

# THE COLLECTORS'

PRICE  
1s.6d

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 90

JUNE, 1954

# DIGEST

NOTE  
EDITOR'S  
CHANGE  
OF  
ADDRESS

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FORMED No. 1 OF  
THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY, 1st SERIES

# The Collectors' Digest

Vol. 8. No. 90

Price 1s.6d.

NEW ADDRESS

JUNE, 1954

NEW ADDRESS

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

## FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR, No. 51! When No. 50 of Bill Gander's splendid little paper appeared there was a fear that it might be the last. At the time I expressed a hope that the fears were unfounded and that the C.D. would not be left to carry the standard alone. Well, I am delighted to say that my hopes have been justified for No. 51 as many of you will know ere this has come along to gladden the eyes. Nice work, Bill.

Now Bill has also published a list of the few Magnets he requires to complete his set. As it is possible some of you who do not get the S.P.C. have some of the numbers (unlikely maybe still one never knows) so I will quote them: 1\* to 6\*, 90, 100\*, 110\*, 163, 207, 217, 263, 273, 283\*, 288\*, 308\*, 309\*, 312, 334, 382\*, 393, 413\*, 417, 439\*, 664, 668\*, 775, 880, 941, 942, 948, 973, 974, 975, 992. \* means one needed in good condition.

Now if there's anyone who deserves to have a completed collection it's Bill Gander, so see to it, won't you?

And, you know, Bill doesn't get as many words of thanks as he should for sending along that fine little magazine of his. So that's another thing of which to make a note.

\* \* \* \* \*

HAPPY MEETING: Ronald Hunter, who spends most of his days in far off Brazil came along to see me on May 20th. What a grand experience it is to meet for the first time someone, one has known as a pen-friend for years. The meeting with Ron was no exception. We only had four hours together, but we managed to pack a good deal into it as we strolled the streets of ancient York.

Who's my next visitor?

—ooOoo—

BOUQUET FOR BOB: Many letters praising Bob Whiter for his

splendid sketch which adorned last month's cover have reached me. There's no doubt it was equal to the work of a professional artist. You will be glad to hear he has sent me two more. Thanks a lot, Bob.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE 1954 ANNUAL: Next month, all being well, the Order Forms will be going out. Wouldn't it be nice if I could say by then "every sub. in for 1953." Oh, yes, there are still some out after more than six months. To the great majority that must seem almost incredible, but alas! 'tis true.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

THE 'ANNUAL' BALLOT

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FOR SALE: S.B.Ls 2nd series, 476, 525, 563. U.Js 770, 1140, 1371, Magnets 451, 482, 582, 588, 1444, 1471, 1476, 1477, 1478, 1620, 1621, 1622, 1623, Gems 57, 881, 1079. Boy's Magazine 603. Chums 1930. Offers to: G. ALLISON, 7 SUMMERFIELD GARDENS, BRAMLEY, LEEDS.

I am prepared to sacrifice any of the following Magnets from my collection on a liberal exchange basis for Nos. 862/869, 881, 882, 906, and 907 which I urgently require for binding:- 806, 814, 910, 914, 923/931, 934, 942, 943, 945/964, 966, 971, 973, 975, 981, 983, 986, 985/990 (no covers), 996, 997, 1002, 1005, 1087/1089 (no covers), 1079/1082 (no covers). I need also several numbers for years 1916, 1924, 1927/1931. Lists of any available will be appreciated. I could also supply most popular Magnet reprint series in S.O.Ls. Please wire airmail. C. van Renen. Box 50. Uitenhage, South Africa.

WANTED: Schoolboys Own Libraries and Story Paper Collectors.  
J. BELLFIELD, 24 GRAINGER'S LANE, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU!!or WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM?

By J.R. MURTAGH, NEW ZEALAND  
 \*\*\*\*\*

Sooner or later every collector is asked "What are you going to do with them?" or "What will become of them?" It is natural to evade an honest answer to such questions, but time has an inexorable way of marching on whereas we sometimes more abruptly than expected come to an end. It is a fact which no one can dispute, and one which merits serious thought; all collectors regardless of age, should have a ready answer for them.

Some few collectors of our favourite boys papers will have heirs who are keen to carry on and keep the flag flying as it were, but all too often in the past, collectors have passed away leaving property such as books etc. for which their relatives, if they had any, had neither interest nor knowledge of the best methods of disposal. While most collectors wish to keep their possessions as long as they live, it would I feel be very satisfying for them to arrange for the final placing while they are yet alive and able to care for the multitude of attendant details. How much nicer it is to think that your treasures are passing on to someone who will appreciate them most instead of being possibly burnt under a copper, given away to children, dumped in an Auction Mart or second handshop, given away to a waste paper collector, a children's home or hospital, where, after being read by a few they are destroyed. Don't think I'm adverse to helping children but they really would not fully value what we treasure so highly, and we all have seen the sad fate of many books that have been given to children. Alright, we have decided then that when we die we want our collections of Boys Papers to pass on to people who will appreciate them most, and if we have no relatives or heirs who would treasure them, it stands to reason that they then would be prepared to turn them into money if we could beforehand point the way. And for our own satisfaction and peace of mind what better idea could there be than to see that they fall into the hands of fellow collectors.

My idea is this. A collector knowing that sooner or later the Reaper will be along and having no one interested to leave his collection to, leaves instructions that the beneficiaries of his estate are to contact Herb Leckenby or his successor (we must face facts) and the Collectors Digest would dispose of the deceased

collector's collection to those who are most interested either by advertising them in the C.D. or by having a postal auction. A charge of say 10% could be retained by the Collectors Digest.

In my own case, my wife has instructions to contact Herb Leckenby as to best means of disposing of my collection should I make an early departure from this world. I have nearly a complete collection of Nelson Lees and hundreds of other papers, but don't send a bomb in the post any of you Leeites as I always open my mail beside my N. Lees so they would be destroyed too.

I am 40 now and hope to see out my 3 score and 10 at least. As my mother who is 75 says any years one gets after 70 can be regarded as a bonus. If I do reach that ripe old age I intend then while still having the previous instructions in force to dispose of my collection to collectors while I am still living, except of course for a few really treasured items, so watch out for my adverts in the C.D. issue of February 1983.

In conclusion I would urge every collector to give this matter serious thought; it's up to us to see that our books are preserved for posterity. There are some who may think it a good idea to leave them to a museum, but while there are some worthy points about this, remember it takes them out of collectors hands for all time. I'm sure all of us would be glad to help the British Museum in London to fill any gaps they may have while we are still living but have they any gaps? Here's a chance for someone to write us an article on just what the British Museum has in Boys papers we are interested in.

I hope Herbert will add his remarks in support or otherwise of my suggestions.

\*\*\*\*\*

Postscript: I'm publishing this exactly as Jack wrote it. He asks me to express my views. I gladly do so for, what he says about the danger of cherished collections being thrown away hits me right on the solar plexus, so to speak. Many times and oft I have thought what Jack is saying in print, and as a matter of fact Len Packman and I had a chat about it when he was up north some time ago. It is really an important and serious matter, for quite often one's kith and kin haven't the slightest idea what some papers may be worth. They might pick up some bound copies and say "These can't be worth much" and hand them over to a neighbour's boy whereas a hobby friend of the deceased could have made a rapid

calculation and said "My word so-and-so would gladly give £4 for this." Judiciously dealt with the collection has a whole might well bring a very useful sum to the widow or whoever was left behind.

Jack suggests that the C.D. should act as a kind of executor. Well, I was going to say it would gladly do what it can, but 'gladly' is hardly the right word, is it? What I mean to say is it would do all it could to help if the unfortunate necessity arose; Jack won't misunderstand me when I say that I personally hope I won't have to deal with his collection for I simply mean I trust he will reach that allotted span he speaks about, and if he did I should be a somewhat ancient editor, if here at all, shouldn't I?

Anyway, he's certainly giving you something to think about, and I shall be glad to have your views. - H.L.

I offer 5/- each for any of the following Detective Library numbers in good condition. 10/- for No. 1. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24, 29, 31, 33, 35. LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

AVAILABLE: Red Magnets, 120 mint issues between numbers 11-400, 150 numbers 1935-40. Gems, 35 1/2d issues, also 100 between 1936-40 and 20 between 1933-34. S.O.Ls. many St. Franks stories; Populars 1927-31; Holiday Annual, 1939; Union Jacks, 1916-20; and 1924-30; Boys Friends; Boys Realms; Young Britains; Modern Boys; Tit-Bits; Boys Magazines; Modern Wonders; Detective Weeklies; Early Wide Worlds; Chatterbox; Prize; Young Folks. Also American Science Fiction; Breezy; Snappy Mags; Several absolute mint vols. of Chums 1912 onwards. B.O.P. mint, 1920-3. Film Mags; Seven mint Film Annuals (pre-war), etc. etc. All kinds bound vols. 1800-1940. Thousands rare early Cigarette Cards. S.A.E. please.

Magnets, Gems, Populars, S.O.Ls., etc. required. Your reasonable price always paid. B.F. Lib. No. 199 wanted. Early issues for exchange. RONALD ROUSE, 3 ST. LEONARD'S TERRACE, GAS HILL, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

WANTED: The following NELSON LEES, second new series 1930-1933. 1, 6, 7, 32, 33, 37, 43, 46, 51, 110, 121, 132, 151, 152, 154, 156, 159, 160, 161. Some NELSON LEES for exchange. N. PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE ST., LIVERPOOL, 7, LANCS.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I am afraid I slipped up rather badly over my statement last month concerning Stanton Hope. A number of readers have written to me pointing out that Mr. Hope has written two stories in the current series of the Sexton Blake Library: No. 21 "The Sign of the Blue Triangle" and No. 103 "The Case of the Monta Grandee Diamonds." I must confess that on looking up my records I found them recorded! How I came to miss them I do not know, but I do thank those of you who so kindly (and nicely) pointed out the error. I have sent individual replies in most cases, but in two I could not. The first is from a friend of Mr. Bottomley but whose name and address I cannot read. Through the medium of Blakiana I thank my friend, and if he would care to write me again I will send him a personal note. The second is from a Mr. Tomkins who does not give his address (other than Norfolk), and here again I thank my kind friend. If Mr. Tomkins would be so good as to write and tell me in which issue of the "Digest" the statement he mentions regarding Gilbert Chester is made (I cannot find it), I will check up and, if found to be there, publish a correction. I am most interested to hear that Mr. Tomkins heard from this author quite recently (beginning of May), and I would like to know more about him. Perhaps Mr. Tomkins would like to supply some details or a little article?

And now I have pleasure in announcing A GRAND SEXTON BLAKE CIRCLE QUIZ COMPETITION to appear in next month's Blakiana. The questions are supplied by members of the Blake Circle, and all replies should be sent to me at the above address, to reach me not later than 31st July. Members of the Blake Circle will meet together shortly after the closing date, for the purpose of checking the entries. The prizes are as follows:- 1st Prize: A copy of the Collector's Digest Annual for 1954, to be sent direct to the winner by Herbert Leckenby when published (in December). 2nd Prize: Two early S.B.L.'s (2nd series Nos. 85 and 147, both by G.H. Teed). Very nice copies. 3rd Prize: A copy of S.B.L. 1st series No. 15, by A. Murray.

All prizes are supplied by the Blake Circle, and in case those of you who know what a Teed 'fan' I am should wonder - I already have Nos. 85 and 147 in mint condition!

Needless to say, members of the Sexton Blake Circle are not eligible to compete.

The result will be published in Blakiana in September.

Finally, whilst it is very gratifying to receive so many letters pointing out my mistake, it is a pity the same enthusiasm cannot be shown where articles are concerned. Maybe one or two of you will take the hint!

JOSIE PACKMAN.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE TRUE STORY OF GWYN EVANS

By W.O.G. Lofts

\*\*\*

See Notes (1, 2 & 3)

Gwynfil Arthur Evans, to give him his full name, was born in 1901 in the town of Portmadoc, North Wales. His father, who was a Portmadoc clergyman, brought him up very strictly, and Gwyn no doubt grew up with a good outlook on life. (1)

Upon leaving school, Gwyn worked in the local bank, but in time grew restless, and with the influence of the late Lloyd George, who was a great friend of Gwyn's father, Gwyn obtained a post in the Y.M.C.A. out in Palestine.

He returned to England shortly before the final ending of the first World War, and joined the Royal Navy where he first met George Rees. It was during his short career in the navy that he had an inspiration to write, and George Rees in fact suggested to him a new character for the Sexton Blake Library - 'Splash Page'.

Upon demobilisation, Gwyn left England for Egypt in company with George Rees, where they founded a newspaper called "The Egyptian Mail". One day in 1921, when out after a story, they both helped to solve a real live murder mystery. This resulted in two Russians and a deserter from the British Army being executed.

Gwyn, however, was still restless and decided in 1924 to return to England, at which time he started to write stories about Sexton Blake for the 'Union Jack' and 'Sexton Blake Library'.

Gwyn, who was over six feet tall, thin as a rake with very pale features, was known to everybody for his escapades in the vicinity of Fleet Street. He grew careless with his work, was

always in trouble with his publishers for being late with his stories, and was always broke. As other correspondents have written, he was a real bohemian to the fingertips. (2) (3).

Despite all these drawbacks he still continued to pour out stories for the A. Press, and which were in great demand. In 1930 he wrote what was to be his greatest success, "Hercules Esq", for Harold Shaylor Ltd, later to be re-published by Wright & Brown in 1934. He received £3,000 for the film rights of this story, gave £1,000 to his publisher, and himself got through the whole balance in a few weeks, without even paying his creditors!

By this time Gwyn was in ill-health, and it was suspected that he had a cancerous growth. He knew that he had not long to live, and this prompted him to create the character 'Miss Death'.

In 1939 Gwyn appeared in the B.B.C. feature "In Town Tonight" with a famous Scotland Yard detective. He caught a severe chill and died shortly afterwards. The cause of death was actually a gastric tumour.

Gwyn died at a very early age, not yet forty. He left a wife and two young children.

Despite his faults he was a most lovable character, and he left a gap in the band of Sexton Blake authors that until now has never been filled.

A full list of his stories in the 'Union Jack' and S.B. Lib. appeared in the 1953 C. Digest Annual, but for those who are interested I have listed below all his stiff-covered novels, some of which were reprints (without Blake and Tinker) of S.B.L. and U.J. stories.

Hercules Esq.	Harold Shaylor Ltd. (1930)
" "	Wright & Brown (1934)
" "	Amalgamated Press (1936)
Bluebeard's Keys	Wright & Brown (1937)
Castle Sinister	" " (1936)
The Clue of the Missing Link	" " (1938)
Coffin for Two	" " (1939)
The Crook of Fleet Street	" " (1939)
Death Speaking	" " (1934)
The Hanging Judge	" " (1936)
His Majesty the Crook	" " (1935)
Iron Mask	" " (1938)
The Man with the Scarlet Skull	" " (1935)

The Homicide Squad	Modern Publishing Co. (1934)
Murderers Meet	Wright & Brown (1934)
The Mysterious Miss Death	" " (1937)
" " " "	Mellifont Press (1946)
The Return of Hercules Esq.	Wright & Brown (1937)
The Riddle of the Red Dragon	" " (1935)
Satan Ltd.	" " (1935)
The Sign of the Saracen	" " (1936)
The Triangle of Terror	" " (1938)
Rogue Royal	" " (1935)

Notes:

- (1) His father was a fine, tall man who would be horrified at the thought of reading a novel.
- (2) He wrote his stories on scraps of paper.
- (3) Readers may have noticed that some stories seemed to have a very sudden ending. This was because Gwyn was too lazy to count the words of his stories, and the editor often used to have to chop parts out towards the end, thus making the story disjointed.

# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

NIL DESPERANDUM! Those of you who sometimes despair of ever getting some longed for numbers for your collections take heart from the happy experience of Charles van Renen of Uitenhage, South Africa. Says Charles, gleefully in a letter recently: "I struck a bit of wonderful luck recently; in response to an advert of mine in a South African paper for Magnets I managed to pick up the "Bunter Court," the "Paul Dallas," and several dozen other Magnets in mint condition. It was rather like a dream come true."

I should say so indeed. Well, Charles has an advert in this month's C.D. for more Magnets he requires. I'm longing to hear him say in due course that more Magnets have come his way as a result of it. So you'll see what you can do to help a fellow away from the centre of things, won't you?

\* \* \* \* \*

No less than 100,000 copies of the first "Holiday Annual." I have just gleaned that impressive fact in a letter written to a

correspondent of mine, and loaned to me. I wonder how many of them are still in existence. A considerable number one would think.

\* \* \* \* \*

POTTED PERSONALITIES. NO. 3. (Second Series)

BOB CHERRY:

Bob Cherry, who made his bow at Greyfriars in Magnet No. 2, has ever been a substantial part of the backbone of the stories. Bob has probably been seen in a stellar role as much as any character apart from Bunter, and if Harry Wharton is more synonymous with Greyfriars than Bob is, it is perhaps due to the fact that Wharton is a deft piece of character-painting, while Bob is a typical, happy-go-lucky English schoolboy. In Bob Cherry we have the type of fellow that everybody would like to be - the sort of pal that everybody would like to possess.

Skimming back down the years on our Bob-sleigh run, we bring to mind the tousled-headed schoolboy who adored Marjorie Hazeldene from afar; we see him as the champion of Bunter against the latter's unscrupulous relative, Carter; we recollect the ever-generous fellow who was ready to extend a helping hand to his rather worthless cousin, Paul Tyrrell.

Twice in Magnet history we found "BOB CHERRY IN SEARCH OF HIS FATHER," - one in early red-cover days in the story of that name, and again in the long Sahara series when Major Cherry was captured by the Shiek Mohammed. It is my view that the latter was the best series in which Bob ever appeared - Bob's finest hour, as it were. It was a magnificent holiday series, not too well remembered, today, perhaps, because it appeared in the mid nineteen-twenties and the Magnets of that time are very scarce, for some unknown reason. Few who have read it will ever forget the superb closing yarn of the series when Bob, a victim of the Shiek's vengeance, was bound to the back of a camel and driven into the desert.

In earlier times, in two fine red-cover tales, Bob was judged guilty of stealing a postal-order, and to prove his son's innocence, Major Cherry was prepared to spend his last penny in taking the matter to the House of Lords. On another occasion, Bob saved Mr. Vernon-Smith, whose car had smashed on a level-crossing before an oncoming train. By his gallant act, Bob saved the Head from the power of Mr. Vernon-Smith, who was a moneylender in those days.

When the Bounder planned successfully to get the Famous Five

expelled from Greyfriars one after the other - the far-fetched theme rang the bell simply because it was so skilfully written; Bob was the last to suffer expulsion and he refused to go and featured in "BOB CHERRY'S BARRING-OUT", probably the first of all the barring-out stories.

In more recent times we have seen Bob as a "swot", working for a scholarship, - not so outstanding a series, perhaps, because Bob was on much less familiar ground.

Though his home, "Cherry Place," has figured but rarely in the stories, his relatives have often been featured - Paul Tyrrell, Captain Corcoran who took the party to the Congo, and Major Cherry in the Sahara series and in the Franz Krantz series, to mention but two.

The cheery, characteristic "Hallo, hallo, hallo" of this typical schoolboy has rung down through the years of Magnet history from the beginning till the present day. Long may the Bob-sleigh run continue.

\* \* \* \* \*

MORNINGTON

By A.O. DAVIES

"Silver!"

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, opened his study door, and called to Jimmy Silver.

"I should like you to perform a little service for me, Silver."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"There is a new boy coming to Rookwood this afternoon, who will be on the Classical side, and in your Form," said Mr. Bootles. "He is of a - a somewhat unusual type, with very rich and aristocratic connections."

This is how readers of the Boys' Friend in the year 1917 were informed of the arrival of Mornington. I was one of those readers and this particular issue was the first Boys' Friend I had ever possessed.

I remember, vividly, leaning against the stone wall of the Lancashire Bridge as it crosses the Mersey in Stockport, a town where I spent many happy years of my youthful life, and taking out of my pocket my first Boys' Friend. My 'Frank Richards' education had begun. Rookwood was the first school created by Charles Hamilton I knew; the delights of Greyfriars and St. Jims was to come many months later. Jimmy Silver and Co., Conroy, Pons and Van Ryn, Rawson and Oswald, the three Tommies of the Modern side, and

Mornington and Erroll, all these had become my friends and companions before I met the Famous Five or the Terrible Three and the host of characters that pass and repass through the pages of the Magnet and Gem. Although I yield to no one in my admiration of the stories associated with Greyfriars and St. Jims, yet there exists in my heart a very special place for Rookwood and the splendid character portrayals to be found within its ivy covered walls. Throughout the years when I have thought of Rookwood, two characters have always come to mind - Val Mornington and Kit Erroll. In these two boys Charles Hamilton has drawn types for our instruction, he has moralized without too obviously stating the moral. He does not preach a sermon but allows the experiences written about them to teach their own lessons, an improvement on the methods of the earlier writers of school stories.

But let us join Jimmy Silver and Co. as they meet this Mornington.

'And then on the platform of Coombe Station Jimmy's eyes fell upon a man in mutton chop whiskers who alighted from a third class carriage and came along the train to a first class compartment and opened the door....., A lad of about their own age stepped from the carriage, yawned and glanced about him. He was a slim fellow with a somewhat seedy looking face and heavy eyes. He was not in Etons, but dressed in lounge clothes of a very fashionable cut. He wore a diamond ring, a diamond pin and a gold watch. A cigarette was between his fingers.

"What a hole!" he remarked, with a disparaging glance about him.

"Look after the luggage, Jenkins." Jenkins was the man with mutton chop whiskers and Mornington's valet.

"Find me a taxi!"

"You won't get a taxi here," said Jimmy. And when Lovell suggested that they should walk, Mornington stared at him and said, "Did you address me?"

"Yes I did."

"Then don't."

"Wha-a-t!" said Lovell.

Mornington turned away, "Jenkins!"

"Yes, sir."

"Never mind the luggage. Find me a car, and don't keep me waiting, you fool!"

When eventually Jimmy Silver & Co literally drag this rather

offensive young man to Rookwood, we have the interview between Mr. Bootles and Mornington. It is a most extraordinary interview. Overbearing and completely lacking in respect for authority, Mornington shouts at the Form Master, "I demand to see these four young villains flogged at once! Otherwise, I will not remain in the school, My dog has been lost, my hat has been lost. I have been treated in a ruffianly manner. They must be punished at once!"

In this eventful first day, Mornington finds the 'friends' he deserves and would choose. Being a fellow with plenty of money and liking the gay life he is quickly singled out by Topham and Townsend and made much of. Having accomplished their big catch, we are told that "Topham and Townsend were in a state of great delight. They had bagged the rich new boy. It was easy to see that he was a fellow of their own tastes."

Another side of this remarkable character is seen when Jimmy Silver, having recovered Mornington's dog, brings it to his study and set it down on the carpet. Mornington put his hand in his pocket fished out a half crown and tossed it across the table, "Take that for your trouble," he said. He had been used, all his early life, to being waited on, he expected others to do things for him and he rewarded them not with his friendship but with cash. He bought 'friendship' and never earned it.

From his first day until he and Kit Erroll became friends, we have this same Mornington. "I demand," "I will not," "They must be," are characteristic of him. Mornington, with all the seeming advantages of wealth and position, living in the lap of luxury, his every want and whim satisfied, reveals in his early months at Rookwood, a vicious, revengeful and depraved disposition, undisciplined, ill-mannered and spoilt.

During this year 1917, we are given, except for one isolated instance, episodes in the early school life of this astonishing character that vary only in the degree of wickedness practised.

"There is so much good in the worst of us....." so the old saying goes. And this is true of Mornington. For we perceive qualities, at present misplaced, of determination and courage, and in spite of, or perhaps in consequence of, his upbringing he is determined to become a regular member of the cricket and football teams and even aspires to become captain of his form. He is both intelligent and ambitious. He loves the limelight and hates obscurity and if rightly trained is of the stuff that makes leaders

of men. Eventually we find, after much backsliding, a reformed and valued member of the Fourth form, and for me he is a character I cannot help but like.

Charles Hamilton, in his writings, frequently makes use of Shakespeare, the Greek and Latin writers and the Bible, for his quotations and illustrations and I am reminded in connection with Mornington, of an incident in the New Testament, of the man born blind and the question asked by the disciples "Who did sin this man or his parents." Mornington is a young man born blind. It is not all his fault that he shows such ugly, evil traits, most of the blame belongs to his parents, his past upbringing, his environment. For as soon as the enlightening influence of Rookwood penetrates the darkness of his mind he begins to see the errors of his way, and especially under the ennobling and patient influence of Kit Erroll there emerges a character that though still full of faults has many fine qualities. As Jimmy Silver remarked when Erroll's friendship for Mornington had become established "Morny won't do Erroll much good, but Erroll may do Morny heaps of good."

-----ooOoo-----

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By  
ERIC FAYNE

It has sometimes been suggested that the titles used for the stories in the GEM and MAGNET were often hackneyed and completely uninspired. Our Editor, in one of his recent articles, mentioned various titles which cropped up time and time again in the history of the Magnet, and Charles Hamilton has told us that on many occasions a story would be published under a title different from the one which he had chosen.

It can be argued that a title counts for little, and, though that is true, it is also a fact that many a story lingers in one's memory owing to the unusual title under which it appeared.

In the early days of the Gem, many fine yarns had snappy, appropriate titles - appropriate, without in any way betraying the plot of the story. "THE LIMIT" was an intriguing title, which told of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's under a form-mistress, - a delightful, believable yarn, which they re-published years later under the monstrous name "Miss Ponsonby's Pets".

"BAFFLED" was another strange title, but an unforgettable one. Years later, Frank Richards make one of his characters say "The word 'baffled' is never used nowadays. It's quite out of date." But it was certainly a snappy name for the story of the mysterious

disappearance of Dr. Holmes' Rembrandt.

"NO CLASS" was a title which made an immediate impression in the story of Joe Frayne's entry at St. Jim's. "HARD TIMES" very neatly summed-up a story in which Gussy advertised himself as a detective, with side-splitting results. "THE TOFF" made one wonder, whereas "The Boy from the Underworld" was just a name.

In later years, the Magnet went in for more original titles than it had done in earlier times. A fine story which lives in the memory, helped by its fascinating title, was "--SOME PERSON UNKNOWN", an episode in the grand series of the Courtfield Cracksmen, while "THE BEGGAR OF SHANTUNG" was a memorable title in the China series.

"GRUNTER OF GREYHURST" was not a masterpiece, but the unusual quality of the title keeps it in the memory.

What's in a name? Nothing perhaps, but I fancy that most of us, at some time or other, have bought a book on its title alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

MAGNET TITLES (Cont'd): 1281 Billy Bunter's Bargain; 1282 The Shadowed Schoolboy; 1283 The Secret of the Scarab; 1284 The Eye of Osiris; 1285 The Worst Boy in the Form; 1286 The Rebel of the Remove; 1287 Harry Wharton Declares War; 1288 The Schemer of the Sixth; 1289 The Way of the Rebel; 1290 The Glorious Fifth at Greyfriars; 1291 Hunting for Trouble; 1292 The Scapegrace of the School; 1293 Nobody's Pal; 1294 The Spy of the Sixth.

\* \* \* \* \*

MY COLLECTION

No. 5. - ROBERT FARISH'S

I discovered the GEM in 1911. I was ten years old then, and I cannot truthfully say that I thought much of my discovery. After all, what did I know about such things as house-rags and study-feeds, and prep and impots? I only knew corduroys and clogs, and the little village school, the head-mistress of which seemed to take an unholy delight in ordering me to take twenty spellings home with me, and learn them, at the end of each school day.

If I didn't think much of my first St. Jim's story, I didn't forget the GEM, and one day in 1913, when I was in Carlisle, I bought myself No. 283, "Taggles' Benefit," and from then until 1925 I was faithful to the old paper. I read other boys' papers during those years, but the GEM was by far my favourite, and it

still is.

I saved all my GEMS from 1917 to 1925....for what purpose I don't know, for there was no indication then that one day they would be valuable and much sought after. I just kept my parcels of GEMS at the bottom of my bookcase until, alas, they were thrown into the paper salvage in 1940.

After I lost touch with the GEM in 1925, I often wondered what became of it. I never tried to find out, and I never saw it in the hands of any boy. It vanished from my sight, but not from my memory and affection. It was therefore with considerable interest that I read in the DAILY MAIL one day in 1950 about an exhibition of old boys' papers in Leeds. David Pullan and his address was mentioned, and as the result of a letter to him I discovered Herbert Leckenby and the COLLECTOR'S DIGEST. I became a reader of the C.D., from which I soon learned that the GEM ceased publication in 1940, the very year that my parcels of old GEMS were thrown into the paper salvage. The knowledge, quickly acquired from the C.D., that there were many old boys with affectionate memories of the GEM was pleasing to me.

I still had something by me in 1950 to remind me of Tom Merry and Co., namely, "Winning His Spurs," "The House-master's Homecoming" and "A Stolen Holiday," these being the three famous double-number GEMS of 1915. I also had the first two HOLIDAY ANNUALS and a number of old St. Jim's BOYS' FRIENDS and SCHOOLBOYS' OWNS. But after reading the C.D. for some months I felt that I wanted something more to remind me of my boyhood. I wanted the Talbot GEMS, and I wanted them badly, the Toff always being my favourite character.

Herbert Leckenby didn't give me much hope of ever acquiring the Talbots, but luck was with me and, thanks largely to Bill Martin and Alfred Horsey, I now possess them, some thirty-six numbers in all. These Talbots belong to the days when the GEM was at its zenith, and I consider myself fortunate in possessing them.

Having acquired the Talbots, I became seized with the desire to have those GEMS which tell of Tom Merry's time at Clavering and of his arrival at St. Jim's. I didn't think that these would be easy to obtain, but luck was with me once more, Richard Whorwell and Bill Martin providing me with Nos. 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 33 and 42 (first series), and Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 (second series). I also own a PLUCK of 1906, which tells of Jack Blake's arrival at St.

Jim's, while another of my treasures is the famous GEM Christmas double-number, "The Mystery of the Painted Room."

My little collection is an expensive one, but I now have what I wanted to have, and I am content.

May we old boys always cherish our memories of the GEM, and may Martin Clifford be spared to be with us when we celebrate the half-centenary of the old paper in 1957.

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## OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

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L O N D O N     S E C T I O N: Guests of Honour at the May meeting held at Cherry Place were Don Webster of the Liverpool Club, C.L. Lettey and F.G. Rutherford of Bristol and Bill Jardine of Brighton. Chairman Len welcomed these distant travellers and after his usual good remarks the official business was duly carried out. The librarians gave their report and the Hamiltonian section done good business at the tea interval. Two letters were read from members overseas, Myer Jacobs now in Italy and Anthony Blunden in Germany.

Don Webster had brought with him a Top of the Form quiz and two teams led by Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe participated with chairman Len as the score taker. After three good rounds of questions Bob Blythe's team won by one point. Bob Blythe in the news again as he had brought along his Lotto game. Here the North triumphed as Don Webster was the winner. Roger Jenkins produced his Study game once again but this time he had to be content with second place as Eileen Whiter was an easy winner, your Uncle Benjamin was third. Hearty votes of thanks were afforded to the three members who compiled the three contests.

A brisk sales and exchange took place and of course the usual good feed was indulged in.

It was decided to hold the next meeting at Hume House, 136, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E. 22. on Sunday, June 20th, 4 p.m. sharp.

\* \* \* \* \*

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

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NORTHERN SECTION, Saturday, 8th May, 1954: Chairman Breeze Bentley opened the meeting to an attendance of only eleven members, several regulars being unavoidably absent. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and passed, and then the Treasurer/Librarian, G. Allison, gave his report showing credit balance as

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being approx. £27. Letters of apology for absence were then read including one from Herbert Leckenby who owing to unforeseen circumstances was unable to be present, which must be the first meeting of the Section Herbert has missed. The next item on the agenda was the Quiz compiled by London which set us all memory-searching. We did our best and sent off the results to Herbert for checking. The thanks of the meeting was extended to London for providing the quiz for us. After refreshments a Bunter Drive was held which was won by Bill Williamson, who incidentally won the last one. The prize was a basket of fruit which would have taxed the appetite of Bunter himself.

Jack Wood then gave a short humorous reading from an early Nelson Lee which convinced even Hamiltonians that E. Searles Brookes has his points. The meeting closed at approximately 9.15 p.m. **NEXT MEETING: JUNE 27th.** Follows the trip to York on June 20th. Its in the midst of the famous "Festival". Come and add to the numbers.

N.J. SMITH,

Hon. Sec.

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MIDLAND SECTION MEETING, 17th May: This proved to be a very informal meeting, the whole evening being occupied by discussions arising from the Treasurer's report on finances and plans suggested for the future of the Club, as it was the annual business meeting. After the Treasurer's report had been adopted, appreciative references were made to his work.

A resolution was then passed re-electing Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to their respective offices for the ensuing year.

Following this, two ladies were elected to serve of the Committee - Miss C. Scott and Mrs. W. Brown. Both are foundation members. Miss Scott has given us very valuable assistance on the committee for some time past, and we are very pleased that so keen and enthusiastic a member as Mrs. Brown is now able to join us on the committee. We were sorry that the retiring lady member, Miss Russell, felt unable to continue on the committee, and the writer gladly takes this opportunity of recording our thanks for her valuable advice and assistance.

During the evening reference was made to two letters which have been received from other clubs. One from Merseyside suggests an inter-club quiz, which we will certainly bear in mind for the near future. The other letter from Northern invites anyone

interested to join their outing to York on Sunday, June 20th.

A now customary informal chat concluded the proceedings.

EDWARD DAVEY.

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MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING, MAY 9th: There was quite a reasonable number present at this meeting, despite the unavoidable absence of a few of our regulars, who sent apologies. The chairman opened matters by passing a tribute to one of our staunchest members, Norman Wyness, who passed away recently. Don voiced the opinion of all present by saying that Norman will be greatly missed; he was a real enthusiast in everything connected with the hobby, and was a really sociable member and good friend to the section. We could do with more of his like.

The chairman then dealt with various section and club items, and this was followed by the secretary's report, etc.

As this was our long awaited Nelson Lee night, Don vacated the chair in favour of our vice-chairman, and leading Lee-ite, Frank Unwin, who soon had the discussion under weigh with his remarks on Edwy Searles Brooks as compared to Charles Hamilton.

Most present, needless to say, had definite opinions on the points brought up by Frank, and they were not slow to voice them. There were sufficient Nelson Lee fans present to make the debate a ding-dong affair, and for once the Bunter and D'Arcy champions failed to have it all their own way. In spite of the hotly contested issues, it was obvious that nobody was entirely antagonistic to either author, and both sides were prepared to admit the faults, as well as the merits, of their particular favourite writer. A really enjoyable evening, indeed!

Our June meeting is a general contribution by those present, each speaking for a few minutes on his favourite author, series, or story. We think this should be an interesting innovation.

Next meeting June 13th.

FRANK CASE.

\* \* \* \* \*

INFER CLUB QUIZ CONTEST: LONDON V. NORTHERN

London's Questions to Northern

Greyfriars: 1. What Greyfriars story appeared both in the "Holiday Annual" for 1920 and 1940? 2. Apart from Chapman, Shields, Hutton Mitchell and Clarke, give two other artists who drew covers for the "Magnet". 3. Who was the Greyfriars School Doctor? 4. Who was Arthur Traill? 5. What was the precious article in Dr. Voysey's

study that Bunter hid in a waste paper basket?

St. Jim's: 1. Who impersonated D'Arcy so successfully as to fool the whole school? 2. Give the title of the "Gem" story in which both Billy Bunter and Baggy Trimble play a prominent part? 3. What was the name of the American tourist who makes the acquaintance of the St. Jim's party in the South American series? 4. Name the St. Jim's senior whose cousin an escaped convict visits the school? 5. Which St. Jim's master was punched in the eye in the blackout and by whom?

St. Frank's: 1. Give the name of a close relation of Proff. Zingrave who was featured in the early stories. 2. Give the name of the temporary form-master who made life difficult for Alf Brent when the latter first arrived at St. Frank's. 3. Which senior died of heart failure during a champagne party given by Kenmore? 4. Who was the leader of the "Communists" as told in the first 2d "Nelson Lees"? 5. What was the later name of the 13 club?

Miscellaneous: 1. Who were Dick Turpin's two staunch companions (Aldine) Dick Turpin Library? 2. Philpot Bottles was the Chips office boy. Name the Funny Wonder and Comic Cutts office boys? 3. In which series of stories did the character "Gus" appear and what was he? 4. Which Sexton Blake character was a very "deseased" man? 5. What was Chunky Todgers real Christian name.

The above questions were compiled by Bob Whiter, John Addison, Bob Blythe and Len Packman.

#### ANSWERS:

Greyfriars: 1. "Billy Bunter's Bike". Holiday Annuals 1920 and 1940. \*2. C.H. Blake and P. Hayward. \*3. Dr. Pilbury. \*4. A. Somnambulist. \*5. Louis' Quinze Snuffbox.

St. Jim's: \*1. Gordon Gay. 2. "Two of a Kind". \*3. Hiram Honk. \*4. Monteith. /5. Silverson. Fourth form master who was punched by Monsieur Morny, French Master.

St. Frank's: \*1. Vera Zingrave, his, Professor Zingrave's step-daughter. \*2. Mr. Snuggs. \*3. Wallace, a 5th former. 4. Armstrong. 5. The Compact of Ten. (Ezra Quirke series).

Miscellaneous: 1. Peters & Beetles. \*2. Horatio Pimple & Sebastian Ginger. \*3. Bombay Castle stories by Duncan Storm. A crocodile. \*4. Dr. Lepperman. 5. Joseph.

* Indicates correct answers	-	13	
/ Indicates first part of answer correct		$\frac{1}{2}$	13 $\frac{1}{2}$

NORTHERN'S QUESTIONS TO LONDON:

Greyfriars: 1. Which Study did Billy Bunter occupy before moving into Study No. 7? 2. Who was the last permanent member to arrive in the Remove? 3. For whom did Wibley deputise as "Hamlet" in the sixth form production of "Hamlet". 4. In Magnet No. 162 entitled Wingate's Chum - Who was Wingate's Chum? 5. Who was Edgar Caffyn's guardian?

St. Jim's: 1. Who paid Joe Frayne's school fees? 2. Who was the day boy at St. Jim's? 3. What was the Nisan's Diamond? 4. Who was the fourth member of Figgins & Co? 5. When the St. Jim's Fourth played Tipton at rugby, which members of the Greyfriars Remove were in the team?

St. Frank's: 1. What St. Frank's scholar had the same initials as J. Breeze Bentley? 2. What was the motto of the Glenthorne's? 3. A new boy arrived and said his name was Ivel which was incorrect. Who was he? 4. What was the title of the Third New Series No. 1? 5. In what issue of the Nelson Lee Library did Nipper disclose his real identity to Tregellis-West and Watson?

Miscellaneous: 1. When was cricket first introduced at Rookwood? 2. Name the Cliffe House counter-part to Horace Coker of Greyfriars? 3. We all know that Johnny Bull was at Greyfriars. At which school was Mr. Harold Bull the Mathematics Master? 4. At what school was T. Dodd a member of the Terrible Three? 5. In No. 2 question is asked who was the counter-part to Horace Coker at Cliffe House. Who was the counter-part of Mark Linley at Cliffe House.

ANSWERS:

Greyfriars: \*1. Study No. 14. \*2. Dick Hilary. 3. Tom North. \*4. Miss Rosie Locke. \*5. Mr. Sarle.

St. Jim's: \*1. Mr. Poinsett. Guardian uncle to Tom Merry. \*2. Richard Brooke, Fourth Form, School House. \*3. A jewel carried by Gussy in the Flying Schoolboy series. Gems 1625/1634. \*4. Marmaduke Smythe. \*5. Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Tom Brown, and Morgan.

St. Frank's: \*1. J. Busterfield Boots. 2. The Fighting Glenthornes. \*3. Solomon Levy. \*4. Nipper - New Boy. \*5. The Christmas Double Number entitled "The Phantom of the Tregellis Castle".

Miscellaneous: 1. 1837. Holiday Annual 1925. \*2. Angelica Jelly. \*3. Rookwood. 4. Austin Towers, Dr. Quilter's Academy for Unruly Scholars. ("Redcastle & Co." by D. Goodwin - Boys Friend serial and B.F.L. No. 37.). 5. Peggy Preston.

\* Indicates Correct Answers

13

/ Mark Linley only was given

$\frac{1}{4}$

13 $\frac{1}{4}$

Note: With 13 fully correct answers each, to all intents and purposes - a tie - an ideal result. But London had one question which required two answers (No. 5. St. Jim's), Northern got one of them Silverson; Northern 's St. Jim's No. 5 required four names, London got one of them Mark Linley; hence to be strictly fair an additional  $\frac{1}{2}$  mark to Northern  $\frac{1}{4}$  mark to London.

H. LECKENBY, Umpire.

## POST BAG

### THREE GOOD ITEMS OF NEWS FROM FRANK RICHARDS!

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

May 4th, 1954.

Many thanks for the C.D. which came as a sunny spot on a rainy morning! The article on the "King Cricket" serial was specially interesting; to me at least. I remember that story so clearly, that it seems quite amazing that it is nearly half-a-century since I wrote it.

It is probable that a Bunter book will be serialised in Australia soon: and I like the idea very much. And I hear that "The Lone Texan" will be published at the end of May: which is quick work for these days, considering that it was written only last February.

Just now I am writing a new Bunter play for television, which I am told is to appear on the TV. screen in the early summer.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

Note: In reply to numerous enquiries the address of the Atlantic Book Co. is:- 16 BARTER STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.

\* \* \* \* \*

OVER TO YOU, ROGER

33, Brae St., Liverpool 7, Lancs.

Dear Editor,

It is with some amusement tinged with a little sorrow, that we read the one sentence that jarred in an otherwise most excellent article by Roger Jenkins in the May C.D. We refer of course to the

remark which infers that Handforth was a carbon copy of Coker. We must confess ourselves surprised that such a worthy exponent of Charles Hamilton lore should have made such a statement.

We, who have read many more of the St. Frank's stories than those of Greyfriars are not qualified to give a character study of Coker, but we are in a position to state quite emphatically that the famous Edward Oswald was not an imitation Coker.

Dare we refer to the story which many readers consider the best ever written featuring Handforth? We are thinking of course of the "Death of Church" series which appeared in 1927. The story of Handforth's reaction to the supposed death of one of his best friends, makes the basis of a magnificent yarn. It is laughable to think that Coker could have taken his place. No - Handforth rose here to heights that Coker could never have risen.

We could also tell of many other stories of Handforth, of his holiday adventures, when with Nelson Lee, Nipper, Umlosi and many others, he helped to defeat their common enemy. Had we the space we could tell many a story of Handforth in which he appeared in a far different light than that to which many staunch Hamiltonians are accustomed.

We have read particularly in our school days quite a few Magnets, but in all honesty the character of Coker made no impression on us at all. We have no means of knowing whether Brooks had Coker in mind when he fashioned Edward Oswald Handforth, but to us one thing is quite certain, Brooks made a far better job of Handforth than Frank Richards did of Coker.

Yours faithfully, NORMAN PRAGNELL.

(Note: Walter Fleming protests in similar vein and there's more in the Nelson Lee Column. Roger will reply next month. - H.L.)

WANTED: Magnets, especially Nos. 487, 477, 479, 461, 805, 808, 994 995, 1029, 856-860, also S.O.Ls. Greyfriars & Rookwood, condition not important, if readable. 5 early S.O.Ls for exchange. For Sale: Bunter's Barring-Out, 2/6d & 2/-. (MISS) EDITH MAGOVENY, 65, BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND.

(cont'd from p. 172). "God rid of 'em!"

"Yes, for waste-paper--towards the end of the war."

I staggered over to the bar.

"Yes?" said the barman.

I gave him a pitiful look.

"He got rid of 'em!" I said brokenly. "Waste-paper!"

Two more pints, please!"

# GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S



By JACK WOOD, Nostaw,  
328, Stockton Lane, YORK.

Those remarks by Roger Jenkins about the similarity between Edward Oswald Handforth, of the St. Frank's Remove, and Horace Coker, of the Greyfriars Fifth, have not gone down too well with the Old Franconians, and a skilful reply by Cyril Banks is so timely that I have re-adjusted my own timetable in order to include it this month while it is still topical.

In the circumstances, those of you who were looking forward to our conducted tour of the St. Frank's country will have to postpone the trip for a month. Buses and cars will leave from the King's Cross coach station next month for a tour of the capital to visit some of the many London homes made famous, or at least familiar, in the Nelson Lee stories.

Results of our first competition, therefore, will be announced in the July C.D. Many thanks to those who have responded - not as many as I would have liked, but satisfactory for a preliminary canter. And now, Cyril Banks asks.....

## WAS COKER A MODEL FOR HANDFORTH?

In the Collectors' Digest for May, Roger Jenkins in his usual very interesting article says that E.S. Brooks was so taken up with Coker of Greyfriars that he used him as a model for Handforth. Now whether E.S. Brooks did have Coker in mind when he created Handforth or not I really do not know, but if friend Roger is

trying to tell us that Handforth is a replica of Coker I strongly disagree. There is a world of difference between these two characters as I will try and show.

We will take Coker first. Frankly he is just a champion chump (as Frank Richards himself often describes him). At games he is just hopeless, although he thinks he is brilliant. Actually he is as big a manace to his own side (when he can get a game) as he is to his opponents. Often he has barged his own men over a football, and has even scored through his own goal for the other side, believing he has scored a perfectly good goal. His antics on the cricket field have been just as idiotic. He can certainly fight a big in a rough house style but is hopeless at swimming. At rowing his performances have caused havoc on the river. His class work is just as hopeless. He is old and big enough for the sixth form, but does not possess the intelligence of the average third form boy. His spelling has not yet left the KAT = cat stage, and he is never in the wrong; at least in his own opinion. No matter what sort of a scrape or mess he gets himself into, it is always someone else's fault. He considers himself a cut above everyone at Greyfriars and imagines everyone else is a fool. Against all this though, Coker has his good points. He is very generous to his friends, and is as honest and straight as anyone can be.

Now let us have a look at Handforth. In appearance he is not unlike Coker. Both are big and burly with ugly mugs, and both have an unruly lock of hair over their foreheads. Either of them will hit out at the smallest provocation, and they both possess unlimited courage. Both are hasty and impulsive, but apart from these points we shall not find many other things in common. At sports Handforth is quite good, even if his style is somewhat crude. ~~As a footballer he is a first class goalkeeper. Why he even kept goal for the famous Blue Crusaders for a short time.~~ Can you imagine Coker doing that? At cricket he is again a prominent member of the Junior team. With the bat he is liable to be out first ball, or to go on and make a century. He is a slogger only, but not a clown like Coker. Although clumsy by nature (like Coker there), he seems to lose his clumsiness on the sports field (not like Coker there). Handy has made some brilliant catches in his time, but can you imagine Coker holding the simplest of catches? At boxing Handforth is again just a slogger. Perhaps at fighting Handforth and Coker come fairly even.

At rowing Handforth may not have a classical style, but at least he can handle a boat without being certain to capsize it. At class work Handforth may not be brilliant, but at least he is not the absolute duffer that Coker is. His work and spelling etc., are more or less normal. Again unlike Coker, Handforth is capable of using his brain. He is capable of using sound common sense. He is certainly very headstrong and does not stop to think enough. His reasoning is often sound, but he is so impatient that he usually misses some small point that makes all the difference. Like Coker, Handforth is as straight and as honest as the day; true blue, and one of the best. There is, of course, one other thing they both have in common. Mechanical transport. Coker has his famous motor bike, whilst Handforth has his baby car. Coker, however, is a perfect menace on the roads, and Handforth just as reckless. There is this difference though, Handforth can really drive, and has perfect control over his car. There we are then. To sum up we find that they do resemble one another in appearance, and in one or two ways, but if we look a bit deeper down we find there is a lot of difference between Handforth and Coker.

\* \* \* \* \*

From another old friend, Bill Champion, we are reminded of

ONE OF LIFE'S MAJOR TRAGEDIES!

The other Sunday afternoon I had just completed a two-months task, that of building a conservatory adjoining my house, and was standing back with righteous pride in order to admire my handiwork when I was hailed by a neighbour of mine, two gardens away. Now this neighbour, of some sixteen years standing, and whose name, through no fault of his own, is Tom, is very friendly with my household; in fact, he and his wife often accompany my wife and I to old-time dances held at villages and towns near Reading. Apparently, on this particular Sunday, he, too, had been actively occupied on some husbandry job of major importance. I forget, now, the actual job, but whatever it was, it appears to have had a thirst-producing effect on him, because he suggested we went for a "hoggin" after tea.

Personally, and to the great sorrow of my wife and daughter, I am never averse to a proposal of this nature; so it came to pass that, after tea and a much-needed clean-up, we embarked without ceremony in my loyal old "flivver" and set off into the wilds—in this case a village situate on wooded hills in close proximity to the famous old biscuit-town.

Over the first pint I casually mentioned that had I stayed at home that evening, it had been my intention to write an article

for a certain magazine called "The Collectors' Digest". Always polite, and conscious of my companion's seniority in years, I chose my words with the utmost care - so Tom hadn't a doubt that I was far happier "sinking" beer with him.

"Collectors' Digest - never heard of it!" he said without enthusiasm. "What's it mean?"

Over a second pint I enlarged a little, and, rather bashfully, told him that the "C.D." was devoted to the collection of old boys' books.

"What sort of old boys' books?" asked Tom, still not evincing any signs of great interest.

"Oh, well - you know," I said, somewhat lamely; "boys' books - Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees--".

To my unbounded amazement, Tom's eyes opened wide, and a long-departed sparkle crept into them.

"Did you say Nelson Lees?" he ejaculated.

"Yes -- a small book, you know, written by Edwy Searles--"

"Brooks!" finished Tom. The change in the man was unbelievable; his step, as he went for another refill, was light, his shoulders seemed to have shed a great load. He placed the filled glasses on our table, sat down, sighed, and looked into space for a moment, a far-away expression in his eyes. I waited expectantly.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he murmured softly. "The old Nelson Lee! I haven't heard the name for years."

"Why," I exclaimed with mounting excitement, "did you ever read any?"

"Read any!" repeated Tom. "Why, I started reading 'em from No. 1. Never missed one! Never threw one away! I used to live for Wednesday, to find out what old Nipper and Handy were doing. And then there was old Dorrie, and that black geezer, Um--something--"

"Great Scott!" I gasped. "And I never knew!"

"I got married twenty-three years ago," went on Tom, unheeding of my interruption, "but I still had my Nelson Lee every week. And then Pat (his daughter) came along, and somehow--I don't quite know how--I started slipping. You know what it's like with kids-- this job to do, that job to do, never a moment to spare for anything else. Week after week, the Nelson Lee was still delivered to my house, and added to the pile, unread. I kept telling myself that I'd read 'em somehow, sometime--fall sick or something, and read 'em in bed. The end of the Nelson Lee came, and I still hadn't as much as picked one up -- but the thoughts of that super read to come kept me going through the early days of the war, sort of buoy-me up, as it were. But it wasn't to be." Tom drained his glass sadly, the cares of his fifty-odd years descending on him again like a mantle. "I never read 'em!"

I was on my feet, fairly dancing with excitement.

"But all those Nelson Lees--what came of them? Where are they now?"

"I got rid of 'em," muttered Tom dismally. (concluded p. 168)..