

The Collector's Digest

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MAY, 1953
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Re-drawn
by
M. Lewis



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



FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

THOSE "COMICS". Just too late for comment last month was that discussion on "Comics" in that new sound broadcast feature "Now's Your Chance", which came from Reading on March 30th.

Nearly all the questioners were on the attack and Messrs. Pemberton and Miller, two of the biggest publishers and importers of the comics, were hard put to it to put up a defence, and to say the least they were not very convincing. One question which I was waiting to be asked but wasn't, was the simple and obvious one. "Why the dickens do they call them comics?" It all seems so absurd to me. Take the picture story in one of them "The Graveyard Girls March Again". How many laughs are you supposed to get out of that?

* * * * *

THE FUTURE OF BLAKIANA. I am happy to announce that Josie Packman has accepted the editorship of Blakiana. As we are fortunate

enough to possess quite a number of lady members it is only fitting they be represented. Moreover, it will certainly not be a question of a figurehead for Mrs. Leonard Packman knows as much about Blake lore as the great majority of the males.

Josie starts with the June number so I appeal to Blake fans to give her all the support they possibly can. She would like to provide six pages a month as during Maurice's regime. Copy should reach her not later than the 16th to ensure it appearing in the following month's issue.

* * * * *

OUR SLEUTHS. You will see this month that two of our members, Josie Packman and Ernest Carter, have discovered further instances of old stories being served up as new. This kind of thing is very interesting and always provides a smile. How about finding some more.

* * * * *

NEXT MONTH. I wonder how many of you have read a dramatic Greyfriars story of long ago in which Harry Wharton saved a Prince from a Central European country from drowning in Pegg's Bay, and was afterwards received by the then reigning King of England at Buckingham Palace. Not many I don't suppose for it appeared a long time ago and wasn't republished; it was the George the Fifth Coronation number of Jun 17th, 1911, needless to say a very scarce number.

Well, Eric Fayne, in our Coronation number next month gives you a graphic description of this story, together with the other Coronation Numbers of the Magnet and Gem.

And, as I said last month there will be descriptions of Coronation numbers connected with other popular papers of the past. I hope to mail it as near Coronation day as ever possible.

* * * * *

THE 1953 "ANNUAL". A good deal of my time is now being spent in planning our big event, and I can promise you that in appearance it will have a real streamline look, so we've got to do our utmost to see that the contents live up to it - you don't see shabby passengers in a Rolls Royce. Well, you've never let me down yet. I am sure you won't this time. Len Packman, who hasn't contributed for a year or two has offered to write up Cedar Creek, a happy

idea, for the School in the Backwoods has been neglected up to now. Other of our experts in Hamilton lore will entertain you again.

Then, as no doubt many of you know that prior to 1914 quite a number of serials were published in the A.P. papers, concerning invasion of Britain by land, first by the French then by the Germans. Marvellous yarns some of them, interesting to look back on now. I'm swotting some of them up now, and Pearce Sutherland out in British Columbia tells me that Captain Frank Shaw wrote no less than six similar stories for "Chums" with such stirring titles as "The Peril of the Motherland" and "The Swoop of the Eagle". Between us we hope to provide something well worth reading, especially by the older members.

Yea, unless something unforeseen occurs, I have a feeling I shall have another happy Christmas.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

THE "ANNUAL POLL"

Neck and Neck!

1. There Were Other Schools. 159.
2. Levison at Greyfriars. 157.
3. The Amazing Career of Billy Bunter. 148.
4. Kings of Crime. 124.
5. The St. Franks Saga. 101.
6. Roamings of the Rio Kid. 99.
7. Stand and Deliver. 81.
8. Single to Happiness. 78.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB. (cont'd from page 139.)

firstly, the devising of a better system of book issue and return, easing the burden on our indefatigable librarian, Bill Horton, and, secondly, the setting up of a committee of three to deal with the arrangements for the section outing, which we are hoping will take place during the summer months. Then came Jack Morgan's quiz, which we were glibly informed was an "easy one"; we soon had cause to suspect that Jack had his tongue in his cheek when making this reckless assertion. However, it presented no difficulties to young Peter, who gained full points, with Jim Walsh a close second. Norman Pragnell sets us the posers for next month - we shall have to brush up on our Nelson Lee data, probably. It should make a welcome change from Hamiltonia.

After refreshments, the library business was dealt with, and the meeting closed at 10.30 p.m.

F. CASE. Secretary.

STORIES I REMEMBER

By HERBERT LECKENBY

No. 3 "THE SILVER DWARF" with Book II, "THE MISSING HEIR".
(Author: Maxwell Scott)

* * *

"The Silver Dwarf" first appeared in the "Boys' Friend", starting in the Christmas Double Number 1901 and going well on into 1902, and was reprinted several times in later years. It was Maxwell Scott's second serial of Nelson Lee in the Green 'un, following close on the heels of "Birds of Prey". In my opinion these two were the best of all the many serials he wrote for various papers, but in thinking that I may be biased on account of the circumstances under which I read them. I was at school at the time and the Boys' Friend was bought each Saturday with all the income I earned, through doing some household chores. One appreciates something hardy earned.

However, on re-reading some of the instalments for the purposes of this article I am still of the opinion that it was an interesting, jolly good yarn, ideal for a boys' weekly. In later years Maxwell Scott used the same idea, a chase through many lands in the interests of a rightful heir, several times, but his first effort was certainly his best. In fact, in this story the chase took his detective right round the world and in the stories which followed I am not certain that the circuit was quite complete.

There was something else about "The Silver Dwarf" which added to its appeal, it was illustrated by Arthur Clarke. A Maxwell Scott Nelson Lee story did not seem the same without him.

However, to the plot. Lord Easington, owner of vast estates in Cornwall, thought to be a bachelor, has met with an accident and knowing he is about to die appeals to one, Jack Langley to "send for Nelson Lee". Jack and the detective are old friends for in that earlier story "Birds of Prey" they had gone through many adventures together. Nelson Lee promptly obeys the call and on the journey by train to Cornwall has a fellow traveller, Mark Rymer, D. Sc., F.I.C., Professor of Chemistry, Westminster University. He is described thus:-

"A thin, cadaverous looking man, rather under the average

height, with a Roman nose, out of all proportion to the size of his face. His lean and somewhat lanky form (seems to be a contradiction there) was enveloped in a heavy fur-lined overcoat. His shoulders were so bowed that he had almost the appearance of a hunchback. His dome-shaped forehead rose high and white above two deep-sunk glittering eyes, proving him to be possessed of an immensity of brain-power, whilst his square, determined-looking chin was equally suggestive of strength of will."

Professor Rymer and Nelson Lee were destined to see a lot of each other in the days that were to come, for the former was cousin to the Earl of Easington and under the impression that he was heir to the richest man in all Cornwall. A rude shock, however, was awaiting him. On arrival at their destination they are just in time to hear the dying Earl make a startling confession, that years before he had made a secret marriage and has a son. Then with his last breath he gasps "The proof of my marriage - the Silver Dwarf."

Naturally the listeners are puzzled at first, but later find out that the Silver Dwarf is a statuette about ten inches high, and that it is obvious it is hollow and contains the all important papers. A fire breaks out at the Earl's home, the statuette disappears before either the detective or the professor can lay their hands on it. From that moment the neck and neck race round the world is on, with plot and counterplot, the professor determined by hook or by crook to destroy the proofs, and the heir if necessary, the intrepid detective to thwart him.

The two learn that the statuette has passed into the hands of the owner of a big silversmith's shop in Paris. The rivals set off for the French capital and then on through many lands, the Silver Dwarf ever just in front of them.

Now just to digress a moment. Some years ago we were able to publish in the C.D. quite a lot of notes from Maxwell Scott's diaries, thanks to the kindness of his son. He admitted that his father had never done much travelling, but when he wrote such stories as this he was surrounded with railway guides, shipping lists, guide books to foreign lands, obtained beforehand, and was most anxious to have every detail correct. Perhaps one cannot get to know all about a country from guide books and natives possibly found flaws in Maxwell Scott's descriptions, but to the average reader it all sounded authentic and convincing.

Here is a good example of his thoroughness. Mark Rymer is

anxious to get to Paris before Nelson Lee, so

"He took down a Bradshaw and hurriedly consulted it.

"By Dover and Calais; that's no good!" he muttered to himself. "There's a steamer leaves Dover at five minutes past eleven tonight, but I can't get to Dover in time to catch it. By Folkestone and Boulogne - that's worse! By Newhaven and Dieppe - no good either! By Southampton and Havre. Ah, this looks like being possible! Train leaves Falmouth 12.40 arrives Southampton 9.9., steamer sails at midnight. What time is it now? Two minutes past twelve. By jove, if I can catch that train I can get to Southampton in time to catch the midnight boat, and I can be in Paris by half-past eleven tomorrow morning! Mark Rymer, you're in luck! It's a thousand to one that Nelson Lee will never think of the Southampton route. He'll wait till tomorrow morning, and cross by Dover and Calais, and by the time he reaches Paris I shall have interviewed Monsieur Delafosse, and the Silver Dwarf will be in my possession!"

But, to the professor's chagrin he finds Nelson Lee had thought of the same route, so on the cross-channel journey there was nothing for it but to toss the detective over-board. However, Nelson Lee is picked up and arrives in Paris not far behind. The Silver Dwarf though has travelled on and we find the rivals next in Spain. There the detective falls into the hands of bandits. On to Gibraltar - Tangier - Marseilles - Port Said - Colombo - Nelson Lee, thanks to the unscrupulous professor being face to face with death many times.

Whilst at grips in Colombo the slippery statuette was on its way to Australia. Came the sending of many cables (no long distance 'phones in those days) and then on February 28th, 1902, departure for 'down under'. Arrival Larg's Bay, port of call for Adelaide, March 14th. Adelaide to Melbourne, seventeen and a half hours journey (was it correct, Australian chums?) then on to Sydney.

Here at long last the Silver Dwarf gives up its secret, but only just, where Nelson Lee is concerned. For Professor Rymer gets to the house first, reads the documents, hears a rush of footsteps, then mutters to himself:

"Too late, my friend, too late. Too late to save the papers, but just in time to see the blaze!" But he speaks too soon. Nelson Lee rushes in, takes a flying leap at his exultant foe, literally toppled him head over heels, then, in the nick of time rescues the all important papers from the flames. The name of the missing

heir was known at last, and here with explanations to the people in whose hands the statuette was found came the end of Book I of the "Silver Dwarf".

Nelson Lee's search, however, was only half over, just as he was only half way round the world. As for the rascally Mark Rymer, Professor of Chemistry, he had now two tasks on hand, to prevent Nelson Lee finding the heir, who was known as Dick Seymour, and to get rid of the rightful owner of the vast estates, when he himself found him. The story continued in the Boys' Friend as "The Missing Heir" Book II of "The Silver Dwarf". There were many more hairs-breadth escapes for Nelson Lee, for Dick Seymour proved to be as elusive as the little statuette had been.

The rivals learn that the missing heir had gone to New Zealand some years earlier. Before getting there, Nelson Lee, through the plotting of Mark Rymer, falls into the hands of bushrangers, and later a party of 'blacks'. From the latter he escapes by aid of ventriloquism. In later years it seemed to be forgotten that Nelson Lee was an adept at this art.

On to Napier in New Zealand, only to learn that Dick Seymour has gone to Hawaii. Undaunted, despite more rough handling, the detective sets off there, via Rotorua and Auckland.

A pause here to say that when I read this story in the long ago, all the places I have mentioned were just dots on the map to me, but on re-reading recently they had a greatly added interest, for in many of them, Colombo, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland and little Rotorua, I have hobby friends, who will probably be reading these lines soon.

On arrival at Hawaii the professor learns that Dick Seymour is employed by Pryde & Co., a firm of planters on an estate very near to Kilauea, the largest active volcano in the world, or as Maxwell Scott carefully explains "to be strictly accurate Kilauea is the name of the crater, and the name of the volcano is Mauna Loa.

At long last the professor catches up with the "Missing Heir" and loses no time in attempting to put him out of the way. The volcano, of course, plays a dramatic part in the doing thereof.

Now comes a touch of romance into the story. Dick Seymour is in love with the planter's daughter, and 'asks for her hand in marriage'. They did such things in those days. Mr. Pryde says much as he likes Dick, he does not consider his income is sufficient to maintain his daughter, so he gives Dick two years to

make good. Dick accepts with good grace and decides to go to New York to seek his fortune, and totally unaware that nearby is someone anxious to tell him that he is already a millionaire.

More encounters with Professor Rymer then on to San Francisco, across the American continent to New York with ever the evil second in line for the fortune in the shadows, and the tireless Nelson Lee ever on his heels. Then the final lap for home, a last desperate attempt, Professor Rymer meeting with his just deserts, explanations and wedding bells.

In this 'jet age' one can circuit the world a little more quickly than did Nelson Lee and Mark Rymer fifty years ago, yet it was a fast moving story with never a dull moment. One of the best of all the famous Boys' Friend serials.

I seem to remember that years later when "The Silver Dwarf" was dusted and polished for reprinting in the "Nelson Lee Library" the detective flew down to Cornwall to take up the case. A little later when Mark Rymer made the first attempt on his life near the Smuggler's Leap he was travelling on a motor bike. Well, I suppose if those responsible thought an old story was better than a new one they had to modernise it somewhat, but I with all the years behind me preferred the original with its 10.45 express from Paddington and my favourite detective travelling by trap when he had his narrow escape by the Smuggler's Leap.

WANTED: Clean Cigarette Cards, especially any issued before 1920. Also old Aldines and Film Magazines before 1940. J. ORME, "NORTH DENE", 37 NEW ROAD, UTOXETER, Staffs.

FOR SALE: Magnets 1935-40, 1/3d and 1/6d each. Nelson Lees, complete years 1920-1925, 30/-d per year; 1926-1932, 25/- p.yr. Schoolboys Own Libraries, Greyfriars, 3/-; St. Jims, 2/- each. All clean copies. State any other of your requirements.

C. L. LETTEY

27 HEATHER CLOSE, KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL.

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EXETER

ADVERTISE IN THE C.D. - 1d. per word.

Advertisements

AVAILABLE: GOOD CONDITION, REASONABLE PRICES: Magnets, Gems, Populars, Boys Friend Libraries, Union Jacks, Marvels, etc. 1905 onward. Old 'Bloods' (Lloyds, etc.) 1840 onwards. Victorian rarities, bound, Boys of the Empire, Young Folks Budget, etc. Aldines, Famous Crimes, Answers, Tit-Bits, 1882 onward. Photo Bits, London Life, etc., from 1910. Also pre-1940 Film Magazines. EXCHANGES WELCOMED! THOUSANDS IN STOCK. S.A.E. requirements, please
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I REQUIRE URGENTLY Magnets before 1920, Children's Comics, Film Fun, Kinema Comic 1920/21, Rainbow, Comic Cuts, Funny Wonder, Puck, Chuckles, Lot-o'-Fun, etc. Plucks, Football and Sports Budgets all before 1921. DAVID STACEY, "THE BEECHES," SOUTHEND RD. WICKFORD, Essex.

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BOUND VOLUMES

UNION JACKS 1160-1203; 1370-1393; MARVEL 65-78, 1905.
GEM 1142 - 1167; THE POPULAR 285-310 1924; 259-284 1924.
THE EMPIRE LIBRARY 20 - 36 1910; PENNY PICTORIAL 488-500 1908
NELSON LEE 140-165 1929; 166-191 1929; MAGNET 502-553 1918
COLLECTORS DIGEST 1-36 1947-50; 37-72 1951-53; C.D. ANNUALS
1948, 49, 50, 51, 52.

52 copies of THE MAGNET for 1936 suitable for binding

BOUND VOLUME of THE GEM 621-646, 1920.

WANTED: "The Most Haunted House" by Price.

PRICES OF ANY OF THE ABOVE WILL BE GLADLY FORWARDED

ON RECEIPT OF A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB, MIDLAND SECTION (Cont'd from page 158).
 more welcome to us than Mr. Down; both for the man himself of a most attractive personality, and for what he means to us as the Olympian Being who as Editor guided the fortunes of our beloved "Magnet" for so long.

The meeting had started in the usual way with the minutes and then a reading by Mr. Porter from a Rookwood story (S.O.L. No. 356). Following this representatives of the press had taken two photographs and yards of details. The newshawks then left us in peace to enjoy Mr. Down's talk.

We are much indebted to him for a mine of information on the publication of periodicals, and for his inexhaustible patience and courtesy in dealing with the large number of questions fire at him before coffee and refreshments arrived.

During refreshment time various suitable toasts were drunk.

Incidentally, mention must be made of a splendid greetings poster which was much admired, and had been done specially for us by a very keen lady member, (Miss Partridge).

After our toasts, Mr. Bellfield read us two chapters of "Billy Bunter's Barring Out", showing a very choice example of Frank Richards' tremendous sense of humour.

Finally we tackled a quiz prepared by our Chairman. The prizes were "Magnets". One set for the Ladies' prize and one for the gentlemen's.

A final farewell chat with our visitor concluded a memorable evening.

EDWARD DAVEY.

* * * * *

MERSEYSIDE SECTION

April 12th, 1953.

There was again a large attendance for this meeting, which got away to a flying start at 7.30 p.m. The formal business was quickly dealt with, and the chairman prefaced his remarks with a welcome to yet another new member, Mr. A.O. Davies, of West Derby. Rarely a month passes without a fresh enrolment, the encouraging feature being that all our new friends are "stickers". Reference was then made to the matter which caused so much indignation at our last meeting; the A.P. letter business; Don informed us that one of our members felt so strongly about it he had written a letter informing them of our views on the reply, and we await development (if any) with interest.

Two important section matters were then (concluded page 132)

HAMILTONIAN

Conducted by HERBERT LECKENBY

* * *

Gerry Allison was interested in that word-ladder, - "Coker" into "Prout" which puzzled some of the Midland members at one of their meetings. It's evidently a teaser for it beat some Northern Section chap too. But Gerry solved it in 15 steps. He suggests you all have a go, so I'm giving his solution at the end of this section, but don't look at it until you have had a try.

What's more Gerry has worked out another one - "POTTER" into "GREENE". He warns you it's tough but it can be done with genuine dictionary words. He got it in 20 steps.

And, Gerry generously offers half a guinea for a correct solution, not necessarily the same working out as his. The prize to go to the one doing it in the least number of steps, or if all alike to the first one received. We'll give you until May 20th. Send direct to GERALD ALLISON, 7, SUMMERFIELD GARDENS, BRAMLEY, LEEDS.

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OUR COVER PICTURES: Concerning last month's Mervyn Lewis says "It appeared in Magnet, 1540, "Wibloy Wins Through", the series 1536-40 where Wibloy is expelled for impersonating Mossoo.

Of this month's he explains:- It is enlarged from an inside illustration, reversed, to make it more confusing. The background is the same. Here are the clues. The centre figure in Price of the Fifth. On the left is a newcomer to Greyfriars who is also in the Fifth. Who is the character on the right who does not belong to Greyfriars, and in what series and particular number did he appear?

* * * * *

(Note: I am always glad to welcome 'new hands' to our columns and five minutes after reading the following I was writing to Derek congratulating him on a fine effort and for breaking new ground. More please, Derek. - H.L.).

LEN LEX - THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE

By DEREK SMITH.

Howard Haycraft in his detailed analysis of the Life and Times

of the Detective Story speaks of "the hoodoo that has always hovered over boy detectives."

Certainly, any author who attempts such a characterization is confronted with one staggering disadvantage. If he creates a credible boy, nobody will believe in his feats of detection - and if he gives his readers an efficient detective, they won't believe him a boy!

A striking example can be found in the work of Gaston Leroux. We can swallow Rouletabille's masterly ratiocination, and delight in the complex *Mystery of the Yellow Room* - but let the author tell us his hero is only sixteen years old and we hoot with derision.

No such criticism can apply to Charles Hamilton's "Schoolboy Detective". Len Lex, who made his bow in "The Modern Boy" in October 1936, was not only one of the liveliest and most original of the author's many creations, he was also completely credible.

Chapters Two and Three of the opening instalment, besides setting the stage for Len's entrance, were models of deft, careful construction.

"Slim, athletic, rather handsome, Len did not look much like his uncle, the Scotland Yard inspector." But detection was in his blood.

Detective Inspector William Nixon was after a mysterious burglar known as the *Sussex Man*. He had little success until his orphan nephew indicated the essential clue to the criminal's headquarters, if not his identity.

Once Len had convinced his uncle the cracksman could be found somewhere in Oakshott School, the natural consequence was the youngster's appearance as a new pupil in the Fifth - apparently an ordinary schoolboy, but in reality a detective keeping watch for the *Sussex Man*.

Len soon narrowed his search down to four main suspects. Three were masters at the school, the fourth was "X" - identity unknown.

It would be a pity to give the game away in this article, for the mystery was never the open secret usually encountered in boys' fiction. Charles Hamilton kept his readers guessing until the last instalment, dividing their suspicions with a skill worthy of the all-time mistress of the surprise solution, Agatha Christie.

This alone should have been enough to win the series an

enduring position in boys' literature - but there was also... Well, the best is yet.

With characteristic modesty, Frank Richards comments in his Autobiography: "There were giants ... in those old days, who laid waste many fields, and left nothing for their successors but gleaning. Frank claims more originality for his 'Schoolboy Detective,' ... but no detective since Conan Doyle has been much more than a variation on the original theme."

Mr. Hamilton did himself less than justice. Besides dispelling Mr. Haycraft's hoodoo forever, he also provided his readers with an entirely original Watson!

Peter Poringe was not only a Watson who - like Nero Wolfe's assistant, Archie Goodwin - nearly stole the show from his Sherlock Holmes. He was also the only Watson in the history of the detective story who never realised his friend was a detective!

Peter Poringe - Pie for short - was a goat. Not a Giddy Goat like Adolphus Smythe and the Nuts of Rookwood, but an amiable, blundering fathead whose involved schemes of vengeance always ended in disaster or dissolved into hilarity.

Let the careless reader beware. Don't dismiss Pie's antics as mere comic relief. They were vital threads in the fabric of the story. They were as essential to the plot as Billy Bunter's fatuous machinations in the Greyfriars saga. Every time Pie played the goat, unknowingly and unintentionally he uncovered a fresh clue to the mystery for Len's consideration.

I wonder if Charles Hamilton - a craftsman of uncanny skill - chose this graceful and witty way of expressing his disapproval of those irritating American ladies in the "Had-I-But-Known" school of detective fiction? Though in a later story Pie interrupted Len's investigations by smothering him with soot, his blunders never confused the trail. On the contrary, Pie's antics were always a help to Len Lex, for the unforeseen results invariably gave fresh impetus to his investigations.

The original series about the Sussex Man was followed by three others. Since the sequels were rather short, the author was unable to repeat the intricate pattern of mystery exemplified in the first. "The Mystery of the Moat House" played an ingenious confidence trick on the reader, but the puzzles in the subsequent yarns were open secrets.

In all other respects, however, these stories were as

excellent as ever. Len Lex grew in charm and authority, while Peter Porrhinge pursued his hilarious, goatish way with unflagging zest.

The series was all too short. When Len Lex made his final exit, he did so with grace and modesty. "My shy nature makes me loathe the limelight. I don't want the fellows here to tumble to it that I'm a detective. I'm off!"

And he was. To the best of my knowledge, he never reappeared in the pages of "The Modern Boy".

Why? Well, that's the biggest mystery of all. He certainly doesn't deserve to be forgotten.

But perhaps there's still hope. Frank Richards has already hinted that the Rio Kid may ride again. Maybe Len Lex, too, will delight us with his return.

With that goat, Porrhinge!

Bibliography:

The Schoolboy Detective.

Originally published in The Modern Boy. Nos. 452 to 461. Reprinted as "The Schoolboy 'Tec!" in Schoolboys' Own Library No. 353.

The "Moat House" series.

Originally published in The Modern Boy Nos. 462 to 465. Reprinted as "The Moat House Mystery!" in Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1941.

The "Eric Tunstall" series.

Originally published in The Modern Boy Nos. 479 to 484.

The "Egerton Young" series.

Originally published in The Modern Boy Nos. 485 to 488. Both the above series were reprinted in "Asking for the Sack!" Schoolboys' Own Library No. 371.

* * * * *

(Two old contributors join hands here, and like Derek they deal with stories not adequately dealt with up to now. - H.L.)

STORIES ABOUT HAMILTON SCHOOLS IN THE FIRST SERIES OF THE BOYS' FRIEND MONTHLY LIBRARY

By ROGER M. JENKINS and JOHN R. SHAW

* * *

Many collectors to whom the words 'Magnet' and 'Gem' are household names have probably never come across copies of the first

series of the Boys' Friend Monthly Library. As the Series ended as long ago as 1925, the rarity of these books is not surprising. Nevertheless, there were a number of issues in this Library of very great interest to collectors of Charles Hamilton's work, for this series was in a way the predecessor of the Schoolboys' Own Library and other monthly publications of the Amalgamated Press.

As was only fitting, St. Jim's was the first school to be represented. In November 1907 appeared No. 30 entitled "Tom Merry & Co." which related how the three rival factions at St. Jim's were welded together to meet the menace of the new Grammar School at Rylcombe. The sequel to this story - "Tom Merry's Conquest" - was published in January 1908 in No. 38. The theme was the same as the earlier story, but on this occasion the ranks of the Saints were swelled by two juniors paying return visits to the school - Robert Digby and Marmaduke Smythe. (Collectors may care to note that "Tom Merry's Conquest" was later reprinted in the Gem in Nos. 167 and 168, and again in Nos. 1359 and 1360, the latter reprinting being more abridged than the former.)

There is an indefinable charm about these very early St. Jim's stories which is peculiar to the Sussex school. The characterisation and the idyllic atmosphere of rural England more than make up for what would later have been regarded as a rather thin and uninteresting plot. Gussy is superb, and the absence of any real villains on the scene renders all the fun harmless. There is much to be said for the theory that the arrival of the early Levison and the reactions to his extreme villainy smashed the magic mirror which reflected these unique and harmonious youthful visions.

If the Boys' Friend Monthly Library provided material for the Gem, the Gem also returned the compliment to the monthly library. Gems Nos. 173-175 appeared in No. 509 of the Boys' Friend monthly entitled "The Schoolboy Castaways" (other reprints of this series were in the 1924 Holiday Annual and Gems Nos. 1364-1366). Again, Gem Nos. 190-192 provided material for No. 517 of the Boys' Friend monthly entitled "Under Sealed Orders" (see also Gems. Nos. 1397-1399). Both these foreign trips were apparently very popular with the readers.

The substitute writers contributed two effusions under the pseudonym "Martin Clifford". No. 153 - "The Silent Three" - is a curious tale obviously not by Charles Hamilton. No. 276 - "Through Thick and Thin" - is by J.N. Pentelow, but it seems from a study of the text to be an expanded version of a story written by Charles

Hamilton. The most successful St. Jim's story in this series, however, is No. 383 entitled "After Lights Out". This tale, which is, needless to say, by the genuine Martin Clifford, and which is not a reprint, relates how Racke incurred the enmity of a footpad on one of his nocturnal expeditions to the Green Man. When the footpad later waylaid Racke and took his revenge, Levison was thought to be guilty of the assault, since he was known to be on particularly bad terms with the son of the war profiteer at that time. To get even with Levison, and to avoid having to explain to Dr. Holmes about the nocturnal excursion, Racke accused Levison, who was expelled from the school. The development of this plot provides one of the most engrossing single stories ever to have been written about St. Jim's.

A number of schools made a solitary appearance in this series. No. 413 entitled "The Feud at Rockwood" was also a story which was making its sole appearance in print, but it was only an average tale. It is a pity that the Hampshire school was not better represented. No. 67 entitled "The Secret of St. Winifred's", on the other hand, was an intriguing story about Clive Lawrence who, as Jimmy Silver was destined to do some years later, on his first day at school bagged a senior trap and overtook the rival conveyance on the way. As Clive Lawrence became captain of the Fourth, and also helped to find buried treasure, his first term at St. Winifred's was hardly uneventful. "Rivals of St. Kit's" in No. 46 related the vicissitudes of the career of Arthur Talbot, captain of the school, loyally backed up by Nugent of the Fourth. This extremely dramatic tale of St. Kit's (not the same as the school in "School and Sport") was, like the one about St. Winifred's, a solo appearance.

We move on to more familiar ground with No. 235 - "The School Under Canvas", which appeared under the pseudonym "Prosper Howard". This was a story about Rylcombe Grammar School - which had been introduced into the St. Jim's stories in 1907. A series of short stories about the school was written under this pseudonym by a substitute writer for the Empire Library in 1910. Charles Hamilton himself then wrote a serial centring around this school for Nos. 228-246 of the Gem, and it was this which was reprinted in No. 235 of the Boys' Friend monthly library. Also connected with the Gem Library and the Empire was No. 367 - "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays". This was a reprint of a serial which had first appeared in the Empire and later at the back of the Gem (Nos. 405-416). For a while D'Arcy's cousin spent the time at St. Tredda's, Miss Penfold's

establishment not too far from St. Jim's. Were it not for the fact that Tom Merry & Co. made a number of appearances in the story, it would not perhaps readily occur to the reader that the story was by Charles Hamilton, so different is the method of approach adopted by the author.

Greyfriars was not very well represented in the Boys' Friend monthly library. No. 319 - "School and Sport" - and No. 489 - "Football Champions" - were banal efforts written by that substitute writer who imagined that a list of sporting events provided a substitute for a plot when writing a story. No. 513 - "On the Warpath" - was, however, by Charles Hamilton, being an abridged reprint from Magnets 170, 176, and 177 (these were later reprinted once again in Nos. 51 and 57 of the Schoolboys' Own Library). The tale deals with the manner in which Bulstrode regained the captaincy of the Remove, and the difficulties which beset him later. Taken as it is from one of the best periods of the red Magnet, it makes fine reading in spite of the omission of a number of chapters.

But if Greyfriars was poorly represented, it was a neighbouring school - Highcliffe - which was the centre of the two finest stories within the scope of this article. The first, which was published in 1915, was No. 288, entitled "The Boy Without a Name". This relates how a new boy called Clare came to the school on a scholarship, much to the disgust of Mr. Mobbs and Ponsonby & Co. He struck up a deep friendship with the whimsical De Courcy, the Caterpillar, and despite Ponsonby's attempts to get him expelled, he managed to maintain his position to the end, when it turned out he was the son of Major Courtenay, Ponsonby's rich uncle (the similarity to the first St. Kit's stories in "School and Sport" some years later is striking). There is much that can be said about "The Boy Without a Name": if anything is required as proof of the timelessness of Charles Hamilton's writing, this is it, for apart from the snobbery which might seem excessive by present day standards, this tale is every bit as compelling as the day it was written. The character drawing is superb, with the Caterpillar standing out head and shoulders above the other characters. He is the original of Cardew, who even at his best hardly equals the De Courcy of this story and its sequel. It is no wonder that Charles Hamilton considers "The Boy Without a Name" to be one of his finest stories.

The sequel to this story appeared the following year in No. 328 entitled "Rivals and Chums". Courtenay was now captain of the

Highcliffe Fourth but the Caterpillar, though as friendly as before, was tempted by the bait of the roulette parlous which Ponsonby told him Mr. Banks was running at Courtfield. The description of the two visits to this gambling den are the highlights of the story. De Courcy first discovered that consistent backing of the same number was not the key to success, and after he had lost all his money he realized that Mr. Banks could manipulate the wheel. On the second occasion, therefore, he resorted to the device known as playing the croupier i.e. backing manque when most stakes were on impair, and backing noir when most stakes were on rouge. But Mr. Banks found this device annoying, and he deliberately allowed the holders of the big stakes to win in order to put a stop to the Caterpillar's ruse. The moral tone of the story is impeccable, but the author's own absorbing interest in roulette enlivens the subject to a tremendous degree. The main plot of "Rivals and Chums" is again Ponsonby's schemings, and the story is a worthy successor to "The Boy Without a Name". Charles Hamilton wrote no other stories centring around Highcliffe. The doddering Dr. Voysey, the snobbish Mr. Mobbs, the unscrupulous Ponsonby and the whimsical De Courcy were never again allowed to play their parts on so wide a stage. If for this reason alone, we must feel grateful to the originator of the Boys' Friend monthly library for giving Charles Hamilton the opportunity to present us with two priceless jewels to add to our treasure house of school stories.

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POTTED PERSONALITIES. NO. 7

By Eric Fayne

* * *

ERIC KILDARE

Our author's Captains of their respective schools never seemed quite to ring the bell. They were, to say the least, rather stodgy characters, - and, in their smug dryness, rather alike.

Of the three, however, - Wingate, Kildare, and Bulkeley, - I think it can be said that Kildare was the most successful. For one thing, he was Irish, and that fact set him just a little apart from the other two. In the Gem's later years, Kildare was almost a nonentity, and we did not miss him. But, in blue-cover days, he fairly frequently appeared in a star role.

Probably the best tales in which he appeared were those in which he was shown in rivalry with Monteith. There were a number of excellent tales on this theme, and the characters of the two house leaders of St. Jim's were shown in clever contrast. Those stories, with the character painting which they possessed, gave Kildare a flying start over his opposite number, Wingate of Greyfriars. In passing, Monteith was an excellent character study, and it was a great pity that he did not feature more prominently in the Gem story.

Many of these early rivalry stories appeared in "Pluck" though I believe that they were edited, and re-printed in the Gem.

A series comes to mind in which Kildare left St. Jim's for a time, and Tom Merry became Captain of the School, to be succeeded in that lofty position by Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts, wishing to retain the position, endeavoured to make Kildare's absence permanent, in one fine story.

In the British Isles series, - four successive stories featuring a representative of each country, Kildare appeared for Ireland. As has already been mentioned in these Potted Personalities, Kerr represented Scotland, Fatty Wynn Wales, and, of course, "Tom Merry for England".

One or two moderate tales introduced Kildare, in connection with his relative Mick Kildare, but the plots do not remain in the memory.

Finally, in 1931, a substitute writer contributed a series in which Kildare joined the Foreign Legion, - a far-fetched affair which is better forgotten.

Kildare's part at St. Jim's was nothing like so large as Wingate's at Greyfriars. Wingate had a spoiled brother, and he also had an implacable enemy in Loder. On one occasion he even fell in love with an actress. But he was too lofty and sedate to be a very popular character. In Kildare we had more of the human senior boy, and the Gem would have been the poorer for his absence from the St. Jim's stage.

* * * * *

Word-Ladder. "COKER" into "PROUT"

COKER	POKER	POKES	POLES	POOLS
POOPS	PROPS	CROPS	CROWS	CROWN
GROWN	GROAN	GROAT	GROUT	PROUT

MAGNET TITLES (see page 160).

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Ray Hopkins, popular member of the London O.B.B.C., is now living in Seattle, U.S.A. With a racy letter to me recently he also gave me a delightful story he had received from a friend of his, Miss Nancy West, a reporter on the Vancouver Daily Province. Said Ray, "How did you like that, Herbert? I thought it was awfully funny and as it has some kinship to the Club activities I thought you would like to hear about it and perhaps use it in the mag."

Use it! I should say so. Why I had already decided on that before I got to that part of Ray's letter. And when you've read it I guess you'll say I shouldn't have known my job if I hadn't used it. Here it is in his friend Nancy's graphic sentences.

"I had a long chat with Freddie Goodchild, our librarian the other day. He told me an hilarious take about "Chums" which I will pass on.

Seems that he and his wife were vacationing at Point Roberts some years ago, and were lucky to hit a warm, dry summer that allowed them to soak up the sun on the beach every day. But, this same sun had made all the cabins and surrounding driftwood drier than tinder.

So one day, shortly after Freddie and his wife had settled themselves on the beach, he looked backward to see with some horror that their cabin was afire -- and smoke now billowing from the window. The two dashed across the beach, alerted their neighbours and went to fight the fire. One of these neighbors (whose name I can supply only if I check with Freddie again) is, or was, a University Professor, and came quickly to help.

Freddie organized things, getting each of his helpers to grab large armfuls of clothing and personal possessions and run outdoors with them. This went on until Fred decided it was not safe to bring out more than one more arm load. So he and the Professor went in to pick up two more loads. They had loaded their arms, and Freddie was leading the way out of the now smoke-filled room, coughing a little, when he heard a loud crash from behind.

"Poor Professor," Freddie thought wildly, "he's had it." He dropped his arm load of possessions every which way and ran back to the rescue, only to find the Professor standing with a wondering, awed look on his face, holding a book.

"Look, Fred," he said. "A copy of "Chums". I haven't seen one of these since I was a boy!" (concluded page 156).

NELSON LEE COLUMN

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

Our first contribution this month comes from Ernest Carter of Australia. He has chosen as his subject the 2nd New Series of which not much has been written. This particular series has not found much favour in the past amongst a lot of collectors (myself included) but there's more in it than meets the eye as this article, and one or two others I have in hand, will show. What Ernest has to say is certainly surprising to me and is sure to interest those of you who are Sexton Blake fans.

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY
2nd New Series 1932
REPRINTS FROM SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY
1st Series 1920

By E.C. CARTER.

So much has been written about the Nelson Lee old series and first new series so I have decided to show a little light on the second new series which up to date has puzzled collectors whether the detective stories were written at the time by Brooks, or other authors, or even perhaps reprints by Maxwell Scott and others. I have before me Nelson Lee No. 134. 2nd new series and also Sexton Blake 1st series No. 124. The former title is "The Prisoner of the Temple" and the latter "The Mystery of the Thousand Peaks". ~~The Lee version is condensed from the Blake story.~~ In it Sexton Blake becomes Nelson Lee, Pinker - Nipper, The Hon. John Lawless - Lord Dorrimore. Where Pedro is featured he becomes Wolf. This story takes place in Manchuria. The next Lee is No. 136 "South Sea Loot" which is taken from Sexton Blake Library No. 108, "The Head Hunter's Secret". Lord Dorrimore is not featured this time. Lee No. 137 "The House of Horror" is taken from Sexton Blake No. 127 - "The Affair of the Oriental Doctor". This is probably by Lewis Jackson as the Blake story featured Inspector Harker and Leon Kestrel. Harker keeps his identity in the Lee version but

Kestrel is omitted. No. 147 is the next Lee story "Desert Foes" which is taken and condensed from Sexton Blake No. 136 "The Sheikh's Son" which features Lee, Nipper and Lord Dorrimore. No. 149 is the last Lee story I have been able to trace which is entitled "The Treasure of the Hunger Desert" which is taken from Sexton Blake No. 144. "The Secret of the Hunger Desert". This is a story about Tibet. As my Sexton Blake collection is not complete I am unable to trace any more reprints or rewritten stories. Perhaps collectors who are interested in research work may be able to trace some more for themselves, as I now have given a lead. It now proves that Brooks did not write the stories at the time nor were they reprints by Maxwell Scott or others. With the exception of the "House of Horror - Affair of the Oriental Doctor" by Lewis Jackson, the other stories were definitely by Andrew Murray, a prolific writer of Blake in the 1920's. The Hon. John Lawless was one of his favourite characters. Why Murray's stories were reprinted good as they were, and writers like Brooks, William Murray Graydon, Mark Osborne and Pierre Quirouille, who stories were not used in the Lee versions is rather a mystery. Perhaps Murray's stories were more easily obtained, permission granted without trouble and more suitable for the period. Then again, if reprints were being used why were the stories of G.H. Teed not used?

In conclusion I hope this little effort will be of some use to collectors of the Nelson Lee and Blakiana. I think it has opened a new field of research as I don't know whether the subject has been used before.

I would welcome any comments and further information about this interesting matter - Nelson Lee Library 2nd new series - Reprints from Sexton Blake first series.

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Well there you are. If any of you care to go into this matter of reprints and can trace any more, both he & I would be very pleased to hear of them.

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Next we have Norman Pragnell of the Merseyside Club. A few months ago he gave a resume of one of his favourite series, i.e. concerning the School Train. This time he goes further back to an early 1st N.S. yarn when the Old Paper was at the height of its popularity. Norman is one of the keenest N.L. supports, and he is certainly doing his stuff at the club meetings to get the N.L.

its proper appreciation, as witness their report last month. Nice work Norman, more power to your elbow!

ST. FRANKS AND THIS RAGGING BUSINESS

By NORMAN PRAGNELL

There is no doubt that many a successful school story has been based on the theme of interhouse japing and ragging, and many are the episodes we have all read where Ancients have debagged Moderns and the Fourth have been unceremoniously bumped and ducked by the Remove. Some of us may recall with amusement the time when Lovell was dumped at Bagshot by that enterprising new boy Loring who had no compunction about letting Lovell share the fate intended for himself. Most of these yarns were amusing and interesting, even if they left no lasting mark on our memories.

It was left to Edwy Searles Brooks to give us Nelson Lee readers the opportunity of reading what was without doubt the finest series of this type to be written, and it appeared in the first near series Nos. 68 - 71 and was entitled "The Feud of the Fourth".

The opening chapters told us of Nipper & Co. with several of his fellow Removeites just arriving at Belton station after their African holiday, and instead of receiving the cherry greetings of their school friends we read these lines which told us that this was to be no usual story. "And strangely enough, every face was grim. There were no welcoming smiles here - no cherry greetings. Nipper during that first second sensed that something was wrong." And how right he was. Misunderstandings the previous day, over a minor rag by Armstrong on Professor Tucker had resulted in inflamed tempers, and the Fourth were in no lighthearted mood. Nipper & Co. were quickly grabbed, then compelled to wear their clothing inside out, and finally made to trundle a hack containing Boots & Co. back to St. Franks. Relations between the two Forms rapidly deteriorated and fights, both individual and collective were soon the order of the day. Thrashing machines, tar and feathers, wholesale glueing to forms were but few of the methods used in the war between the Remove and the Fourth.

To make the bitterness complete an unknown dealer in destruction appeared on the scene dealing out punishment

indiscriminately, caring nothing whether his blows fell on Removeites, Fourthformers, or even masters. That he was a very unpleasant fellow we know, because he was quite free with his use of dog whips and heavy stones.

Inevitably, the Head was forced to take action, and both sides were warned that future repetition of this conduct would result in expulsion and flogging for the leaders.

But matters were out of hand by then. The Remove formed an Ancient Order of Avengers and the Fourth replied with their own interpretation of the Klue Klux Klan, and the war was continued anew. The end had to come, however, and the unknown menace was eventually discovered, but only in the nick of time, for by then Nipper and Boots had both received the sentence of expulsion.

Justice was done however, and the guilty culprit exposed and publicly drummed out of the school, but not before confessing to being responsible for the more unpleasant happenings.

Reflecting back on this series, one realizes that this was not a story based on personalities, but upon fast moving events and situations, and although many of our favourite characters appeared, there was no emphasis on any one particular person, that is not until the end, when the guilty boy took the limelight.

Finally in summing up, let us say that this was an excellent story, extremely well written, without any padding, a story that held our interest to the last line.

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I have been asked 'when are we going to have another quiz?' Well it's not easy to think of questions that will stump some of you experts but - well get your teeth into these. Answers next month - I hope! Incidentally they're all concerned with one or other of the Holiday Series.

1. What was the 'Conquerors'?
 2. Which Fourth-former found his father, long believed dead, and where?
 3. On one holiday there was a sort of barring-out. In what kind of building & where?
 4. Who was the 'Prisoner of the Cavern'?
 5. Who, or what, were Angelina, Emma, Susie & Lizzie?
 6. A Dragon met a Wanderer. The Dragon won the first round but not the last. When & where?
 7. Charlie Chaplin once spoke to the one and only E.O. Handforth. When & where?
 8. How far was Ixwell from Dunstane?
 9. Where was the river Majarra?
 10. Who was Daniel Nash?
- (concluded page 160).

BLAKIANA

(Unavoidably Blakiana is shorter than usual, but we hope to return to normal next month.)

"THE PAST IS PRESENT"

By J. PACKMAN

On reading one of the Sexton Blake Libraries published last month, No. 283 entitled "The Case of the African Hoodoo" by Rex Hardinge, I was considerably surprised to feel a sense of familiarity with the story.

The African setting, the happenings and the name of the author, gave me the clues and, on returning to my collection of Union Jacks' for inspiration, I found this so-called "new" S.B.L. was merely a re-write of the very first Rex Hardinge story to appear in the Union Jack No. 1265 dated 14th January 1928, entitled "The Black Cloud".

Except for some changes in the names, and with the addition of a "glamorous female" (not needed in my opinion), the whole plot has been lifted from the Union Jack, the first chapters of each story being practically identical. The Amalgamated Press managed to do quite a bit of cribbing, but personally, I feel the yarn is quite a topical one, and has been handled very well.

Seeing that the original story was written many years before this Mau Mau business came to a head, it is obvious that Rex Hardinge had a good knowledge of South Africa and Kenya. He most certainly prophesied as to what would eventually happen, and this to my mind, gives an authenticity to the story.

I have many of the old Union Jacks' among which are some fine stories by Rex Hardinge, and I, for one, would be very pleased if the Editor of the S.B.L. decided on a little more cribbing. He has plenty of material at hand from which to select. To go further, I cannot see any reason why he could not re-introduce the characters of Sir Richard Loseley and Lobangu which Mr. Hardinge took over from the late Cecil Hayter, but I suppose this could be asking too much.

For those who are interested, the commencement of the opening chapter of both the original Union Jack and the current S.B.L. are

as follows:-

Union Jack No.1265

dated 14.1.28.

It was sundowner time at Bennspruit. Stretched out in chairs on the "stoep" of the manager's house, Sexton Blake and Burke Wallace smoked the evening pipe of placid reflection. Before them stretched a glorious panorama of orchard lands the trees showing green against the red soil in a series of perfectly straight lines. Dotted here and there were the small round houses of the overseers and just beyond the manager's garden a cluster of buildings surrounded the store. Sexton Blake drew a long breath of sheer contentment. The case that had brought him from England to Johannesburg had proved an exacting one. He had met Wallace in the course of his investigations and had taken an instant liking to the tall man with the strong lined face and prematurely grey hair. The liking had been mutual, so that when, at the successful conclusion of the case Sexton Blake confessed to needing a holiday, Wallace had begged him to come and spend a week or two on the Citrus Estate in the Barberton district of which he was the manager. Blake accepted readily realising how spent were all his resources by his gruelling work chiefly underground on the Premierburg Gold Mine. He and Tinker had been eight hours on the Bennspruit estates, and the detective had to confess he had

Sexton Blake Library No. 283

dated March 1953.

Soapy Carter, international crook, smooth cosmopolitan forger, repeated on a cheque in Johannesburg the error he had made on specimens of his work in London, Paris and New York, and other centres throughout the world, and as a result Sexton Blake sat stretched out in a comfortable chair on the stoep of the estate manager's house at Dawnspruit and enjoyed a sundowner and the evening pipe of reflection.

Before the detective's eyes stretched a wide panorama of Africa tamed by man's hard work, acre upon acre of orange groves, the trees showing as bottle-green lines against the redness of the soil, criss-crossed with the sparkle of water furrows. Dotted here and there were the small white houses of the overseers, each flanked by a wind break of gums and a short distance from the manager's garden on its hilltop that commanded such a magnificent view of the estate a cluster of buildings surrounded the big packing shed Blake drew a long breath of contentment. The trailing trapping and rounding up of Soapy had been tough, nerve-racking task, sordid, violent and generally unpleasant, so when a chance acquaintance, Tom Garrett, had asked the detective and his assistant to stop over for a few

enjoyed every minute of the time. | days they had gratefully
accepted.

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A SCORE FOR BLAKE FANS. The "Daily Express" of April 2nd had a good story which should please all Blake fans. It concerned Alfred Denville, veteran actor and ex M.P. and Stanley Baldwin when Prime Minister. Mr. Denville was telling him that a man he had met in a train spent the whole journey reading a bundle of comics. "Nothing odd about that" said Mr. Baldwin, "My favourite reading is Sexton Blake" - and he pulled one out of his pocket.

Yes, Blake fans are entitled to crow. Dr. Summerskill when in the Government did once put in a good word for the Gem, but Hamiltonians cannot claim a Prime Minister as a patron.

* * * * *

A meeting of the Sexton Blake circle was held at Greenwich on Sunday, April 12th 1953. Present were Len & Josie Packman, Olive & Chas Wright, Archie Young and Ben Whiter, letters were received from those unable to attend.

The work done during the previous quarter was submitted and sorted out, and the following was proposed for the 1953 C.D.
Annual:-

Anthony Skene correspondence. Work of Allan Blair, John G. Brandon, Gwyn Evans, Coutts Brisbane, Pierre Quiroule and Cecil Hayter, and a composite article on the character of Sexton Blake through the years, in the hands of different authors.

A discussion was held on future programmes and the meeting was declared closed at 5-45 p.m. The remainder of the evening was spent round the fire with general chats on the hobby.

C. WRIGHT.

Acting Secretary.

(cont'd from page 149) LETTER FROM AMERICA

Freddie says the loud crash he heard was the professor dropping his load of possessions when he saw the book!

Can you beat that one? (End of quotation).

(Well, as Ray says "How do you like that?")

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

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

April 19. In delightful weather amidst the picturesque setting of Surbiton close to the river Thames, reminding Hamiltonians of that famous journey and cruise of the "Water Lily", a good representative gathering enjoyed the warm hospitality of Eric Fayne at the Modern School. In the unavoidable absence of chairman Len, owing to indisposition, Josie Packman took the chair. Official formalities were soon finished and the company adjourned to the "Rag" where a fine feed that would have delighted Fatty Wynn was partaken. Following the feed it was out into the garden where with the spring flowers and the Magnolia tree at its best, host Eric conducted the Hamiltonia journey. First Home was Roger Jenkins followed by Bob Whiter, Josie Packman and Ben Whiter in that order. Then in the company went into the Remove fom room for the Greyfriars Lotto, a very fine game devised by the worthy host. In this game all can join in even if their knowledge of old boys' books is limited. Competitors have to get twelve characters filled in instead of the numbers in the original "Lotto". John Geal was first to finish followed by myself, then Bob Blythe, Bob Whiter, Josie Packman and Marea Deacon. Great fun and laughs were had by competitors calling out for names they already had. After this game down we went to the "Excelsior" cinema for a film show with host Eric as operator. A grand show this with hosts of laughs. To wind up a very fine meeting "What's My Line" on the T.V. was seen followed by the get together ere we left our host and his lady helpers for our journey, except of course John Geal who lives nearby, back to the metropolis.

Next meeting at "Cherry Place", Wood Green on Sunday, May 17th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

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

3rd Annual General Meeting. April 4th, 1953, 239 Hyde Park Road,
Leeds.

The bringing forward of the meeting a week to Easter Saturday evidently affected the attendance which was a pity seeing it was

the occasion when the officials had to give an account of their stewardship. However, when they had complied, members present evidently considered their representatives had kept faith for all were re-elected without any to do.

Some interesting figures in the statement of accounts were Library Fees £35. 15. 10¹/₂d., Sale of Books £14. 10. 6d., and Books Purchased £63. 16. 10. Despite this substantial purchase during the year there was still a balance in hand of £11. 13. 3. If one adds the books bought in the two previous years it is evident the Club is in a sound condition, for on the average the books bought are worth at least the amount paid for them.

There was an interesting discussion on a question put by Robert Pick - "Would it be possible to reduce the library fee in order to encourage sales?" The feeling of the meeting was that it would not be practicable, at present at anyrate. It was pointed out there was a lot of work involved. As an illustration, when a postal member places a new order the conscientious Librarian has to check his records to see that the borrower gets copies he has not had before - no easy job in some instances.

After refreshments came a new game "Bunter Drive", invented by the ever resourceful Gerry Allison. I've paid tributes to his genius before. I'm going to do it again for this was a real winner.

It has the advantage that everyone, Hamilton fan or not has an equal chance, and I feel sure Gerry would be willing to explain it to anyone interested.

The prize was a very attractive one - a set of the new coins from a farthing to half-a-crown - with an extra shilling for Scotland. Bill Williamson was the lucky winner with a score of 155 out of a possible 210.

Altogether a very enjoyable evening.

Next meeting May 9th.

H. LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

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MIDLAND SECTION

Meeting, 20th April. A very good muster of members and yet two more new friends were present on this very notable occasion; it being our second birthday party.

Unfortunately, of our two distinguished visitors expected only one, (Mr. Down), arrived as it happened. So in a sense it was Mr. Down's evening; certainly no visitor could be (cont'd page 139).

Letter Box

OLD FRIENDS RETURNING IN "BILLY BUNTER'S OWN"

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

April 11th. 1953.

Thanks for the C.D. Good as ever: especially Eric Fayne's 'Potted Personalities'. Your article on H.T. Johnson woke many old memories. I don't think I ever came across him, but used to hear a great deal about him, and I seem to remember that the "Pride of the Ring" was specially commissioned by Sir Harold, afterwards Lord Rothermere: and with all its flamboyance it was very readable: I remember it very clearly, though it must be half a century since I read it, or very nearly.

Four authors in one have been very busy lately on "Billy Bunter's Own" annual, Frank Richards, of course, has been dealing with W.G.B. —Hilda with Bessie, —Ralph Redway with the Rio Kid: Charles Hamilton with the "School for Slackers". The latter, as doubtless you know, was a feature of "Modern Boy" in the dear dead days beyond recall. It was quite a pleasure to the author to meet Jimmy McCann again: I trust he will have the same effect on the readers.

Kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

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The Publishers Tell You Something, Too.

MANDEVILLE PUBLICATIONS

45, Great Russell Street, LONDON, W.C.1.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

14th April, 1953

I note from the past two editions of the 'Collectors' Digest' that Mr. Frank Richards has informed you that a BILLY BUNTER'S OWN is being published this year. I am very happy to inform yourself and the readers of your very popular magazine that the book is being published by ourselves and hope that although its general format may be different to the old 'Holiday Annuals', it will be happily received.

Another point which I am sure will be welcomed is that the book jacket and the illustrations will be done by Mr. C.H. Chapman. With good wishes. Yours sincerely, A.E. GERRARD.

HE WHETTED YOUR APPETITES

3 Montgomery Drive,
Sheffield, 7.

April 6th/53.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Please disillusion Mr. Cecil H. Bullivant that we have had enough of his reminiscences. I am sure many fellow collectors also found his letter in the April "C.D." most interesting. Cannot you induce him to write a full length article for the 1953 Annual?

Yours sincerely,

LEONARD M. ALLEN.

(I've received quite a lot of requests for more from Mr. Bullivant, I've asked him to oblige. - H.L.)

* * * * *

FLEET STREET BOUND!

4 Milbank Crescent,

DARLINGTON. 6th April.

Dear Herbert,

Thanks for "C.D." just received. I thought you might like to know that I've taken the job with "Reveille" and am starting with them as Features Writer on Monday 4th. May. So wish me luck!

For a few weeks I shall probably be in digs so I mean to contact some of the OBB fans so far known to me by name only. If I'm still holding the job down next Xmas I may be able to prod the Editor into dealing with the hobby so if you could spare him a copy it might produce results. Until I fix up a home in London will you please send "C.D." to the above address and my wife will send it on.

If you care to make this item a par in the next issue I've no objection.

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE MELL.

NELSON LEE COLUMN (cont'd from page 153).

Well I think that that lot will cause you to scratch your heads. There are 14 points all told. And the best of luck!

MAGNET TITLES. "S" denotes substitute. No. 1167. Waking up Greyfriars. No. 1168. The Call of the Circus. No. 1169. The Hidden Hand. No. 1170 Tale-Bearer in Chief. No. 1171. The Greyfriars Rebellion. No. 1172. Down with the Tyrant. No. 1173. All Busy on the Greyfriars Front. No. 1174. Victory for the Rebels.

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