The Collectors Digest.

(Vol.3) No.33. Sept.1949.

**NEW SERIES THIS WEEK!**

Cover of the Union Jack of 6th Sept., 1913. The story by Maxwell Scott ~

# The Finest Boys Annual ever Published

## Tom Merry's Annual

This is the first post-war issue of Tom Merry's Annual. We feel confident that it will find a very special place in the affections of boys all over the English-speaking world ..

All our old friends are here – Tom Merry and his chums of St.Jim's – Jimmy Silver of Rookwood – Harry Compton & Co. of Carcroft School, not forgetting our fat old friend Turkey Tuck. .. .. .. .. ..

In addition to these old favourites, the Annual contains this year some exciting new features – The Story of the F.A.Cup – an exciting article on motor racing, and another on Speedway, by Basil Storey – a fascinating article on whaling and another on secret codes. Finally, there is an enthralling feature on how to make a small and inexpensive radio set, with full instructions and list of components .. .. .. ..

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London, S.W.1.

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SEPTEMBER 1949

Next Issue October

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

"The Education of an Editor": No, this does not refer to me for it's the title of an article I have had the good fortune to receive from Mr. F. Addington Symonds, first editor of "The Champion". It tells something of his own career from his boyhood in Rhodesia to the day he resigned from "The Champion". I can give you my word it's a grand, graphic, racy story. When I read it, I was in two minds, whether to run it as a serial to follow the Maxwell Scott Diaries, or whether to reserve it for the Annual. I've decided on the latter.

I cannot resist telling you this now, though. There was something in Mr. Addington Symonds' career as romantic as anything you may have read in story books. As a small boy out there in Rhodesia his favourite paper was the "Big Budget".

When ten or so he wrote to the editor,"Arthur Brooke", actually Arthur C. Marshall, kindly Christian gentleman and sincerest of all boys' editors. To his delight the boy got a prompt reply. That started a life-long friendship. The years rolled on and the boy from Rhodesia, ink in his veins, found himself at Fleetway House. There he was given the job of creating the "Champion". He modelled it on his boyhood favourite the "Big Budget", and he sought out all the old contributors to that paper he possibly could. And the climax came when there entered his office to discuss a new serial - the man he idolised in his youth, Arthur Marshall. Yes, truth is as strange and thrilling as fiction.

How that story appeals to me! Does it not to you?

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Holiday Unique: At the time of writing this, Harry Dowler is spending a holiday at the Anchorage Private Hotel, Hinderwell, Yorkshire. What is there unique about that, you may ask? Ah, well, you see what is now the Anchorage Hotel was once the home of Maxwell Scott, and there's no greater admirer of the creator of Nelson Lee than Harry Dowler. Ever since he read "Birds of Prey" in his boyhood days of long ago he has collected every scrap of information he could about its author. Now he is having an experience he never dreamed of, spent in the very place where "Birds of Prey" and all those other fascinating stories were written. More romance in real life. Yes, I guess you'll agree it's a unique, memorable holiday.

And he's promised to tell us all about it next month.

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Anticipation: The last time the Old Boys' Book Club met at East Dulwich I spoke to the members there assembled from 200 miles away. When they gather there again in September, I hope, God willing, to be there in the flesh. If anything does crop up to prevent me, then the most unhappy man alive will be

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

Last Minute Flash: Thanks to the efforts of Jack Cook a Northern Old Boys' Book Club has been formed, to be known as the Novocastrian Story Paper Collectors' Club. First meeting was August 18th. Report in next issue.

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## I VISIT FRANK RICHARDS

by Leonard Packman

On Saturday July 30th I arrived at Broadstairs with my family for a fortnight's holiday. A day or so later I wrote to Frank Richards asking if I might pay him a visit. I was not very optimistic, for, as most of us know, Mr. Richards has perforce to lead a secluded life. My pleasure therefore can well be imagined when I received a reply which pointed out "that much as the Oldest Inhabitant would like to see everyone, and little as he likes playing the part of the Invisible Man, it couldn't be done —— especially in the holiday season when my kind readers seem rather like the oysters in 'Alice' — 'Thick and fast they came at last and more and more and more'.." However, Mr.Richards went on to say that he felt an exception must be made for the Chairman of the O.B.B.Club, and that he would therefore allow himself the pleasure of relaxing the rule and would be pleased to see me at eight p.m. the following Tuesday (August 9th).

I must confess to feeling somewhat elated, but my wife and daughter hastened to dampen my spirits by pointing out that I had not seen Mr. Richards yet and that I might be put off at the last minute. Fortunately nothing like this happened and a few minutes before the appointed time found us walking down Percy Avenue until we reached "Rose Lawn". Here I left my family who arranged to meet me later, on the cliffs at the bottom of the avenue.

My knock was answered by the charming young lady who guards the portals and who escorted me into the room where I found 'Our Chief' seated in his armchair dressed and looking just as he did three years ago when his photograph was taken for "Picture Post".

I hardly knew how to begin and said that I felt literally just as a Removite would feel upon entering Dr. Locke's sanctum, but with a musical little chuckle Mr. Richards soon put me at my ease.

My next problem was how I should address him, by his real name or his 'adopted' one? To this he replied, "Call me Frank". This, of course, I could not do, but seeing that he had Frank Richards in mind I said I would make it Mr. Richards, and

Mr. Richards it was.

During the course of conversation over an excellent cup of coffee and a cigarette I learned a lot of interesting details and as I really represented all Hamiltonians, here is the picture as it was.

Seated opposite me, with those nimble fingers that play on the keys of his beloved typewriter filling his pipe from the tobacco jar close handy, he told me why he was unable to leave the house on account of his bad leg, although he was able to spend a while in the garden.

In his cheerful kindly way Mr. Richards said that although 75 years of age, and in spite of failing sight, he was as happy at his typewriter as a boy with a new bicycle.

I asked him what he considered the best Magnet (s) he wrote, to which he promptly replied 'The China Series' (presumably a series of twelve commencing with number 1175 "The Menace of Tang Wang").

My next question dealt with the time he was in Austria when War was declared in 1914. I asked Mr. Richards how he managed to get his stories to London, and with a smile on his face, his nimble fingers busy again in the tobacco jar, he settled back in the chair and said that after being censored, each story was sent to London in two parts, and then, in reminiscent mood he said he remembered one particular story about a Zeppelin, the second part of which arrived here before the first and was passed by the German censors!!!

Tapping on his metal ashbowl which, incidentally, served as a gong whenever he required the services of his housekeeper, Mr. Richards informed me that Billy Bunter was actually born in 1899 but not proving popular was put into cold storage until the Magnet was launched in 1908, when he at once became a success.

My next question was did he think there was any possibility of Owen Conquest writing a Rookwood story on the lines of the Greyfriars and St. Jim's bound books. The reply was that "Owen" had already been approached with a view to writing two. The only question was as to whether commercially they would be a success, and as Owen Conquest is rather doubtful about this, only the future can decide.

Mr. Richards went on to say that some "Carcroft" stories he wrote early in the war will be published by "Mandeville Publications" as soon as sufficient paper becomes available.

My next question was in regard to the possibility of Mr. Richards' autobiography being published. The reply was that there is a possibility that one day, with certain revisions from the original manuscript, this will be published. To this I echoed the thought in all our hearts by saying I hoped it would be soon!

I learned that Frank Richards was about sixteen when he wrote his first story (1890), and again in reminiscent mood he said that he considered one of his best stories was "King Cricket" which ran as a serial in the "Boys Realm" in 1906 (illustrated by Briscoe), but the story was ruined when reprinted in an abridged form at a later date in the "Boys Friend 3d. Library".

It was then that I was told something which will make all collectors weep, for it appears that some time ago during a salvage drive, Mr. Richards got rid of about 500 green 1d. "Boys Friends", about 1000 Gems and a similar number of Magnets. The weight, he reckons, was close on half a hundredweight! I did not say so, but I thought if only he realised how eagerly these papers are sought after! What vandalism!

Mr. Richards did not like the idea of such high prices being asked and offered for the old papers, but when I pointed out that collectors paid many pounds for a little postage stamp, he saw my point.

I spoke of the happiness he has brought to so many thousands of boys and girls, - yes, and to adults also - throughout all those years, at which a placid smile stole over his kindly face, and he nodded, saying softly, "Yes, I think I have. Do you know how many Magnets alone were printed in its 33 years career? Five hundred million!!"

As this is only one paper I leave our readers to work out statistics of the total number of books and stories his writings cover! But time was passing all too quickly. I mentioned that my wife and daughter were waiting for me, at which Mr. Richards expressed a wish to see them. I hastened to the bottom of the road and though at first they thought I was joking, they returned with me.

My daughter was thrilled, for she (aged 13½), will have something to remember in the years to come. And speaking of years, some have passed very quickly for Frank Richards, for, pointing to a picture of his niece taken as a little girl, he said, "Yesterday she was playing on the sands and today she is a grown up woman of twenty!

How time flies, and don't we Hamiltonians know it!

To crown my evening's happiness Mr. Richards presented me with a large photograph of himself which he autographed and which has now been framed and reposes on my sitting-room sideboard.

The time had now come to say goodbye and as the door of "Rose Lawn" closed quietly behind us, it was with a feeling of great happiness that we made our way back to Broadstairs.

Thus my brief but pleasant and memorable visit to Frank Richards.

I am sure he will forgive me if I quote my daughter's words as we walked along, for it echoes the thought in us all, "What a kindly, wonderful man."

God Bless you, Charles Hamilton!

(Lucky Len.- H.L.)

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WANTED URGENTLY: All back numbers of Collectors' Digest; Also Annuals. William Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

AN INEXPENSIVE HOBBY: Collect specimen numbers of Victorian boys' papers. I can supply Boys of England, Boys Standard, Boys Comic Journal, Boys of Empire, Young Englishman, Boys World, Black Bess, Black Highwayman, Sweeney Todd, Blueskin, Tyburn Dick, Ching-Ching, Harkaway and hundreds more, 6/6 per dozen. Medcraft, 64, Woodlands Road, Ilford.

WANTED: Aldine Publications, Turpins, Duvals, Robin Hoods, etc. E. R. Landy, 4 Nuneeton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

FOR SALE: "Billy Bunter's Bank-note"; "Billy Bunter's Barring Out" and "Billy Bunter in Brazil". What offers? T. W. Puckrin, 16 Willows Road, Middlesbrough, Yorkshire.

(NOTE: Here's a change; something about a paper which had quite a decent run, yet somehow seldom gets the limelight.- H.L.)

## THE "BOYS MAGAZINE"

### By Wilfred Darwin

The little paper with the pink covers familiarly known as "Boys' Mag" was started by E. Hulton & Co. in February 1922.

Number 1 was in my opinion a poor effort compared to later issues. It was a mixture of school, detective and sport. John Hunter contributed a rather fantastic serial story to it, entitled "The Lure of the Lost Land". This was the first of many such yarns that John Hunter wrote for Boys' Magazine. Apart from this type he also turned out one or two good ones dealing with football. Other serials were written by H. Wedgwood Belfield, Michael Poole, Brian Cameron, W.B. Home Gall and Edwy Searles Brooks.. The latter author (famous for his stories of St. Franks in the Nelson Lee Library), introduced Freeman, Hardy and Willis, better known as "The Firm" at Castleton School. He took these and other schoolboy characters to the planet Venus in a story entitled "The Planet Schoolboys". They travelled to the white planet in a marvelous space ship invented by Professor Roxley Drew, an eminent scientist and relative of one of the Castleton boys. Here they discovered amongst other strange things a wonderful city inhabited by a race of winged beings and ruled over by Hudson Zeff, an American who had landed there many years before in a projectile.

Every kind of a yarn seemed to find a place in Boys' Magazine. There were detective stories, school stories and Western stories. There were also tales about highwaymen and others of historical interest. Dick Turpin and Robin Hood were rarely absent from its pages. The famous highwayman especially was a firm favourite of mine in those days as he must have been of every other Boys' Mag reader. A Christmas Number was never complete without this colourful character. He usually appeared on the cover resplendent in scarlet coat and three-cornered hat under such titles as "Dick Turpin on the Haunted Highway", or "Dick Turpin and the Christmas Coach. Other yarns of a vastly different type also had a place in these special

Christmas Numbers. One in particular I remember in 1926, was a detective story entitled "The Ghost of Marston Towers". This yarn contained all the usual ingredients of the Christmas ghost story such as secret trap doors, underground passages, ghostly apparitions etc. But apart from all these necessaries it also manifested the true spirit of Christmas. Here as follows is a seasonable bit from the first chapter.

"Sir Rudolph Marston stared unseeingly through the dim lit library, his fine old face distorted. Outside the snow was coming down in heavy flakes and the moon lit the quaint old pile of Marston Towers with its winding turrets and tall spire - lit it in all the majesty of its snowy mantle. Yet if the scene was typical of the old-fashioned Christmas Card - there was a sad and sighing wind abroad. It moaned eerily through the old Towers and the windows long since out of repair shook and rattled. Old Sir Rudolph Marston gripped the stem of his wine glass and saw - ghosts.

Ghostsof the Past!

Another fine story of this type, though not a Christmas one, which appeared a little later was "The Hooded Monk of Blenway College". Though a well written yarn I found it rather disappointing from the fact that the ghostly friar turned out to be only the school porter in Monk's dress, who with a desire to make a bit of money out of income had kidnapped the Captain of the school and was holding him to ransome in a vault beneath the school buildings.

The Blenway College boys who appeared in this and several other stories were a merry crowd, especially Scorcher Smith, a lad with many bright ideas for enlivening the general atmosphere of the school. His japes on scholars and teachers alike kept the place eternally on its toes with merriment.

Another schoolboy character deserving of mention was the Blott of Berrisford. William Hurley Spencer Blott was a schoolboy inventor with a genius for getting himself into trouble. Michael Poole, who created this amusing fellow, wrote a long series about him for "Boys' Magazine". They must have proved popular with readers, for some time later stories about the Blott of Berrisford were seen on bookstalls in volume form.

As a final item I would like to mention a school serial which ran for some time during 1927. Written by Captain Keith Clive, this was entitled "The Outcast of St. Mervyns'". It told the very human story of a scholarship boy and son of a farm labourer who, much against his schoolfellows' wishes, was made Captain of the school. How the outcast proved himself one of the best and more than worthy of his position as school Captain, made interesting and thrilling reading.

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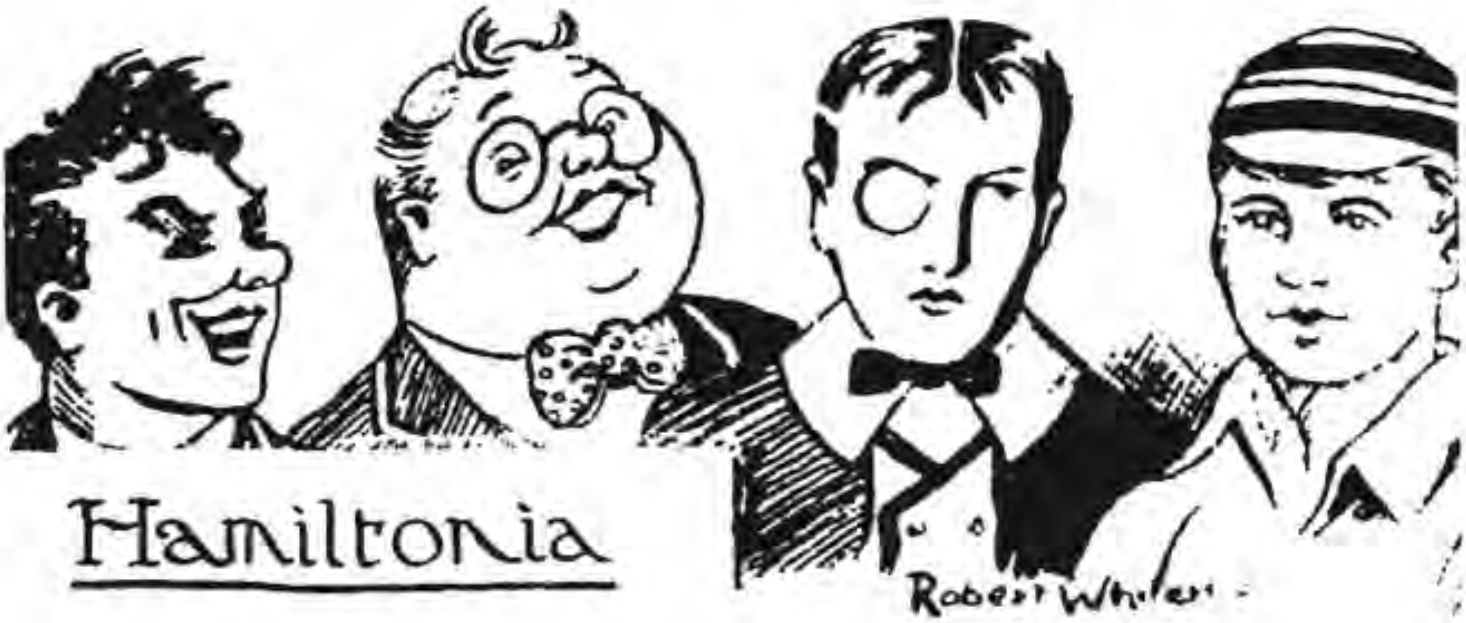
WANTED: The following numbers Nelson Lee old series: 106, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123, 124, 126 to 147 inclusive; 237, 294, 328, 329, 331, 332, 334, 335, 336, 357, 388, 389, 487, 488, 520, 521, 533, 537, 538, 539.
Also number of S.O.L's and complete set of Modern Boys for Sale or Exchange. E. McPherson, 80 Benedict Street, Glastonbury, Somerset.

WANTED: Sidney Drew Stories in Boys' Friend Libraries 3d and 4d. Many Exchanges. Write Henry J. H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

FOR SALE: 48 numbers Nelson Lee Library, New series. (Jan. 2, 1932 to Feb. 18, 1933. No's 102, 103, 105, 109 to 112, 115 to 117, 121 to 124, 127, 120, 130, 131, 133 to 138, 140, 144 to 161. New Series (Feb. 25 to Mar. 25, 1933), No's 1 to 5. In good condition, 25/- including postage. Leon Stone, Elgin Street, Gordon, N.S.W., Australia.

SPECIALLY WANTED: ½d. Gems, 3, 5, 9, 11, 37, 42. 2d. Gem No. 41 "Ghost of St. Jim's (1908) 5/- each offered or will give two copies for one of 1d. Blue-covered Gems, or copy for copy 1d. Red-covered Magnet for them.
Have 1d blue-covered Gems for exchange. Also 1d. Plucks, Boys' Friend 3d Libraries, Aldines, etc. Many other boys' papers wanted including Jack North's Boys Friend Libs. 1st series. Have Union Jack Detective Supplements between No's 2 and 51. About 38, Jan. 1926 on. Wanted Boys' Friend 3d Libs, 30, 38, 46, 59, 65, 67, 81, and 125. And Horace Phillip's school stories. Richard Whorwell, 29 Aspinden Road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.16.

Phew! What a Slump in Subs. in August.
Dr. Holidays, I presume!




Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

I Told You So. In this column last month Dr. Wilson asked a question concerning an incident in a "Gem" of long ago. I ventured to suggest that John Shaw could give me the answer. Two days after the first C.D's went out I saw among my pile of mail his familiar handwriting. I opened the letter and then could not resist a chuckle. Why? Well, here's why!

4 Brunswick Park,
London, S.E.5.
Aug. 6th, 1949.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

The Gem which Dr. Wilson so well remembers is No.279, "Tom Merry's Special Number." Levison wrote the poem and offered it to Tom Merry for the "Weekly". Perhaps the complete poem would interest readers of the "C.D." Here it is:-

"Kildare, the captain of the coll.,
Is always keen, and never slacks;
A sight it is to see Kildare,
Worm his way through halves and backs,
And beat them all, and kick for goal!

"We like to see our skipper bowl;
All wickets fall when he is there!
Say what you will, he's just top-hole,
So give a cheer for old Kildare!"

It will be observed that the initial words read, "Kildare is a worm, and we all say so."

Yours very sincerely, John Shaw.

There's your little problem settled, Dr.Wilson, all pat.

My comment last month about a temporary Greyfriars character who grew older seems to have aroused a little curiosity. Well, it was Wally Bunter. He came at first in that long series where they were about the same age. Some three years later he came again - as a master - and it was then stated he was a little older than Loder.

On this occasion the stories were the work of one of those inefficient substitute authors, and he took it upon himself to introduce for the occasion a "First Form" when all the data of Greyfriars made it clear there was no such thing.

Stupid errors like this remind one of others equally silly made by those fellows who butted in thinking it was quite easy to get the Hamilton touch. For instance, there was the one who told of D'Arcy slipping over to Highcliffe one afternoon to arrange a football or cricket match, I forget which, for all the world as if Highcliffe was in the vicinity of Wayland.

Then there was the extraordinary incident of Magnet No.545, "The Shylock of the Second". Here the first chapter was headed "At Rylcombe Station", and the text went on to describe a scene there. To crown all, C.H. Chapman drew the cover picture - the station platform with "Rylcombe" prominently displayed in the background. In this instance it was sheer carelessness, for this substitute, who was also editor at the time, had at least a knowledge of Greyfriars.

It occurs to me it wouldn't be a bad idea if one of our historians got together a record of all these ridiculous errors perpetrated by those substitute writers in the Gem and Magnet.

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Last month when I spoke about Taffy Llewellyn & Co., and the other Billy Bunter, I said I couldn't remember the name of the school. I have just found it was Blackminster. Blackminster! Greyfriars! rather curious, that.

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And now Len Packman comes along with an interesting record of instances where, in the Magnet, the same title was used twice, thrice, and even, in one instance, four times. It's too long

to publish at one go, so we'll leave some over until next month. What licks me is how it was compiled. I can only assume all the 1683 stories were arranged in alphabetical order. Anyway, this is what live-wire Len says.

During the course of the "Magnet's" long career it was only natural that certain titles would be duplicated, but the total number is rather surprising.

For the benefit of those who are interested, the following analysis shows the Title, Number of times duplicated and Serial number.

If, for purposes of comparison, my list of duplicated "Gem" titles and list of titles appearing in both the "Magnet" and "Gem" is of sufficient interest to "Hamiltonia" I shall be pleased to supply the details.

Leonard Packman.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Billy Bunter's Bargain. | (3) | 1221, 1281, 1659. |
| Billy Bunter's Bolt. | (2) | 449, 916. |
| Billy Bunter's Bank. | (2) | 1206, 1482. |
| Billy Bunter's Hat Trick. | (2) | 1226, 1326. |
| Billy Bunter's Luck. | (2) | 701, 1069. |
| Billy Bunter's Windfall. | (2) | 87, 1532. |
| Black Magic. | (2) | 1050, 1305. |
| Blackmail. | (2) | 1133, 1450. |
| Bob Cherry's Secret. | (2) | 266, 633. |
| Bravo Bunter. | (2) | 754, 1016. |
| Bunter Comes to Stay. | (2) | 1066, 1141. |
| Bunter the Ventriloquist. | (2) | 1328, 1369. |
| Bunter's Big Bluff. | (3) | 1072, 1316, 1564. |
| Bunter's Latest. | (2) | 526, 787. |
| Down on His Luck. | (3) | 226, 1256, 1406. |
| Drummed Out of Greyfriars. | (2) | 253, 856. |
| Foes of the Remove. | (2) | 586, 1240. |
| Foes of the Sixth. | (2) | 417, 1212. |
| Fool's Luck. | (3) | 1134, 1407, 1630. |
| Football Foes. | (2) | 192, 1448. |
| Friendsor Foes. | (2) | 113, 881. |
| Harry Wharton's Downfall. | (3) | 170, 885, 1257. |
| Harry Wharton's Enemy. | (3) | 1063, 1261, 1424. |
| Holding the Fort. | (2) | 227, 1513. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hunted Down | (3) | 1009, 1089, 1402. |
| In Borrowed Plumes. | (4) | 304, 656, 751, 1066. |
| Loder's Luck. | (2) | 583, 658. |
| Poor Old Bunter. | (2) | 160, 896. |
| Rivals of the Remove. | (2) | 7, 1423. |

(continued)

Well, before I write any more Hamiltonia, I hope to have talked quite a lot of it down in London Town, not only Hamiltonia, but also Blakiana, Penny Dreadfulitis, Aldineonia, etc. etc. There's some talk of an all-night session. Go on, laugh, ladies. Well, I'm all for it, and I daresay I shouldn't even then be silent over breakfast. So if I'm in good form next month you'll know the reason why.

(NOTE.- Charlie Wright has been a collector for years, but this is his first article. With such a nice touch of humour it's a pity he didn't start before. However, better late than never, and when you've read it you'll be pleased to hear we have others from him in hand. - H.L.)

## THE TRAGEDY OF GUSSY'S TOPPERS

By Charles Wright

Has any "Gem" enthusiast ever stopped to think of the enormous number of Gussy's Toppers that came to a sad end one way or another? I suppose there are statisticians who could work out whether they would stretch from here to Australia if placed side by side, but no doubt they would reach a heck of a long way. I should say that Gussy was the star customer, the pride and joy of his Hatter. He probably bought more toppers than an army of city magnates.

They found their sad end in a variety of ways. He was butted on to his fallen topper on one occasion by a donkey, and quite a few were used for mixing ink, soot and treacle in for use as booby traps. The last he saw of one was on Wayland platform as his train steamed out, draped round the leg of the lanky Figgins after he had tried to shoot a goal with it, he left another stuck on the hoof of a raging bull, when he saved Wally's life once.

Baggy Trimble had quite a fondness for Gussy's toppers for use as collecting boxes on the numerous occasions when he tried to transfer his schoolmates' surplus cash to his own pockets, and these usually finished up as footballs, Gussy often joining in, unaware that they were his own.

Once when Kerr was disguised as a soft looking new boy, he very kindly picked up Gussy's fallen topper by sticking the ferrule of his umbrella through the crown and offering it to him on a fork as it were. Several times the leather band inside has been lined with ink which after a while has trickled over his face, giving him a zebra-like appearance, and the number of his toppers which have been transformed into busbies are legion.

Gussy and his Topper has always been a great source of amusement to Gem readers, and while he would always complain loudly at the rumpling of his waistcoat or bags, a smashed topper always seemed to leave him speechless. He nearly always gazed at it in "speechless horror".

In any encounter between St. Jim's and Gordon Gay & Co., it was invariably good-bye to Gussy's tile, Once when he tried to get into a publisher's office with a formidable amount of manuscript on fashions, his topper was bashed over his ears by a commissionaire's ham-like fist.

His lid has been knocked flying from his noble nut by footballs, cricket balls, snowballs, and practically every kind of missile from an apple to an egg.

On one never to beforgotten occasion when Gussy was captain of the lower school for a week, he sternly chided the third-form fags on their slovenliness, and, led by Wally D'Arcy, nine of them promptly arrayed themselves in Gussy's clothes, each one had a gleaming topper more or less balanced on his ears; they were afterwards found strewn in the Fourth Form dormitory like nine concertinas.

One could go on for hours on the sad fate of Gussy's lids, but in spite of it all, the one and only invariably turned up smiling next week with a brand new gleaming topper that was a joy and a beauty for ever.

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# Old Boys Book Club

## Brighton Meeting. August 21st.

Glorious weather marked the second annual visit of the club to Brighton, and to the strains of "Good Old Sussex by the Sea" a company of thirteen members, ably led by Len Packman, set off for the St. Jim's country. At Brighton station genial Harry Homer, who resides a few miles out at Heathfield, met the company. Afterwards the party split up and enjoyed the various amenities of the seaside metropolis ere journeying to the home of dear old "Robbie". Here the host and hostess, together with Elaine and Julie, gave one and all a hearty welcome. The Chairman suitably replied and expressed the hope that the meeting would become a hardy annual. Then the business of the afternoon commenced. The minutes were read, also the correspondence, treasurer's report adopted, and other minor matters settled. The secretary then gave a brief resume of the first committee meeting dealing with the Christmas social. Afterwards the general quiz papers were distributed and members had time for five minutes perusal ere the call to refreshments. Here a grand spread had been made ready complete with a fine cake beautifully made and complete with the club's badge in icing on the top. Full justice was done to the spread and photographs were taken of the worthy chairman cutting the cake. Mrs. Kay Robyns was heartily congratulated and suitably thanked for her great efforts as regards the wonderful tea. The business was then resumed and the quiz proceeded with. All agreed what a very fine quiz it was and were pleased to see the chairman complete his hat trick by winning his third consecutive quiz. Second in the race was Charlie Wright, with Harry Homer third. A hearty welcome was afforded to Mr. Deacon, a new member, who learned of the club's activities through his other interest in science fictional magazines. Then the 'phone bell rang and soon everyone had the pleasing opportunity of conversing with the vice-president of the club, our Herbert. Naturally most of the conversation was about the September meeting of the club to be held at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E.22 on the third Sunday 18th at 3 p.m. The two distinguished guests who hope to be present are Herbert Leckenby and

Edwy Searles Brooks, so it is hoped that all members and friends will attend and make the occasion a memorable one. The chairman has arranged for the meeting to open at 3 p.m., so all are urged to attend early. The business of the meeting then being declared over, an adjournment to the garden was made, where numerous photographs were taken by the host. For those interested a perusal of the pet mice was available, and then came an enjoyable diversion in the shape of a cinema show when Robbie showed an episode of "The Exploits of Elaine" to an enthusiastic audience. Indeed, in Mrs. Dubb, Robbie discovered another great admirer of Pearl White who was featured in the aforementioned film.

All good times must terminate and a very happy company said ou revoir to Mr. and Mrs. Robbie at the bus stop ere commencing their journey to the station and a fast train home.

Attendance:- Len and Jose Packman, Charlie and Olive Wright, Mr. and Mrs. Dubb, Frank and Mrs. Keeling, Ron Deacon, Harry Homer, W. R. Well, S. Godfrey, Ben and Bob Whiter, Robby, Key, Elaine and Julie.

BENJAMIN G . WHITER,

Hon. Sec.

oooooooo

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# The Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe,
46 Carleton Road, Holloway, London, N.7.

The most important news this month is that Mr. Brooks has definitely promised to attend next month's club meeting. This will be a bumper meeting, as apart from Mr. Brooks our worthy editor has also promised to be there. All readers of the C.D. are invited to attend. There will be plenty of books for sale, and refreshments will be provided; what more can you ask? All you've got to do is to beg, borrow or otherwise obtain the cash, the time and permission - or bring the wife! - she'll be more than welcome. The address is Hume House, Lordship Lane, E. Dulwich. Anyone wishing to come, but doubtful of finding their way, can write to me or Len Packman, and details will be forwarded, roll up in your hundreds. There will be plenty of room, even if it's only on the Chandeliers!

So far, no-one has come forward to offer a solution to the authorship of those early N.L's, as given last month, so, perforce, the subject will have to remain in abeyance.

Jim Southway asks, "when did E.S.Brooks' name first appear in the N.L.?" The sequence of events leading up to this is rather interesting in retrospect. Mr. Brooks has told me that he had felt for a long time previous thatthe stories, written as they were, supposedly by Nipper, in the first person, made him appear a perfect paragon, and a boaster of the first order. Wishing to put Nipper in his correct perspective, it was agreed that the stories should be written in the third person under E.S.B's own name. Apparently the editor thought that the majority of his readers believed the characters to be real, as the transition from "by Nipper" to "by E. Searles Brooks" took over 18 months. The change over took place like this. Until O.S. No.396 the stories were "by Nipper", after this copy and until No.444, this was occasionally dropped, sometimes for months at a time, although the stories were still written in the first person. E.S.B. was mentioned for the first time,

although not by name, in No.422. E.S.B. came partly into his own with No.455 in which appeared the ception "The narrative related by Nipper, and set down by E.Searles Brooks". Finally, with No.485 all pretence was dropped and the stories from then on were written in the third person "by E.Searles Brooks". It was in this copy that his photograph, used for the rest of his time with the A.P. appeared, together with an interview, I think that Mr. Brooks must have been a little shy of his first christian name, as it was not until some time later that he signed himself Edwy Searles Brooks.

Len Packman has just sent along a list of some of the early St. Franks yarns that appeared in the Boys' Realm in 1919. He adds "and in each case it says 'by the author of the St. Franks stories appearing weekly in the Nelson Lee Library'; personally I should say without hesitation that these at any rate are the work of E.S.B." If this is so then it is probably the same as the case of Frank Richards and the Schoolgirls' Own Library. In the B.R. Mr. Brooks wrote the first of the stories and later substitute writers took over. Anyhow, here is the list for the record.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| No.4 | (26.4.19) | Handforth's Latest |
| 5 | | By Half a Length |
| 6 | | Fullwood's Fortune |
| 8 | | After Lights Out |
| 9 | | His Word of Honour |
| 10 | | The Joy Riders |
| 11 | | Honours for St. Franks |
| 12 | | The Surprise Packet |
| 13 | | Harts' Little Way |
| 14 | | A Stormy Affair |
| 15 | | Saved by the Enemy |
| 16 | | The Fateful Letter |
| 17 | | By Whose Hand? |
| 19 | (9.8.19) | His Honour Redeemed |

Have discovered two more Boys' Friend (4d.) Lib. containing stories by E.S.B. They are

| | |
|---|---|
| No.656 | The Return of Zingrave |
| " 657 | The Wonder Craft |

Mr. Brooks tells me that he too possesses a copy of No.1. That brings the total known copies to seven. Does anyone know of any more?

And here are another ten in our list of series.-

1st N.S. 82-89, Handforth's Herring-out against Mr. Pyecraft. 90-93, From Boot-boy to Baronet. (Intro. Jimmy Potts and Vivian Travers). 94-99, Efforts of the Remove to in-instate the Earl of Edgemore. 100-107, Handforth is ostracised by the Remove. (Note - 100-103 complete stories). 108-112 Complete stories. (Note At this period a series of stories featuring Handforth at St. Jims appeared. Gem No's 1059-1063.) 113-117, Cuthbert Chambers is sent down to the Remove. 118-123, The Kidnapping of Hussi Kahn. 124-127, Rivalry between St. Franks and the River House School. 128-131, Willy Handforth's Greyhound. 132-136, Football Series. Intro. Lionel Corcoran and the Blue Crusaders.
Finally the titles. O.S. No.231, The Tyrant's Understudy. 232, The St. Franks Rebellion. 233, Barring out the Bully. 234, The Siege of the West Wing. 235 Victory for the Rebels. 236, Exit the Tyrant. 237, Dorries' Christmas Party. 238, A Yuletide of Mystery. 239, The New Year Heroes. 240, The Spendthrift of St. Franks (Intro. The Hon. Doug. Singleton). 241, On the Downward Grade. 242, The Waster's Progress. 243, Singleton in London. 244, Deeper in the Mire. 245, Up against the Head. 246, Singleton's Rival School. 247, Taking the Plunge. 248, On His Uppers. 249, A Lesson Well Learnt. 250, The Schoolboy Agitators.

NOTE:- The number given last month for "The Sack for Nelson Lee" was incorrectly given as 210. This should, of course, have been 230.

Advertise your wants in the Annual. It will be read from cover to cover - 2d per word.

Journey to Yesterday, with the C.D. Annual.

Time is getting on. Have you ordered your Annual yet?

A new feature soon - "Popular Papers of the Past".

## Passed to You, Bob.

The Modern School,
Grove Road, Surbiton.
8th August, 1949.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Mr. Whiter rather misses the point in his letter in your August issue. I did not criticise his adverse comments on Mr. Chapman's work. My contention is that a tribute to a great artist who has just passed over is not the place to voice such comments on the latter's colleague.

Bob is quite right when he states that, in one of my articles, I described a drawing by Warwick Reynolds as "hideous". But my article was not a tribute or an obituary.

Bob may be right when he suggests that I was guilty of bad form in criticising the work of an artist who is dead. Certainly, a man who has passed over cannot defend himself or hit back. Also, he cannot be hurt by adverse criticism, however placed.

Bob does not substantiate his statement that Mr. Shields did the first drawings of Bessie Bunter. It would be interesting to know whether this artist did, in fact, create the fair Bessie's form in picture. I still believe that she was created by Chapman in the Magnet, and Dodgson in the School Friend.

Yours sincerely,
ERIC FAYNE.

**Advertise your "Wants" in the C. D. Annual. It will be read from cover to cover. Price of Adverts is at 2d per word.**

All Correspondence to
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## THE ROUND TABLE.

### September 1943

I am gratified to note that the interest in Sexton Blake seems to be growing week by week. This month I have had a number of letters from new members of the circle who have just discovered "Blakiana". For years and years, in fact from the time I was twelve years old (and I'm 37 this year) I thought that I must be the only adult person who still evinced any real interest in Blake. Little did I know that there were many more thinking along the same lines and dying for the opportunity to contact some one with similar interests. Now I realise that I was not alone and that there are very great chances that we might yet put our favourite back in the fore-front again. A month or so ago my friend Rex Dolhpin spoke of "the golden era of Sexton Blake". His "golden era" was also mine, but of course the older members of our little circle have a very different one of their own. To some, those early pink U.J's are "tops" and it would be futile to try and convince them that those stirring stories of 1926 or 1927 were the finest ever written in the old "Union Jack". My first story was a Teed, maybe this is the reason why I think this author is the finest of all Blake writers. Yes, "The Mystery of Black Dan's

Treasure" was the prelude to my subsequent great love for the most written of character in English literature, for that, indeed, is what Sexton Blake is. I have been interested, and somewhat amused to learn of some of the favourite authors and stories sent in to me in response to my request a couple of issues ago. It is sometimes hard to see eye to eye with other Blakians, especially when they are of such varying ages. It is hard to believe that an author who has written but one or two stories in the Blake saga should be considered the "best of the authors" or that his first effort should be deemed "the best of all Blake stories". Teed, Hardinge, Murray, Skene, Evans, Graydon, Drew and many others took years and years to develop the character of Sexton Blake. How different he has become during the past few years. He has lost all that charm we used to associate with him. Yes, the word "charm" is the correct one to use! There is a great deal of charm in those old stories and Blake was more often than not a charming man. I do not necessarily refer to his attractions for the fair sex as described so well by Messrs. Teed and Jackson, I mean that his manner and method of handling people and situations was both gentle, sincere and exceedingly effective. In turn the man was sarcastic, witty, provocative and agressive, but he was never vindictive, jealous, cruel or thoughtless. His characteristics were those that every boy could profitably have copied, perhaps many did, and were among the main reasons why the detective endeared himself to so many, both old and young alike.

I do not know why I should wander on in this strain, but it often strikes me that there are very many persons about who cherish the memory of Sexton Blake. I have often referred to the character when talking to clients of mine and many of them have exclaimed "are they STILL turning out Blake stories now?" or "You don't mean to tell me that you can buy Blake stories in 1949!" Of Course I tell 'em the whole story of this really grand little hobby of ours and although they laugh (or at least some of them do) I am convinced that deep inside they are experiencing something which I have been experiencing for years, and that is the thrill of accompanying Blake on one of his man-hunts.

With a bit of luck we should get a bit of publicity on one of the South Wales local papers soon. I have recently been interviewed by a reporter who came along to have a look at my Blake collection. To say that it amazed him would be to put it mild. He asserted that his forthcoming article would necessarily have to feature H.M. Bond "and his activities) but that Blake would also be put on the map. Now, this little incident might yet result in a lot of local interest in the hobby. Like Asquith once remarked "we shall have to wait and see"!

Circumstances have again prevented me from publishing the previosly arranged lists of U.J. and S.B.L. titles etc. But I have re-arranged our programme a wee bit and this month present U.J. details for 1932 and 1933. Next month I shall include 1930 and 1931 if space permits. As soon as I can possibly arrange it the First and Second Series S.B.L. will be dealt with. At the moment there are quite a few gaps that have to be filled in.

Well, I think that it is about time that this particular Round Table came to an end. Hope I haven't bored you with my "wanderings".

Cheerio for now.

******************************************************************

BLAKE - HIS EARLIER DAYS AND CHRONICLERS.
by WALTER WEBB.

Part III.

There is simply no mistaking the style of Mr. Murray Graydon, and he it was who conceived this story. Incidentally No. 62 was the Christmas Double Number for 1904, and contained, besides the Blake yarn, a narrative entitled "Black James" written by Herbert Chandos.

Next on the list was "Tracked By Soxton Blake", another Arnold Davies effort, but again it was certainly Murray Graydon who penned the story. It appeared in No. 68 and was immediately followed by "Soxton Blake's First Case" which was published anonymously. The undisclosed author however, had been responsible, some ten years previously, for several serials which

which appeared in "Answers", and also the story "999" which ran for many weeks in serial form in the comic paper "Chips".

Issue No. 71 contained "The Clue Of Three" and is of particular interest to me by reason of the fact that, of all the Blake yarns I have read this bears the closest resemblance to the style of Henry St. John I have yet come in contact with, and Henry St. John was one of my favourite authors.

Two weeks later Blake appeared again, the title of the story being "From Clue To Climax". As in No. 71 the yarn appeared anonymously, but with the information that it was written by the author of "The Mystery Of Hilton Royal" and there is no doubt that Wm. Murray Graydon was again the chronicler.

At this period Graydon's Scotland Yard character was a detective inspector named Callow, and Blake's housekeeper an elderly woman named Mrs. Gaffney. This prolific author was also the first to write about Blake in his now famous Baker St. chambers, previous to which the detective's abode had been vaguely referred to as "an office in the City", or some similar term. Later, Mrs. Gaffney was supersoded by the now famous Mrs. Bardell, and with the appearance of Pedro a few weeks later the Baker Street Quartet was completed.

There is no doubt that Graydon was the first author to present the famous characters in their now familiar setting; both the motherly Mrs. Bardell and the bloodhound Pedro were his conceptions, even if Blake and Tinker were not, and he it was who prepared the mental picture by which the hands of other writers were to be guided in their own efforts at chronicling the adventures of the most famous detective in fiction.

---------- The End.----------

YOU ARE REQUESTED

to send along any articles or features for the forthcoming C.D. Annual for 1949 without delay. Time is getting short and we wish to have all copy ready in good time this year. ALL your efforts will be heartily welcomed, for, even if they are not suitable for the Annual they will eventually find a place in the C.D. I make a special appeal to all those newcomers to the Blake circle: Please make an effort to contribute an article for your amateur magazine. We want NEW ideas!

Here we present the first of a new series which will, when complete, give you an up-to-date record of the authors, stories and characters presented in the second series of the famous "Union Jack", Sexton Blake's Own Paper. The policy will be the same as for the recent series of S.B.L. 3rd Series titles, in other words we shall work back through the years, commencing with the 1933 and 1932 stories in this issue.

"THE UNION JACK" 1933.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1525. The Call Of The Dragon. | | Arthur J. Palk. |
| 1526. Behind The Fog. | (1) | Robert Murray. |
| 1327. Stolen Identity. | | Gilbert Chester |
| 1328. The House Of Light. | (2) | E. S. Brooks. |
| 1329. Sexton Blake Wins! | (3) | Robert Murray. |
| 1530. Village Vengeance. | (4) | E. S. Brooks. |
| 1531. The Land Of Lost Men. | (5) | Rex Hardinge. |

Key To Characters: (1) The Confederation, (2) Waldo, (3) The Confederation, (4) Waldo, (5) Lobangu and Sir. Richard Losely.

"THE UNION JACK" 1932.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1472. Confederation Calling! | (1) | Robert Murray. |
| 1473. Death Over Africa. | | Rex Hardingo. |
| 1474. Planned From Paris. | (2) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1475. The Tree Of Evil. | (3) | ~~Leban~~ Hardingo. |
| 1476. Reece's Recruit. | (4) | Robert Murray. |
| 1477. Aerial Gold! | | Gilbert Chester |
| 1478. Lost In The Legion. | (5) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1479. Wry House. | | Anthony Skene. |
| 1480. Wind Blown Blackmail. | (6) | Robert Murray. |
| 1481. The League Of Onion Men. | (7) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1482. The Secret. | | G. H. Teed. |
| 1483. The Mystery Of Bluebeard's Key. | (8) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1484. Enter The President. | (9) | Robert Murray. |
| 1485. The Proud Tram Mystery. | (10) | Gilbert Chester |
| 1486. The Crook Crusaders. | (11) | Anthony Skene. |
| 1487. Revolt! | (12) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1488. The Witches Moon. | | Donald Stuart. |
| 1489. Fear Haunted. | (13) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1490. The Mystery Of Blind Luke. | (14) | E. S. Brooks. |

"THE UNION JACK" 1932 (continued).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1491. The Monkey Men. | | Rex Hardinge. |
| 1492. Dirk Dollands Ordeal. | (15) | Robert Murray. |
| 1493. The Plague Of Onion Men. | (16) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1494. Sexton Blake In Manchria. | (17) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1495. Arms To Wu Ling. | (18) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1496. The Diamond Of Disaster. | (19) | Robert Murray. |
| 1497. The Blood Brothers Of Nan-Hu. | (20) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1498. The Fifth Key. | (21) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1499. Once A Crook. | (22) | E. S. Brooks. |
| 1500. Volcano Island. | (23) | Robert Murray. |
| 1501. Waldo's Way Out. | (24) | E. S. Brooks. |
| 1502. The Lightening Murders. | | Stamford Webber. |
| 1503. Honolulu Lure. | (25) | G. H. Teed. |
| 1504. The Trail In The Sand. | (26) | Robert Murray. |
| 1505. The Rainmaker. | (27) | Anthony Skene. |
| 1506. The Crime Of The Creek. | | G. H. Teed. |
| 1507. Red Sand. | (28) | E. S. Brooks. |
| 1508. The Squeezer. | (29) | Robert Murray. |
| 1509. The Death Insurance Policy. | | Gilbert Chester. |
| 1510. The Goldmaker. | (30) | Anthony Skene. |
| 1511. The Ghost Hole. | (31) | Rex Hardinge. |
| 1512. The Four Guests Mystery. | | Robert Murray. |
| 1513. Crooks Divided! | (32) | Robert Murray. |
| 1514. The Motor Show Mystery. | | Stamford Webber. |
| 1515. Crooks Cargo. | | David McCluire. |
| 1516. Sexton Blake's Understudy. | (33) | ?. E.S.Brooks. |
| 1517. The War Memorial Murders. | | Rex Hardinge. |
| 1518. The Shadow. | (34) | Robert Murray. |
| 1519. Suspended From Duty! | (35) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1520. The Hunted Man. | | Reid Whitley. |
| 1521. The Masked Carollers. | (36) | Gwyn Evans. |
| 1522/ The Secret Passage Murders. | | C.Malcolm Hincks. |
| 1523. The Crimson Smile. | | Donald Stuart. |
| 1524. Men Of The Mask. | | Gilbert Chester. |

Key To Characters:

Confederation:- 1,4,6,9,15,19,23,26,29,32,34.
Waldo:- ~~2,14,XX~~ 14,22,24,28, 33.
Roxane:- 2,5,12,17,18,20, Splash Page:- 36.
Plummer:- 25. Lobangu:-31.Coutts:- 35. Zenith:- 11,27,30.
Wu Ling:- 17,18,20. Onion Men:- 3,13,16,21, 7 Hales:- 10.