

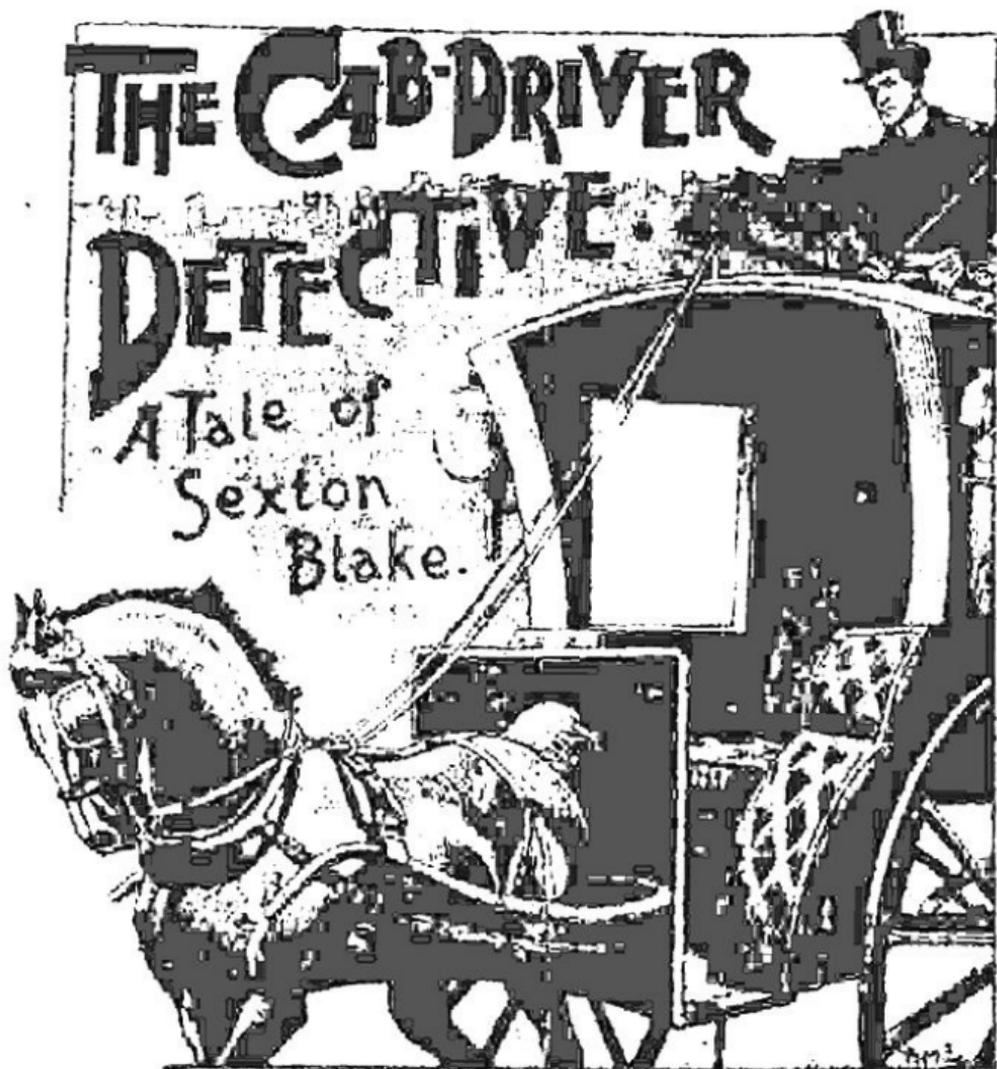
The

(Vol. 2) No. 15.

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Collectors' Digest

A Cover of D.J. No. 107 dated 29.10.1905.



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JANUARY 1948

Next Issue : February 1948

Editor Miscellaneous Section:

Herbert Leckenby, Telephone Exchange,
G/o Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

* * *

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR:

A New Year and a New Volume ! To our readers all over the world, health and happiness and may the word 'austerity' be heard less in the land. As for Volume No.2, we'll try our utmost to make it better than Vol: No.1. And here let me sincerely thank all those who sent me Christmas Greetings. It has been impossible to acknowledge all individually, but I'm going to make a New Year Resolution, I don't usually, but its this: With the Annual out of the way - (for the time being) I mean to answer my correspondents within a decent interval. This, despite the fact that my mail increases weekly.

On another page, you will read an account of how

we managed to get the Annual out by Christmas after all. What an exciting race it was. It made me think of Mr. Addington-Symonds vivid description of the launching of the "Champion" 25 years' ago.

I am writing this at the end of the Christmas break, so there has not been time yet to receive many opinions, but I did get some by aid of the 'phone on Christmas Day, and all were encouraging. One did say 'Nigh on 100 pages, instead of 60, you'll be broke!' Yea. maybe we were a little reckless, but we're not worrying. As co-editor Maurice said in his 'phone chat. "It's been worth it, and we shall have experience behind us for next year's". Yes, we're already thinking of next year's.

On Christmas Eve I had the pleasure of a chat on the 'phone with that good friend to our hobby, Mr. R.A. Goodyear. Said he in the course of it "I don't know how you do it with that switchboard of yours to look after as well. Well, yes, life is rather hectic at times, but if all work was as congenial, my hobby work I mean, grumbling, complaints, strikes, would be things of the past. Oft times during the year I have said to myself "What on earth should I have done with myself if it hadn't been for the hobby." As it is when preparing the mag., reading, and replying to my correspondence, I feel as young as the boys of Greyfriars School. And that reminds me, I owe Mr. Goodyear an apology. It was he who wrote that nostalgic little poem "Stephanie" which appeared in the last issue. Somehow his name was omitted. Sorry, Mr. Goodyear.

Well, we don't know what 1948 has in store for us; there are gloomy forebodings about the paper situation, but we'll get the mag. out by hook or by crook. All the same, if any of you can pick up a ream or two of decent foolscap duplicating paper it would help us a lot.

Yours sincerely,

Herbert Lee Kirby

In sending this contribution Mr. Goodyear said "Send it back if you don't think it good enough." Well, it didn't go back. It's just the kind of thing to get you talking, especially the older ones.

Ed.

OLD v. OLDER OLD BOY STUFF

by

R. A. H. GOODYEAR

What had you Old Boys that we still Older Old Boys hadn't? I think it was superior letterpress.

Your illustrations were no better, though some of them could perhaps claim equality with the clever Boys of England and Young Folks' Paper pictures. You definitely lacked those gorgeous coloured plates which were given away with Brett's publications. "Gratis with our next number - a splendid coloured picture of the Lord Mayor of London killing Wat Tyler". Next week another grand historical picture, printed in six colours, will be presented free, entitled, 'The Conspiracy', or 'The Death of Rizzio'".

How passionately I loved the perfume of the colour-printing oils used in the production of "The Boys of the Empire"! I used to plunge my face into my copy the moment I got outside the news-agent's shop and inhale the scent rapturously before even glancing at the truly delightful illustrations to "The Master of the Sword" and "Forecastle Tom".

"The name of LEIGHTON BROTHERS will be a sufficient guarantee of the excellence of the Colour Printing," said the 'Boys of the Empire' editor. It was. From this famous firm came also the colour-prints first reproduced by the "Illustrated London News".

Where you present-day Old Boys scored was in the quality of the stories. The very old-time far-

thing-a-liners (I doubt if they were paid even that much - some of them scarcely deserved to be) sometimes wrote the baldest of uninspiring stuff, broken into absurdly short paragraphs and almost wholly lacking in descriptive power. Such a thing as the progressive development of a character on the lines of Tom Merry and Billy Bunter never occurred to them, perhaps because it was quite beyond them in any case. How elated we should have been had they given us the equivalent of a Sexton Blake or a Nelson Lee! They hadn't the education to do that, for popular education was then in its infancy.

Of course one must admit that Sexton Blake was an impossibly ideal type of private sleuth, even more so than Sherlock Holmes was before him. The police will tell you how fantastically unlike reality were the feats which Sexton Blake accomplished. The authorities would never have allowed him the wide margin of latitude in private investigation permitted him by his authors. "Dick Barton, Special Agent" is a ludicrous example of the same sort of thing in to-day's interminable broadcasts. Even in boy's fiction there is room for some amount of fact, for "truth is always strange, stranger than fiction".

Character study was an outstanding feature of your Gem and Magnet. Pluck and Union Jack yarns. Your schoolmasters weren't just lay figures, fashioned on a plan that had served for a hundred years, sharply divided between sanctimony and villainy. Your boys did things differently and talked much more naturally than the stereotyped saints and sneaks of our Older Old Boy schools. Those were just too good or bad to be believed in.

Some of our readers will possess those very vivid pictures in "The Blue Dwarf", mainly about Dick Turpin and packed with turnpike-road incidents. My perfect copy of "The Blue Dwarf" was merrered because I couldn't resist taking out the plates and pinning them on the walls of my study as an inspiration to me in the composition of the many

School and adventure yarns I wrote for Hendersons and Lloyds. Whenever I felt jaded, those boldly coloured pictures were a stimulus to me. "Buck up," I said to myself, "and give the dear lads something as brisk and bright as those animated pictures of Dick", and the mere sight of them galvanised my laggard brain into fresh action.

Finally, I say we Older Old Boys had the advantage in our illustrations while you got the pull in your tales. Take as an example the front page of the Boys of England as reproduced for us in Vol.1, No.10 of this Collectors' Digest. That reveals a brilliant group of romantic movement which could have adorned the pages of Sir Walter Scott.

"The Collectors' Digest" Subscription Rates:

Single copies 1s.1d post free. Three copies (on publication) 3s.3d post free. Six copies 6s.6d post free. Postal Orders to be made payable to - H. Leckenby at York, Uncrossed.

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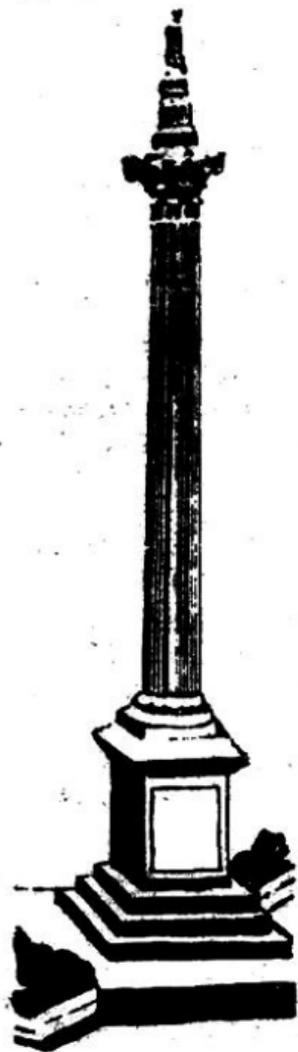
GOOD PRICES offered for Bound Volumes of early Magnets, also loose Magnets between 1908 and 1929. Eric Payne, 23, Grove Road, Surbiton.

WANTED: Aldine Publications, Turpins. Duvals, etc. Landy, 4, Nuneston Road, Dagenham, Essex.

MAGNETS WANTED: Urgently, between 1922 and 1930. Good prices paid. Have Magnets 1936 to 1940 for exchange. J. Corbett, 49, Glyn Farm Road, Quinton, Birmingham.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs., Union Jacks, and Detective Weeklies. W. Colcombe, 256. South Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

The Nelson Lee Column



Conducted by Robert Blythe, 81,
Alsen Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

It may be said that despite the undoubted superiority of the Nelson Lee Library over its companion papers (my own opinion, let me hasten to add, but I bet it will start something), very little seemed to be written about it. In all the amateur magazines that I've read the articles concerned with the "Magnet" and "Gen" appear to be predominant.

Now all you Lee supporters, this is your column. It exists to answer your queries. It is to encourage you chaps who have the furtherance of St. Franks at heart, to add your quota to that which has already been written on this subject. There must be many a budding genius hiding his light under a bushel, and it is for the benefit of such great minds that this column has been started. Do facts prevent your taking the plunge? Then this column is your answer. Please don't think however that I am setting myself up as an irrefutable authority. Far from it, but if I don't know the answer, I'll find out somehow.

You can help me too. For years I have wondered how many copies of No.1 there are in existence. In all the 22 years that I have been collecting I have known only two. One is in the British Museum, and I have the other. Of a certainty there are more, but how many? If any of you possess, or know of anybody who possesses a copy, write and let me know, and the results will be published on this page. It is not my intention to do much other than introduce the subject this month, but I hope to write an informal sort of chat in subsequent issues. However, it depends on you. Let me hear of any interesting items and I'll either reply personally or through this column. So let's be hearing from you.

(To save time, readers should send their queries direct to Mr. Blythe. Ed.)

I WANT YOUR odd Magnets, Boys Friend Libs., Bread-noughts, Greyfriars, Annuals. All letters answered. Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

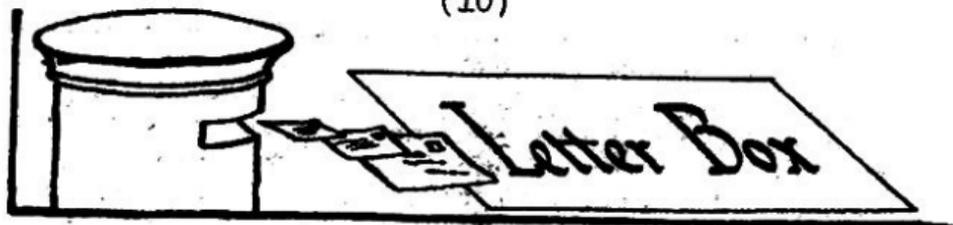
WANTED: Early issues of Gem, Magnet, Pluck, Dreadnought, early 1914 and 1915. Eric Payne, 23 Grove Road, Surbiton.

EXCHANGE: Boys Friends, Boys Herald, Marvels, Chums, Union Jacks, 1903-1910 for Magnets 1912-16, or 1923. Complete copies. W.H. Nente, Wenlock, Burnham, Bucks.

NELSON LEES for exchange. Wanted Nos. 542 to 549. Schoolboys Own No. 216. L.M. Allen, 3, Montgomery Drive, Sheffield, 7.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, Magnets, Gems. Good condition only required. Robert Blythe, 81, Alsen Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

WANTED: The Treasure of Santa Maria series, pub. during 1936 in the Gem, also Schoolboy Owns, No. 286 and Gems Nos. 1518 & 1519. C. Holland-Skinner, 151 Brixton Hill, London, S.W.2.



1

More Reminiscencies from Frank Richards

18th December, 1947.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for C D. which I think stands not only for Collectors' Digest but for Continuous Delectation.

I like the Editor in reminiscent Mood. And Robert Whiter seems to write as well as he draws: which is saying, as Mr. Runyon would have expressed it, more than somewhat! A couple of little errors for Wood read Hood, and for "five hundred" read "some hundreds". But what's a small matter of orthography or arithmetic between friends? Robert's article is top-notch: and even a German-speaking Editor couldn't have "declined the article".

Frank Snell's contribution is like a breezy breath from the wide spaces of Devon. Frank Richards blushed with modesty and pleasure as he read it; and after this Combined Operation, read it over again.

The Boys Realm on the cover brought back many memories. I see that it is dated 1910, and by that date I had ceased to write for the Realm, being too busy with Gem and Magnet. It must have been as far back as 1905, I think, that I had a serial called Football Fortune, in that paper, but I can still see myself sitting in Hamilton Edward's room at the old Carmelite House discussing it with him, as if it were yesterday. That was long before Billy Bunter adorned the pages of the Magnet: though our fat friend was first delineated as long ago as

Shakespeare was not thinking of Mr. Brooks, but the thought seems applicable.

Yours truly,
Eric Payne.

(Long years ago a book was written "Eric, or Little by Little". It has often been dubbed a nampy pampy book. Well, there's nothing like that about the Eric we know. He gets there quickly, too. But I've an idea faithful Leetites will want to say something. Well, if you do, try and say it as crisply as he has done. Ed.)

* * *

43, Mayfield Road,
Sanderstead,
Surrey.

Sir,

In a recent article in the C.D. by Mr. Puckrin, entitled "Masters of Greyfriars" it is a matter for surprise that no one, so far as my knowledge goes, has ever remarked on the 'singular' fact that none of the Greyfriars Staff appears to be married! Are we to assume, then, that they have taken a vow of celibacy in the manner of Catholic Clergy? I think not.

Although marriage might have humanized the Remove Acid Drop, & turned him into more of a Pear Drop, the Merry Wives of Greyfriars would have cluttered up the scene and spoilt the School Story Paper.

I feel sure Mr. Hamilton would agree with this, and also with the words of the Gilbertian Opera that "they'd none of 'em be missed!"

Yours sincerely,
Bernard Prime.

(The vererabile Dr. Locke was married, Bernard, but I believe he was the only one. Ed).

* * *

4, Brunswick Park,
London, S.E.5.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Mr. Waine is quite in error in stating that Gem No. 890 is omitted from my list of imitations. Enclosed is a letter which perhaps you may kindly print in the next number of the C.D.

The story "When Billy Bunter Forgot" in the Holiday Annual for 1929 is a reprint of the story "Poor Old Bunter!" which first appeared in "Magnet" No. 160 dated March 1911.

Yours very sincerely,
John R. Shaw.

P.S:

The song "Tell me, what is Love" is now on Sale. Copies can be obtained from Messrs. Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew, Ltd., 16, Mortimer Street, London, W.1. The price is 2s.0d. each - plus postage, of course.

J.R.S.

(Insertion of this letter has been delayed. Ed.)

WANTED: Schoolboys Own Libs. from No. 1 onwards, especially Greyfriars. Also Triumphs, Rangers, 80 to end. Good condition essential. Please state price. John W. Gocher, Junr., Victoria Cottage, Constitution Hill, Sudbury, Suffolk.

MAGNET COLLECTOR requires certain numbers during the periods 1921-1923 and 1927-1929 to replace soiled copies and complete volumes for binding. Top prices paid for good, or possibly only, fair copies. R.H. Hunter, 12, Braybrook Street, London, W.12.

WANTED: Girls Papers 1919-1940; School Friends, Schoolgirls Own, Schoolgirls Weeklies. Schoolgirl, from No. 140 onward; also Schoolgirls' Own Libs. by Hilda Richards and Marjorie Stanton. G. Kirby, 55, Forest Street, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, or C/o Collectors' Digest.

THE ANNUAL REACHED YOU BEFORE CHRISTMAS!HERE'S HOW!by Herbert Leckenby

Christmas just passed was about the happiest for me since the far off days when I believed in Santa Claus! The reason? Well, simply that, after months of work and anxiety the Annual was out and, in the great majority of cases, in the hands of subscribers by the festive day. We had won through, but only just. Let me describe the closing scenes.

Ten days before Christmas I was in despair. It seemed impossible to get it out in time. Excellent progress was being made with the typing but some special stencils, necessary for the illustrations had not arrived despite being on order for several weeks. So, on Tuesday, 16th December, I got to work on a number of trunk calls. I felt more content when I had got a promise that the stencils would be despatched that evening, and more contented still when I learned on the Thursday evening they had arrived.

Our sterling friends at the duplicating agency then got to work on the last lap in real earnest determined to beat the clock. And here let me pay a well deserved tribute; Mr. Wood and his staff have been really splendid. They have been as enthusiastic as if they worked on the famous dress for the recent Royal Wedding, as keen as a collector on the track of the last "Magnet" to complete his collection. 'Twas a lucky day when I strolled down the ancient street called "Stonegate" and made the acquaintance of Mr. Philip Wood.

Well, on the Sunday afternoon I set off on what had become my daily pilgrimage, and my eyes were gladdened by the sight of a couple of advance copies awaiting me. I ran through the pages anxiously, eagerly. A great feeling of elation then ran through me, for it all looked so good to me. A few minutes later a copy was on its way to my colleague

Maurice, sharer of all the months of work and worry. Back home again I examined it from cover to cover at my leisure. There was hardly a flaw. Among those 50,000 or so words the typing errors could be counted on the fingers, the cover would look fine on any bookstall, and the sketches specially done for the job had come out splendidly. The reading matter, well, there was something for everyone. Yes, verily the first Annual was a success!

Meanwhile the agency was carrying on assembling the pages ready for the bookbinders on the morrow. The envelopes were all stamped and addressed ready, the long distance ones on top, nothing was left to chance.

Then, on Monday morning, I was greeted with the news that all the copies for the United Kingdom and Eire had been posted before ten. We'd won through - at five minutes to twelve, as it were. Orme Christ-Eve, an indicator on my switchboard buzzed. I rapped in a plug and heard an operator advising "Cardiff calling you", then Maurice's voice with a distinct note of elation in it saying "It's arrived. It's splendid, wizard!" That was all that was needed to convince me that life is not so bad after all.

On Christmas Day, he in Cardiff, I in York, at eleven in the morning, drank a toast to the Annual and success to "The Collector's Digest" in 1948. Would that we could have clinked the glasses together.

And, now, maybe, I shall have a little leisure to answer my legion of collector friends more promptly - until we get going with Annual No.2. Yes, I've got some copy in hand already!

WANTED! WANTED! WANTED! Nelson Lee/Gem series of the Castlton twins. Good price paid. L.Vosper, 13, Kinlet Road, London, S.E.18.

More Praise for Bunter BookTHE GREAT ATTRACTIONby Leslie Vosper

The subject of magnetism was a favourite with my old physics master at school. "A magnet has two poles," he would emphasise. "A North and a South".

All that, of course, meant very little to me and the impression was almost nil. But when he came to pointing out that the amazing thing about the magnet was its power to attract I became rather nettled. In fact I dearly wanted to get up on my hind legs and argue that there was nothing amazing about the attraction of the Magnet, and that if the learned gentleman would deign to read the periodical but once he would soon see my meaning. The book was so packed with excellent quality that it couldn't fail to attract. It was inevitable.

And all that was a long time ago. Now "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" is in our hands. It is, virtually, the re-incarnation of "The Magnet", and it attracts just as much as ever it did. Billy hasn't altered a scrap; The Famous Five are every bit the same; The Bounder, Toddy, Quelch and the rest have not changed, nor has Father Time thinned their hair or dimmed their eyes. All, all is exactly as of yore.

My dear old master never wavered on his pet subject. "Like poles repel, unlike poles attract", he would repeat dangerously when our work reflected our lack of concentration.

He was all wrong so far as I was concerned "The Magnet" and "The Gem" weren't poles apart, for they were very much alike, and goodness alone knows neither repelled one against the other. They were both centres of attraction and very much in tune one with the other.

"The Gem"! Will it find the same re-incarnation as "The Magnet" has done! Gussy, Tom Merry, Monty

Lowther, Piggy and the others? I believe it will.

For this I stolidly maintain - every reader of Frank Richards "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" would automatically become a purchaser of a volume by Martin Clifford. I would go even further. If a Rookwood work by Owen Conquest appeared on the market the same loyal stalwarts of Charles Hamilton would snap it up just as smartly.

The great attraction would be there, just the same.

In the meantime, all that remains to be said, please, Mr. Hamilton, carry on with the good work!

* * *

NOTE: The second Bunter Book is entitled "Billy Bunter Benknote" and in it The Bounder has a prominent part. It is hoped to publish it in the early months of this year. Ed.

FROM THE YORKSHIRE EVENING POST
(Leeds) 15th December

**Bunter Comes
To Stay**

SOME time ago I had a good deal of correspondence from kind-hearted men (and women) sympathising with a reader who had lamented the fact that the old "Magnet" and "Gem" school stories were no longer on sale. They even lent me back numbers for him. I am glad to announce, therefore, that a volume has just been published by Mr. Frank Richards entitled "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School". This is, of course, the "Magnet" character, and I found the book as absorbing as ever the weekly tales were. Here in permanent form we have the essence

of the Owl of the Remore. He has never been nearer expulsion, never more adept at acquiring tuck, never more brave and brilliant than when he saves his master's quitch.

And before this perfect ending, which saves the Fat Man from the sack, the famous postal order actually arrives. In fact there are two! But Bunter is badly in debt at the time. Does he pay up? Suffice it to say that what happens is in keeping with Bunter's well-rounded character. But there is more than Bunter in the book. There are Harry Wherton and Co., and their friends and all the ageless background of Greyfriars.

JUST WILLIAM'S CHOICE

The Daily Express, 20th December, 1947, related the following:

Julian Denham, "Just William" of the radio, looked carefully through film books, nature books, books of trains fastened gleefully on a book with a fat schoolboy on the cover - "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" by Frank Richards (Skilton 7s.6d).

His father said "Somebody's been spoiling his taste with boys comics." Julian looked puzzled "Why should Billy Bunter spoil my taste?" he said. Mr. Denham was silent.

(Good for William. Ed.)

FOR SALE: Magnets 1500-1683, 9d each; Gems 1500-1666, 9d each; Dick Turpins (Newnes) 1-80, 1/3 each; 20 copies Buffalo Bill with two annuals, 40/- the lot; Pals (1923) 1-6, 1/- each; Rocket (1923) 1-26, 1/- each; 50 early copies Boys Magazine, 6d each; 30 Cheer Boys Cheer, early numbers, (1911) 1/- each; Gems 1-104, bound in 4 volumes 65/- each vol; Magnets, 1000-1200, 1/3 each; 50 copies Schoolboys Own Lib. 1/6 each; 50 copies Boys Friend, 1/- each; 50 copies Sexton Blake Lib. 1/6 each; Early Plucks, 3 vols. Union Jack Bound (1913-15), Penny Popular, Union Jack, Magnet, Gem, except highest offers for these items. 50 Nelson Lees, 50/-, Gems 500-700; Magnets 500-700, best offers. 70 copies Black and White Budget (1899-1901) 1/- each; 2 bound vols. Boys Realm, 1-26, 27-52, 2/6 each copy equivalent; 20 1/2d Plucks 2/- each; 120 Vanguards and Dreadnoughts first issues 2/6 each; Gems 1-280, 2/6 each; Magnets 400-500 2/6 each; 50 Most Amazing Murders and Crimes, 20/-. W. Martin, 93, Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10. 'Phone, Willesden 4474.

WANTED: Family Heralds, Bow Bells, Boys Comics, Stevens 3d and 6d Magazine of Fiction. A.W. Lawson, 11 River Street, Clerkenwell, London, E.C.1.

Poets Corner

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Dedicated to Frank Richards by Jack Corbett

When storm clouds gather, menacing and low,
O'er restless seas of dark and greenish hue.
The brightness of the heavens fade and go,
As swirling cloud reigns over sky once blue.

Then breaks the storm with all Hell's anger free,
The ocean's heaving waters never still.
The deafening tumult of the lashing sea,
Where life is saved by naught, except God's Will.

Yet bravely stands the lighthouse mid the storm,
And still it's light gleams through the darkened sky.
Sending hope and making chilled hearts warm,
Of those at sea who bravely do or die.

The golden light tells vessels where to glide,
And points the way for human hand to steer.
O, noble light with lost ones you abide,
Preserving life and banishing all fear.

And so when storm clouds darken earthly life
When brightness dims, and hope fades in the heart,
There gleams a light that pierces through the strife,
The light of youth from which men loathe to part.

The golden pages of those books we love,
That tell of youthful days long, long ago.
They are the lighthouse given from above,
To steer us through dark hours when clouds are low.

We travel on this unknown sea so vast,
Some glimpse through eyes now dimmed, the better land,
Exalting Heaven for the golden past,
The lighthouse of their life - to ever stand.

Jack Corbett.

Bouquets and no Brickbats

As we go to Press congratulations on the Annual are flowing in. We should not be human if we did not produce a few of them, chosen at a m. They put us in good fettle for No.2.

* * *

It is a very fine production and high credit is due to all collaborators. The list of boys' journals is most interesting to me and I really cannot see any omissions.

Hugh D. Fennell, London, S.E.25.

* * *

Far better than I even anticipated. It is really a splendid job and apart from its immediate interest has a great value as a reference work ... I was amused by the "Penny Dreadful" burlesque by C.W. Daniel, a great yarn - and the meeting with Mr. Quelch by Jack Corbell intrigued me intensely.

Tom Martin, Bristol 5.

* * *

I received Annual on Christmas Eve - quite a lovely present. I am very pleased - so pleased that I hasten to order next year's at once.

Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Dorset.

* * *

I am astonished that you could produce so creditable a volume under present difficult conditions. It is good from cover to cover.

Frank Richards.

* * *

It is a source of constant amazement to me how you manage such a wonderful budget of highly entertaining and interesting material. It must be pretty

expensive and apart from that it must take up all your spare time. I must really congratulate you.
F. Addington-Symonds, Hendon.

* * *

I must congratulate you upon an excellent job well done. There is something to appeal to everybody and a feast for the majority.
John Medcroft, Ilford.

* * *

My heartiest congratulations on a jolly good piece of work. It has certainly come up to all my expectations.

Robert Blythe, London, N.7.

* * *

A very fine effort. I hope it will turn out to be an Annual of a very hardy variety.
Roger M. Jenkins, Havant.

* * *

Excellent. It contains much valuable information and interesting articles, which I hope in the future to spend some pleasant hours perusing.

John R. Shaw, London, S.E.5.

* * *

Received the Annual Christmas Eve. What a thrill! Its superb. The article on St. Jims was good. I have always wanted to have details of those stories.
W.L. Bowden, Redruth.

* * *

Congratulations. Its a fine effort and you should be proud of it. It came at an opportune moment - (Christmas Eve) and I am in the midst of reading it.
G. Neville Weston, Kidderminster.

* * *



ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO
H.M.Bond, 10 Erw Wen, Rhiwbina, Cardiff.

THE ROUND TABLE:

I take this opportunity of extending my best wishes to all fellow Blake lovers for 1948. The past year has, in some respects, been a rather dismal one but at least we can say that as far as our hobby is concerned things have been better than ever before. From letters received I know that "Blakiana" is much appreciated and fills a rather large gap in the lives of those of us who have followed the fortunes of The Man from Baker Street for many years. Before I seriously started collecting I often yearned to contact someone who thought the same of Blake as I did and my joy knew no bounds when I eventually became aware that not one but many, were of a similar mind. Well, I am now in touch with so many enthusiasts that my life cannot be dull. There is no end to the discussions we can all hold even though they are only "by post", and it is to be hoped that during the coming year we shall get together even more and not only write to each other more often but also try to enlarge the circle of those who follow the adventures of the most written of character in English literature.

We want to get Blake on the map again. I know

that the modern reader will scoff at some of the old yarns that we used to read and enjoy years ago and am fully aware of the fact that that type of literature is as dead as the Dodo. Nevertheless, there IS a place to-day for a series of stories, a series of radio plays and/or a series of well produced films dealing with Blake. The Americans have made good use and good money of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great detective, Sherlock Holmes. Why, now that Yankee films are to be out, cannot we look forward to some really good "B" films with Blake as the central character. And look at Dick Barton. The children as well as the grown ups drop everything each night at 6-45 in order to follow the adventures of a character who was not even thought of two years ago. Why not a series of Blake plays on similar lines? There is no end to the possibilities as you will admit and although it sounds a bit fantastic and probably a bit crankish, we Blake lovers are THE ones to put forward all the suggestions we can to those who are in a position to use them. Here's hoping 1948 will be a real Blake year.

H. M. Bond.

TWENTY-FOUR VOLUMES AGAIN !

A Review of the 1947 issues of the S.B.L.
by H. Maurice Bond

The year just concluded has not been what we might call an eventful one in the history of our favourite fictional detective, but I thought that a short review of the Library bearing his name during the past twelve months might prove to be of interest to many. Probably the most important happening came in August. On the morning of the first Friday of that month we arrived at our newsagents and collected our two copies of the S.B.L. but found that they did not take up so much room in our pockets. In actual fact 34 pages had been deducted from each issue. Yes, for the first time since the early 1930's

we were offered a 64 page Library. True, the recently adopted method of printing right across the page came to an end with those August issues and once again we had a two column page, but this did not entirely make up for the loss of those 34 pages for the print was not much smaller. Many, like myself, shrugged their shoulders and muttered under their breath "um, just another cut - I still have my Blake ration anyway" but when we thought harder we realised that even during the most difficult periods of the late War we were not rationed quite so drastically. Fortunately we still have the inimitable cover designs by Eric R. Parker and we see familiar names of authors so I suppose we must be thankful for small mercies and sympathise with our less fortunate friends who love the work of Charles Hamilton as we love the adventures of Sexton Blake. Looking through my records I see that no new author came to the fore in 1947. This was a pity for I think new writers tend to relieve the monotony. Anthony Parsons again scored as the author with the most stories, he wrote seven out of the twenty-four. The old favourite Rex Hardinge who only returned to the pages of the Library in 1946 came second with five stories. Lewis Jackson came next with four. Gilbert Chester and John Hunter three each, and Anthony Skene and Walter Tyrer one each. The yarn by the last but one named author came as rather a surprise but a very welcome one at that. It is some years since we were treated to one of those actionful yarns by the fine author of the Zenith series, and I must say that his new effort lacked none of the zest we have come to associate him with. My only regret was the absence of the Albino. It would be difficult to say what actually was the best story of the year, for, as the modern Blake story goes, they were all quite up to standard, especially those of Mr. Parsons.

We should like to have the frank opinions of all who got a copy of the "Annual". It will help us in planning next year's.

One of our youngest fellow Blake fans contributes his first article to the pages of Blakiana and we think you will agree that it is of considerable interest.

"DUPLICATION OF S.B. CHARACTERS AND BOOKS"

by John Herman

In looking round for reprints of old Blake books, one has to be careful. Most of the authors, e.g. Brandon, Evans, etc., who have chronicled Blake's adventures, have also written books dealing with other characters. But some of these are merely reprints of their early Blake stories, but since the Amalgamated Press own the copyright of the name Sexton Blake, the characters names in them have to be changed round a bit. This is a far from complete record, and I would be grateful to any reader who could add to this list.

Several of Gwyn Evans' S.B. tales have been reprinted in bound book form by Messrs. Wright & Brown. "The Clue of the Missing Link", is one of these. It contains two stories, both of which feature Splash Page. It is interesting to note that the book was dedicated to G.H. Teed, "who understands". This was probably justified by the fact that most of the characters featured therein were invented by the letter - Dr. Huxton Rymer, Mory Trent, Nirvana, Marie Galante.

In this, Blake appeared as Chester Brett, R.N. (retired), and Tinker as 'Ginger' Mullins. Their residence was shifted from Baker Street to Cheyne Row.

Also, Coutts was changed to Barker, and Mrs. Bardell, to Mrs. Beale.

Blake, Tinker, Coutts and Mrs. Bardell appeared as the above, also in "Castle Sinister" (a reprint of "Sinister Castle" an early Evans S.B.L. book), and in "The Case of the Climbing Corpse" (with Julius Jones and Sir Henry Fairfax). All of these books,

again, featured Splash Page and were published by Wright and Brown.

One of Donald Stuart's stories appeared under the title "Dens of the Secret Service" by Gerald Verner (again the publishers were Wright & Brown). M. Julie and Granite Grant featured (both Quiroule characters). Grant appeared as Michael Deane, Blake as Trevor Lowe and Tinker appeared as White, his Secretary.

G.H. Teed's "Crooks Vendetta" and "At the Bottom of the Suez" have also been duplicated (publishers Columbine). "At the Bottom of the Suez" was a reprint of No. 19 of the second series "Sexton Blake Library" (later 590) entitled "The Great Canal Plot" and deals with a plot to blow up the Suez Canal. The book features a whole host of favourite Teed characters: Prince Menes, Wu Lung, The Black Eagle, and George Marsden Plummer (as Flash Brady). Plumber also appears (with Gloria Ravissa) in "Crook's Vendetta". In both books Blake is Grant Rushton and Tinker Tony.

No. 638 of S.B.L. (2nd series pub. 1938) "The Mystery of the Ice-Cream Man" by John G. Brandon, appeared in book form by Wright & Brown, "Mr. Pennington Goes Nap". The book was published in 1940. The Hon. R.S.V. Purvale appears with Flash Wibley, as the Hon. A.S.V. Pennington (He has been duplicated in many of Brandon's books as the same, e.g. "Mr. Pennington Comes Through", "Mr. Pennington Barges In", etc., but whether all of these were reprints of Blake tales, I cannot say.

Although Purvale was easily recognisable as Pennington (vice-versa) I still find it hard to believe that that excellent character Inspector McCarthy, of "McCarthy O.I.D.", "Bonus for Murder" and a whole host of other Brandon books, was in reality Sexton Blake.

"Captain Daok" (Readers Library) by Peter Mariton, was a reprint of John Hunter's "Riddle of the Lost

Ship". The name Blake was changed (and the whole character too) to Lengely.

With Anthony Skene's "Monsieur Zenith", in which the Albino features throughout, I cannot say whether it was a reprint of a Sexton Blake tale or not, since I have not read it.

George B. Rochester's "Sky Bandits" features J. Coutts, and was probably one of his S.B.L. stories, principle sleuth in this case is Dexter Drake.

Tailpiece: Gwyn Evans "Union Jack" serials - "Hercules Esq"; "The Return of Hercules"; and "The Homicide Club", featuring Bill Kellewey, Symphony Sam, Henry, etc., have all been reprinted in bound form by Messrs. Wright and Brown, with the characters names, untouched.

THE STORY OF DR. SATIRA

Part Four

by H.M. Bond

Needless to say Dr. Satira succeeded in escaping from the private mental home when it was found that Sexton Blake had discovered the whereabouts of his assistant, but before doing so he set fire to the building and nearly succeeded in losing his own life. For a long while it was thought that he really had perished in the fire from which Tinker was rescued by the quick action of his master, but eventually it became evident that the master criminal was still at large. Yes, Satira escaped by the skin of his teeth from that fire and for some while struggled through the countryside hampered by a severely burned. He hid in the hedges by day and made his way towards London by night. On the particular night with which we are concerned he was hobbling painfully along a narrow country lane when he heard a sound behind him. Halting, he realised that someone was approaching him on a bicycle, and promptly dived into the nearest ditch. The rider turned out to be a

policeman who was cycling on his beat between two villages. Satira pounced on the unfortunate officer and managed to get control of the bicycle on which he painfully peddled his way. As dawn was beginning to break we find the infamous Doctor peering at the inscription on a brass plate outside a house in a small country village. He had disposed of the bicycle and it was his aim to find a medical man who could render the necessary aid for his now almost useless leg. His eyes narrowed as he saw that here indeed was the very place he was seeking, the residence of a Doctor. Without hesitation Satira knocked up the medical man who turned out to be rather elderly. After he had attended to Satira's leg the latter informed him who he was and the terrified Doctor tried to bluff his way out of an extremely awkward situation. But the unfortunate medico was doomed from the moment he knew who his patient was for without hesitation Satira shot him through the head.

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