

# THE Collector's Digest

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SEPTEMBER  
1953

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SEPTEMBER, 1953

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



## FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

THE LONDON CLUB IN THE NEWS AGAIN: Those enterprising fellows who run the parent Club brought off a big write-up in the Wood Green Weekly Herald, of July 24th. It carried a banner heading across five columns "Billy Bunter Worshippers". There was also a fine photograph showing Ben and Bob Whiter, Len Packman, Charlie Wright and Bob Blythe engrossed in the Bunter T.V. episode.

The text, a column or more, described the famous room at Wood Green and the activities that went on there. It was jolly good publicity stuff, even though there were one or two of the inevitable errors such as "Mr. Prout, House Master of the Remove" and the Hon. Hurree Ramset Jam Singh". Still we mustn't be too critical. One cannot expect young reporters to be as well versed in Greyfriars lore as Bob Whiter.

\* \* \* \* \*

BILL GANDER: The C.D. is now in the eighties and a few weeks ago many of you would receive No. 50 of Bill Gander's grand little

S.P.C. It, of course, is by several years the elder brother of the C.D., it is only because we take the stage oftener that we appear older. Unfortunately Bill tells us that through unavoidable circumstances, the S.P.C. is to appear less often than of yore. The only consolation about that is that the outlook is not as cheerless as it might have been, for at one time Bill thought No. 50 might have to be the last of all.

Anyway, the moment seems opportune to pay tribute to Bill for the debt we owe him. To bring out that perfect example of the printer's art, packed with absorbing articles for old boys' book lovers without fail four times a year has been a wonderful feat of endurance and devotion, especially as it included all the dark days of the war years and because he has done it "for nix".

I, of course, know something about the sacrifice of one's own leisure time running a magazine regularly, entails, but I gain one big compensation. Frequently I am able to meet the fellows who help to keep the C.D. going and that means a very great deal. But Bill far away across the sea is debarred from that. He tells us that he has only met two collectors in the whole of his life, and those I suppose were at his side of the herring pond. Therefore, he can only look forward to our letters. I have often wondered if we fully appreciated what turning out the S.P.C. entailed. In an ordinary printing works of any size the 'copy' would be set by linotype or monotype and the wholesixteen pages printed in one run, or possibly two. How different for Bill.

In the time he can spare from the employment by which he earns his living he has to 'set up' the copy patiently letter by letter, then run it off a page at a time, supplying the energy himself. I had experience of it years ago in a little printing works, and believe me it's no soft job. Then he has to provide the paper and envelopes and do all the addressing and mailing.

Yes, through the years, Bill Gander has indeed earned the gratitude of his fellow men.

And having said all that I still hope it won't be very long before we see No. 51. For you see, if it had not been for the S.P.C. there might never have been a C.D., and I should be loth to think that the pupil had to carry the standard of the old boys' book collectors fraternity alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

'ANNUAL' PROGRESS: Things have been happening with a vengeance

during the month. A week or two ago I received from Eric Fayne his article on the Adults of Greyfriars and St. Jims. This is a most interesting and invaluable "Who's Who" of 150 or more 'grown-ups' who passed through the pages of the Magnet and Gem; something never compiled before.

But this isn't all where Eric is concerned; not by any means. Listen to this. About the same time as I received the above mentioned I received a letter from Bill Hubbard, who despite the fact that he is right in the midst of the Nairobi trouble can write unperturbed about Hamiltoniana matters. Among other things he made a request for an article on Rookwood. Now as you know this school is a bit of a problem for very few collectors have anything like a run of the necessary Boys' Friends. However, one is Eric Fayne so I appealed to him. Promptly came his consent and a proposal to call the article "Days of Conquest". How's that for a brainwave?

Well, three or four days later I received a packet which I could see at a glance was from Eric. "It can't possibly be the Rookwood article" I said to myself. I could hardly believe my eyes when I found it surely was - nearly eleven neatly typed foolscap pages. Talk about Edgar Wallace and a story dictated in a week-end. That was a mere nothing compared with this astounding feat for Eric had had to wade through eleven years issues of the large paged Boys' Friends in order to get his data. Not only that he tells quite a lot about other stories which appeared in the "Green 'Un" over those eleven years.

I should just like to add that the article covers different ground to the admirable one Roger Jenkins wrote for S.P.C. No.49.

I have spoken about this at some length but it honestly is an achievement that should be put on record. You'll agree when you see it.

Do you know when our new agency told me of their plans to make a real streamlined job of the Annual, I, in one way, rather got "the wind up". "Why on earth should he do that?" I can hear you say. Well, you see, I began to wonder if I should manage to make the contents equal the appearance. But all my fears are evaporating now; when the time comes I'm confident you'll all say 'in every way the best yet'.

Just one other thing. Orders continue to come along satisfactorily but so far a scarcity of adverts. We must have a few. How about it?

THE OTHER 'ANNUAL': Shortly after these lines are in print I hope to be on my way once more to London town, for the tour I look forward to for fifty weeks of the calendar. And there may be particular significance attached to it this year. For twelve months hence as things are ordained, I may be on the 'retired list'. To me the thought that I am nearing that age is simply fantastic, for, probably through being absorbed in this hobby of ours, I feel only half way.

However, if it has to be it will at least give me more leisure to pilot the good ship "C.D." on its way to its hundredth number, and then some. Meanwhile to the big city, to meet old friends and, I hope, some who have come along since last I was there.

Yours sincerely,  
HERBERT LECKENBY.

INTER-CLUB "QUIZ"

Merseyside Questions to Northern

Q = Question

A = Answer

'MAGNET'

- Q.1. Give the name of Gosling's Dog? A.1. "Biter".  
 Q.2. What 'St. Jims' character performed "the hat-trick" in a Magnet story? A.2. Wally D'Arcy (Magnet 79 - 'Harry Whartons XI')  
 Q.3. What Greyfriars 'old boy' kidnapped Bob Cherry? A.3. \*Franz Kranz.  
 Q.4. Which Greyfriars character was sent to Borstal? A.4. \*Vernon-Smith.  
 Q.5. Which Greyfriars master arrived in a tramp's attire? A.5. Wally Bunter.

'GEM'

- Q.6. What was Valentine Outram's real name? A.6. \* George Purkiss.  
 Q.7. Who was master of the Shell Form at Clavering? A.7. Mr. Quelch.  
 Q.8. What name did Marie Rivers use when coming to St. Jims?  
 A.8. Miss March.  
 Q.9. What school did Cardew attend prior to coming to St. Jim's?  
 A.9. \* Wodehouse.  
 Q.10. What was name of St. Jim's housemaster prior to Mr. Railton?  
 A.10. \* Mr. Kidd.

NELSON LEE

- Q.11. Which fifth-former spent a period in the 3rd form.

A.11. \* Chambers.

Q.12. Name 4 sisters of St. Franks Removites attending Moor View School. A.12. \* Irene Church, Winnie Pitt, Ena Handforth, Violet Watson.

Q.13. Which series was started and not completed in 'Nelson Lee' Library? A.13. \* Reprint of 'China' series (1938).

Q.14. Who was Junior Captain of Carlton College? A.14. \*K.K. Parkington.

Q.15. Who was third form Captain prior to arrival of Willy Handforth? A.15. \* Owen Minor.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

Q.16. "Portland Bill" appeared on the front page of which comic?

A.16. \* The Butterfly.

Q.17. What 2 Rookwood characters have Mark for christian name?

A.17. \* Lattrey and Carthew.

Q.18. Who wrote adventure serials in the first person for 'Chums'?

A.18. \* S. Walkey.

Q.19. Give name of dancer known to Tinker before he met Sexton

Blake. A.19. \* Nirvana.

Q.20. Who wrote about "The Boys of the Bombay Castle" and for what periodical? A.20. \* Duncan Storm ('The Boys' Friend').

\* Indicates correct answer. Northern score - 15.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Northern Questions to Merseyside

##### 'MAGNET'

Q.1. What Greyfriars Remove boy had a study to himself? A.1. Robert Fortescue Smith.

Q.2. Which Greyfriars character grew older? A.2. \* Wally Bunter.

Q.3. Whose Minor died at Greyfriars? A.3. Bulstrode Minor.

Q.4. Which Greyfriars character was "murdered" by a Sub. writer?

A.4. \* Courtenay.

##### 'ST. FRANKS'

Q.5. Who was temporary Page Boy at St. Franks' during Kennedy Hunter Barring-Out? A.5. Bates.

Q.6. What was Nelson Lee's other names during the same Barring-Out?

A.6. Kent and Reinhardt.

Q.7. From which school did Handforth and Co. come before St. Franks?

A.7. Monkhurst College.

Q.8. Name of final Nelson Lee title. A.8. St. Frank's Fugitives.

Q.9. Which Sixth Former impersonated his elder brother at St.

Franks? A.9. \* Simon Kenmore.

- Q.10. With what paper was the Gem finally merged? A.10. \* Triumph.  
 Q.11. From which school did George Grundy come? \* Redcliffe.  
 Q.12. Who preceded Mr. Railton at St. Jims? A.12. \* Mr. Kidd.  
 Q.13. Name of Curate at Huckleberry Heath. A.13. \* Mr. Dodds.  
 Q.14. Who was D'Arcy Minimus? A.14. A Donkey.  
 Q.15. Name of Figgins' father. A.15. Sir Fortescue Figgins.  
 Q.16. Who was Captain of the St. Jim's Fourth when Jack Blake arrived? A.16. George Herries.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Q.17. What was the name of the inn near the Benbow-resort of the Gay Dogs of St. Winifreds? A.17. Lobster Pot.  
 Q.18. Name three other detectives created by Maxwell Scott apart from Nelson Lee. A.18. Kenyon Ford, Martin Dale, Vernon Read.  
 Q.19. Name of doctor who used to visit Mrs. Bruin's School. A.19. \* Dr. Lion.  
 Q.20. In what comic did Loo Lumlee and his lucky lamb appear? A.20. Chuckles.

\* Indicates correct answer. Merseyside score - 8

## Hamiltoniana

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

\*\*\*

You will remember that in the July number I said that "The Pride of the Ring" which appeared in the Greyfriars Herald, 1st series, was, on the authority of Fleetway House, written by G.R. Samways, and, now we know that, it might be possible by studying his style to trace some of the Gem and Magnet stories for which he was responsible.

Well, Ron Crollie of Romford got down to some studying and, as a result I have had a very interesting letter from him. In it he gives me a list of several stories he is sure were written by Samways and also gives some examples of his style. Here first are the stories.

Magnets. No. 421, "Skinner the Skipper", 424, "The Mailed Fist at Greyfriars", 426, "The Terrible Two", 436, "Called to the Colours", 468, "Linley Minor", 476, "The Greyfriars Flying Corps".

Gems. No. 420, "Sportsmen of St. Jim's", 430, "The Conquering Heroes", 438, "A Schoolboy's Sacrifice", 442, "The Schoolboy Reporter", 444, "Every Inch a Hero", 448, "Heroes of the Fourth".

Ron gives some extracts. This, for instance, to which he adds the comment, "rather different to a Hamilton story isn't it?"

Colonel Ranter halted and glared at the humorous Bob as if he would eat him.

"Huh!" he exclaimed, "You - boy - don't you know who I am?"

"Couldn't tell you from Adam" said Bob Cherry.

"Half a jiffy though! You're Colonel Decanter - what!"

The peppery old warrior pranced about on the flagstones, breathing out threatenings and slaughter.

"How dare you!" he stormed, "I'd have you know you impertinent cub that I am a governor of this depraved and benighted institution!"

Ron also says there were attempts to introduce classical allusions in this manner.

"Steady on, old scout!" said Bob. "No good scrapping when we're outnumbered by three to one. They'd strew the hungry churchyard with our bones, as Shakespeare says".

Well, George Orwell once said that anyone could write a Greyfriars or St. Jim's story given the data. Um! Yes! and quite a number of chaps can handle a cricket bat but not in the manner of a Hutton or a Harvey. In the same manner I am sure you can see the difference between a Greyfriars substitute author and the genuine Frank Richards. And now that Ron Crollie has given you a lead, perhaps you can find more by the same author. I have a suspicion that Mr. Samways wrote those stories devoted to sport tournaments.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had no sooner written the above than I received (thanks to Eric Humphreys) a copy of a new paper called "School Cap". Perhaps some of you have seen it, too. Anyway, it is published by Charles Buchan's Publications Ltd., 408 Strand, W.C.2. It costs 6d and is to appear fortnightly. It runs to 32 pages, Magnet size, devoted almost entirely to a school story, the school being "Rockcliffe". It is plainly evident someone was familiar with the old Magnet. There's a map of the school and a "Who's Who". The leaders of the Fourth Form are known as the "Famous Four Aces".

The author is given as "Basil Storey". Now here comes a real curiosity and a coincidence. Looking through the story I was



instantly struck by the fact that the style was strangely like that of the substitute writer mentioned by Ron Crollie. The more I look at the dialogue the more I am intrigued by it. I should very much like to hear what others think.

Anyway in view of the appeals for the revival of the Magnet it will be interesting to see how this new venture fares. Any brave endeavour to place on the bookstalls a clean and healthy school paper of the type we knew in pre-war days, deserves to succeed. But has "School Cap" a chance? It has had practically no publicity, even though a well-known sportsman is behind it.

Anyway, if it does succeed, well there is indeed an obvious hint to the A.P. to think again where the Magnet is concerned.

Later. With No. 2 already a change in page size to that of Detective's Weekly.

\* \* \* \* \*

WHO WAS HERBERT BRITTON: In Eric Fayne's article "Days of Conquest" referred to elsewhere, he refers also to a series of school stories which appeared in the Boys' Friend in the Rookwood days. These were linked up with Hamilton stories for the titles of some of them were: "The Courtfield Champion"; "Bob Travers at Greyfriars" and "The Bluffing of Ponsonby". The author was given as "Herbert Britton". Has anyone any information about him?

\* \* \* \* \*

BILLY BUNTER'S OWN ANNUAL. NO. 1. MANDEVILLE 10/6d.  
TOM MERRY'S OWN ANNUAL. NO. 5. MANDEVILLE 10/6d.

Reviewed by Gerry Allison

\*\*\*

Age cannot wither, nor custom stale  
 His infinite variety; other authors cloy  
 The appetites they feed; but he makes hungry  
 Where most he satisfies.

I offer my sincere apologies to the Bard of Avon, for taking liberties with his lines on Cleopatra, but they came irresistibly into my mind after I had read the two new Annuals just published by Mandeville.

The Editor asked me if I would like to report on these for the 'Collector's Digest', and needless to say, I jumped at the offer. But now that I have finished reading them, I hardly know how to begin my critique. It is what the French call 'embarras

des richesses'. Has there ever been such a tour de force before? I doubt it.

There are 200 pages in each volume, and of this total, no less than 398 pages are from the hand of the Master, that genius of Broadstairs, Charles Hamilton. There are tales of adventure in the Wild West; in the South Seas, and in Africa. There are also eight complete school stories. As I cannot possibly describe them all, I will just list them, and let the bill of fare speak for itself. I will treat the two volumes as a whole, because you will need to buy them both!

First we have full length yarns of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. Those three elysiums of our halcyon days, where all our old/young friends are as happy and carefree as they were at the beginning of this turbulent century. Shangri-La just isn't in it.

Next Frank Richards gives us another tale of Felgate School, whilst Charles Hamilton relates a further riotous episode at High Coombe, the 'School for Slackers'. Jimmy McCann has still not got the school underhand. A certain member of the Northern Section O.B.B.C. could give him some advice here.

And now we have a grand little yarn by Ralph Redway about the Rio Kid, that most likeable of outlaws. Next Charles weighs in again with a very exciting story about Ken King of the Islands, and also an adventure in Africa featuring the Kikuyu.

The feminine reader is not forgotten either. Hilda Richards brings Bessie Bunter and Cliff House on to the scene again, and very welcome they are. Then there is some verse about Billy Bunter, a Greyfriars Who's Who, for quiz compilers, and a short episode by Clive Fenn.

And finally, the Greyfriars illustrations are by C.H.Chapman, and the St. Jim's by R.J. Macdonald. What more do you want?

(Yes, indeed it was like old times to find the artists in the places they had made their own, again. - H.L.)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME

By Donald B. Webster.

It all started when I was introduced (at Liverpool G.P.O.) to Harry Wharton! "Yes" he said "that's my name, and how I did enjoy reading "The Magnet"! ". "As a matter of fact" he went on, "when I was in hospital in Sicily a most amazing incident occurred. The mail had just arrived and my name was called out." "Hullo there"

exclaimed a fellow ward-mate, "is your name really Harry Wharton?" "Yes" I replied. "Well, mine really happens to be Bob Cherry!" Now there's a coincidence for you.

This article was intended to be written a long time ago, when The Editor, 'our Herbert', asked me to get the "low down" on Lord Sefton's horse named Bob Cherry. After much research his Lordship's secretary said he was sorry to disillusion me, but it was not called after Frank Richards' character of that name, but a reverse of the Lancashire expression "Cherry Bob" (a shiny nose). But he confided "I often read the Magnet and Gem, though I preferred Sexton Blake". He might have added that his Lordship disclaims any connection with a new House prefect at St. Jim's

How many readers who saw the film "The Quiet Man" noted it was directed by Frank Nugent, and how many have been intimately associated with a name resembling or reminding them of fictional characters of their youth. I'm sure James Walsh (and others) must have encountered many such instances during their excursions into our Counties - and abroad too for that matter.

What names come to mind in the Sporting World, cricketers such as Grace, Holmes, Wharton, Hobbs, Hammond; and De Courcy of the present Australian team. Footballers such as Wharton, D'Arcy etc., and golfer Bobby Locke (surely another relative to our 'august' Head). What a collection we can get from The Turf - horses, such as Wayland, Bob Cherry, Cleveland Girl, (no prizes for guessing her christian name), Cross-Keys, and of course "over the sticks" is one called "C.D.". (I wonder if H.L. ever had a bob on it). Jockeys Piggott (of The Third) and Gosling can be added to the list.

One could go on for some time with such names as Wingate (Chindits), cars such as Talbot and Railton or Basil Cardew who describes such vehicles.

Jack Corbett of Birmingham tells me he came across a Mr. Quelch in a telephone directory, and one would have no difficulty in associating such names as Lascelles, Knox, etc. There must be numerous Bunters in existence.

One of our members often reminds me that he passes "The Gem" cinema en route to our meetings and never fails to pass a shop kept by H. Vernon-Smith. Furthermore, when in Manchester Handforth's shop was pointed out to me.

You didn't know "Highcliffe" was near Boscombe did you, or that many years ago "Greyfriars" was the name of a school in

Wallasey, Cheshire, with "The Magnet" stores and tuck shop opposite! And a cafe in Margate called "Rookwood".

Maybe I am open to contradiction but Mr. R.C. Robertson, Glasgow, the Somerset cricketer in his book - "The Brighter Side of Cricket" - refers to "Greyfriars" as his prep school, but in reply to my enquiry, naively suggested it signified Charterhouse.

One could go on indefinitely adding to this list - but as Shakespeare wrote in "Romeo and Juliet" "what's in a name?" - quite a lot methinks.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here's still another new contributor. It's grand to have them. George makes a good start, too, for you all love an argument. And he to some extent anticipates the 'debate' article "Greyfriars versus St. Jim's" in the coming Annual, written up by myself.-H.L.

### SCHOOL YARNS ARE BETTER BY FAR

By George Bromley

\*\*\*

The Famous Five (and Bunter) travelled the world, to the Far East, the Middle East and Africa, by land, sea and air, not counting by caravan. They even went to Hollywood and made a film, though like many other Stars Bunter had previously acted for the British Film Industry (anticipating local trends by nearly thirty years). But you Hamilton fans will have to delve way back to verify this startling fact.

But in my opinion no finer yarns will be told than the "School Series", and furthermore no better or more vivid writing than the "classroom" scenes. I do not contend the stories are better, but that these little adventures had the supreme quality of transporting one to the scene of action.

Greyfriars Remove Formroom has a quality that St. Jim's Shell or Fourth never seems to possess.

Firstly, of course, because the Form Master is portrayed as a "living" character, a real person. Mr. Quelch is an integral part of the Remove, and probably the only regular Master, apart from certain sporting masters who occasionally pop up, that is more than a stock or "prop" character in any of the Charles Hamilton schools.

Mr. Quelch is almost the perfect Master, and no better clash of personalities have been drawn than the everlasting feud, in the form room, between the Bounder and the Beak.

How often did Vernon-Smith lounge out of his deak, with studied carelessness, though his heart did beat a little faster, and in a cool drawling voice, subtly defy his Form Master.

No one, even Cardew, does this so well at St. Jim's, because Mr. Lathom will never be a Quelch and Cardew never as well drawn as Smithy.

And who at St. Jim's could match the complex character of Harry Wharton?, especially when his reckless streak came out in defiance of the thundering Quelch, and with a bitter contemptuous face he openly sneered at authority. Too bad this, for Quelch could be really kind and gentle.

Gussy's howlers in construe, do not compare with the "Owls", especially when Bunter's eyes are on the clock and his thoughts on Coker's cake. Probably because in Bunter howlers come naturally, while they seem to be rather forced on Gussy, just for a laugh.

Rarely are the scenes in St. Jim's forms told in any detail, but what more riotously funny than Bolsover's desk banging and Cherry's feet shuffling to commence the ragging of Moscoo? Or Bunter's BEEST chalked on the blackboard, not counting the numerous occasions when his jaws are stuck together with Peter Todd's toffee.

His attempts to obtain leave from class by forgetting his Latin Dic. during the Geography lessons are little "Gems".

Mr. Richard's worked hard to create suspense in his travelling stories but without effort gave his readers the jitters when Quelch rustles into class and Cherry whispers to Nugent "Henry seems waxy" and promptly receives a hundred lines, and when a football match seems jeopardized by a gating. When Skinner trembles for the cigarettes in his study and the Bounder's Sporting Record" may have been found.

And what a relief when the fatuous Owl's footling about settles the suspense, and solves the mystery once and for all.

No better than all the exotic travel stories is when Smithy or Wharton dares to pull the tiger's tail in the classroom.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### WHY WE LOVE OUR FOOLS

By C. L. LETTEY

Why is Bunter such a popular and sympathetic figure? Let us admit it - he is a born idiot, a prevaricator, a pilferer, a scared rabbit and a dozen unenviable things besides. Why then this popularity? This feeling of sympathy? Is it because at heart we feel sorry for him?

This may satisfy at a superficial glance, yet I believe there is a much deeper explanation. For Bunter is a character like Chaplin and Stan Laurel and many more funny men of the screen and stage.

We know Chaplin will slope his rifle on his wrong shoulder and let the gun go off at the worst possible moment. We know that Stan Laurel as a plumber will bust that water-pipe. He could not possibly do anything else! Likewise we know that William George Bunter assuredly will construe his latin like no man, woman or child before. There is only one Bunter. Like Chaplin and Laurel, Bunter would make a ridiculous soldier. Superiors may rave and roar at their shortcomings, but it avails nought. The sergeant, the headmaster, nay, the law itself, has no voice to transform and tame these impossible members of society.

Authority, that mighty Mogul, which exhorts us to mend our ways, exclaims in vain to such duffers. Its stern note passes unheeded. A donkey that can not or will not go when beaten, makes the beater look a fool. Likewise, our duffers make a fool of stern authority. Chaplin will go on sloping his rifle wrongly. Laurel will continue his career of bursting water pipes and smashing windows and Bunter certainly and positively will proceed with his wonderful construes to the utter dismay of reasoned authority.

Their inane unconscious inborn dufferdom takes our breath away. Reason hath no place in their scheme of things. Logic faileth and authority (so long disliked in our secret selves) prevaiileth not.

Indeed, with such characters it hath no existence. That is why we love our fools.

\* \* \* \* \*

MAGNET TITLES (cont'd). 'S' denotes substitute

No. 1194, The Secret Sniper; No. 1195, The Boy Without a Name;  
 No. 1196, Chunley for Short; No. 1197, The Mystery of the Paper Chase; No. 1198 Tatters of the Remove; No. 1199 Chivvying Chumley;  
 No. 1200 The Voice of the Tempter; No. 1201 The Amateur Rogue;  
 No. 1202 A Rogue's Remorse; No. 1203 A Kinsman's Treachery;  
 No. 1204 The Champion Chump; No. 1205 A Schoolboy's Sacrifice.  
 No. 1206 Billy Bunter's Bunk; No. 1207 The Man from the States;  
 No. 1208 The Mystery of the Mill; No. 1209 Coker's Holiday Capture;  
 No. 1210 Coker's Desperate Venture.

HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR COPY OF "THE ANNUAL"?

# OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

## L O N D O N   S E C T I O N

The next meeting of the club will take place at 13, Raphael Road, Hove, 3, Sussex and the host will be John Robyns (Robby). The date will be the 20th Sept., at 3.30 p.m.

Travel arrangements are in the hands of Len Packman and members intending to travel are asked to be under the clock Brighton Side of Victoria Station not later than 9.30 a.m. so as to facilitate the purchase of cheap party tickets. Vice President Herbert Leckenby hopes to be present and will those intending to be present kindly notify

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

\* \* \* \* \*

### NORTHERN SECTION MEETING

August 15th

Our chairman being on holiday I took over and my first duty was a very pleasant one - to welcome a new member, Jack Munro. As I mentioned the duty was a particularly happy one for me as he is of my generation, and he hadn't been in the room five minutes before he, Harry Stables and I were deep in converse.

Just as we were about to start secretary Norman Smith arrived back from his holidays, brown as a berry. He got through his minutes then Gerry read a batch of interesting letters and also told us that the bank balance was £10. 13. 5.

Then we got down to the '20 Questions Quiz' put to us by Merseyside. Phew! You ought to have seen the wrinkled brows over such teasers as "What St. Jim's character performed the 'hat-trick' in a Magnet" story? and "What Greyfriars master arrived in tramp's attire? Oh Liverpool, how could you?

However, we were fortunate in having experts in every section at hand and after a break for refreshments in order to recover, the sealed envelope with the answers was opened when we found we had not done at all badly.

I had the answers by Merseyside to our questions and if you turn to another page you will find that we beat them handsomely.

The reading of "The Boy Without a Name" will be resumed at the September meeting, Saturday the 12th.

(cont'd page 274)

# ADVERTS

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HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR COPY OF "THE ANNUAL" ?

"Marked" absent; Horace and Stanley. Report to Mr. Quelch.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Meeting, August 17th.

We had quite a crowded but very enjoyable programme for this evening. After welcoming a new member, (Mrs. N.M. Weston), and a visitor from London, (Mrs. Tatton), we began the meeting with quite an amount of formal business which included references to three letters and certain current and forthcoming events.

We then settled down to enjoy a chapter from "Magnet" No. 1437 read very nicely indeed by one of our oldest and keenest members, (Mrs. W. Brown). This chapter came from the "Portercliffe Hall" series and gave a splendid and most amusing example of Bunter's fatuous and funny fibs. On this occasion he is most anxious to get Wibley off the scene; but, sad to say, people just don't believe Bunter even when as a last desperate resource he states that the Famous Five, Smithy and Kipps have all been drowned. We much appreciated this reading and do hope that we shall be having another one soon.

After refreshments (and a raffle of a "Gussy" book), we finished the evening with an animated discussion on "Bunter v. Miss Blandish". I had referred to that most awful book last month in my talk as being the very antithesis of good old Greyfriars. Many interesting points were made on such questions as to whether or not Greyfriars is old fashioned or too fairy-like; and further does "sexy" literature harm the mind, or again can we have the old moralistic atmosphere in the modern mediums such as the cinema and radio.

If we did not really settle any of these questions; at any rate we went home with memories of a very pleasant evening that went all too soon.

EDWARD DAVEY, Hon. Sec.

\* \* \* \* \*

MERSEYSIDE SECTION

August 7th.

The meeting commenced at 7 p.m., as there was a little extra business to be dealt with. The attendance was rather smaller than usual, due to holidays, etc., and Messrs. Wyness and Bartlett are both on the sick list at the moment. We sincerely hope both will

be fit in time for our next "get-together". The formalities were quickly concluded, and the chairman then gave the committee's report on the dinner to be held in Sept. The details have been fixed, and, judging by the bookings already placed, there should be a very impressive number present. We are looking forward to the event with pleasant anticipation, and feel sure that our first venture in this direction will be most successful. Here's hoping, anyway - !

Having fortified ourselves with refreshments, we then tackled the quiz submitted by our friends of the Northern Section, and this certainly gave us a lot to think about! Some, but fortunately not all, of the questions were real "humdingers", making us appreciate how little, not how much, we know on the subject of old boys' book lore. However, we are hoping the result of our efforts will give us a "pass", at least. If there are as many wrinkled brows in Leeds on Aug. 15th as there were in Liverpool on Aug. 9th, then the contest will be well justified, and we should like to thank our Leeds brethren for a most pleasant hour.

The library business having been dealt with, the meeting closed at 10 p.m.

F. CASE. Sec.

## BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

As it would appear on the surface that this month's S.B. Library by John Hunter is in direct contradiction to the facts as stated in last month's Blakiana, I think I should make it quite clear that the information therein is correct. I have made enquiries from which I gather that although, as Graham Davies says, the last story written by Mr. Hunter is S.B.L. No. 279, the A. Press have other material by him in hand. Thus, it may well be that we have not as yet had all this author's S. Blake writings.

It will of course be appreciated that the chronological sequence of Mr. Hunter's works are known only by him and his publishers, but in whatever order the latter may choose to publish an author's writings the last S.B.L. written by John Hunter is No.279.

This month we have the second and concluding part of Walter

Webb's article. I am sure you will agree with me when I say 'Thank you very much, Walter!' I may add that he has something else 'up his sleeve' for Blakiana, and I am expecting to hear further from him on the matter very shortly.

Next month we shall have the first of the three-part article on G.H. Teed's THREE MUSKETEERS, an article which covers all the activities of that murderous trio of crooks as recorded in both the Union Jack and Sexton Blake Libraries.

JOSIE PACKMAN.

\* \* \* \* \*

SEXTON BLAKE ON SPEEDING CHARGE

Sexton Blake came to Llanelly today - to answer a summons at the justices' court.

Blake, whose home address was given as Llwynneithen, Fforestfach, was fined £2 for exceeding the speed limit.

Constable Haydn Thomas said Blake told him, "I am usually very careful".

Announcing the fine, the chairman, Mr. H.D. Llewellyn, commented: "We are sorry you have not kept a good record like your namesake".

The South Wales Evening Post.

22 July 1953.

\* \* \* \* \*

The B.B.C. should engage Mr. Blake for "The Names the Same" programme. - H.L.

\* \* \* \* \*

SECOND SERIES versus THIRD

by Gerry Allison

\*\*\*\*\*

How often people tell me that the present Sexton Blake yarns are only a feeble shadow of the wonderful tales of yester-year. "Ah!" they say, with a nostalgic sigh, "if only we could have books such as we read twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago". The number of years depending on the age of the speaker.

Well; how true is this, exactly? Are we painting the past rose-coloured because we were younger then, or have the stories really depreciated in quality?

This month, the Amalgamated Press have published No. 294 of

the 3rd Sexton Blake Series; "Destination Unknown", by John Hunter. By an odd coincidence, I had just read No. 294 of the second Series, title; "Dr. Duvene's Crime", by Gilbert Chester, which was published in July 1931 - twenty-two years ago. I thought it would be interesting to compare these two stories, and try to find out if, in truth, we are receiving an inferior article nowadays.

Fortunately perhaps, both are by authors of - shall we say - average quality. It would be manifestly unfair to compare a Teed story with one by, say, Hilary King; or, on the other hand, to balance an exciting, modern thriller by Hugh Clevely, against one of the more pedestrian productions of the past. Yes; they were not all masterpieces, even when we were younger and less critical.

But Gilbert Chester and John Hunter are fairly well matched I think. Both are experienced writers, and both have written a lot of Blake stuff. I do not like generalisations, myself, but in this case, I think we can let these two tales represent their respective Series.

Both numbers, again, contain 64 pages. "Dr. Duvene's Crime" has the blurb; 'sensational narrative of startling detective adventure', and cost 4d. "Destination Unknown" is a 'thrilling detective novel', and the price is 8d. First blow to Series 2!

Each tale begins in an interesting way, and strangely enough, both refer to music in the opening paragraph. Chester has an electric gramophone thundering out the Valkyrie, whilst Hunter describes the 'pulse quickening words and music of the Marsellaise as they came hot from the brain of Rouget de Lisle'. Neither book was easy to read, and in neither case was Blake anything more than 'a peg on which to hang a story', as Tom Hopperton once said.

But at least, the Second Series did give us some action. Good gorgonzola, what action! A summary of it would fill Blakiana for this month. To give you some faint idea, here is what happens between pages 34 and 38.

Sonia Maritza and Derek Rhodes are being pursued by Chicago gangsters round the mansion of Jasper Heron an English money magnate. Sonia is a foreign spy, and Derek a journalist-adventurer. To escape, they leap out of an upper window. A magic lake appears, and they swim across it. (Later on, when Eileen Hale climbs down a rope of sheets from the same window, the lake has disappeared. There are flower-beds and a gravel path below!)

However, Sonia and Derek tear madly through the night with

the gangsters after them. The baying of blood-hounds makes them re-double their speed! Suddenly they reach a road, and just then, a car flashes past them, and pulls up just ahead. Three men jump out and dash through the hedge.

The fugitives commandeer the car, and drive off at top speed, only to find themselves pursued by two cars. It is the Flying Squad, and to their horror they find that they have a corpse in the back seat of their purloined car.

The pursuit goes on. And on! A level crossing looms up, complete with goods train roaring past, and blocking their path. The Flying Squad are barely a furlong behind, now! Nothing daunted, Derek drives his car alongside the speeding train, "his tyres bursting like a barrage of guns". He and Sonia leap on to the train, and haul themselves into a truck, breathless and panting - and no wonder. "By Jove!" he said, "that was a wonderful jump of yours!"

They thought they were now safe. But no. The train plunges out of a tunnel, and CRASHES INTO ANOTHER ON THE SAME LINE. "There was a crunching, rending noise, like a blast of some monstrous bomb, and the freight wagons piled up on one another in a flailing dance of destruction".

And so on.

Well, there was nothing boring about that! But I am afraid that "Destination Unknown" was just a yawn from start to finish. There was the usual Hunter stuff; brutality, torture, and the old complicated 'plot'. You know what I mean without my saying any more.

Blake and Tinker spent most of their time either bound and gagged, or lying unconscious. (I don't really blame them, mind you). Blake's idea of feigning unconsciousness, apparently for days on end, was hardly what one expects from the Baker Street wizard. It says; "the gang fed Blake and gave him water to drink, for he was naturally forced to abandon his pretence of unconsciousness". But my own somnolence was no pretence.

Yes. I find I must admit that twenty-two years ago, you got a lot more value, for half the money, even if you bought tripe!

The other S.B.L. this month, No. 293. "The Case of the Missing Nazi", is by Walter Tyrer. Sorry, I haven't had time to read it.

WHEN BLAKE RECOVERED THE CROWN

by WALTER WEBB

\*\*\*

PART TWO

That the crown was somewhere on one of the roofs was obvious, so Blake got up on to the roof of the White Tower, the highest point in the fortress and looked down upon the roofs of the other towers. He caught a brief glimpse of Jarvis on the roof of the Bell Tower, but before Blake could accuse him, Jarvis triumphantly informed him that he had just discovered the stolen armour on the roof of the Bell Tower. Again Blake's suspicions were lulled by the servant's cunning, for it never occurred to the detective that the crown reposed inside the armour. Jarvis had several uneasy moments when Tinker approached him and asked to inspect the armour, and aroused the young sleuth's suspicions when he refused to allow the latter to handle it. Tinker mentally vowed to inspect the armour thoroughly at the earliest opportunity, and it was from that moment that Jarvis's luck began to turn.

Blake and Tinker then held a council of war, in which it was decided that Blake should watch Potter, whilst Tinker devoted his attentions to Jarvis. Determined to inspect the once stolen suit of armour, Tinker let himself into the Keep with the aid of his Yeoman's keys, and carrying his lantern, made his way to the passage leading to the Chapel of St. John, it being necessary to pass through the chapel to get to the banqueting chamber, which is the first of the two rooms used as the armoury. As he was about to leave the chapel and enter the armoury, Tinker heard a footstep, which sent him scurrying behind a massive pillar. The newcomer was Potter, who was obviously expecting the arrival of Jarvis, for he called out the latter's name as he came forward. When Potter passed him on his way to the chapel, having mistaken Tinker's footsteps for those of his confederate's, the young detective noiselessly entered the armoury, and racing along the upper stairway, hid himself in the chamber overhead. Tinker soon discovered the armour, in close proximity to which was the figure of a knight on horseback. Struck by an idea, Tinker lifted the figure from the dummy horse, donned the shirt of mail, and in next to no time was seated on the wooden horse, his visor down and one hand resting on a long lance, his lantern extinguished and out of sight.

Potter returned to the upper chamber, in which he had been

awaiting Jarvis's arrival, and it was not long before the latter entered, to find his confederate in a very nerveless state. When Tinker saw Jarvis insert his hand inside the breastplate of the stolen armour and bring forth the stolen crown he almost betrayed his hiding place; but his presence was not to remain long undiscovered, for Potter, peering nervously about, discovered his lantern, still warm, which prompted the precious pair to make a search of the chamber.

Tinker realised that the game was up, and slipping from the horse, armed himself with a battle-axe. Potter retaliated by grabbing up a two-handed sword, and with Jarvis taking up a mace, the two villains prepared to do battle against their young adversary. (The use of the word "villain" is made deliberately, because in those days the use of the expression "crook" was not observed in the pages of the UNION JACK. Bad men were known as "villains", "cowards", "scoundrels", "rogues", "dastards", in fact, by any uncomplimentary name, except that of "crooks".)

In the flickering light of the lanterns, Jarvis and Potter charged Tinker, but their confidence was somewhat shattered when their youthful opponent, like one of the knights of olden times, retaliated with such good effect that they were driven back in confusion. The historic combat was ended when Tinker smashed the lanterns, and, shedding his armour under cover of the darkness, quitted the chamber.

Blake, still disguised as Sir William, paid a visit to the flat occupied by the Potters, but found only Potter's wife, Susan, in occupation. Asking Blake to wait whilst she brought her husband to him, Susan Potter made a hurried flight, and Blake, foiled in his purpose, went to see Doctor Temple, only to discover that the real Sir William Fortescue, having hoodwinked the servants set to look after him, had left the house and was already on his way to the Tower of London. On leaving the doctor's residence, Blake was lucky enough to see Susan Potter in a hansom, the woman having just left her husband after warning him that the game was up. Potter had handed the crown to his wife, but whatever plans she and her husband had concocted in relation to the disposing of the crown were brought to nought, for Blake, beckoning a policeman, had the hansom stopped and the woman arrested. The detective then made his way to the Tower, and accused Potter of having stolen the crown. At first, Potter's attitude was bombastic and cynical, but his sneering denials were quickly brought to an end when Blake



produced the crown and told him of the arrest of his wife. Potter was beaten, and realising it, made a clean breast of the whole affair. Jarvis was sent for, and furious at his confederate's confession shot Potter dead from point-blank range. Next instant, he turned the weapon to his own head and pulled the trigger.

With the minimum of fuss, the crown was quickly restored to its original place in the jewel-room of the Tower after the re-setting of the great Henry VI ruby, and another memorable case for Sexton Blake came to an end.

\* \* \* \* \*

A DIAMOND JUBILEE: In November, Sexton Blake will have been in action for 60 years. We understand the A.P. have no intention of marking the event in any way. The C.D. will endeavour to do so. Have you any ideas?

MORE PUBLICITY for  
FRANK RICHARDS and the O.B.B.C.'s.

A few weeks ago I received a letter from Frank Richards saying one which he had received would no doubt interest me and that he had himself answered it, referring the writer of it to me. The letter certainly interested me and I am sure it will all the members, so here it is:-

LITERARY, DEBATING & DIALECT SOCIETIES OF GT. BRITAIN & IRELAND  
Sections 3 and 4.

Communications to the Compiler: Geoffrey Handley-Taylor, F.R.S.L.,  
Arts Theatre Club, 6-7, Great Newport Street, London, W.C.2.

5th August, 1953.

Dear Mr. Richards,

In a recent article published in the RADIO TIMES - I read that there were "Billy Bunter" Clubs in existence. I would like to include details of these Clubs in Section 5 of the above handbook. In Section 3-4 (to be published by Hinrichsen Edition Ltd., six weeks from this date) I have mentioned the 'dissolved' Greyfriars Club at Portsmouth - but this was the only information I possessed at the time my MS. went to press. I have given the Club a cross-reference under "Billy Bunter" as well.

All good wishes,  
Yours very truly, GEORGE HANDLEY-TAYLOR.

Now there happens to be an interesting link with Mr. Handley-Taylor. At one time he lived in York and when we put on that memorable Exhibition of Boys' Books in the York Public Library it followed an Exhibition by Mr. Handley-Taylor. So I lost no time in writing him giving him some information about the Clubs and also reminding him about those Exhibitions.

Here is Mr. Handley-Taylor's reply:-

GEOFFREY HANDLEY-TAYLOR, Arts Theatre Club, London, W.C.2.

14th August, 1953.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Our letters have crossed. I am delighted to receive your letter and THE COLLECTOR'S DIGEST (August, 1953). After examining the DIGEST I will pass it along to Paul North Rice of The New York Public Library - as they/he may be interested in subscribing to the publication.

I well remember your Exhibition at York - one of the best - and I well recollect talking to the Reference Librarian (Mr. Biggins) about the interest it had aroused. You had excellent publicity at the time and I visited the "penny dreadful" part many times. I toured a Portuguese Exhibition, a Ballet Exhibition and several others - but I believe it was the Portuguese Collection which preceded yours.

I can't get all branches of the OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB into Section 3-4 of my handbook - as all the space is taken up - but I am going to try and squeeze in a notice of THE COLLECTOR'S DIGEST - with very brief details - also your address. This can be fitted into the Bibliographical part. Certainly I will be able to do more for you in Sections 5-6 (next year). Anyhow - I'll send you a review copy of Sections 3-4 (should be next month) containing the mention of your Digest.

All good wishes - and I want you to know that I am deeply interested in the fine work of the Old Boys' Book Club.

Yours very truly,  
GEORGE HANDLEY-TAYLOR.

\* \* \* \* \*

Well that's all very gratifying and there's more to follow. On the afternoon of August 14th I received a London 'phone call from a representative of the American "Time" magazine. He asked quite a lot of questions about the Clubs and the Hamilton papers. Just before he rang off he said there would be something in

Friday's edition. Well that proved to be what is known as the 'Atlantic Edition' dated August 24th. It proved to be a review of the maestro's activities written in that slick American style, and ran to a couple of columns. In addition three pictures by R.J. Macdonald from a Bunter Book. They gave the write-up the heading "Forever Bunter".

Here's a typical extract on the 'Magnet' -

"Missionaries read it in Malaya; traders took the Magnet along to Australia; soldiers snatched it up in their canteens in India."

Of the O.B.B.C. it said -

"Today Bunter's immortality seems assured. He is a constant topic of conversation at London's Old Boys' Book Club, a society of 400 greying authors, schoolmasters, actors and civil servants who collect juvenilia and have as their motto 'Puer Manebit'."

Well, all that within a few days, not bad is it? Whither next?

## Nelson Lee Column

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

A hearty welcome to another new-comer to our column, and Marcus gets a good start by having a clear field. I think you will agree from Marcus' description that there could have been little padding in that once popular series of eight stories.

Just before he starts let me make the old appeal 'More articles please'. There's only a couple in hand.

THE TREASURE OF EL SAFRA (O.S. Nos. 213 - 220)

By Marcus Johnson

\*\*\*

With the coming of summer I expect many readers thoughts have turned to plans for their holidays, and this recalls that some of the very best of E.S.B's stories were those written about adventures during the summer vacation. One series, the second of its kind, was written in 1919; and I remember, as a schoolboy then, what a thrill I had reading it. I have since then always associated the Sargasso sea with the adventures I read over thirty years

ago and reading them again quite recently I found them just as enjoyable.

The series opens with Jack Grey inviting some of the Remove and seniors of St. Frank's to accompany him on a trip to North Africa in his father's steam yacht "Wanderer" where a party is to seek for treasure buried in an oasis in the desert. Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee were, of course, included; as were a number of lady guests the sisters of four of the fellows invited.

By the intervention of Handforth, Fulwood & Co. are foiled in an endeavour to wangle an invitation from Sir Crawford Grey, and in revenge Fulwood sends Handy a telegram saying that his mother is ill. Handy naturally goes to his home in London only to discover that the telegram is a fake. He makes a wild dash to Caistowe in the family car and then in his haste to reach the yacht both he and the bicycle he is riding go over the cliff into the sea, but he is fortunately picked up by the yacht's motor pinnace.

Meanwhile, a chance meeting in London between two seamen Simon Grell and Jack Starkey, who know about the yacht's trip to Africa and the hunt for treasure, and a Captain Nixon of the steamship Collindale also due for North Africa, leads to a conspiracy in which plans are made to ambush and steal the treasure from Sir Crawford Grey's party. On the trip to the North African port of Agabat, Captain Nixon discovers that Simon Grell regrets his bargain and intends to trick him. A quarrel takes place on deck and Grell is knocked overboard but is picked up later by the yacht which is steaming on the same course. When Simon Grell recovers from his exhaustion he tells Sir Crawford and Nelson Lee about the plot and they are put on their guard against Captain Nixon.

On arrival at Agabat, Umlosi the Kutana chief, joins the party. He has made preparations for the trip into the bush and across the desert to the oasis. In addition to the expedition by land, an aeroplane which has been stowed on board the yacht is assembled, and Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore and Nipper make the journey to El Safra by air.

The land party consists of Simon Grell, Umlosi, a number of juniors and seniors and is led by Dr. Brett. Handforth is kidnapped by natives in the pay of Nixon who now learns of the plans of the party. Umlosi tracks Handy to the hut in which he is held captive and rescues him and they hide in a treetop to avoid recapture. Nixon launches a sudden attack on Dr. Brett's party and

captures them. Handy and Umlosi are spotted in a clearing by the aeroplane and picked up and the party is rescued from the blacks when the plane appears over the camp, the natives fleeing in terror. The party then pushes on through the bush to the desert where camels are waiting to take them on the first part of their journey to the oasis of Zambé.

Nixon and Starkey disguised as arabs follow them to Zambé and during the night Nixon tampers with the controls of the aeroplane hoping to make it crash. Nelson Lee is not caught by this ruse and the aeroplane reaches El Safra in safety and they discover the treasure consisting of diamonds, emeralds and rubies. The land party, now on their way to El Safra, are struck by a simoom during which Nicodemus Trotwood vanishes and is believed buried during the sandstorm. He is however picked up by the aeroplane, which has returned from El Safra, after wandering about almost exhausted. After taking off again the plane is blown out of its course and over the bush by a roaring gale and on landing to discover their location they are captured by cannibals.

Dr. Brett's party reach El Safra without further mishap and find Nelson Lee's message saying that the treasure has been found. The party are attacked during the night by Captain Nixon and two dozen cut-throats but a timely warning from Jake Starkey, who revolts against murder, and the attack is beaten off. Nixon flees, knowing that Starkey has betrayed him, almost mad with lust for revenge.

Meanwhile Nelson Lee, Dorrie, Nipper and Trotwood are being kept prisoners and they are to be offered as sacrifices after a night's orgy. Only a trick with petrol by Nelson Lee and the ventriloquist powers of Trotwood averts this. Later they manage to escape undetected from the hut where they are imprisoned and cross the nearby river by the bridge to the aeroplane, which is unguarded, on the other side. By using some of the spare petrol, which is allowed to flow from one of the tanks down the bank and into the water, they are able to fire the petrol floating on the water and so gain time to make their escape in the plane.

The party headed by Dr. Brett retrace their steps from El Safra and reach the yacht at Agabat without further trouble. The disappearance of Trotwood and the non-arrival of the aeroplane causes much grief and sorrow at what is assumed to be the loss of four valuable lives.

During the night, while the decks are deserted, Captain Nixon who

is bent on revenge, swims to the yacht and disappears below.

The next day the yacht prepares for home, abandoning the original plan of visiting Madeira and the Azors, but just before the time for sailing the lost aeroplane appears and amidst great rejoicing the missing members are welcomed back.

On the following day the aeroplane is shipped on board and the yacht steams away a few hours later. After two days at sea the weather changes with heavy seas and a gale blowing. Soon the ship is in the track of a violent tropical storm. At the height of the storm Nixon appears from below, where he has been hiding, and attacks the first officer who is on the bridge at the wheel. He knocks him unconscious with an iron bar and dons his oilskins and alters course for a small rocky island to the northwest. On reaching the island the ship is swept through a narrow gully and strikes the rocks and wedges firm. Nixon dives overboard and reaches the shore and disappears. The ship by a miracle does not suffer very much damage, although without assistance from tugs or other vessels it cannot get free, but the passengers and crew are able to remain on board. The delicate wireless transmitter is however useless.

Nelson Lee and the boys go exploring the island, which is named Castaway Island, and Handforth & Co. take candles and go exploring some tunnels leading from a cavern and are lost underground. After several hours they have to give up and soon after are captured by Nixon and four men in rags and tatters, castaways, whom Nixon has persuaded to support him.

Later, a search-party led by Nelson Lee come upon Nixon and his followers and they too are overpowered. All the prisoners are now forced to march into a tunnel and one by one they disappear through a hole in the floor into a small underground pool. They escape from the pool through a seaweed-choked cavity into an outer cave and are able to swim to an opening and so gain the rocky beach.

Meanwhile Nixon is not idle, he signals to the yacht and displays the white flag and Dr. Brett and the Captain of the yacht go ashore. Nixon tells Dr. Brett that Nelson Lee, Dorrie, Nipper and five juniors have walked into a trap and are being held prisoner and he demands three boatloads of food in exchange for the release of the prisoners. This is refused as being merely the first of many further demands without a guarantee that he will keep his word. Unfortunately for Nixon, while threatening to do his worst, Nelson Lee and the others are seen climbing over the rocks in the distance and Nixon flees in terror back to his cave.

The island is situated away from the shipping routes, so Nelson Lee constructs a raft upon which to assemble the aeroplane and for which floats are made to convert it into a seaplane. After a trial run with Mr. Clive the first officer as navigator they set out to get help.

Handforth falls in love with Violet Watson, one of the four girls in the party, and Reggie Pitt, dressed in one of her dresses and appropriate made up, sits out alone under the awning at dusk and leads Handy on while the juniors listen on the other side of the awning. (this is a real scream).

Nixon has not been seen for several days, but when Violet Watson goes ashore to tend to a maimed seagull, she is kidnapped by him and carried into the tunnels. Dorrie attempts to rescue her but is driven back by revolver shots. Nipper dresses as a girl and cruises about in a canoe which drifts ashore when he loses a paddle. He is seized by Nixon and his men and taken into the cave where Violet Watson is held captive. In the ensuing fight Nipper shoots Nixon through the arm with a revolver and the two captives manage to escape to the boat awaiting them on the shore.

Nelson Lee returns and within a few hours a liner and steamer arrives and the yacht is towed clear of the rocks in which she is jammed and is soon made sea-worthy again.

A large party, all fully armed and led by Nelson Lee, now go ashore. The castaways soon surrender, but only after a fight and a chase through the tunnels is Nixon captured and put in irons on board the liner to be taken to England. The seaplane is stowed away on board again and they start off on the homeward trip.

On the second day at sea the yacht runs into a storm, the propeller-shaft snaps and all throughout the following night the ship is driven further and further out of her course and into the Gulf-weed. The yacht drifts deeper and deeper into the Sargasso sea, through a channel which is forced open as it progresses and then closes behind it, until towards evening the yacht ceases to move.

There are a number of derelicts to be seen and Handforth decides to explore a Portuguese hulk several hundred yards away. Handy and his chums manage to get on board the ship and he climbs a mast to get a better view. From this vantage point he sees two or three figures moving on one of the wrecks in the distance. The mast collapses in his excitement and Handforth crashes to the deck. On returning to the yacht he persists in his story but no one believes him thinking it to be but an invention of his fertile

imagination.

The next day Agnes Christine is knitting on deck in the stern of the yacht when she is suddenly gripped by a huge tentacle projected over the rail and only the brain-wave of Dorrie, who fires a rocket at point blank range at the monster's body, saves her and those who go to her rescue from the grasp of the sea-monster.

After dark that evening, Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and the juniors notice a flickering light which appears to come from the derelict liner upon which Handy had said he had seen figures. Several rockets are sent up and shortly afterwards answering rockets are seen to rise from a spot fully two miles distant. Owing to the perils of crossing the weed during darkness nothing can be done until daybreak and it is not long after dawn that a group of twenty men are seen slowly making their way across the weed to the yacht. They are taken aboard and are found to be the crew of a British ship carrying a large cargo of food which has been torpedoed in the Atlantic by the Germans over eighteen months earlier.

The repairs to the propeller-shaft is completed and with steam up the Wanderer gradually moves forward. Hour after hour the ship steams slowly through the weed and after several days the open sea is reached and the yacht escapes from the clutches of the sea of doom and commences her homeward trip.

The trip home is uneventful and so another series ends with the juniors returning to St. Frank's for the new term.

LETTER BOX

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

August 15th. 1953

Many thanks for your letter and the C.D. I am glad to hear that you have received copies of the annuals, and think them "jolly good".

~~The C.D. arrived very shortly after I had written you about Mr. Handley-Taylor. A very good number, as usual. I like Gerry Allison's review of the latest Bunter book very much indeed. And I like very much John Shaw's review of the TV. play. In fact this issue is very likeable in many ways. I may perhaps be permitted to explain to young Anthony that lengthening a story does not necessitate padding, which our young friend seems to take for granted. A long story is a long story, not a short story padded out. I have in my time written a story as long as twelve of the longest Magnets added together, - a serial, - but the editorial eye did not detect a single syllable of "padding", neither did the eye of the reader. As for the "day of school stories" being over, when that sad time comes, Frank Richards will be over too.~~

With kindest regards, Very sincerely, FRANK RICHARDS.