his own, being a queer mixture which one now and again comes up against in real life.

Although descriptions of scenery are considered padding, I personally find them well worth reading, for there are some wonderful descriptions such as that of Bellton Wood in which quite a considerable part of the Clement Heath - Handforth's brother-in-law - series is depicted. Then again in the Reggie Pitt series there is a good description of Roulette playing together with the rules which is not included in the small Roulette sets which can be purchased in the shops. I can well believe that it is not in the interest of schoolboys to be too closely acquainted with the finer points of gambling, but it is refreshing to be able to read the series with a perhaps greater knowledge of Roulette than when one started.

In the herring-out series Brooks is careful to see that either there is a good stock of food and that water is available, or, as in the Mr. Martin series, the kitchens and store-rooms being occupied by the juniors in "The Siege of the West Wing."

Both Brooks and Hamilton can describe with wonderful effect the topography of foreign countries, although I think Brooks again goes into greater detail which helps the reader to get a clearer picture in his or her mind's eye of the locality.

Next we have Ron Burrows of Leeds. Ron is really steeped in St. Frank's lore. You will remember he answered all the

questions in the two quizzes I gave some time ago. In addition he and I have had quite a bit of correspondence over the map I drew recently, and by the accuracy of his information forced me to concede that Shingle Head was west of Carstowe instead of east as I had it.

Anyway, here is Ron with some more topographical details.

### THE POSITION OF ST. FRANK'S

Doubtless many readers of the Nelson Lee Library ask whereabouts in Sussex St. Frank's was situated. Well, so have I, and now I think that I have reached a solution to the problem.

Disregarding such places as Carstowe, Bellton, Bannington and so on, the St. Frank's country is broadly described (when seen from the sea) as having on the left the high chalk cliffs of Shingle Head; in the centre the River Stowe; on the right shingle and marshes; and the downs behind Shingle Head.

Up to 1920 St. Frank's is said to be in East Sussex. The best account is given in No. 237, and states that a sea-coast castle in Kent "practically on the Sussex border" is roughly thirty miles from St. Frank's. Now by reference to a map it will be found that Beachy Head is some thirty to thirty-five miles from the Kent border. Furthermore, as seen from the sea, the Beachy Head area is very similar to the Shingle Head area - high chalk cliffs on the left; the shingle of the Crumbles, and Pevensey Marsh on the right; and downs behind Beachy Head. The only thing missing is the river. No other lengths of the coast of Sussex fits E.S.B.'s description so well as this area around Beachy Head.

So far, so good; now comes the awkward part.

From 1920 onwards E.S.B. transferred the scene of the stories from East Sussex, describing them now as being in the extreme west of Sussex, in the area centreing on Selsey Bill, the only other headland of any considerable size in Sussex. This area, however, does not even approximate to the description required. Selsey Bill itself is composed of low earth cliffs some six to ten feet high; on the right is flat coast neither shingly nor marshy; no river; no downs. Nor are there any chalk cliffs at all in this area.

What E.S.B. appears to have done in 1920 was to transfer the original shingle-Beachy Head area to West Sussex, placing Beachy Head itself in the position actually occupied by Selsey Bill, and fitting in the other country accordingly. In this

position St. Frank's remained till the end.

Therefore, I consider that to understand E.S.B.'s conception of the St. Frank's district it is necessary to take the area around Beachy Head for several miles and transfer it to the extreme west of Sussex.

And now, after four years (!) we finally come to the last titles of all.

2nd N.S. No. 142, the Plateau of Peril; 143, The Land of the Lost; 144, The Scarlet Death; 145, The Cavern of Doom; 146, The Claws of the Hawk; 147, Desert Foes (not by E.S.B.) 148, The King Comes Back (Not by E.S.B.) 149, The Treasure of Hunger Desert (Not by E.S.B.) 150, The Most House Mystery (E. S. Brooks), 151, The Hidden Peril (E.S.B.); 152, Archie's Christmas Party (E.S.B.); 153, The Haunted House (E.S.B.); 154, Nerki the Sorcerer (E.S.B.); 155, Secret Service (Not by E.S.B.); 156, The Mystery of the Gold Ship (Not by E.S.B.) 157, The Fellowship of Fear (E.S.B.); 158, St. Frank's in Peril (E.S.B.); 159, The Fighting Sixth (E.S.B.); 160, The Siege of St. Frank's (E.S.B.); 161, The Castle of Doom (E.S.B.)

### 3rd New Series

No. 1, Nipper - New Boy (Reprint O.S. 112); 2, Kidnapped (Reprint O.S. 114); 3, Tried by his Form (Reprint O.S. 116); 4, Nipper's Triumph (Reprint O.S. 118); 5, The Housemaster's Peril (Reprint O.S. 120); 6, The House of Mystery (Reprint O.S. 122); 7, Rivals of St. Franks (Reprint O.S. 125); 8, Under Arrest (Reprint O.S. 126); 9, The Mystery Master (Reprint O.S. 148); 10, The Tyrant of St. Frank's (Reprint O.S. 149); 11, The Revolt of the Remove (Reprint O.S. 150); 12, The St. Franks Barring-out (Reprint O.S. 151); 13, No Surrender (Reprint NoS. 152); 14, The Rebel Fortress (Reprint O.S. 153); 15, Tricked by the Tyrant (Reprint O.S. 154); 16, The Secret Seven (Reprint O.S. 155); 17, Good-bye to the Tyrant (Reprint O.S. 156); 18, The Fall of the Tyrant (Reprint O.S. 157); 19, In the Shadow of Expulsion (Reprint 1st N.S. 8); 20, The Castle of Fear (Original E.S.B.) 21, The Brotherhood of the Breve (Orig. E.S.B.); 22, Waldo, the Gang Buster (orig. E.S.B.); 23, Chins Bound (Reprinted from 1st N.S. 12); 24, The Prisoners of the Dragon (Reprinted from 1st N.S. 13); 25, The St. Frank's Fugitives (Reprinted from 1st N.S. 14).

A few comments on these, and we have finished.

2nd N.S. 142-155 contain a serial entitled "Cook of the 'Isle".

This is a reprint of 1st N.S. No's 21-25.

The authorship of 2nd N.S. 142-146 is ~~doubtful~~, although E.S.B's name is mentioned on a few of the stories. I wonder if any of you have read a story by Dennis Wheatley called "Uncharted Seas"? If so I wonder if you too were struck by the similarity of the plots. I won't say more than this, except that Wheatley, to quote "'Who's Who", started writing in 1932 and his first novel was published in 1933. The N.L. story is dated 1932.

2nd N.S. Nos. 147-149, 155, 156, I strongly suspect were by Maxwell Scott, although I have no proof, but in view of the fact that certain of the stories listed two months ago were by Scott, leads me to think that he was the author. Incidentally it was a great surprise to me to realise that Scott had written them for, like most people, I had thought that, apart from one or two very early O.S. stories, nothing else except the serials "The Silver Dwarf" and "The Missing Heir" in the middle of the O.S. Series and the reprints in 2nd N.S. 112-116 ever appeared. This is of particular interest to those of you who are keen on his stories. For one thing, they are a lot easier to come by. I haven't space this time, but next month I'll give more details.

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# BLAKIANA



Edited by H. M. Bond,  
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## The Christmas Round Table.

This month practically all Sexton Blake fans will be sitting around the imaginary round table. Christmas time has always been a period when the great detective has seemed to take on a new and more important role in our literary interests. Ever since the days of the grand Gwyn Evens Christmas stories I have looked forward to a Christmas afternoon by the fireside reading one of the new, or one of the old, Blake stories. To-day, we are not lucky enough to have new Christmas stories from Gwyn, indeed for many years we haven't even had seasonable stories from any of the authors, but we can, and do, turn back the pages of the Blake story and relive those thrilling old days when the dear old UNION JACK became a fat twopennyworth, when crooks and detective often came together and the spirit of Yuletide reigned supreme for a short but very enjoyable period.

I would like to think that all readers of the Blakeian section of the C.D. had an enjoyable Blake Christmas. I hope all those old stories will be re-read and re-read. And most of all I would like to think that when you sit down to your Christmas dinner you recall the grand scene so well portrayed by Eric R. Parker. The scene in the dining-room at Baker Street when Mrs. Bardell brings in the Turkey. Every December I write about that scene. To me it is wonderful to think that a fictional character like Blake could have attained such popularity to warrant the interest in such seasonable goings on at the famous old house. Anyway, long



live the Blake Christmas and may I express a hope that you will have a very enjoyable holiday. A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

H. M. BOND.

The November Sexton Blake Libraries.

No.275: "Calling Whitehall 1212", by Hugh Clevely.

No.276: "The Case of the Bogus Baron", by Walter Tyrer.

Reviewed by Gerald Allison.

A very hearty welcome to a new Blake author, and one who is in the top class too. Ever since I read "Hell to Pay" in 1937, I have never missed a book by Hugh Clevely. Such thrilling yarns as "Death's Counterfeit", and "Three Wood Overcoats" still remain in my memory, although it is twelve years since I read them. So when I saw the name Hugh Clevely along with a fine cover picture by Eric R. Perker on Sexton Blake Library No.275, I knew I was in for a good time.

What a satisfaction it is to read a really competent Blake yarn. I mean a tale without the fatuous situations, the impossible coincidences, the imbecile dialogue which has become so familiar to us, alas! To read a story with a logical plot, and believable action is a real treat these days. Well, "Calling Whitehall 1212" is just such a story. All the characters are credible, and the pace is maintained throughout.

And what of Clevely's Blake? It is always most interesting to see what a new hand will make of the ever familiar, and yet ever intriguing Baker Street detective. Well, despite a slight mistiness in outline, Blake was Blake, all right. Shrewd, decisive, and with a nice sense of humour. And even when the heroine mistook him for a race-horse (!), Sexton Blake retained his calm savoir faire. And I liked the way he drove his car right into the group of villains on page 63. A very good tale indeed, and, by the way, there was no mention of Carter. Instead we had an excellent Tinker.

Walter Tyrer usually provides us with a good tale, and "The Case of the Bogus Baron", S.B.L. 276, is no exception. The episode in Berlin is especially well done, and one gets a really vivid impression of what an uneasy and dangerous thing life must be today in that unhappy city. But Sexton Blake even knows how to deal with the Russian menace!

The story skips about a bit, and I could hardly believe that Blake's client, Major Bruce Herman, would have been quite so ready to forgive Elsie Lane when she had been robbing him blind for so long.

Perhaps we might have been given a little more of Blake and Tinker, who kept being first on the case, and then off it, although through no fault of theirs.

The glimpses we got of them were very satisfactory though, and I am glad to see that Blake still keeps up his scientific work in his laboratory at the top of the house. And by the way. Why can't we have the number of the house? After all, Conan Doyle did tell us that Holmes lived at No.221b, and it is high time we knew where to look for Chez Bardell.

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### BLAKE'S BROTHER

By William Colcombe.

The story of Sexton Blake's brother Nigel, the theft of Blake's "Manual of Crime" and the perfect picklock were told in four issues of the Detective Weekly, the first two numbers, the fourth, and the thirteenth. The author was Lewis Jackson, of Kestrel fame.

Old Berkeley Blake had two sons, Sexton and Nigel, and it was his dream that both should follow in his footsteps and emblazon their names on a brass plate in Harley Street, where he had a flourishing practice. His dream never came true, Sexton Blake it's true became qualified, but unable to resist the urge that was to make him the greatest detective of his time. Nigel set for his M.D., failed and turned wester. For years he remained a thorn in the flesh of his brother, until a year or so before the first World War he persuaded Nigel to go abroad. Nigel Blake settled in the Carercoons and married a widow, Claire Peterson; she gave birth to a son, Garry, Sexton Blake's nephew. Nigel Blake then caught spotted fever, and it left him a changed man, he took to drink, and became subject to wild outbursts of temper. After two years his wife left him and returned to England, bringing her son with her. For over twenty years Nigel was missing, and was assumed dead. But he wasn't, he had deliberately disappeared, and when his wife accidentally meets him in London after all those years, Sexton Blake persuades her that she is mistaken.

For Blake had discovered that his brother had turned crook, in helping his nephew with a case of forgery, (Gerry had joined the police and been appointed to the staff of the C.I.D.), Sexton Blake traced the forgeries to a certain Dr. Brown, who had started up a quack practice in Limehouse. He had already handed all the particulars to Gerry when he found that the forger was his own brother and Gerry's father. He decided to protect Nigel from arrest. He went to Limehouse and managed to get him away to Baker Street. Nigel broke down and begs his brother not to betray him to the police. In doing so, Sexton Blake jeopardised his relations with Scotland Yard.

As a reward for his brother's help, Nigel robs his brother of his "Manual of Crime", a book in which Sexton Blake examines in detail the methods of all the cleverest criminals. With the book were drawings of an apparatus Blake calls the "Perfect Picklock", which will open any lock with comparative ease.

At first Blake conceals his burden from Tinker, but after the lad had saved him from being charged with being concerned in a robbery committed by Nigel, he confides his troubles to his faithful assistant and they stand shoulder to shoulder to overcome the threat to Sexton Blake's good name.

Sexton Blake consults an old friend of his, Sir Richard Serols, mental specialist of Harley Street, who decides that Nigel is not completely sane and the only way out for Blake is to have his brother privately certified and kept under restraint.

It doesn't take long for Nigel to take full advantage of both Manual and Picklock, and he commits robberies to the value of over half a million pounds.

An added complication is the fact that Nigel's wife intends to marry again, unaware that her husband is still alive.

Nigel entices his son to a flat where he had been living and reveals his story; he now seems to have recovered his sanity, but when Gerry threatens to hand him over to the police he dopes him.

Nigel, now thoroughly frightened, gets in touch with his wife and asks her to hide him. She gets in touch with Sexton Blake and he lays an ambush for his brother, he catches him and at last is able to place him under the expert care of Dr. Serols.

And what of the huge fortune in jewels that Nigel had looted. He had cached them in a flat in St. John's Wood, but when Blake goes to recover them they are gone!

Leon Kestrel, as eminent in the underworld as Sexton Blake himself was in the field of crime detection, had heard from afar of the invasion of crookdom by the uncannily gifted novice who had cleaned up half a million without a trace, - and more interesting still, had heard rumours of how that phenomenal feat had been accomplished. He had failed, however, to find the Manual or Picklock. But Sexton Blake had been equally unsuccessful in his quest for these vital articles, and it was now a dual between him and his old antagonist for possession.

Nigel died in Hospital, but not before he gave his brother a clue that enabled him to recover his precious "Manual of Crime". Thus ended this unfortunate episode in the life of Sexton Blake, the full story of which is told in Detective Weekly No.1, "Sexton Blake's Secret"; No.2, "Sexton Blake at Bay"; No.4, "Sexton Blake's Triumph" and the Kestrel sequel to No.13, "The Monster of Paris".

#### SEXTON BLAKE IN THE NEWS.

The "Daily Express" made good use of our favourite detective in a story they ran on October 20th. It carried a streamer heading in prominent type thus:

SEXTON BLAKE FAN FOILS THE

COSH BANDIT

The Old Soldier "swipes back".

The story told in dramatic and humorous fashion of the adventure of Henry James Tilley, 68 year old watchman at a Brixton Hill bakery. Matter of fact it was his first night there. He had taken with him S.B.L. "The Scrap Metal Mystery" to pass the hours away. Says the reporter, "He had just got to the part where the fiddlers were boasting about their plans. Sexton Blake had not even been called in - when the 'phone rang. Someone asked if there was anyone in to take an order. Then Mr. Tilley made a mistake. He replied - forgetting for a moment the cunning of Sexton Blake - "The place is closed down." It was all peaceful enough. But Mr. Tilley had just got to the part where the

great detective was about to be consulted when he was struck on the head with an iron bar.

The reporter goes on to give a graphic description of how the old ex-soldier was faced with a young man gripping a cosh and ordered to lie on the floor. Then he remembered what Sexton Blake would have done and what his old sergeant-major told him - "If you're still on your feet, swipe back." He picked up an ebony stick and brought it down with a thud on the back of an upholstered chair and looked so determined despite the blood running down his face that "the bloke fled". Then "999" and a smashed window to attract attention but the bandit got away leaving cash running to four figures behind him.

These Fleet Street reports find our heroes useful to lend colour to their news stories, don't they?

LETTER BOX

CASELL & COMPANY Ltd.  
37/38 St. Andrew's Hill,  
Queen Victoria Street,  
London, E.C.4.  
Publicity Department.  
29th Oct. 1952.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I am sorry not to have replied to your letter before now, but I have been waiting for an advance copy of the new Billy Bunter story which we shall be publishing on November 20th. I am having a copy sent to you under separate cover, and shall be very glad if you will mention it in your magazine. I shall also see that you have copies of future volumes, which we plan to publish at the rate of two a year.

Yours faithfully,

E. S. HARPER,

Publicity Manager.

From Frank Richerds

November 22nd, 1952.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the C.D. I had missed that cross-word in the Radio Times, and was much interested and amused to read your account of it. I remember that Bunter figures in a

Daily Mail cross-word some time ago; but the D.M. had their date quite correct.

Eric Feyne's Singapore article is good reading. I could have wished it longer. But I am sorry that he missed Bhenipur on his way home. A description of that State would have been extremely interesting.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,  
FRANK RICHARDS.

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FRAGMENTS OF MEMORY

By N. C. Gourlay.

These odd jottings cover vague memories of old papers of the late 'thirties. Their purpose is perhaps to rouse someone's interest and lead to further investigation and more details about these mostly forgotten and neglected magazines.

First, I would like to write about "Buzzer". This was a short-lived Geo. Newnes Ltd. publication of, I think, the year 1936. There were 36 issues only. The paper was published in a large size, a little bigger than Detective Weekly. No authors' names were used and its middle pages were devoted to humorous cartoon strips. At first it had 36 pages. These later fell to 28 and finally to 24.

The stories in "Buzzer" were a compromise between the straight adventure stories of "Modern Boy" and the more sensational "novelty yarns" of the D. C. Thomson papers. Each issue had seven stories, every one of which was part of a series. The first issue had a school-cum-fantasy series about a group of schoolboys who found themselves "transported by radio" to the Moon. For ten weeks they indulged in the usual adventures that befall interplanetary travellers. They helped one group of Lunerans against another by inventing weird gadgets for the Moon soldiers to use.

Another series was "The Flying Trep" stories. A cheerful young man with a very old-fashioned plane hopped from one country to the next carrying goods and getting involved in plenty of thrilling episodes. Midway through the "Buzzer's" career this series stopped, but a few weeks

later the chief character returned as "The Flying Tramp - Secret Service Agent". This new series continued to the end. Another character was a detective with a sports car and a monocle. He was not very credible, seeming an amateur compared with Sexton Blake or Nelson Lee.

I have forgotten most of the stories which graced Buzzer's pages, but I do recollect an interesting series of crime yarns which appeared around No.26. This was called "League of the Double Six". The League was a band of hooded men who cleaned up the gangsters and crooked racketeers of an American city. An exciting swift moving credible story was my verdict.

A first-rate science fiction serial, "50 Fathoms Down" was in the last eight issues. It dealt with the adventures of some explorers in a diving bell who found themselves stranded in lost Atlantis when the cable connecting them to the surface broke. The end of Buzzer must have come unexpectedly, for in No.33 a mystery school story commenced. It concerned some hidden secret about the old building in which a school similar to St.Franks was housed. I was really enjoying it and considering that it was the best story "Buzzer" had published when without any warning the paper ceased publication after the 36th issue. Can anybody tell me why this paper failed?

I read "The Pilot" infrequently in pre-war days but I do remember enjoying some of the stories. The trouble with this A.P. paper was a fondness for stunts. They were always running the fictitious schooldays or boyhood of some famous celebrity.

Alex James the footballer and Leonard Henry the radio star were subjected to this treatment. The most famous schooldays of all, of course, were the reprints of Cecil Hayter's "Sexton Blake's Schooldays". I vividly recall the opening scene in the first episode when the young Sexton Blake without hesitation plunged his arm into molten metal because his scientist guardian had told him it was perfectly safe to do so at a certain temperature.

A sequel followed dealing with Blake's adventures on the Indian frontier with the British Army. I do not believe, however, the "Sexton Blake at Oxford" stories were reprinted in the Pilot.

Another famous reprint was the Will Hey at Bendover School series. They were very funny at the time and I now

hear they were written by the one and only Charles Hamilton. Many of the school stories written for the "Pilot" had unusual plots. Hedley Scott was the author of some of these. The hero was either an unwanted boy sent to a school for criminals by a crooked guardian, or "framed" and sent to a reformatory by an enemy.

Another strange title cashed in on the popularity of the Tarzan films. "The Schoolboy Cannibal Earl" dealt with a white boy brought up by African cannibals who returns to England to assume his title and place as an Earl.

Ken Maynard, the cowboy film star, was featured in a series of Western stories which later reappeared in Wild West Weekly with which the Pilot was incorporated on its demise in 1938.

A humorous cartoon story featured on the cover towards the end of the Pilot dealt with three comic cowboys. This was also carried on in Wild West Weekly and eventually the three cowboys ended up on the back of the "Knock Out" comic.

Tarzan appeared in a serious cartoon in the Pilot's middle pages in 1938. "Tarzan of the Apes", "Return of Tarzan", "The Beasts of Tarzan" all followed each other as a serial picture story.

The most lasting character of the Pilot's last years was Crispin Buchan, the Laughing Buccaneer. Well written, vividly descriptive crime adventure stories with a modern Robin Hood waging war on the underworld and annoying one Inspector Bugle of Scotland Yard - the hero was so like Norman Conquest that I feel inclined to think the author was E. S. Brooks. Perhaps some supporter of Nelson Lee could enlighten me as to this point?

Who remembers "Modern Wonder"? / Size of the "Eagle" in full colour, it depicted the Wonders of Science. It also carried two serials and one complete story. I read the first six months of this paper which started about 1937. Two serials I remember. One "Space Machine" by John Boynton told of a trip to Mars. It was a shortened version of a published novel "Stowaway to Mars". It was also changed for publication in a boys' magazine. A love affair was cut out and the heroine became a youth. The other serial was about the return of Atlantis to the surface of the Atlantic and the adventures of some English people on the recovered land.

I hope this article might stir up some reader, more familiar with the above mentioned papers, to give a fuller account of these long dead magazines of yesteryear.