
The Collector's Digest

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 102.

JUNE 1955

PRICE 1s.6d.

AN EXAMPLE OF LEONARD SHIELDS' EARLY WORK TAKEN FROM
'VAGABOND JIM,' ½d UNION JACK, MAY 12th, 1900.



In an instant he had flung open the door, and as he did so he yelled at the top of his voice:

"Help! help!"

For lying senseless on the floor was Charlie Spink, his face of a deathlike pallor, and bending over the delirious man was a tall figure holding a small phial, the contents of which he was trying to force between the clenched teeth of Reuben Garth.

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Editor, HERBERT LECKENBY,
c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
7, The Shambles, YORK.

From the Editor's Chair

IT DOES YOU GOOD: A few weeks ago I picked up, quite by chance, a copy of "Time and Tide". In it I came across a letter from an Irish correspondent who was seeking information about the 'Boys' Journal', which he thought was published in the last quarter of the last century. Thanks to our records, I was able to give him the details of the paper's run. Whilst awaiting a reply I came across several volumes of the old Victorian publication in the Harry Stables collection.

Mr. Keenan replied and mentioned hopefully several serials he remembered in those papers of long ago. Lo! and behold! they were all in the volumes at Bradford. The upshot was he bought the lot. In a letter expressing his delight, he said that when he wrote the letter to "Time and Tide" he had little hope he would get any information, let alone actually secure the volumes.

Another day I received a letter from the lady Librarian of the Cumberland Library at Carlisle. She said she had visited the exhibition of old boys' books we had put on at Newcastle a few years ago, so she wondered if I could help her. One of her readers was anxious to trace a photograph of a relative which had once appeared in the 'Boys' Own Paper'. That reader could only say it appeared probably between 1870 and 1900. That certainly looked like meaning some research, but I thought "Just the job for Anthony Baker, he'll glory in the task," for he had bought stacks of B.O.P's from the Harry Stables collection.

Anthony did volunteer, just as I thought, and at the moment I am eagerly waiting to hear if he has found that photo.

That great fellow, Harry Stables, gave pleasure to many whilst he was alive; like others of his kind he does so still even though he has passed over.

And you know, there is a feeling of content in doing a good turn even if to a complete stranger. Another score for the Brotherhood of Happy Hours.

* * * * *

THE SILVER JACKET: This successful Australian monthly for boys is now running a new serial by Frank Richards, 'The Barring-Out at Carcroft', a popular subject in Frank Richards stories.

The editor of The Silver Jacket, Mr. Arthur Gorfain, is now in England and the London Club hope to welcome him to their June meeting.

THE 1955 ANNUAL: The year is getting on and next month the usual forms will be issued. At the same time I shall be telling you something about the articles already being written or planned. Yes, we are half-way, yet I have to say regretfully, that there are still some subs. outstanding for the last one. One or two are paying by instalments, and that's okay by me but others have ignored my pleas. That's hardly playing the game, is it? I did not like to mention the subject whilst we were celebrating No. 100, but I would like to be able to fill up the blanks in the subscription list now.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

STORIES I REMEMBER

by Herbert Leckenby

No. 5 - "Young Yardley" - Author "Richard Randolph" (J.N.Pentelow)

On several mornings during the winter months I switched on the radio at 7 a.m. and listened to the broadcasts of the Test Matches then going on "down under". It was worth leaving a warm bed to learn right from the scenes of battle of the gallant deeds of Hutton, Tyson, Cowdray, Statham and Co.

Stumps drawn I settled down with a cup of tea by the fire, and the coming of the dawn found me reading a serial story which appeared in the 'Boys Realm' 34 years ago. The story was "Young Yardley" by Richard Randolph, otherwise John Nix Pentelow, that master writer of stories on cricket in the long ago. Soon I was

engrossed in the doings of Hobbs and Rhodes, Armstrong and Gregory, those cricket heroes of a bygone day. To a lover of King Cricket who remembers them all what better way to spend the early hours of a winter's day.

Well, let me try and describe briefly this story which entrances me still. It started in the "Boys Realm" (2nd series) in No. 107, April 16th, 1921 and ran until No. 126, August 27th. Its hero was Gilbert Ralph Yardley, a young Australian, who just before the departure of the Test team "Armstrong's men", played some outstanding cricket in some country games, so much so that he was chosen at the last moment to make the English tour. In passing, one might say how strange it was that Pentelow should choose the name 'Yardley', a by no means common one for a fictitious Test cricketer, for as all lovers of the game know, years later a player with that name was destined to rise to fame in the world of cricket, and in fact captain England against Australia. But poor Pentelow was never to know for he died long before Norman Yardley's day.

Another leading character in "Young Yardley" was John Alston Ferrars, who happened to be out in Australia at the time. Yardley and he were old friends for they had been at Thirlestane School in England together and had in fact appeared in an earlier "Boys' Realm" serial, "Ferrars of the Sixth". On going to Oxford Ferrars gained his cricket blue and also played for Worcestershire.

There was a subsidiary plot in the story concerning a mysterious packet placed in the care of Yardley by his uncle who was shot just before his nephew's departure from Australia. He or Ferrars have to carry it about until the close of the Test tour, and several attempts to take it from them are made by a gang headed by one Weldon Barchard, who had also been at Thirlestane. But I shan't say much about that for in this story the cricket was all that mattered.

To me the fascinating part of a Pentelow cricket story was the way he introduced real players of its day. He was able to for he knew them all. Not only did he bring them in but some of them figured quite prominently in "Young Yardley", Warwick Armstrong and Clarence Pellew, for instance. Older cricket lovers who may read this will probably remember that the M.C.C. team, captained by J.W.H.T. Douglas was in Australia for the Tests of 1920-21 and they and the Australian team left for England together. This is how Pentelow described it, mixing fact and

fiction:-

"Yardley stood by the rail watching the crowd, and by his side was Jack Ferrars, his chum, the Oxford crack, who had been invited to join the M.C.C.'s team, but had been prevented by business from doing so. Both tall, but Ferrars the more stalwart of build, they made a fine pair as they stood there, Ferrars with his red-gold hair, Yardley chestnut haired, both handsome and bronzed and manly.

Not far from them stood, side by side, Warwick Armstrong, the colossal skipper of the Australian side and John Douglas, the English captain, black-haired, with a countenance the hue of well-toned saddle leather. There too, John Hobbs, the pride of Surrey, and little bulldog Patsy Hendren, and smiling genial Wilfred Rhodes and tall Frank Woolley, and most of the other Englishmen, with Australians scattered among them - little Johnny Taylor and Charlie Macartney, smaller still, and Tom Andrews, not much bigger, with lithe, wiry Jack Gregory, and the taller figures of Ryder and Hendry. Grey-haired Carter and young Oldfield, who might have been father and son, by their apparent respective ages; the two Australian wicket keepers had foregathered with little Strudwick and sturdy Dolphin, the two English stumpers; Parkin was talking to Mailey, possibly seeking hints on the googlie."

Yes, great and honoured names in cricket history. Many of them, alas! like Pentelow would not be listening in to the broadcasts from Australia in the winter of 1954-5.

On arrival in England Pentelow did not make the mistake of making Yardley carry everything before him in the early games against the counties. He failed in some - that's cricket, the unpredictable game. Then came the First Test at Nottingham.

Pentelow was his own selector. As his descriptions coincided as nearly as possible with the actual dates of the games, he had, of course, to write some weeks in advance. In this first Test he had C.B. Fry as captain, rather surprisingly, as he would even then be on the verge of 50 years of age. I may be wrong but I believe the England captain was J.W.H.T. Douglas, that he held the position for the second and third, and was then replaced by A.P.F. Chapman for the last two.

"According to Pentelow" England put up an enormous score in the First Test, declaring at 586 for seven wickets, with

C.B. Fry, Jack Hobbs, and Jack Ferrars getting centuries, with Australia struggling throughout. The record books, however, have it that Australia won as they also did the next two.

In that English innings young Yardley did not get a wicket but he played a dramatic part before the finish. During the week-end he was captured by the gang, and on the Monday Australia had to bat without him and had to follow on. Then on the Tuesday when all seemed lost Gilbert, having escaped came dashing on to the ground just in time to join Warwick Armstrong in a last wicket stand to save the game.

A typical Pentelow touch in describing the game and one which should particularly interest our Nottingham members was this; George Gunn of that county was batting. He hit a ball right into a stand and it was deftly caught by a spectator. Gunn turned to Mailey and asked "Know who that was?" Mailey shook his head, and Gunn answered "My brother Jack": Jack (or John) being, of course, another famous Notts. player. I wonder by the way if they were any relation to 'our John Gunn' of Nottingham town.

Owing to an injury Young Yardley did not play in the second Test. On this occasion it was England's turn to be satisfied with a draw.

On to Headingley, Leeds, where in those days the third Test was played. Just prior to it there had been more kidnapping, on this occasion, Enid Raymond, the girl Yardley had met and fallen in love with. He was chosen to play, with his thoughts elsewhere, nevertheless he bowled Jack Hobbs when that Surrey idol had only scored a dozen, and scored the same number himself in the Australian innings. Then came news that his friends were on the track. Came rescue of his lady love and Gilbert Yardley returned to the game like a giant refreshed to take six wickets in England's second innings. Then he went on to help Australia win the exciting game, sponsored by John Nix Pentelow, by one wicket.

Then to Manchester for the Fourth, where would you believe it, it didn't rain. On the contrary three full days of exciting cricket with runs galore, England won on the stroke of time by a few runs. Yardley playing grandly to save the game for Australia, with Mailey as last man in, ran himself out much to his dismay. More Pentelow genius there, most boys' authors would

have ended it differently.

And so to the Oval with the fate of the Ashes still in the balance. England won the toss and knocked up a mighty score, Ferrars and Douglas getting centuries. Then came more sensations during the week-end, no kidnapping this time, something more exciting - Young Yardley arrested on a charge of murder, the victim being one of the gang. When the great game was continued Gilbert Yardley was still in jail, with his friends moving heaven and earth to prove his innocence. They succeeded, Yardley was released in time to get back to the Oval to enable Australia to win the Fifth Test Match and the Ashes.

Then the secret in the mysterious packet was revealed, it concerned treasure hidden in South Africa by Yardley's father and uncle.

And so that series of Test matches finished under Pentelow's guidance with Australia winning two, England one, and two drawn: whereas the record books have it Australia won three with two draws.

Ah well if a lot of fiction was mixed with fact, it was a rattling good story.

Before I close I'll just quote form the last instalment. At the end of the game C.B. Fry is congratulating Warwick Armstrong:

"As a team" he said quietly, "I count you just about the best team I have ever met. As men, you're all people I'll be glad to meet again."

"Come out to Australia with the next push, Charles", said Armstrong.

Fry shook his head.

"I'm years too old for that" he answered. "Our next team will be a younger team than the last; they won't want me."

"You'd have felt ten years younger if England had won today," Collins said. "Ah, but the next game isn't tomorrow! Good-bye, all of you."

And the great cricketer went with a smile that had a good deal of sadness on his fine face."

That's an example of what I meant when I said that John Nix Pentelow made these yarns of his all the more fascinating to cricket lovers at least by making the real giants of the great game play an active part therein.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

Just a few words on this month's fare. Firstly we have the second part of Walter Webb's informative 'Plummer' article. (We are indeed fortunate in having such a knowledgeable Blake enthusiast to write for us.)

Derek Adley's 'New Age of S. Blake', which follows, is so sound that even a staunch adherent to the old type of yarn, such as myself, can now face the 'new series' with more interest than before.

Victor Colby's 'Babblings of Bardell' was originally intended as a collection - in the form of an article, as it were. On receiving the manuscript, however, I found - to my pleasurable surprise - it ran to 11 quarto-size pages! Obviously this could not all go into one, or even two, issues of Blakiana. I am therefore publishing some each month, and I am sure you will agree that every 'Babbling' is a real gem.

I hope you will write to Derek Ford and give him your support in making his feature 'Consulting-Room Chat' a success. The solution to his puzzle last month is as follows:

1. LACK
2. HIRE
3. SPEAR Making CHARLIE SPRAKE.

Josie Packman.

THE MEN BEHIND PLUMMER (Part Two)

by Walter Webb

Lewis Carlton was not, of course, named as the author of these Sexton Blake stories, which were anonymous, but he was familiar to readers of that period as being responsible for one or two serials and some short stories, which were described as being "screamingly funny tales of Selhurst School". A much worn and oft repeated claim, so beloved of the comic papers, very wide of the mark in this case, for Carlton lacked that master touch

necessary to bring to the lips of his reader that involuntary chuckle of genuine amusement, so marked in the work of that master of his craft, Charles Hamilton.

Thoroughly evil that he was, with hardly any redeeming qualities, there was one thing at least of which Plummer was proud and that was of the fact that he was a Britisher, for patriotism and courage were the two fine qualities which shone like beacons from the dark depths of his bad ones and earned him no little sympathy in the heart of the reader of his exploits while detracting in some measure as a consequence, sympathy formerly held by Sexton Blake, the man whose sworn vow was to hunt him down. Plummer's patriotism was no better illustrated than in "The Case of the German Trader" (U.J.No. 574 - week-ending 10 October 1914.) Plummer was staying in a small hotel in Berlin at the time of the beginning of the war, and was gazing down at a number of marching German soldiers, when his attention was arrested at the sight of a man whom he recognised as a fellow-countryman, who had become stranded in the city when his money, having given out, he was unable to return to England. As the master-criminal looked down he saw the Englishman - a poor, half-starved looking wretch - sway, lurch forward and fall into the roadway, close to the feet of the marching Germans, - saw, too, a burly, arrogant figure in grey-green uniform leave the ranks and prod the prone man with the point of his bayonet. As the sounds of laughter and jeers came up to him through the open window, Plummer, white with rage, dashed down the stairs and running along the marching column until he came up to the man who had made free with his bayonet, hit him a resounding thwack on the jaw, felling him to the ground; then, as another soldier sought to interfere, Plummer grabbed his bayonet and ran it through his arm. As the crowd became threatening, Plummer, satisfied in the fact that he had avenged his countryman, barged his way through them by sheer physical strength and entered the hotel again.

But was George Marsden Plummer really so patriotic as Lewis Carlton would have us believe, after all? Certainly not, according to the author of "Plummer's Death Ray" (U.J. No. 1,093, published 20 September 1924), written ten years later. This case described how, after twenty years tireless research, an elderly scientist named Professor Wendell-Masters completed an invention which he named the Death Ray, an instrument capable

of killing countless thousands of people at a range of five miles even at its birth. In the hands of one nation it would give it the power to dominate the world. When he realised what slaughter, massacre and horror would prevail should it fall into unscrupulous hands, the professor decided to destroy it, but most unwisely advertised his intentions in several newspapers. When Plummer read about this he made his way to the professor's house in a lonely part of Devonshire, killed the old man, and stole his invention. After causing much death and destruction by use of the Ray, Plummer sent an impudent message to Whitehall stating his intention of selling the Ray of Death to the Chinese Government. A Chinaman named Brilliant Yong was to purchase the Ray on behalf of his country, he being part of a political party in China who had dreams of China becoming the supreme Power - rulers of the world! But all Plummer's plans were foiled by the intervention of Sexton Blake, and the master-criminal became a victim of the very instrument by which he had sought to destroy others. That was how, according to the author, Plummer met his death'; but, as all Blake readers know, this turned out to be a false alarm, as, a few weeks later, Hamilton Teed brought him back in a story which also featured Mademoisell Yvonne and Dr. Huxton Rymer. So much for Plummer's 'patriotism'.

Beginning with "The Kidnapped Inspector" (No. 401), Lewis Carlton wrote nearly thirty Plummer stories for the Union Jack, terminating with either "The Case of the Concentration Camp" (No. 590) or "Plummer's Dilemma" (No. 593), a state of uncertainty due to the fact that, not having a copy of the latter story, I cannot be sure whether this was Carlton's last, or Bobin's first. Certainly, however, John Bobin wrote that which appeared four months later, under the title of "The Mystery of the Mosque" (No. 609). It was about this time that Lewis Carlton may have left the firm, for, according to information from Fleetway House, he left his editorial and writing duties to play Sexton Blake on the stage. Thus it came about that John Bobin, better known to lovers of Blake lore as Mark Osborne, who had been relating the criminal adventures of Aubrey Dexter and Ezra Q. Maitland and his beautiful and extremely dangerous wife, known as Broadway Kate, took over the reins from Carlton and carried on the Plummer series. When Carlton did return to writing some years later he submitted two stories for inclusion in the Sexton Blake Library, no longer

as a staff writer, however, but as an outside contributor, and the only comment one need make on those stories is that they are better forgotten!

At the time of Carlton's departure Plummer's popularity must have been at a very low ebb, not very surprising under the circumstances, perhaps, and even Mark Osborne, with his improved writing, could not turn the tide in the master-criminal's favour. The call for Plummer stories became less frequent, and his decline can be plainly seen by a glance down the records from the time Lewis Carlton dropped out of the picture. In 1915 Osborne was called upon to write three Plummer stories; in 1916 two only; 1917 nil; 1918 two; 1919 nil; 1920 one; 1921 nil; 1922 two. It was in 1922 that George Hamilton Teed was asked by a new editor to write some Plummer stories, and this the author promptly did by including him in the star-studded cast of "The Thousandth Chance", that well-remembered 1,000th issue, which was also an enlarged Christmas Number, as well. Under Teed's wing, George Marsden Plummer became more popular than at any time previously, and no one can deny that of all the Plummer tales the best written and better conceived adventures were those related by the author from New Brunswick.

These, then, were the men behind Plummer, first of whom was Michael Storm, the originator; then Hamilton Teed, who ghosted for that solitary story 'way back in 1910, and then, years later, came back to chronicle Plummer's last adventures; Norman Goddard, who took on the job when his interest in Sexton Blake, once so keen, had almost evaporated; Lewis Carlton, who did the bulk of the contributing, but in a manner so slipshod as to render them worthy of little commendation; Mark Osborne, a real asset to the team of Blake writers, whose stories of Aubrey Dexter, and Ezra Q. and Kathleen Maitland were really good, but whose Plummer efforts were not, in my opinion, quite in the same class.

* * * * *

THIS NEW AGE OF SEXTON BLAKE

by Derek Adley

Browsing through my COLLECTOR'S DIGESTS recently I was rather struck by the number of times the present SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY was referred to by various collectors as 'not worth mentioning'.

Now, just recently I have devoted a good deal of my reading time to the S.B.L's that have been published during the last nine or ten years, and I must say here and now that while some of them have been pretty poor in plot many of them have been jolly fine yarns.

Certainly it is true the old criminal characters no longer appear, and the new case books always polish off the villains at the end of each story, but we must remember - the stories do appear under the title of SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY and not under the title of THE PLUMMER LIBRARY or THE HUXTON RYMER LIBRARY.

Surely the fact that the criminal is brought to justice at the end of the story instead of being allowed to commit further crimes only goes to show how good a detective Blake really is.

Looking at another angle, the fact that Tinker is now showing some partial interest in 'wine, women and song', really only makes him more like a normal human being, and not as it has been said, a young blackguard.

I think it is ANTHONY PARSONS who has given Tinker the honour of owning a surname; well, once again it is more natural that he be introduced to strangers and fresh acquaintances as Mr. Carter. After all, in his own circle (Blake, Coutts etc.) he is still known by the affectionate name of Tinker - and Carter isn't really such a terrible name anyway.

Three of the new series of S.B.L's I have recently read are as follows: No. 327 "Murder in the Air", No. 140 "The Case of the Double Event", No. 329 "The Case of the Indian Watcher". The first two yarns are by John Hunter and the third by Anthony Parsons, and in my opinion they are all very excellent yarns and well worth reading.

John Hunter definitely appears to be the best Blake author of today; some describe his stories as having a brutal strain in them, but I should say he is a real 'man's' author.

Rex Hardinge is still with us and so is Anthony Parsons, though perhaps we are having just a bit too much of tales of India by Parsons. But, the fact that some of these old authors are still with us, and that the Sexton Blake Library is still being published at all, should be a good reason why Blake fans should encourage the present series.

My remarks are not intended to give the opinion that I think the present yarns are better than the old ones, because I certainly

do not think that. My intentions are, however, to point out that there still are good yarns being published in the S.B. Library, and that they are, after all, only keeping up with the times.

-----ooOoo-----

THE BABBLINGS OF BARDELL

by Victor Colby

Standing in the detective's consulting room, with a newspaper lying before her on the table, the housekeeper was laying down the law, as that law was interpreted by the Bardellian branch of the Medes and Persians.

"Wot I says is, Mr. Blake", she said with emphasis, "it's scandalous! There's no other name for it. Look at that noospaper! Nothing but advertisements for ladies dresses and sich, one after the other! Look here", she pointed to one "Charming fur coat only eleven guineas! Only mind you, only. And 'ere when I was a gal, all I had was a feather boa, and that made from our own chickens. It's scandalous!"

"Did you have a bonnet to match the boa, Mrs. Bardell?" asked Tinker with a twinkle.

"I don't want any of your imperance, young man!" said the old lady. "look at this one Mr. Blake, 'Becoming dress in pale blue silk. Suitable for evenin' wear. Redooiced to £3. 10. 0' Redooiced, Mr. Blake - redooiced. It's simply scandalous! Seeing as which, Mr. Blake, knowing you like a son, as the sayin' is, all the evenin' wear I had was a nightgownd, which was put on at 10 o'clock prompt every night, and no gallivantin' about after dark like the girls do now! Young women today are spending money as fast as they get it. They are earnin' six and seven pounds a week in these nutrition factories. If I had my way, I'd take half their money away and give it to the pore wounded fellers, or to Dr. Banana's Home or somethink like that."

(U.J. 689 "The Great Hoax")

"Which there's a gentleman as would like to insult you proficiently, Mr. Blake", Mrs. Bardell began, a trifle breathlessly, "and a proper gent 'e is too by the looks of him. Wot you may call inaccurate morning dress, with a monople in 'is eye, and an orchard in his buttonhole".

(U.J. 1398 "The Grey Panther")

"I'll attend to the Christmas desecrations myself, Mr. Blake. I suppose you'll 'ave spitoons of evergreen and 'olly as usual for the festering season".

(U.J. 1417 "The Man who Hated Christmas")

Concerning Blake's tobacco, Mrs. Bardell has this to say.

"I'd like to put it on the back of the fire, only I should have the police after me for cremating a nuisance".

(S.B.L. 2nd series 200 "The Victim of the Waterway")

 AVAILABLE: Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, old series, 1919 onwards, also 1st and 2nd New Series; Robin Hoods, Union Jacks, Detective Weeklies, Sexton Blake Libraries, 1st Series; Nugget Weekly mint run, 1-34; Nugget 3d Library; Boys Magazines; Nick Carters, Books for the Bairns; Boys Friend Libraries, 1st Series, also 2nd; Schoolboys' Own Libraries, St. Franks issues: Adventures; Wizards; Rovers, Marvels, 1916-22; Detective Libraries, including No. 1; Holiday Annuals, Collectors' Digests, Annuals, Young Britains, Skipperers, Tubby Haigs, Triumphs, Penny Pictorials (with Sexton Blake), Modern Wonders, Illustrated Police Budgets, Buffalo Bill Libraries; Aldine and Newnes' Dick Turpins, Aldine Claude Davals, Travel and Invention Libraries, Scouts, Boys Own Papers, Captains, Stage, Motor, Film Mags. and Annuals, 1920 - 1940, Chatterbox, Wide Worlds, Boxing, American; Realms, Rare Books, 1600 - 1850, Rare Cigarette Cards, etc. etc. S.A.E. PLEASE.
 WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs., 1915-35, Union Jacks, 1903-25, C.D.'s, 1 - 35; Nelson Lees 1 - 146; Modern Boys; Early Fashion Magazines; Magnets, Gems, Populars; Comics, pre-war; Photo Bits, Fun; London Life, pre-war; Scarce "Bloods" 1835 - 85. Best Prices or Exchange. RONALD ROUSE, 3 ST. LEONARD'S TERRACE, GAS HILL NORWICH.

"Can anyone assist with Magnets 397, 400, 401, 407, 409, 412, 419, 420, 439, 437, 446, 461, 881, 862/869, 906, 907, 1007/9, 1011, 1013, 1016, 1025, 1029, 1032/34, 1038, 1042, 1047, 1051, 1062, 1089, 1097, 1115, 1117, 1122, 1132/37, 1160, 1162, 1170, 1174, 1178, 1194, 1310. I also require most Gems 400/1220 and am anxious to replace a further 100 or so Magnets between 1000/1500. Lists of anything available welcomed. Your price or exchanges. Please write airmail. CHARLES VAN RENEN, Box 50, Uitenhage, South Africa."

HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

On another page you will see a letter from Frank Richards in which he expresses a desire to know the name of the M.P. who expressed his opinion of Bunter in the House recently.

Well, I've told him and I'll now reveal here, too, that the gentleman who was evidently no Magnetite was Mr. Woodrow Wyatt, who at the time was Socialist member for Aston (Birmingham) but who, at the moment of writing this, is hopefully contesting Grantham, Lincs. Whether he is again an M.P. or not after May 26th, he will doubtless be getting a letter from Kingsgate, Kent, to ponder over.

And here is a remark made by someone in a responsible position who evidently takes a different view regarding the influence of the Greyfriars stories to that held by Mr. Woodrow Wyatt.

"TEDDY BOY" - & GREYFRIARS!

"Given a different social, educational and home background the "Teddy Boy" would probably be the type to be captain of the fifth from at Greyfriars. He would be an entirely different person, a Harry Wharton or a Bob Cherry.

Mr. John B. Mays, Warden of Liverpool University settlement, expressed this opinion when he spoke on "Society's Responsibility for Crime" at the Oxford Summer School of the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency."

POPULAR PERSONALITIES No. 10 (Second Series)

FRANK NUGENT:

The least robust of all the Famous Five, Frank Nugent, provides an interesting character study. Good looking, almost to effeminacy - he was always selected to play a feminine role when the Remove presented a Shakesperian play - there is nothing of the "cissy" about Frank.

Frank Nugent inherits his looks, his rose-pink complexion, and, particularly, his hands, from his mother who was a Ravenspur before she married. The "Ravenspur hands" featured in the fine stories of Ravenspur Grange, where the Co. were the guests of Frank's uncle.

Nugent appeared in the very first Magnet, when Wharton saved him from drowning, and the wonderful friendship was born.

Though there is a distinct contrast in their characters Nugent and Harry Manners of St. Jim's are much akin, so far as their histories are concerned. Both had younger brothers, and in each case the younger brother was a source of trouble for the elder.

Readers with very early collections will recall some human interest stories in which the Nugent parents were shown as stupid people who indulged their younger boy and had little time for the older brother. But throughout Magnet history, most of the stories in which Nugent played the lead showed him making sacrifices for the selfish Dicky.

For Frank made a fetish of looking after Dicky, and anyone who criticised Dicky was likely to find himself in hot water with Frank. The latter, too, brought a heap of trouble on himself by doing the younger lad's prep for him. On one occasion, Frank actually knocked down Mr. Twigg, Dicky's form-master - but fortunately, unknown to Frank, it was only Wibley in disguise.

The series of Carlow, the bootboy who came to Greyfriars, presented interesting character work, showing a strain of unreasoning obstinacy in Nugent.

A subtle pen-picture of Frank Nugent is found in the HARRY WHARTON'S DOWNFALL series of 1932, and the former does not appear in too favourable a light. Nugent, believing that his former pal is going to the dogs, forbids his brother to have any association with Harry. The latter, with some justification, accuses Nugent of being a "false friend".

In the brilliant series when the Bounder became captain of the Remove for a time, Vernon-Smith deliberately tried to cause a rift in the lute in study No. 1 by putting Nugent into the cricket team. Harry Wharton disapproved, knowing that there were better men available, and there was some clever character etching when Nugent bitterly resented that disapproval.

Nugent has never been portrayed as a fellow of very strong character, and his contrast with Wharton, his best pal, is an outstanding factor in the Greyfriars Story. But Nugent is very human, very straight, and very lovable - and a worthy star in the most famous school stories in the world.

WANTED: Gems No's 1478, 1542, 1548, 1576, 1577, 1578, J.R. CARET,
73 DUNTON ROAD, BERMONDSEY, LONDON, S.E.1.

DO YOU REMEMBER?By Roger M. JenkinsNo. 10 - Sparshott Series No. 6 - "Pluck Will Tell"

Merretts began to publish the Sparshott series towards the end of the last war, and, though collectors of Charles Hamilton's work will never allow any of his new schools to share pride of place with St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood, it must be admitted that the Sparshott series could - in more favourable circumstances - have become much more popular than they actually were.

No. 6 of the series is distinguished by the first re-appearance of Billy Bunter after the Amalgamated Press ceased to publish the companion papers. By some odd legal quirk, Charles Hamilton enjoyed the copyright of Billy Bunter as a character (as a result of which the Amalgamated Press were obliged to pay him for the use of the name in the execrable cartoons of Bunter in the Knock-Out comic). On the other hand, the Amalgamated Press claimed to be able to prohibit him from writing stories about the old schools for any other publisher - a most ungenerous attitude, in view of the fact that they declined to publish his stories themselves, and one of which they had the grace to repent later on. So, while Greyfriars was temporarily out of the picture, Billy Bunter was definitely in, and could be introduced into any of the stories Charles Hamilton cared to write about his new schools.

In "Pluck Will Tell", Billy Bunter had blackmailed his way into a shady car trip with Vernon-Smith, who had pushed him out of the car near Sparshott and driven off without him. The part Bunter played at Sparshott was not a major one, but his presence was relevant to the main plot, a rather unusual one about a new boy called Louis Merrick, half French, and rather too timid for a Public School. In the length of a typical Magnet story we were entertained by a description of how Merrick eventually found the determination to stand up to the bully of the Form. It was Billy Bunter, however, who had the last word - a promise to repay Merrick's loan with a Postal Order.

The presence of Bunter was just sufficient to remind old readers exactly how much they were missing, but the Merretts books were, on the whole, an entertaining collection. With Plum Tumpton, Tom Rake, Harry Vernon, and Barnes-Paget the Buccaneer, Sparshott provided an interesting set of characters which made it the best of Charles Hamilton's new schools. But even the best of

the new schools could not survive the re-appearance of the old; the stars do not shine when the sun comes out.

Here's some nostalgia on St. Jims stories of the long ago in support of Mr. Robert Farish. Actually the article was written before Mr. Farish's complaint appeared last month. Come on, Gemites, lets have more; there's still plenty of scope.

GEMS OF MARTIN CLIFFORD

By George Sellars

"The Search for Tom Merry" is one of a series which I consider to be about the best story among them. Financial circumstances compels Tom Merry to leave St. Jim's and he goes to London in search of a job, and how he meets Joe Frayne, the little waif of Blucher's Buildings, and Joe introducing Tom to "The Captain". The latter is a pick-pocket and promises to find some work for Tom, but he tries to use him as a catspaw for his light fingered business and how "The Captain" tries it on with those famous characters, Jack, Sam and Pete, and poor Tom left in the lurch by the rascally captain taking his leave in a hurry with Pete's wallet, and the good natured negro standing by the lad and convincing Jack and Sam that Tom is honest. Of how they invited the hero of the Shell to have a square meal with them, and their search for The Captain of the big negro, with a heart of gold, giving all his money, and nearly all his friends money he had borrowed to the poor beggars of the slum quarters of the great city. Finally, how Tom Merry rescues Towser when the bulldog is in danger on the frozen river, of being drowned under the ice, where The Chums of St. Jims in search of Tom are watching the skaters. Of the lad's brave fight to save the helpless dog, and how his courage against odds triumphs in the end, reveals the sterling quality in Tom Merry's character. A splendid story.

Another great series of Tom Merry, "A Dangerous Double", "A Change of Identity" and "Brought to Book" narrates how Tom's cousin Gerald Goring and a young rascal, Reggie Clavering, both contrive to disgrace Tom Merry and get him expelled from St. Jims. The farmer, because of financial difficulties, intends to use desperate measures in order to disinherit Tom of his money and

claim it himself from Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Clavering is Tom Merry's double, in appearance, but in nature the exact opposite to Tom, a rascal of the worst type. He is ragged by the chums of St. Jim's and told to keep clear of the school because of his blackguardly habits, smoking and visiting the "Green Man" and making trouble for Tom. Clavering is very keen to help Goring in his cunning scheme to disgrace Tom Merry, especially after the rough treatment he has received from Tom and his chums. The hero of the Shell is kidnapped and held in captivity and his double takes his place in the Shell at St. Jim's, to play his part as a rascal in the plot to dishonour Tom Merry, and how he succeeds only too well, when he receives a flogging from the Head and quarrels with Lowther and Manners. Finally how Tom escapes from his captivity, and arrives at St. Jim's just in time to see his rascally double being expelled before the assembled school. The dramatic scene in the hall when Tom denounces Clavering as an imposter and proves himself the genuine Tom Merry by asking his form master about the number of lines he received from him, before being kidnapped, the same applying to his double, and how Clavering gave the wrong answer and Tom Merry the right one, brings a climax to conclude a magnificent series of Tom Merry stories.

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DOES ANYONE KNOW?

Whilst perusing through a publication entitled "The Wonder Book of Comics" published by Odhams Press Ltd., I was astonished to find in its pages a story of Greyfriars featuring Bunter and Vernon-Smith called "Billy Bunter's Booby-Trap", written of course by Frank Richards. I have not heard of this story, or, any mention of it before in the C.D. Whether this story was a reprint of an earlier one published in one of the Holiday Annuals, I cannot say; the illustrations were very crude and by an artist called Norman Mansbridge. They were very similar to those drawn by Hutton Mitchell, one of the very first Magnet Artists.

It will be very interesting to see if some of the "experts" of Magnet lore can tell me whether this is an original story or not?

This book was published in the region of 1949 I believe.

W.O.G. LOFTS.

MAGNET TITLES: (Continued) 1433, Harry Wharton Wins Through; 1434, Fishy's Holiday Stunt; 1435, The Mystery of Portercliffe Hall; 1436, The Phantom of Portercliffe; 1437, The Greyfriars Gold-Hunter; 1438, The Man in the Mask; 1439, On the Trail of Treasure; 1440, Under False Colours; 1441, The Spy of the Fifth; 1442, Greyfriars Idiot No. 1; 1443, The Boy with a Borrowed Name; 1444, Bunter tells the Truth; 1445, Saved by His Enemy; 1446, The Fifth-Former's Secret; 1447, Guyed on the Fifth; 1448, Football Foes; 1449, Bunter Gets His Own Back; 1450, Blackmail; 1451, Bunter Spills the Beans; 1452, Smithy's Strange Adventure.

LETTER BOX

FRANK RICHARDS WANTS TO KNOW

May 14th, 1955.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the C.D., even more interesting than usual. I have been getting letters about the Honourable Member who made silly remarks in the House of Commons about Bunter, but nobody has told me who that member was: and the C.D., for once is not informative. I am told that a report appeared in the Daily Mail, but if so I missed it. I think I ought to speak a word in season to that Honourable Member, who appears to have stated that in the Bunter books people are "shut in doors" and "pushed into fireplaces" incidents of which the author knows nothing. Honourable Members are very often given to talking out of their hats, but there is a limit to the nonsense they may be allowed to talk without being called to order. As you know, I received an apology from a member of the House of Lords who blundered on this subject: and I shall expect the same from this member of the Lower House when I get in touch with him. Who the dickens was he?

Always your sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

NOTE: The name is revealed in Hamiltoniana. H.L.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

After Woodingdean, Cherry Place once again and the usual good gathering with sixteen members in attendance. It was nice to see Jim Hutchinson and James Parratt on this occasion. Unfortunately Bill Jardine was unable to make the journey up from Brighton owing to indisposition. After words of welcome from the chairman, Roger Jenkins, the Hamilton librarian gave an account of another successful month's borrowing. It was unanimously agreed to extend this section of the library by purchasing more material. Owing to the scarcity of suitable "Nelson Lee" material, this section was reported quiet.

Joint winners of last month's quiz, Len and Josie Packman, conducted their effort. This was a repeat of the very fine one that we had over at East Dulwich some months since. Congratulations to Bill Lofts for winning easily, second place was filled by Roger Jenkins who incidentally was the winner, when we had the quiz before. Third place was filled by Bob Blythe.

"Down you go" was conducted by Bob Whiter and after all the subjects and clues were run through it was found that Frank Vernon Lay was the winner with Len Packman and Roger Jenkins in the second place. After this individual members came up to the blackboard and gave their own efforts. These were very good and went down very well. Following this Bob Whiter gave us some sketches, also on the Blackboard, and then showed some drawings on an Epidiascope. These were well received and to finish up with Frank Vernon Lay gave a very interesting impromptu talk. The usual good study feed took place, thanks to Eileen and sister Kathleen, and sales and exchanges were indulged in.

Next meeting will take place at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22., on Sunday, June 12th. 4 p.m. sharp. Arthur Gorfain, Editor of "The Silver Jacket", Australian Boy's magazine, hope to attend.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

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NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, MAY 14th, 1955

J. Breeze Bentley, happily in the chair again, extended a

warm welcome to another new member, Stanley Nicholls.

Wilfred Billham, who was a "new chum" last month now seemed like an old hand, no doubt Stanley will feel the same next month.

Gerry Allison in addition to his other duties read the minutes in the absence of secretary Norman Smith who was on holiday.

The same fertile minded Gerry then announced it was proposed in the summer months, to read graphic descriptions of cricket matches culled from the stories of yester year. He proceeded to read the first taken from P.G. Wodehouse's "The Lost Lambs" which appeared in Vol. 19 of "The Captain". The volume was kindly loaned by Frank Vernon Lay of the London Club. If the reception this first one received is anything to go by this is going to be a very successful series.

Then came an Elimination Quiz built up on Loder's name. That "hard to beat" one, Jack Wood, came out the winner with 14 points. Gerry Allison and myself considered we had done well as we were close up with 13 each.

Several postal members who had had copies of the balance sheet have written expressing how grateful they are with the flourishing condition of the Club, and the pleasure they get in reading of its activities.

Next meeting, Saturday, June 11th.

H. LECKERBY,

Northern Section Correspondent.

MIDLAND SECTION

Unfortunately our Chairman was not able to be present this evening so the meeting was commenced with apologies on behalf of Mrs. Corbett and himself.

Minutes and announcements were soon cleared and we settled down to hear a talk by Mr. Handley Junior comparing his experiences as a Boarder at a Public School with the fictional schools so familiar to us.

This was a most interesting talk, well delivered, thoughtful and sincere. John compared his own school, (Tettenhall) with those of Reed, Finnemore and Hamilton and made some extremely interesting comments.

To mention some of these, Reed drew places more vividly than people but on the contrary and unlike most other writers made much

of the great men of the Fifth and Sixth. Finnemore's delightful saga of Teddy Lester shows surprising variety and adventures in a very localised setting.

It was interesting to hear that Greyfriars and St. Jim's were not so very different from the real thing after all, although justice was not really done to the Prefects. These Olympian Beings were in life without exception lordly, idolised, and fair dealing. But of course most school stories centre on the Middle School.

Also it was interesting to hear that it was in the Middle School that divergence was most noticeable. Fourth Formers varied markedly, and rather unpleasant types, (Bolsovers, Skinners and the like), were more in evidence.

Perhaps most Boarders have a sense of being imprisoned; and like many, John would rather have played Soccer than Rugger.

Our School master members in particular had some interesting comments to make and the topic of Soccer V Rugger was well aired. The Public School system and the virtue and the need for discipline were other matters discussed.

EDWARD DAVEY.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING - MAY 15th

This meeting lived up to the usual high standard of enjoyment and entertainment. It opened with the bright suggestion of a trip to Birmingham some time this year to visit our good friends in the Midland Section. It was received favourably by the members present and will be discussed again at our next meeting.

Don Webster provided us with a St. Frank's limerick, incomplete, to which we had to add the last line, and Bill Horton's was by far the most amusing, Bill's a bit of a drak horse in these competitions, those requiring wit, anyhow. Don's lines read:-

When Handy was up for the sack,
For making a prefect's eye black,
He said, "Don't be silly,
He was biffing my Willy!"

To which Bill added:-

"Right! Let Willy help you to pack!"

Rather neat, what?

After refreshments, all the efforts in the "Bunter's specs" competition were read out, and if any member was in doubt as to

what the fat Owl's glasses really look like, he need by no longer. I think everyone was delighted when we heard that Mrs. Webster had been declared the winner, a very amusing effort, too; mine, for some reason, was second, and young Peter's third. A great success, and deservedly so, for the Websters. Thanks, Mr. Francomb, for a most entertaining competition.

Next Meeting, Sunday, June 12th, 7 p.m.

FRANK UNWIN, Hon. Sec.

Nelson Lee Column

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By JACK WOOD
MOSKOW, 328 Stockton Lane,
YORK.



Since writing my last article, I have spent several happy hours in London during which I had the pleasure of meeting an old pen-friend of our in Jim Sutcliffe for the first time and renewing acquaintance with Bob Blythe and Len Packman who have done so much for the hobby. They were, indeed, enjoyable discussions we had and productive of tangible results, among them the production of S.O.L. 27 River House Rivals, which completes my collection of Brooksian S.O.L's.

Some years ago I had the happy experience of visiting Toronto and though I was not there long I retain vivid memories of a moonlight sail across the Lake from the foot of Niagara Falls - a romantic velvet night with soft music coming from the lower deck and an ex-Hudson Bay Company employee telling me of his new

future as an interior decorator and designer in Britain. Then, of course, I knew nothing of a recent addition to our hobby lovers, Bernard Thorne, who contributes the following profile of a favourite St. Frank's character. We welcome his first contribution and look forward to others.

Here, then, is:

THE ST. FRANK'S BOYS

No. 1 Vivian Travers

The Nelson Lee Library was past its prime when Vivian Travers made his first appearance at St. Franks. This, we feel, was a minor tragedy in the life of our favourite paper. Many excellent characterizations had been introduced by Edwy Searles Brooks after No. 111 Old Series, but among the many, we still believe Vivian Travers was the finest. Unlike some of Mr. Brook's characters, Travers owed little to outside influence. Archie Glenthorpe owed many of his mannerisms to P.G. Wodehouse, as did William Napoleon Browne; Handforth and Co. bore a vague resemblance to Horace Coker and Co., - but Vivian Travers was, without doubt, cast in an original mould. In his peculiar mixture of good and bad, he was not unlike many other schoolboys - real and fictitious; but there the similarity ended. Calm, unruffled, debonaire; a fine sportsman, and yet possessing an air of languid boredom which belied his athletic ability, he added considerable colour to the closing years of the Nelson Lee Library.

Rather tall for his age, inclined to be dark, well-dressed and somewhat flippant in his speech, Vivian Travers came to St. Franks from Beccleston College, and one of the first boys he met at his new school was Jimmie Potts, also of Beccleston, but now, through financial troubles, a boot boy. To describe vividly Vivian Traver's own peculiarly attractive savoir-faire, we cannot do better than quote Edwy Searles Brooks in No. 90, First New Series, January 21st 1928.

"By Jove!" Potts said sharply. "You - you mean that you were sacked?"

"Exactly," murmured Travers, "A blunt way to put it, Potts - a somewhat crude way to put it. But since it is the truth who am I to complain? Yes, I was sacked from Beccleston."

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings---"

"That's all right. My feelings are perfectly intact," said Travers. "At Beccleston I experienced the doubtful honour of

being publicly expelled. Now, let me see, what was my sordid crime? There are so many black deeds in my history that I find it difficult to pick out this particular one. Ah, yes. I remember now!"

"You were caught playing cards weren't you?"

"A most careless affair," said Travers nodding. "In a moment of sheer absent-mindedness the headmaster of Beccleston wandered into my study. At any ordinary time he could have wandered with impunity. But his wanderings, on that occasion, led him into the middle of a most exciting poker game, and I can still vividly remember the Head's expression when he saw me raking in the kitty."

"The kitty?" repeated Potts.

"The pool," explained Travers, indulgently, "Quite a big pool it was. Something in the neighbourhood of twenty-five pounds. And as it was my study, and as the other players were my guests, I received it very forcibly in the neck. At certain changes of the weather I can still feel pains in my old wounds," he added reminiscently.

Within a few days of his arrival in the Remove, Vivian Travers firmly established himself with the other juniors. Although displaying an occasional liking for cigarette smoking and a "flutter", he proved to be an excellent footballer and - the following summer - a first-rate all round cricketer. He was also a very skilful motorcyclist, although inclined to recklessness; as was proved in No.91 First New Series. when with a calm disregard for danger, he accepted a dare from his study-mates, Gulliver and Bell, to leap an eight-feet ravine on his 'bike'. Only Jimmie Pott's courage saved him from certain death on the rocks three hundred feet below. Travers repaid the debt by forcing the rascally stock-broker, Grayson to restore to Jimmie and his mother their lost fortune; thus enabling the boot-boy to take his rightful place in the St. Frank's Remove as Sir James Potts, Bart.

A little later (in First New Series No. 113-117), Travers showed clearly that mixture of good and bad in his nature. Guthbert Chambers of the Fifth had just celebrated his birthday; and Grayson and Shaw, his Form mates, had planned to entice him into a gambling session so that they could rob him of the substantial sums of money that he had received from his fond relations. Travers, hearing of the plan, had good-naturedly inveigled Chambers into a game of his own, so that he could win the money, returning it later when Chamber's danger was over.

Unfortunately, Mr. Pagett of the Fifth, had interrupted Traver's plan, and Chambers and Travers had been flogged for gambling. Chambers, in addition, had been sent down to the Remove for his persistent slacking. It had amused Travers to see the stupid and pompous Fifth-former in the Remove; but, at the same time, he felt that he was, in some part, responsible. He decided, as a measure of atonement, to push Chambers into the captaincy. He commenced his plan by arranging that Nipper should find him, Travers, smoking just before an important match. Nipper had no alternative but to drop him from the match; and as a result Nipper's eleven lost. Prompted by Travers, Chambers criticised Nipper's handling of the captaincy, and finally challenged him to a fight. The result was inconclusive, but Travers pressed for an election, and Chambers was made Junior Captain. But his bungling of the new position soon found Chambers in difficulties, and when Travers learnt that he was dropping the regular eleven cricketers for nonentities and wasters, he decided that his whimsical scheming had gone far enough. He, therefore, changed his colours, and using all his efforts and cool nerve got Nipper re-instated and Chambers sent down to the Third Form!

And later on, during the Removites' visit to India, when they were besieged in the Kypur Pass fortress by the rascally Ameer of Richnir, it was Travers's cool resourcefulness that brought help in the nick of time.

During the following autumn term, Travers again showed his skill - not only as a schemer, but as a first-class Soccer forward. Bannington Town, the local professional Soccer club, were having a bad season. Its supporters had become apathetic as a result of its poor showing in the league. In an attempt to revive interest, Vivian Travers persuaded the Bannington Town's manager, Mr. Billings, to arrange a match between the Junior Eleven and the Town Reserves. Mr. Billings had even agreed to a match with the Town first team if the juniors won. He had, of course, no doubt that St. Franks would be beaten, but he under-estimated the juniors. Nipper's team won a hard-fought battle by four goals to two. Travers, himself, scored a miracle goal from a pass by Reggie Pitt, and again we quote Mr. Brooks: "Vivian Travers leapt forward, gathering the leather in his stride, and took a first-time shot on the run.

(We regret that through lack of space, the rest of this interesting article has to be held over until next month.)

LATE LETTER

May 24th, 1955.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for your kind and informative letter. I shall take the matter up with the honourable member as soon as I get a little leisure to do so.

Some of our friends may be interested to hear that W.G. Bunter will be having another run on television this summer. I have just completed the plays, and expect to see them begin in June.

With kindest regards.

Very sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

(Mr. Woodrow Wyatt is no longer a Member. H.L.)

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Wanted: Number One's of Boys' Papers. Also loose copies of the rarer type of papers such as "School and Sport", "Empire Library", "Scoops" and many of the Victorian era. W.O.G. LOFTS, 56 SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LISSON STREET, MARLBORNE, LONDON, N.W.1.

WANTED: "CHAMPION'S" Nos. 14 and 15 and 38 to 52. STATE PRICE AND NOS. AVAILABLE. ALL LETTERS ANSWERED. JOHN BUSH, 32 WALDEN AVENUE, CHISLEHURST, KENT.

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