

The Collector's Digest



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Re-drawn
by
MERVIN LEWIS

The Collector's Digest

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



FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

ARE YOU IN FAVOUR? John Gunn of Nottingham has sent me a suggestion that in next year's Annual we should publish again the list of boys' weeklies which appeared in the first six years ago. He points out that we shall have a large number of readers who were not with us then.

Now I rather like the idea myself. It is quite true that although over the years in between we have inevitably lost some friends, by death and other causes, the circulation since the first Annual has just about doubled, and it is true that in that first list there were some omissions and a few errors. So there is something to be said for re-publishing for there's no doubt it was one of the most useful articles we have ever had.

Another idea strikes me if we did do it again, it would perhaps be easier for reference if we arranged it in alphabetical instead of chronological order. At the same time we could tabulate the "libraries" the B.F.L's., Aldines and so on.

Anyway let me know what you think, then if there's a favourable response we can get down to it straight away.

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DEATH STRIKES AGAIN. I deeply regret to announce the death of Raymond W. Caldwell of Lancaster, Pa., U.S.A., who passed peacefully away in his sleep on January 10th, after a long illness.

Raymond Caldwell was one of our veterans and possessed about the biggest collection in America, in fact in the world. Bill Gander tells me it consisted of no less than 67,000 American items and numerous English ones. In addition he had 20,000 duplicates. The actual collection will be offered to American Libraries and the duplicates placed on sale to collectors. As many of the American weeklies were worth at least a dollar each it will be seen that the collection represented a considerable fortune.

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I WISH I'D BEEN THERE! Arthur Harris of Penrhyn Bay, Llandudno, owner of that unique collection of nearly 3,000 Comics (needless to say the decent British variety), has recently given three talks concerning them. The talks were given at the Presbyterian Church, Penrhyn Bay, Baptist Church, Llandudno, and Toc H, Llandudno. These talks were very successful and the specimens Arthur showed created a lot of lively interest.

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OUR COVERS. The illustration on the covers of our January and February numbers, the skilful work of Mervyn Lewis, have been much admired. The one last month was from Magnet 1550. Mervyn has sent three more, the first appears this month and in connection with them he has supplied a novel little Quiz. For details see Hamiltoniana.

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THOSE "ANNUAL" SUBS. I am sorry I have to mention this subject again, but at the moment of writing the response to my appeal last month is, to say the least, disappointing, for only three subs have come along leaving over twenty still outstanding. For once I have really been let down. Come on those late ones, so that I can say cheerfully next month 'All Clear'.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

Stories I Remember

by HERBERT LECKENBY

No. 2. "FOR LEAGUE AND CUP"

(Author:- Arthur S. Hardy)

* * *

In our December number I referred briefly to this story saying I hoped to get a chance to re-read some of it at Christmas. Well, I managed it and since I have spent several restful hours renewing acquaintance with the numerous characters I first met over forty years ago. And as in the case of the story I dealt with last month I found it as readable and engrossing as I did then. What is more, I was more convinced than ever that it was the finest football yarn ever written before or since.

"For League and Cup" was probably the longest serial ever to appear in the Boys' Realm or its companions for it ran from Sept. 8th, 1906 to May 11th, 1907, Nos. 223 - 258, that is throughout the football season and in fact running over into the period devoted to cricket. Each instalment was a long one and invariably it was given the most prominent position in the paper. It is a thousand pities it was never published in book form, without the slightest cutting, for it was a classic of its kind, and should have been allowed to live.

The story was the second dealing with the fortunes of the "Blue Crusaders". In the first the reader had been told of the forming of a club in the works of Keith Howse & Co., of Browton, Lancashire, and its rise within a few years to Football League status. There was nothing far-fetched about that, for was not Aston Villa born in a Wesleyan School and many a now historic club created in an equally modest way? Maybe the rise of the Blue Crusaders was a little more rapid, but that can be forgiven, for throughout "For League and Cup" one had dozens of vivid descriptions of titanic battles with the famous clubs of the First Division.

In the first story the most prominent members of the "Blue Crusaders" team were Harry Ewing, David Moran, Arthur Drew and Will Fowkes, the giant goal-keeper. They were players from the

beginning, and shared in all the tribulations and triumphs. A leading personality was Peter Simple, landlord of the Half-Way Inn where the Blue Crusaders made their headquarters. A really lovable, well drawn character, Peter.

The start of "For League and Cup" dealt with the transfer of Dick Green from Newcastle United, for a fee of £500! £500, mark you, Ye Soccerites, and Green was an International at that!

There was a mystery about Green, however, although it was evident he was a footballer, he was a miserable failure in his first games at centre forward and was dropped. Moreover, he was surly, quarrelsome and altogether an unpleasant specimen, whereas at Newcastle, Green had the reputation of being popular and a jolly good fellow. As the story progressed it turned out that the man who had arrived at Browton, was an impostor named Edwin Boyd, and the real Green lay in a Newcastle hospital suffering from a head wound and loss of memory. Boyd had found him lying on a moor, and finding they were much alike in appearance had taken Green's place as he had reasons for wanting to lose his own identity. This is the only part of the story which did not appeal to me. The "doubles" idea has been played up countless times in fiction right enough, but I can never take it as being really convincing, except of course when it's a case of real twins.

However, Boyd is eventually exposed and on his recovery the real Green takes his rightful place in the Blue Crusaders team and proves his worth.

Another character of a very different type also came in early on in the story. He was one who was destined to play his part in several Crusader stories. He was introduced as Thomas Silward, who had come to work at the office of a leading Browton architect, where Harry Ewing was also employed. Silward soon gets into the company of the Blue Crusaders players, who find he has an extraordinary habit of bragging. He declares he is one of the finest centre forwards who had ever kicked a ball and that he had played in that position for the then famous amateurs, The Corinthians. His boasting leads to a lot of derision and resentment and straight-forward Fowkes calls him a liar. There is real trouble until it comes out that the conceited one's full name was Thomas Silward Harborough, son of Sir Geoffrey Harborough. He had been wrongly accused by his father, and in consequence had left home and dropped his surname. Fowkes instantly realises that

Harborough's claim to have played for The Corinthians is true and apologises. From then on Harborough plays frequently for the Blue Crusaders and proves one of their mainstays in their triumphant progress. He continues to brag in audacious fashion but does not seem to be aware of it, and unlike most braggers shows he is as good as he says he is.

To explain in detail all the plotting and counter plotting away from the football arena would take a whole issue of the C.D. so for the rest of my space I will confine myself to the game itself.

Someone said to me recently that when you read a description of a football match by A.S. Hardy, you could almost imagine you were in the stand or on "Spion Kop" watching the game yourself and I cordially agree. Game after game was described in this story, each different to the one that had gone before. Yet there were no absurdities, no fantastic situations as in so many present day football yarns. What is more, actual players of the day played their part. Crompton of Blackburn Rovers, L.R. Roose famous amateur goal-keeper of Stoke, Cantrell and Bache of Aston Villa, Tait and Bridgett of Sunderland, Colin Veitch and Rutherford of Newcastle, these and many more. The referees too, the real knights of the whistle then presiding, Hardy knew them all, oh yes, in this yarn he proved himself to be the king of football story authors.

Leeds readers will be interested to hear that a couple of chapters were devoted to their city, though no football was played there. Well known streets like Briggate, Boar Lane, Infirmary Street, Vicar Lane and no longer existing Lowerhead Row getting special mention.

The "Blue Crusaders" made triumphant progress in the First Division, though Hardy did not make the mistake of making them win every game. Then came the fights for "The Cup". It must be remembered that in those days the First Division clubs came in at the First Round. The Crusaders won their way through to the Final at the Crystal Palace and victory there. Their progress is worth recording.

First Round, Fulham (after two draws), Second Round, Newcastle United, Third Round, Borden Athletic (for purposes of the plot a fictitious team), Fourth Round, Crystal Palace, Semi-Final, West Bromwich Albion, Final, Woolwich Arsenal.

There was a real see-into-the-future touch about their

opponents in the Final, for the great days of the now famous Highbury Club were then still years ahead.

And this great story finished with the Blue Crusaders winning the championship of the First Division and the Football Association Challenge Cup.

Exaggeration? Well, in this year of grace there's quite a number of people who believe it's going to be done in real life, and methinks I can hear that ace, through thick and thin Arsenal supporter, Harry Homer, shouting in stentorian voice from Spain "Why sure it is".

WM. MARTIN,

93 HILLSIDE, STONEBRIDGE PARK,
LONDON N.W.10. Tel:ELGar 3230.

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 one interested @ 42/-
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I WANT and WILL BUY or EXCHANGE any of my books for - - -
 COLLECTOR'S DIGEST ANNUALS 1947-8-9; E.S.TURNER'S "Boys will be
 Boys"; "Police Budgets"; Any "Aldine" Publication; "Nugget"
 Libraries, 1st "Rates", "Buffalo Bills"

CAN YOU HELP ME?

I am appealing to all fellow readers of 'C.D.' I am most anxious to obtain the two following issues for reasons of great personal sentiment. If you could supply at any time, would you please let me know? I will gladly pay any reasonable price and don't mind buying a 'run' if necessary, to get the ones I want.

NELSON LEE (Original Old Series) No.17 "THE BLACK WOLF"

MAGNET No. 474 "VISCOUNT BUNTER"

J. RICHARD TRAYNOR

1 Rose Villas, Swindon Street, Cheltenham, Glos.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

L O N D O N S E C T I O N

A cheery company gathered at "Cherry Place", Wood Green on Sunday February 15th. Most of the regulars were present and it was good to see Ron Crollie once again. Chairman Len disposed of the usual formalities in his customary good style. A full discussion as to the venues of future meetings was held and with new projects in view, the March meeting was fixed for Hume House, East Dulwich.

All the serious business being completed, quiz time was held. A new idea by Eileen Reynolds which was called a "Syllable" quiz on "Magnet" characters and places. A newcomer to the ranks of the winners was John Addison with a foursome deadheat for second place amongst John Geal, Roger Jenkins, Ron Crollie and Bob Whiter. "Gratters" Eileen for a good quiz. "Cedar" was the word for the Eliminator quiz that followed and here Bob Whiter was an easy first, Len Packman and Eileen Reynolds both in the second place. An unusual thing about this quiz was the fact that Cliff Wallis was totally eliminated as he obtained a cypher of answers.

Alan Stewart brought success to the sale and exchange as he had obtained quite a good number of "Rangers", "Champions" and Modern Boys" of good vintage. These were snapped up and the thanks of members must be afforded him for his good thoughts on this matter. A good get together followed and it was a very cheery gathering that gradually broke up by members wending their divers ways home.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * * * *

N O R T H E R N S E C T I O N

Meeting. 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, 14th February, 1953.

The wretched weather prevented one or two of the regulars getting through, nevertheless a good muster gathered round a cosy fire. J. Breeze Bentley was back in the chair.

Gerry Allison happily announced a big purchase of S.O.L's., for the library, a goodly proportion being early ones, and said there was already a great demand for them. For the time being

it had reduced the bank balance substantially, but it was a good investment.

"Comics" (so called) have received a good deal of attention from the press of late, mostly condemnatory, but there were no complaints about the "Comics" Horace Twinham dealt with in a very interesting talk. For, he was reviewing those real genuine English comics, which have delighted several generations of boys and girls, the sixty year old Chips and Comic Cuts, The Jester, Puck, Butterfly and many more. Horace had a varied assortment with him, ranging over many years. These were passed round and examined with much enjoyment.

The members present greatly appreciated a telegram of good wishes from Arthur Harris of Llandudno, owner of the world's largest collection of English comics. If the weather had been better Arthur would probably have been present.

After refreshments the remainder of the evening was spent in a free and easy, and, of course, the library was not neglected.

Next Meeting, March 14th, when it is to be hoped to have a discussion on the Magnet and the Gem; how they differed, the outstanding characters in each, their merits or demerits and so on. A good attendance is hoped for.

Special Notice: Through unavoidable circumstances the April Meeting, the Annual General, will be held on April 4th Easter Saturday.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

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M I D L A N D S E C T I O N

Meeting. 19th January, 1953.

Our new meeting place which we sampled for the first time with this meeting, is the members lounge of the Chamber of Commerce. For comfort and indeed almost sumptuousness, this is reminiscent of Bunter Court. What more can mortal man ask?

It was a pity therefore that it had been a very foggy day, and that there was a distinct likelihood that buses would cease running altogether; consequently we had easily the lowest attendance ever, only ten members being present. Yet this was very good considering that some bus services were partially suspended and the outlook dubious.

It took our indomitable Cradley friends two hours to reach us, and as they did not leave until nearly ten, well!

Inevitably we were very late starting, and necessarily had a purely informal meeting. Nevertheless we discussed quite a lot of business and then went on to an animated discussion on school stories in general, and those written by Frank Richards in particular. Some very interesting points were made, but this discussion was cut short to enable us to hear a reading by Albert Clack from a "Magnet", of excitement and danger to the Famous Five and Smithy in the Polpelly series, (Christmas 1935). Thanks Albert for a most enjoyable reading.

As usual, the time had gone only too quickly and despite our earlier good intentions, in view of the weather we were not much earlier than usual in dispersing.

M I D L A N D S E C T I O N

Meeting. 16th February, 1953.

It was Mr. Porter's evening, so after a modicum of formal business, we settled down to the good things he had organised for us. First came a game of "Complements". The surname of a character from the old books was on one slip of paper, and the full Christian names on another. These were scattered on various tables and we were required to match up the pairs.

Several members succeeded on matching up quite a number and our popular Treasurer, Mr. Gregory, just beat Mr. Ingram by half a mark for the prize.

We then settled down to enjoy a reading from "Billy Bunter and the Blue Mauritius", very well read by Mr. Porter who, I'm afraid, in his enthusiasm let his coffee get cold, whilst reading.

We then worried our brains over a teaser: convert "Coker" to "Prout" changing one letter at a time. It can be done but don't ask me!

By now it was library time, and another meeting had appeared to go like greased lighting as is quite the usual custom.

EDWARD DAVEY.

Next meeting 16th March, 7.30 p.m. at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. We look forward keenly to a talk by Mr. Ingram on the old books from a Schoolmasters' point of view.
(In order to bring up to date, two Midland reports this month. H.L.)

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING, 8th February, 1953.

The meeting opened at 7.30., fourteen being present, and letters of apology were received from Messrs. Timmins, Switzer and Dalzill. The weather was atrocious, and Don Webster complimented those present on their enthusiasm in making the journey. He then dealt with various club matters, including thanks to one of our members, who wished to remain anonymous, for the gift of a set of ash trays, marked with the club initials. They are certainly a nice job. No less than eighty Magnets, etc., have been purchased over the past month, money well spent! The reply from Amal. Press was then read; its brevity was exceeded only by its lack of consideration, and it is better that a veil shall be drawn over the reaction of the listeners! The secretary having read the minutes, etc., the meeting then debated Mr. Pragnell's proposal of a dinner-social in the near future, and it was resolved to make arrangements accordingly. During refreshments, served by Webster, père et fils, Frank Unwin's admirable quiz was tackled with gusto and determination, the winner being our popular Bill Horton, with Jack Morgan runner-up. Then came Don Webster's talk; this dealt concisely but comprehensively with the history of the Magnet and Gem in their various phases, and it was obvious Don had spent a great deal of time in research, well justified by the result, and there were none present who didn't learn something. The talk was illustrated with copies of the two old favourites through the years, and these included No. 1 of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Gem and No. 1 of the 1d. Gem - what a treat for us all! Many thanks, Don, for such an interesting half-hour. The meeting ended at 10-15 p.m. with the library business.

Next meeting Mar. 8th.

FRANK CASE, Secretary.

"Magnet Titles"(cont'd). 'S' denotes Substitute

No.1145 The Mystery Master, No.1146 Some Person Unknown, No.1147 Billy Bunter's Bluff, No.1148 The Man from Scotland Yard, No.1149 Goodbye Bunter, No.1150 The Greyfriars Cracksman, No.1151 Billy Bunter's Come-Back, No.1152 (S) Nap of the Remove, No.1153 (S) Grease-Paint Wibley, No.1154 The Fool of the Fifth, No.1155 Duffer and Hero, No.1156 Who Hacked Hacker?, No.1157 The Mystery of the Silver Box, No.1158 The Missing Masterpiece.

HAMILTONIAN

Conducted by HERBERT LECKENBY

* * *

As stated in my editorial Mervyn Lewis has set an interest-Quiz in connection with his reproductions for our covers. He says:-

"Test your memory. The illustration on the cover this month is taken from inside a Magnet. The three figures in it are the same but to make it more interesting they appear reversed from the original, i.e., left appears to right. The background has been altered. Here are a few clues; two of the figures you will recognise - Fisher F. Fish and Mr. Quelch. The third is a new character to Greyfriars, one of the numerous boys who appeared for a brief period. He was in the Remove and a rather unscrupulous character. He was in Study 3."

Mervyn's answer will appear next month. Of course you won't all possess the Magnet in question, but many of you will.

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One of our youngest members Anthony Baker, Christ Church Vicarage, St. Alban's Road, Barnet, Herts, has now a complete run of Magnets from 1277 to 1683, with the exception of No. 1319. Anthony takes second place to no one in his admiration for Greyfriars, so if there's anyone who could spare him this copy they would be doing him a real good turn. There's nothing like helping a member of the younger generation who prefers the good old Magnet to the present day trash.

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GOOD NEWS. Two more Goldhawk books have been published since our February issue appeared. They are No. 10, "D'Arcy the Reformer"; No. 11, "D'Arcy's Day Out". I understand copies are restricted so any fans who do not get them through the Clubs would be advised to apply direct to the publishers.

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WHOM? Some time ago I received an excellent typewritten article entitled The "Magnet 1915 to 1917 and 1930 to 1933". I separated it from the writer's letter and filed it. I found later the article wasn't signed and I am sorry to say I can't remember whom I have to thank for it, though I probably did so at the time. Would the writer kindly drop me a line so that I can give him credit when I publish it?

* * * * *

A BOOST FOR THE "MAGNET". Did you hear that illuminating incident in "Question Time" on the Light Programme, February 19th? A teenager had raised the question of the comic-strips so much in vogue today. Along came Fielden Hughes or Frank Tilsley, (I'm not sure which), who said that in his schooldays almost every boy read the "Magnet". Parents tried to persuade them to read the "Boys' Own Paper" but they would stick to Greyfriars. Then he went on with emphasis "So great an impression had those stories on our lives that even today forty years later we have Magnet Quizes, when men put such questions as "Who was Dr. Locke's brother?" (he made a slip here). What was the name of the Greyfriars' porter?

Judging by the applause, what the speaker said was greatly to the liking of the members of the younger generation present.

I wonder if any of the "higher-ups" of the A.P. were listening and noted the significance of the incident.
Postscript. I was writing the above the evening after it happened, February 20th. I was half listening to "Any Questions". One was put about the C.O. of a R.A.F. Station who put a ban on comics and at that very moment I was referring to the Magnet. I'll be blessed if W.J. Brown came along and said that in his youth his favourites were the Union Jack, the Magnet and the Marvel, and they certainly did not do him any harm. The manner in which mention of the Magnet was received was once again illuminating.

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(cont'd page 78)

DUE TO UNFORSEEN PRINTING DIFFICULTIES, the Magazine Collector is suspended. In its place is the M.C. BULLETIN - a sample, 2½d. stamp. Adverts 6d. each. G. CLEMENTS, 72 East Street, Colchester, Essex.

REVIEW OF THE LAST TWO GOLD HAWK BOOKS

by Roger M. Jenkins

* * *

The last two numbers in the present series of Gold Hawk books were published rather unexpectedly as a kind of post-script, as it were, to the original series. No. 10 - "D'Arcy the Reformer" - is not a happy tale, dealing as it does with the method in which Cardew joins forces with Racke to take revenge on Tom Merry. This is, alas, a far different Cardew to the one who appeared in the Golden Age of the Gem, the early nineteen-twenties. His old urbanity and suaveness have worn so thin that they now seem to be little more than a cloak for as savage a temper and as unscrupulous a nature as Mornington's. Tom Merry also seems to have forsaken his old maxim "Why Grouse?" and Gussy plays only a small part - his name appearing in the title for the same reason that Bunter's name appears in the title of every Bunter book.

But if No. 10 is the least successful of the Gold Hawk books, No. 11 - "D'Arcy's Day Off" - may be acclaimed as the finest. The immortal Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is as splendid as he has ever been. Helping Wally with a Latin translation for Mr. Selby lands Gussy in trouble with the Head. Gussy is as obstinate as always and of course seeks further trouble. The result is a most readable story which makes one regret the passing of what has been, on the whole, a most pleasant series.

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POTTED PERSONALITIES. No. 4.

by ERIC FAYNE

* * *

GERALD CUTTS.

In some ways I think that Cutts was the most believable of the bad characters in the Gem and Magnet stories. Sly, cunning, and unscrupulous, he was nevertheless possessed of a strength of character which seemed lacking in such fellows as Knox, Loder, or Racke.

He had his counterpart at Greyfriars in Stephen Price, though the latter was pictured as being weaker, and, in consequence, not so dangerous. Both were in the Fifth Form at their respective

schools, and Cutts seemed to have the same bad influence on St. Leger, that Price exerted over Hilton.

Though Cutts did not often enjoy the limelight on the St. Jim's stage, he appeared from time to time, and one or two stories in which he appeared are unforgettable.

Few who read it will forget an early yarn in which the Fifth Former tried to blacken the character of Digby. Cutts pretended to be writing a play, and, feigning a sprained wrist, persuaded Dig to write some of it for him. This included a desperate letter from a schoolboy who, in the play, had fallen into dire disgrace, and Cutts passed off the letter as being a confession which Digby had written in real life. It was about the only time that Digby received much prominence in a story.

The plot was used again in the Magnet, with Loder as the pseudo-playwright, and, so far as I remember, Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry appeared as the "disgraced" character.

A fine tale, which would have been extended to cover a series in later years, showed Cutts persuading Tom Merry to lend him the funds of the junior sports' club. Entitled "The Last Hope", this yarn had some fine character-painting, about 1912.

In 1922 appeared a series which commenced with the story "A Fifth-Form Mystery". Excellent yarns in which Cutts stole money, and landed the blame on Darrell.

A short series which remains in my memory as a real Gem, on account of the subtly humorous and natural picture it gave of school life, was one in which Mr. Ratcliff lost a foreign banknote and accused Cutts of stealing it. Later the money was found in a book, and Cutts demanded an apology. I forget, offhand, the actual date of the last story, or its title.

Though Cutts was no credit to St. Jim's, he was an interesting character, and one who might well have played a larger part in the general scheme of things.

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A LITTLE MORE ABOUT CLIVEDEN

by LEONARD M. ALLEN

* * *

Until our worthy Editor included Cliveden College in his interesting article, "There Were Other Schools", little had been

written of this Hamilton academy. Frank Richards in a recent letter told me he occasionally received enquiries about the school from older correspondents. I was too young to read the stories when they first appeared in "The Boys' Herald", but well remember purloining them from my elder brother's secret collection at a later age. I was careless, however, and the whole lot was confiscated by the parent and never seen again.

On October 12th, 1907, Editor Hamilton Edwards announced in "The Boys' Herald" Editorial that he had made arrangements with Charles Hamilton to write a series of ten-thousand-word school stories for the paper. The first appeared in No. 223, the following week, entitled "The Cliveden Combine". This described the arrival at the College of the U.S.A. scholar, Lincoln G. Poindexter, his fight with Pankhurst and the forming of the Combine with Dicky Neville and Micky Flynn. The next story, "The Fourth Form Football Club" introduced a concertina playing fat boy, Medway, and the tuck-shop keeper, Dame Bunter - possibly a relation of B.B.

The stories appeared regularly each week, the titles indicate their progress:-

No. 225 the Cliveden Hobby Club - the Combine in friendly rivalry with Pankhurst and Price. No. 226 A Fight with the Fifth - introduces Crane and Cuffy of the Fifth and their attempt to fag the Fourth. Another familiar name appears - Teddy Trimble. No. 227 Christmas at Cliveden - the troubles of the Form-master, Mr. Lanyon with his crook cousin, Ralph. No. 228 The Captain of Cliveden - introduces Philpot, a Skinner type, and Trevelyan, Captain of the school. No. 229 The Fourth Form Match - Poindexter VI v. Pankhurst XI. No. 230 The Cliveden Waxworks - Amateur theatricals. No. 231 Philpot's Plot - central character, Mons. Friquet, ze French master. No. 232 The Cliveden Diabolo Match - topical - more Friquet etc. etc.

During this period the Editor made regular enquiry of his readers about the stories. This was probably to help him assess the reaction to a change of policy. Prior to the Cliveden yarns only one school serial had appeared in the Herald, the weekly complete story was generally of the adventure type.

The Cliveden stories were published regularly each week during the early part of 1908 but as the year progressed they were replaced by adventure yarns. By the middle of 1909 one appeared at very infrequent intervals and no previous mention made in the Editorial. The style of "The Boys' Herald" changed and great

prominence was given to the Scouting Movement. The last Cliveden story I can trace was in No. 316, August 7th, 1909, entitled "The Cliveden Dramatists".

Cliveden, however, was not the first Hamilton school to appear in the "Boys' Herald". St. Tim's was introduced in No. 114, Sept. 23rd, 1905, and I cannot trace any other stories of this school before or after that date. Several familiar types appear, hero Frank Lawrance who objected going to boarding school, Pat Kildare, later to be his friend, Hogg and Hake, the bullies, and Herr Hummell, the German master. After a rough start Frank settles down and establishes himself by scoring the winning goal in the form match.

* * * * *

THE OPEN ROAD

by WILLIAM F. CHAMPION

* * *

Maybe it is because, all my life, I have had such an ardent love for the wide, open spaces, the deep, still woods, and the gently meandering stream that has so endeared the 1919 St. Jim's caravanning series to me. Maybe it is because I read that series at so young and impressionable an age (nine years) that I am so happy when musing on some lonely heathland, or so contented when fishing in some sequestered reach of the Thames or Kennet. Whatever the cause and effect, I do know that I shall never tire of reading that series of eleven books over and over again --- especially as my over-zealous mother destroyed my first set soon after I had purchased and read them, and it was not until sometime during the black days of the last war that a friend of mine managed to procure the complete series for me and earned my undying gratitude.

Actually, they are quite simple stories, completely devoid of anything of a really startling nature --- no Brooksonian plots or denouements, no impossible situations and no great or involved complications; just clean happy-go-lucky reading matter, with a breath of the open air in every line. I will just run through the stories briefly, to see if I can explain why they grip me so.

In the first book of the series "The Schoolboy Caravanners" (Gem. No. 595, 5-7-1919) we find Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.,

united as usual, making plans for a caravanning holiday. After Gussy has become rather involved with a suspicious Mr. Railton, through arranging about the "horse" by 'phone from the Prefect's Room, he proceeds to sort out enough clothing, for the holiday, to fill half-a dozen fair-sized trunks. His exasperated friends point out, in vain, that the average caravan is very small, necessitating taking the absolute minimum of attire, and, in the end, forced to take very strong action, lock their pal's clobber in a lumber-room. The school closes for the summer vacation, and, on the last page, the heroes of the School-House discover, to their great wrath, that Figgins & Co., of the New-House have stolen, not only a march on them, but also their caravan ---- complete with horse!

In the following week's story "Rivals Of The Road" we find the seven School-House friends dashing round the countryside on push-bikes, searching for their stolen caravan. E.E. Briscoe did a first-class job of the cover of this Gem, with the caravan "parked" on the fringe of a delightful-looking pine-wood, downland stretching away into the distance, and "Circumstance" the horse, peacefully chewing grass on the verge of a dusty lane, while, in the foreground, Figgins & Co. have come to grips with a particularly villainous-looking nomad of the road. Actually it is through this adventure that Tom Merry & Co., are enabled to catch-up with their rivals, and the story closes with the New-House trio cadging a lift on a passing wagon, and the School-House party setting off triumphantly in the opposite direction, with their recaptured caravan.

The third story in the series "On The King's Highway", deals chiefly with Gussy's attempts to regain possession of his "clobber". He is successful in the end, and the manner in which Lowther disposes of it, at an open-air market in some small country town, makes hilarious reading. The outcome of this is: Gussy sends all his six fellow-campers to "Coventry", but soon comes to the conclusion that it is he, and not they, who is the sufferer!

"A Midnight Mystery" follows, and is one of the best stories of the series ---- at least, in my opinion. The caravanners are forced to make camp late at night, in a field, without first seeking permission from the owner. After supper, Gussy again "rides the high horse", and elects to sleep on his own, in a nearby copse. During the night he is awakened by a strange noise, and, upon investigation, sees, to his utter amazement, a strange man digging a deep hole in a clearing, into which he proceeds to dump a heavy sack. When, next morning, the Swell of St. Jim's relates this strange

happening to his friends, they are exceedingly sceptical, and suggest he was dreaming. The owner of the land arrives on the scene soon afterwards, flies into a terrible rage, and sets his dog on the schoolboys. There is a terrific scrap, and the caravanners move off hurriedly, the irate landowner following them for miles. This arouses their suspicions, and, the following night, they retrace their steps to the field, where Gussy is vindicated, when they catch the strange man busy with a spade in the same clearing. Their first suspicions are that he has committed a murder and is burying the body; but, when they confront the startled midnight delver and open the sack, they are astonished to find, inside, two whole sides of bacon, in an advanced state of decomposition. Apparently the man, who possessed the delightful name of Mr. Grubb, was on the local food-committee, and, during the war, had found it comparatively easy to hoard food. With the cessation of hostilities, he had found himself with tons of food stacked in his cellar, and when it had started to go bad, he had been forced to dispose of it in the manner related. In a blue funk, he offers money to Tom Merry & Co. to keep quiet about it. Naturally, they indignantly refuse the offer, and, after ragging the portly Mr. Grubb in no uncertain way, move on to fresh fields.

As the title of the fifth story "Trimble On the Trail" suggests, the fat Baggy catches up with the caravanners, and many amusing schemes are hatched and put into operation before, at long last, he is got rid of.

The next three stories: "Foes Of the Fifth", "Looking After Gussy" and "Charley And The Caravanners" are devoted to what transpired when the caravanners meet-up with Cutts & Co. of the Fifth --- and are really very good. Cutts, Prye, Gilmore, and St. Leger are spending the vac' at St. Leger Lodge, high in the Chilterns, where they are having a high old time in the absence of Major St. Leger, who is still with the army in Germany. The scheming Cutts inveigles Gussy into joining the party, his genial intention being to increase his own finances at the expense of the gullible fourth-former, through the medium of a few games of cards. Naturally, Tom Merry, Blake & Co. do not intend this to happen, and proceed to camp right outside the gates of St. Leger Lodge in order to keep an eye on proceedings. In the end, despite all Cutt's wiles, Gussy refuses to play cards for money. Cutts loses his temper and savagely attacks the junior, and the caravanners rush in to the rescue of their chum in grand style, leaving the fifth-

formers very much of a wreck. Later on in the night, the seniors, plus a few grooms from the Lodge, mount horses and chase the fast departing caravan through the deserted country lanes, and in the ensuing fight the juniors are again victorious.

In the ninth story our heroes meet-up with Coker, of the Fifth-form, at Greyfriars, and have a lot of fun at his expense — especially on the local village-green, where the burly senior displays his prowess at cricket!

"Only Gussy's Way" is the tenth story, and deals with a chance meeting with the brainy Herbert Skimpole, of the Shell, whose uncle is a candidate in a local by-election. The chums get mixed-up with the electioneering, and the humorous Monty Lowther comes out strong as a heckler, getting both Skimpole and his uncle completely tied-up! The last few pages of this yarn are devoted to the troubles of Gussy, who falls head over heels in love with a land-girl!

In the last story "Ructions On The Road", the caravanners, now in Devon, connect up once more with Figgins & Co., and, as the title suggests, there ARE ructions! The New House scores here when Kerr disguises himself as an escaped convict from nearby Dartmoor, and takes possession of the caravan.

Yes, I think this series is as good as any. I do not think anyone could read it without being able to smell the clear, fresh air, without having the impulse to shake the dust from the country lanes off one's clothes. Even at my age, whenever I am in the country, I am constantly on the look-out for a likely camping-spot for the St. Jim's Caravanners!

WILLIAM F. CHAMPION.

"Magnet" Titles (see p.75)

QUERY CORNER

Q. Did the Dreadnought have any numbers large page size same as Boys' Friend? If so, can anyone give run?

H.J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

Q. Can anyone give the numbers of the "Ranger" in which the Grimslake stories appeared?

Syd.Smyth, 1 Brandon St., Clovelly, Sydney, Australia.

Q. When did the Gem start the buff-covered small size?

Anthony Baker, Christ Church Vicarage, Barnet, Herts.

A. With No. 1557. (H.L.).

(Replies to queries not answered here will be appreciated. H.L.)

BLAKIANA

Edited by H. M. BOND
10 ERW WEN, RHIWBINA, CARDIFF

THE ROUND TABLE - MARCH, 1953

The first Thursday in the month of February 1953 is a day to chalk up as eventful. Yet another landmark in the history of "The Sexton Blake Library" became known to us on that day, and all readers of the current monthlies will instantly know what I mean. However, there may be a few who have discontinued taking the S.B.L. for one reason or another and so I have to report to them that at long last illustrations have returned to the Blake stories. I was delighted to open "Crooks Deputy" and see an Eric R. Parker illustration on page 1. It seemed as though the years dropped away and I was once again looking at a pre-war 2nd series S.B.L. There was a slight change in form, for the illustration did not go down to the bottom of the page in the old days, but who cares? Enough that the return to an old style made my Library a more attractive magazine. But what is this? As I turn over the pages I see something ENTIRELY new, two full page illustrations (still by dear old Parker) depicting an exciting scene from the story. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that this has been done. I sincerely hope that the Editor will continue in this - it really does give us older readers a bit of a thrill. But how glad I am that Eric R. Parker still remains the official Blake artist. Had these drawings been by anyone else the whole illusion would have been spoiled. I hate to think what will happen when E.R.P. has retired from his work. May he not do so for many years to come.

The title of the companion volume for February seemed familiar. "The Secret of the Snows". Where had I seen that title before? I rather guessed that there had been a story of this title by Gilbert Chester sometime or other, and on turning up my files I discovered that this was the title of S.B.L. No. 651 2nd series dated December 1938, which was, incidentally, a reprint of S.B.L. 2nd series No. 124 dated December 1927. I took these two issues down from the bookshelf and got another shock! On each

cover we had a little mound of earth and stones with a cross above. On the 1924 cover Arthur Jones was the artist but of course E.R.P. was apparent on the cover of the 1938 volume. Immediately I thought that here was a rehashed story, but on comparing them I found this was not the case. However, it is strange to put the three books together and compare those covers. They are so alike and yet so very different. The different form of dress for those operating in the frozen north is very noticeable.

One or two other slight alterations in the Library would really complete my satisfaction. The return of the monthly "Consulting Room Chat" and the regular inclusion of the Magazine Corner would be very welcome. I should be very glad to have readers views on the new innovation, or should I say, on the return to old standards.

In this issue I am including the first two stories received for the S.B.L. short story competition. I hope to print further stories next month. I would like to inform you here that I have decided to extend the time originally given to submit stories. Entries will now be accepted up to the 21st March. Any story received after this date will not be eligible. And may I earnestly ask for your support in this contest. So far the entry has been disappointing.

Cheerio for now,

H. MAURICE BOND.

* * * * *

"CHEZ BARDELL"

by Gerry Allison

* * *

The House has been described many times, and every lover of Blake must have an exact picture of it in his mind's eye. I most certainly have.

It is a 'modest-fronted house' Gwyn Evans tells us in U.J. 1365, "The Mistletoe-Milk Mystery". He goes on: "Splash Page hurriedly passed upstairs and tapped at the door of the consulting-room. A cheerful fire crackled in the grate". And later: "Tinker brought up a bundle of logs from the cellar".

Now, as we know that Blake has a laboratory on the top floor, "the room above the consulting-room", ("The Case of the Bogus

Baron"), that gives us a four-storeyed house. I am of the opinion that Mrs. Bardell lives on the ground floor, whilst Sexton Blake and Tinker occupy the two upper storeys. Most writers seem to agree with this lay-out. For instance, in S.B.L. 278, "The Man with a Number", Stephen Blakesley says:-

"Sexton Blake was alone, when Mrs. Bardell entered to announce that Inspector Mott was downstairs".

And again, in "The Trail of the Five Red Herrings", (S.B.L. 101) Lewis Jackson gives a more detailed picture, which confirms this theory as to the detective occupying the first floor. He says:-

"The old grandfather clock in the lower hall of Sexton Blake's dwelling in Baker Street had struck the half hour after nine, and the mellow note of the gong was dying away when Mrs. Bardell, the housekeeper bustled along to answer a knock upon the front door.

She conducted the visitors up the stairs to the carpeted room above. Two easy chairs had been drawn up to the old Georgian fireplace in which an oak log was blazing fragrantly. On the hearth stood a tray, complete with crockery and a pewter coffee-pot". Could anything sound more snug, or more convincing?

And it is in the last named story that we have given the number of THE HOUSE. I must again thank Jim Cook of South Oxley for pointing this out to me and for lending me the book in question, - an excellent tale by the way.

On page 92 of this book Blake sends a telegram which reads, 'Must see you very urgent matter. Call 23a Baker Street tomorrow morning 9-30'.

Well, so now the secret is out! 23a is the number. We see therefore, that Sexton Blake and Sherlock Holmes both live on the same side, - the West side, of Baker Street, but Blake occupies a house lower down and nearer to Portman Square.

Now, of recent months there has been a great amount of research to identify the exact position of No. 221B. Baker Street. In the summer of 1951, The Cornhill Magazine, (No. 987), published a long article by James Edward Holroyd on the subject. After examining all the evidence contained in the Holmes saga, Mr. Holroyd gave it as his opinion that the present No. 109 Baker Street is the house known to fame as No. 221B.

On the other hand, in his book "My Dear Holmes", Mr. Gavin Brend plumps for the present No. 61 as having claim to the honour.

The position is complicated by the fact that since the early Holmes and Blake stories, the buildings in Baker Street have been re-numbered! Also of course, even in the Holmes stories, written by one author, the evidence as to the position of No. 221B is contradictory. In the case of Blake, with the multiplicity of writers, the case is even more difficult.

However, I put it to the members of the London Branch, O.B.B.C. generally, and of the Sexton Blake Circle in particular, that it is their obvious duty to examine the evidence contained in the stories of Blake written by the principal authors to determine exactly where No. 23a Baker Street is situated. They should then make arrangements for a plaque to be placed on the outer wall of the famous and historic edifice to announce the fact for the benefit of visitors from the provinces and from abroad. Perhaps the National Trust would assist them. I myself will willingly subscribe generously in such a noble cause.

* * * * *

THEY DID KNOW BLAKE AT SCOTLAND YARD

The "Empire News" of February 15th, published an article by Fred Cherrill, Ex-Chief Superintendent of Scotland Yard. He started off like this:

"The first real fingerprints to arouse my interest were my own!

It was some 40 years ago. I was about 15 at the time, living in the old world village of Dorchester, near Oxford, with my mother and father.

One December night we gathered round the fire. Outside there raged one of the fiercest storms I remember. Every now and again the house shook as the furious blasts beat against it. I was immersed in one of the exploits of Sexton Blake then running in the Union Jack."

Our favourites keep cropping up in the news, don't they?

* * * * *

S.B. Contest. Entry 1

RETURN TO BAKER STREET, 1953

Blake had been in Scotland, and was returning to London feeling rather 'off-colour'. He was pretty fit as a rule, but there was

a lot of flu about, and nobody is immune. It was February, and his winter cases had all been strenuous. A gang in the dock area to smash up; then the sabotage trouble in the 'Queens'. Finally this business in the Orkneys -- smuggling ought to be obsolete these days, but it isn't.

He had not slept for nearly a week and this feeling of having caught the flu was the final straw. When he got back home he was going to bed, and would stay there for a few days. Mrs. Bardell should, for once, be allowed to 'coddle' him to her heart's content, and Tinker could deal with any small matters. And that was that!

At Peterborough the couple in his compartment left, but just before the train started again, a tall man entered and sat down in the far corner. Blake gave him the usual once-over. "Mm", he thought, "service type, and a Yank. Just back from the Far East, - Korea possibly. Obviously a person of authority. Recently married, about thirty-five, and worried to hell".

"You must be Sexton Blake, the detective, I guess". It was the stranger who spoke.

"Why, what makes you think that"? Blake replied.

"You're exactly like the photographs I've seen of him".

"Well yes, I must admit I have been taken for him before today".

"What sort of a guy is he? Pretty good I hear. The reason I ask is that I'm on my way to see him. I've got a case for him.

Blake shuddered!

"Oh", he said, "Blake's getting on now. He's not all he's cracked up to be. I have never actually met him, but I know plenty about him. Now, if I were you, I should take your case to Scotland Yard".

"You would, eh? Well perhaps you're right. Those boys at Whitehall 1212 certainly do a good job".

"None better. Take my tip, and go there".

"I guess I will at that. Thanks, pal".

And Blake leaned back in his corner with a sigh of satisfaction. He'd be damned if anybody was going to rob him of his few days in bed!

THE END

* * * * *

S.B. Contest, Entry 2.

"Draw the blinds Tinker and sit down" Sexton Blake said to his assistant, "Let us shut out the weather."

Blake and Tinker drew up their chairs in front of a blazing fire in preparation for a decent read when the doorbell rang.

"It's Inspector Coutts, Guv'nor" said Tinker, "I'd know his dulcet tones anywhere".

The door opened and in walked Coutts.

"Don't bother to get up," he said, "I have just called for a chat, it's raining cats and dogs outside".

Blake had put down his book and Coutts picked it up whilst Blake was pouring out drinks for three.

"Dr. Nikola" by Guy Boothby" Coutts read out, "is it a decent yarn"?

"I really enjoy the Nikola books" said Blake, "They are unusual and I have read all the four".

"What are they about?" asked Coutts, fondling the ears of Pedro who was enjoying the warmth of the fire.

"Mostly about China and Tibet" said Blake. "Dr. Nikola was a gifted man in search of prolonged life and he had some exciting adventures in the monasteries. It is a part of the world which intrigues me greatly, in fact they are my favourite books". "Well" said Coutts "I think I would enjoy reading them if you can spare them sometime".

"You can borrow them when you go" said Blake "I don't do much travelling in the Far East myself now, and it brings back memories to read about travels".

"What's your favourite books Tinker" said Coutts.

"I like a good detective story" Tinker replied "one about clever C.I.D. men, not like some I know".

He just escaped the cushion thrown by the wrathful Coutts.

"Now, now" said Blake, "If you are not in a hurry Coutts, let's turn the television on and have a quiet evening.

THE 'ANNUAL' BALLOT - PRESENT POSITION

Levison at Greyfriars 117; There were other Schools 115;
 The Amazing Career of Billy Bunter 99; Kings of Crime 83;
 Roamings of the Rio Kid 71; The St. Franks Saga 56;
 Stand and Deliver 53.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to ROBERT BLYTHE
46, CARLETON RD., HOLLOWAY, LONDON, N.7.

I must say that things are looking up amongst N.L. collectors. Articles are rolling in, which is most gratifying, and my post has increased enormously. So much so, that I must ask your forgiveness if I seem a little tardy in answering.

One thing that's rather surprising, in view of some of the comments that have appeared in print, are the number of letters I get from Hamiltonians saying how they have discovered the N.L. Some writers show a great deal of knowledge on the subject, yet according to the "who's who" their only interest is the 'Magnet' or other Hamiltonian writings.

Can it be that at long last the good old N.L. is getting it's rightful place in the sun? Could be!

But to business!

This month we introduce two more new names to the Column both of whom are completely at home with their subject.

First then :-

FOR PREFERENCE - THE NELSON LEE

SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

by Norman Pragnell

The various merits and de-merits of our favourite schools forms the basis of many of our arguments and discussions, so it is the purpose of this article to pen a few of my own thoughts on this subject.

Way back in the twenties I, like the rest of the boys at school was a fervent reader of the "Twopenny Blood", and it is true to say that I amongst others made a preference for The Magnet, but on one memorable Wednesday the lad next to me had brought in a Nelson Lee, and it was with only idle curiosity that I offered to swap him next day. It could hardly have been a better issue had it been picked for me, for it was the first number of the Northestria series, the story of that forgotten world at the North Pole. I was thrilled by that first story, for what schoolboy of that age did not have a weakness for the fantastic. It was that day I gave up The Magnet for The Nelson Lee - for I could only afford one - a

step I never regretted, as I continued reading the old paper right to the last issue.

It is perhaps a little easy today for us who are approaching middle or old age to be too critical of this type of story, but at the age of eleven I was only interested in adventure and the unreal, and the Nelson Lee certainly gave me something I had not tasted in The Magnet or Gem.

I can well remember some of the exciting stories that followed the Northestria series - The School Train and the St. Frank's Afloat Yarns, and the more dramatic type of the Alan Castleton, and Harry Gresham stories. These indeed gave me every satisfaction. My thirst for this type of story took me into the past, when I obtained some of the earliest series, and was able to read that great Ezra Quirke classic, - what thrills we had reading of the devilish machinations of the magician pitted against the brains and ingenuity of Browne of the Fifth.

When the eventual end of the Nelson Lee came I was hurt and perhaps even bitter for I could not believe that I was no longer able to get my Nelson Lee on Wednesday morning. I was insulted, too by the wretched announcement that my paper was to be incorporated with The Gem, but I did buy the next issue only to feel ashamed at the paltry few pages The Gem gave to my school.

I am considerably older, and I hope much wiser than I was in those earlier days, but I still get the same pleasure out of reading the Nelson Lee as I did some twenty years ago, and that Northestria series, which I have read and re-read a dozen or so times, never fails to give me the same thrill as it did when I was given my first copy at school, and so in conclusion I would say that fond as I am of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood, for me it will always be - St. Frank's for ever.

* * * * *

And now a description of one of the lesser known of the old series.

"THE SCHOOLBOY AGITATORS".

An appreciation of the series published in the
Nelson Lee Library Nos.250/255 March/April 1920.

by Charles H. Churchill

Amongst the many series of stories in the first series of the

Nelson Lee Library, the one about the servants' strike appears to have been almost lost in oblivion. I think this a great pity as, in my opinion, the stories are well written and as good as any of the more famous series, about which we so often hear. I know that no mysterious new boy arrives nor any particularly momentous happenings occur. Nevertheless the tales are interesting and contain many humorous incidents.

In the first three numbers, we read how the boys discover that the St. Frank's staff are discontented about their wages. The servants are almost ready to strike having had no increase in salaries for some considerable time and are receiving less than those at Bannington Grammar School, a much inferior establishment to St. Frank's. Sir Roger Stone, then Chairman of the Governors, is appealed to, but turns down the servants' request for consideration without hesitation. Backed by promises from the boys of full support, a strike takes place. Sir Roger is furious at this "audacity" and dismisses the whole staff. We are then amused by the efforts of the boys at bedmaking and preparing the meals. Handforth produces a currant pudding and is greatly dismayed when a dish is broken by his masterpiece dropping on it! Timothy Tucker is prominent hereabouts, making many speeches to the strikers in an endeavour to keep up their morale. Some of these speeches are really amusing.

When Sir Roger engages a local replacement staff the boys dispense with it by escorting the whole lot from the premises more or less forcibly. Sir Roger then arranges for a fresh set of servants to come from a distance and arrive in the middle of the night. Nipper & Co. get wind of this and spoil the proceedings, at least from Sir Roger's point of view by arranging for the new people to be "diverted" to a false address. They then take their places in disguise and arrive at the school at night, to be welcomed by Sir Roger, until he sees them in the revealing lights of the Servants' Hall. After this fiasco the school is disbanded early for the Easter holidays.

In the next story, "St. Frank's at 'Appy 'Ampstead", we read of the adventures of Nipper & Co. on Bank Holiday at the famous "Heath". This is a very good tale in which we read of trouble on the "Roundabout" with Handy and Fatty Little and the mystery of little Bobbie who wanted to kiss Handy. This little lad eventually gets kidnapped and is rescued by Nelson Lee with the aid of Nipper & Co.

When St. Frank's re-opens the boys are staggered to find another new staff installed and severe penalties threatened for any interference. This new staff, however, contains a few "black sheep" and Nelson Lee recognises one or two of them as habitual criminals. Two of these plan to rob the Head's safe, believing it to contain a parcel of jewels. This, however, is a trap laid by Nelson Lee and when the precious two turn up one night to break the safe they are surprised by the Schoolmaster-Detective. Due to an accident they manage to escape and flee by the underground passage to Willard's Island.

In the meantime Nipper had hit upon a very pretty scheme to end the strike. The boys, incognito, imprison Sir Roger Stone in the cellars of Willard's Folly, hoping that after a few hours there he would accede to the strikers' demands.

When visiting Sir Roger later the boys discover about the intended robbery and disclose themselves to the baronet in order to try and prevent it. They meet the crooks in the old tunnel unexpectedly and a fight ensues. Nelson Lee arrives in time to complete the capture of the fugitives. Sir Roger is thus brought to his senses by the shortcomings of his new staff. He gracefully gives in and grants the old staff their reinstatement with an increase in salaries of one hundred per cent instead of the fifty per cent asked for by the strikers.

So ends a very diverting series and I cannot understand why it was never considered good enough for reprinting in the "School-boys' Own Library".

* * * * *

Owing to proseure of space last month the answers to the quiz couldn't appear, but here they are, if you haven't forgotten the questions, by now!

1. 16.
2. (a) Reggie Pitt (b) Enoch Snipe (c) Hubert Jarrow (d) Timothy Tucker (e) Nipper.
3. Cuthbert Chambers.
4. E.O. Handforth.
5. Caleb Droone was the real name of 'The Night Owl, leader of the Alliance of 13' during the time U.S. Adams was introduced.
6. 22 + 1 story reprinted as a serial.
7. Study J. Alec Duncan, Harry Gresham, U.S. Adams. Study L. Nick & Corn Trotwood, James (Fatty) Little. Study 6. Busterfield

Boots, Percy Bray, Walter Denny. Study 15. David Merrill, Fred Marriott, Enoch Snipe, Ancient West, Modern & East Houses respectively.

8. Ebenezer Binks.
9. Marshall's, Wraggs and School House.
10. Terror by Night, U.J. 1357. Later lengthened into a serial 'The Case of the Antlered Man' in the "Detective Weekly" and finally as a novel under the same name.

Our old friend Ron Burrows turned up trumps again with a nearly all correct answers, getting 20 points out of a possible 25. Nice work.

Letter Box

FRANK RICHARDS' MONTHLY LETTER

February 14th, 1953.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D.: very handsome indeed in its new guise. I like Eric Fayne's article: "pungent" as you describe it: and I couldn't agree more.

Critics of the kind to which he refers derive all their ideas, such as they are, from George Orwell, who had a sort of obsession for describing other writers as out of date. He even applied that description to P.G. Wodehouse, I seem to remember: and surely P.G. is ahead of the times rather than behind them.

This worthy critic thinks --- if the word "thinking" can be applied to his mental processes --- that anything that has appeared for a considerable time must necessarily be "out of date". No doubt he would regard William Shakespeare as very much out of date: Horace hopelessly so: and Homer too utterly antiquated to be even remembered in the Graphic office. Macaulay remarks somewhere that Homer is as fresh as ever after three thousand years: and I can bear my own testimony that Quintus Horatius Flaccus is still as fresh as a new-laid egg after two thousand. And I believe there are still people about who read Shakespeare. Actually, of course, the whole thing depends on the writing, and whether it is true to human nature: No well-written book ever could be "out of date". This applies not only to the master-spirits I have mentioned: but to

light literature also. Has anyone since Stevenson written a better treasure-island story than his, which is as old as Frank Richards', and much older than Billy Bunter? Have any of Doyle's more modern imitators ever equalled "Sherlock Holmes"? No doubt the Graphic/Sketch critic would prefer Monsieur Poirot or Lord Peter Wimsey as more up to date! His criticism recalls to my mind some lines of Prior: a writer whom he would probably regard with much contempt for having been quite a long time in print:

"Let him be kept from paper, pen, and ink,
So that he cease to write, and learn to think!"

By the bye, there is a spot of news: it is probable that by next Christmas "Billy Bunter's Own" annual will be keeping company with Tom Merry's Own. BB. of course, will fill a considerable space in the new annual, but the rest of the contents will differ entirely from T.M.O. Among other items, the Rio Kid will ride again ---- I hope that some of Ralph Redway's old readers will be pleased to see him hitting the trail once more.

With kindest regards,
Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

* * * * *

The Amalgamated Press's reply (?) to Merseyside.

6th February, 1953.

D.B. Webster, Esq.,
Old Boys' Book Club,
Liverpool 22.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter dated 31st. January.

I am glad that you and your contemporaries have had so much pleasure from the stories in the GEM and the MAGNET.

You will find that there is an adventure of Billy Bunter each week in the KNOCKOUT, and a St. Jim's adventure, under the title of TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS each week in the SUN.

With kind regards,

Yours faithfully,

The Editor.

(About as encouraging as a rejected manuscript. - H.L.).