

The  
*COLLECTOR'S DIGEST*

APRIL 1954

VOLUME 8, No. 88

Price 1s.6d



*The Lighthouse  
Colstowe*

# The Collectors' Digest

Vol. 8 No. 88

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APRIL, 1954

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



HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL: M. Bernard Hollowood, writing in the "Bowater Papers" an occasional magazine published by the Bowater paper organisation, states: "At the moment the spotlight is on Garth, Superman and other dashing scientific man-marvels. The Jules Verne-R.S. Wells school of fiction writers has been rejuvenated by jet-propulsion, atomic energy and war, but in the United States particularly, comics cater for all tastes and the supermen have to compete for the public fancy against such earth-bound mortals as Mutt and Jeff, Barney Google and Popeye.

"Competition is fierce, but the supermen just have the edge, perhaps, on the nitwits, the love-lorn and the hen-pecked.

"How long their boon will last it is difficult to say. Dan Dare and Superman are good in their way and I should have no quarrel with them if they sometimes revealed traces of human frailty and a sense of humour. Their weakness in the eyes of an old Magnet fan is that they lack character. And that is why I think their days are numbered. Youth will be served and will not forego its Bunters, Whartons, Stalkys, Sawyers and Sexton Blakes for long."

Well let's hope Mr. Hollowood proves to be a true prophet. We shall certainly all agree with him that the present day papers lack the character that was such a feature in those of yester year. Haven't we declared it so often?

\* \* \* \* \*

DEATH OF MRS. JOHN MEDCRAFT: The many collectors who had visited John Medcraft's home at Ilford, and had met his wife, will be sorry to learn that she passed away in her sleep on February 17th. She had only reached her 50th birthday a few days before, but she had been an invalid for many years. In the days when he was taking her to various places for treatment poor John little thought he would be the first to die.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE ADULT PAPERS DO IT TOO: It is announced that "London Opinion" at one time a weekly but of late a pocket-size monthly is to be merged with "Men Only", the old familiar story we are so familiar with where boys' weeklies were concerned. Not so long ago "Men Only" embraced the famous old "Strand Magazine"; which was about on a par with "Answers" and "Blighty" going together. Today the only sign of the "Strand" in "Men Only" is a line of type "London Opinion" is about to die; why not say so?

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMORIES: I've settled down on my old job about which I told you last month. It is past midnight; the red and yellow calling lights on the lengthy switchboard only signal occasionally, and I can write to my heart's content. By my side is the 'phone on which I first spoke to Harry Dowler, twelve or more years ago, a call which had a good deal to do with the starting of our "get together" movement. On the table at which I am now sitting I first wrote to Bill Gander, John Shaw, Alfred Horsey, Jack Corbett and many more. Yes, it's nice to be back and I hope I shall have the good fortune to go on writing to them and the hundreds of other good friends I have got to know whilst I have been away.

Yours sincerely,  
HERBERT LECKENBY.

THE 'ANNUAL' BALLOT

-

Present Position

1. Red Magnet Magic, 149 pts.
2. Greyfriars v. St. Jim's, 123 pts.
3. The Years of Conquest, 109 pts.
4. One Hundred Years of Boys' Weeklies, 104 pts.
5. They Wrote of Sexton Blake, 93 pts.
6. The St. Frank's Sage, 90 pts.
7. Carberry late of the Greyfriars Sixth, 75 pts.

# My Collection

No. 3. - H.C. NOTTON PRICE'S

I started quite young by being appointed Librarian at my school after taking over from someone else when he left. I had in those days about 120 of each Boys' Friend's, Boys' Herald's, Boys Realms, Union Jacks, Plucks, etc., but after a while my parents became interested and wanted to know what all these papers were doing. When I explained where they came from and what they represented, I was told to burn them, which I did as the previous person who had had them unfortunately died of cancer. At the time I was reading a Union Jack called "The Cabdriver Detective, which I was not allowed to finish. This closed my interest on Boys' Papers for a time. It was not until 1922 that I became a serious collector, when I decided to collect Sexton Blake Libraries. In that year I approached the Amalgamated Press about back numbers and they kindly gave me a free advert on the back of S.B.L. I needed among others No. 31, this was also printed on the back of the Union Jack at the same time. I was still advertising for No. 31 in 1951, fortunately this has come to hand, but it has taken me 30 years to get.

I also about that time received quite a lot of these from Cromer and Birmingham (back numbers). From that date I have taken them every month. I had given my newsagent a standing order for them but found when time passed 4 numbers that I needed during the busy months in the summer were not obtainable, but fortunately found two of them in a second hand book shop in Guildford, the other two I still needed, Nos. 407 and 513, but by the kindly help of Mr. Carter in Australia, No. 513 has come to hand. This particular book has taken me many years to get. It now leaves No. 407 still to come.

My next venture was to start and collect Boys' Friend Libraries. I began on Aug. 20th, 1950 and to date have managed to obtain 1118 out of 1488 published. I still require 70 3d. Library which are included in the 370 still needed. I have practically all the Boys' Own Library and Britons Own Library, all but 24 books. I also have managed to obtain during the last two years many Champion Libraries. A good number of these are still needed. I also have all Collector's Digest as well as all the Annuals. I have managed to get and complete the Union Jack Detective Supplement, together with the four S.B. Annuals. I was very keen

when collecting B.F.L's. to obtain the 37 with Sexton Blake stories; these I have been lucky to obtain. I have been a member of the O.E.B.C. for about four years. Attending many of the meetings I have met many very kind friends who have helped me; I here wish to express my gratitude and thanks to one and all.

## BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

Once again, for reasons of space, I must cut my remarks short. This month sees the conclusion of Walter Webb's article. Thank you, Walter, for such an interesting and informative piece of work!

I am sure you will like the article on Lobangu. He is Mr. Thurbon's favourite - and one of my own as well.

I regret to say that I have not had a single response to my suggestion for your favourite Blake story. It would seem that no one is interested!

Next month's Blakiana will, as promised, contain the first of 'Bill' Lofts two articles. The second will appear in the following issue.

JOSIE PACKMAN.

—oo0oo—

Concluding

### SIXTY YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE

By WALTER WEBB

\*\*\*

Less than a year later, the UNION JACK was no more, and in its place we had DEFECTIVE WEEKLY, a much bigger paper, with a black and yellow cover.

New authors were continually introduced in the S.B. Library, among them being John Creasey, author of the stories featuring the Toff; John G. Brandon, John Hunter, Richard Goyné, Barry Perowne and George Dilnot, all best-seller writers.

In January 1934 reprinted stories began in the S.B.L., one a month being published up to the time of the second World War, during which time the circulation of D.W. dropped week by week, and Sexton Blake too, was dropped as a consequence for about two

years, before being reinstated with a succession of reprinted stories from the old U.J. and S.B.L., the latter being in abridged form. But D.W. went from bad to worse, and the end saw it publishing modernised versions of Blake stories which had been printed in the U.J. as long ago as 1912.

For eight months following Hitler's march into Poland the S.B.L. went on as before; then in June 1940 the monthly output was reduced to two volumes. That year was quite a disastrous one for Sexton Blake, for following closely on the deaths of G.H. Teed and Gwyn Evans, five more of his authors passed on in rapid succession. They were John G. Brandon, Walter Edwards, Ladbroke Black, Allan Blair and Robert Murray. Arthur S. Hardy, who had contributed at somewhat lengthy intervals, was another who died at about that time.

Making a welcome return during the war, following an absence of eight years, Jack Lewis endeavoured to reinstate his famous character, Leon Kestrel: but it was no part of editorial policy that the old favourites should be revived, and so, after one solitary story, the master-mummer was allowed to drift back into obscurity.

When the war was over and publishers found paper easier to come by, the stream of crime fiction became polluted with some of the most poisonous matter ever to come from the printing presses of this country, for what the Americans had printed in their magazines in the thirties was as nothing compared to the trash some English publishing firms began to circulate all over the country. But if these books ever offered a serious challenge to the S.B.L. it was beaten off, for today the latter goes ahead whilst police intervention is rapidly and at long last driving the other from the field. Nevertheless, Sexton Blake's position in this Elizabethan age is a precarious one; he can only look back on the days of his past glory, for the future seems dim, indeed, for him.

Readers who have followed his adventures since those fruitful days have the uneasy feeling that the days of their hero, in tales in the form in which they are at present featured, are numbered. In fictional form he battles against crime; in fact he fights a desperate battle against the times, the outcome of which only the future can decide.

Will Sexton Blake survive?

LOBANGUBy W.T. THURBON

\*\*\*

"A man of magnificent physique, the great shoulder muscles rippling as he moved his arms, and his legs, straight as an arrow, terminating in small, beautifully formed feet.

So Lobangu first appears.

The varied interests shown by the list of members in the 'Annual' serve to remind us that we all have our individual favourites among the books of our youth. While my main interest is in the "Jack, Sam & Pete" tales, I always give the palm among adventure tales to Cecil Hayter's 'Lobangu' stories.

There were, I think, two strains in the ancestry of Lobangu. Early in 1885 a young lawyer and his brother, travelling by train from London to Norfolk, were discussing R.L. Stevenson's then just published 'Treasure Island'. "It's a good story," said the lawyer reflectively, "But, you know, I think I could write a story myself as good." "I'll bet you you can't" said his brother. The bet was made, the story written and published September 1885. The story was to make its author famous, for it was "King Solomon's Mines". The African sun glinting on spear and rifle barrel - three double .500 Expresses...sweet weapons and admirable for medium-sized game - three Winchester repeating rifles - Sir Henry Curtis - Allan Quatermain...

Its success brought forth sequels, and that great character Umslopogaas with his mighty axe. Here was the first strain. Twenty years later came the second.

A man who had been newspaper seller, private soldier, journalist, began to write a series of tales for the 'Weekly Tale Teller' about 'Mr Commissioner Sanders'. Edgar Wallace was to achieve legendary fame as a writer of plays and thrillers, but I doubt if he ever did better work than in those Sanders stories, and the long series that followed in the "Windsor Magazine". Just as Rider Haggard had added Umslopogaas to Allan Quatermain so did Edgar Wallace add that engaging character Bosambo to Sanders.

In his early Lobangu stories the influence of Rider Haggard on Cecil Hayter is very evident. 'Express rifles', 'Winchester repeaters' ("The two Winchesters chattered and rippled" - U.J.404 "The Flying Column") are frequently mentioned. (In U.J. 504 "The

Long Trail", the guide Jose 'carried a Winchester repeater over the crook of his left arm'.)

In the very first Losely-Lobangu story, U.J. 171 "The Slave Market", the rescue of Sir Richard and Tinker from the 'White Death's' camp seems based on a similar incident in Rider Haggard's 'Children of the Mist'. And Lobangu himself owes much to Umslopogaas. In later stories such as No. 912 "The Terms of the Wager", there was a considerable flavour of the 'Sanders' stories.

What a wonderful character Lobangu is, with his great spear, his uncanny second sight, his skill as scout and warrior, his taste for snuff and 'bubbly', and how he rules his tribe. Much of Umslopogaas; a dash of Bosambo. A worthy representative of that great line of companions of heroes, who, with Uncas and Deer-foot, have marked and fought and served with their white brethren.

In that first Lobangu story, published on 26th January, 1907, Sir Richard Losely, Governor of the province of Musardu in Africa, is captured in a raid on an outpost by an Arab Slave Trader 'The White Death'. Sexton Blake, who was his fag at school hears of his disappearance and sets out to find him. Like all true adventure stories this starts in the middle of action; "The night was black as pitch, and a heavy, driving tropical rain was sluicing down in sheets"; and through this rain comes Tinker, scouting the camp of 'The White Death'. Tinker is captured; Blake, scouting independently, makes his escape and is joined by a native, who has apparently deserted from the Slave camp. This man of magnificent physique was Lobangu. Lobangu for many moons had served a white man in the 'Kaffir Country' and fought the Matabele. Then the white man died of fever, and Lobangu fell in with the "White Death's" followers and was recruited into his army. He travelled with the slavers until the capture of Sir Richard. Moved by Sir Richard's bravery he tried to help him; detected, he was chained and cruelly flogged. Biding his time he had made his escape, hoping to find aid for Sir Richard. Disguised as slave merchants, Blake and Lobangu enter the "White Death's" camp and manage to rescue Tinker and Sir Richard.

In the next story, No. 181 "Sexton Blake's Zulu", Lobangu proves to be the heir to an English title. Brought to England by Blake and Sir Richard, his misadventures on an English estate and in town are such that his return to Africa is greeted with relief.

Lobangu was a descendant of an English nobleman and a native princess. His great-grandfather, Lord Averstoke, travelling in

Africa early in the 19th century, had fallen sick among the Etbaia branch of the Zulu people. On his recovery he had lived among them for many years and married the chief's daughter. After his wife's death Lord Averstoke returns to England and marries again. His grandson, on his deathbed, discovers the fact of his grandfather's earlier marriage and that the African descendants of Lord Averstoke are the true heirs to the title. He asks Sir Richard Losely, a distant relative, to look for the missing heir - who is Lobangu. Lobangu as a very young lad of twelve, had left his tribe and wandered among the white men for many years. It was nearly twenty-five years later, when he was a man of thirty-seven that he met Sexton Blake. When, after years of wandering, he had returned to his tribe, he found his father dead and his half-brother holding the chieftainship. So he left the tribe to continue his wanderings; but he bore on the inner side of his shield arm the tattooed elephant that was the mark of the Etbaia Royal House. Lobangu was a fine runner, and a master fighter with his great spear that scarcely ever left his side. After his half-brother's death he became ruler of the Etbaia people and turned them into a great tribe. He had his weaknesses; he loved 'bubbly' and he loved jam. He hated the sea and was always seasick, yet made many trips with Blake or Sir Richard on the dark water. He (and presumably Cecil Hayter) was very fond of Pedro - "My Lord, the king of beasts". (In "The Long Trail", he and Pedro had a secret orgy on jam:- "Tinker emerged from behind the fern clump. 'Some small portion, Oh Lor', he chuckled. 'Look at this'. He held out four empty jars of two pounds each, licked as clean as though a newly engaged servant had had the washing of them".) A striking figure always, whether with black ostrich plumes for a headdress and carrying an enormous spear, or in white ducks, or Sir Richard's cast off scarlet tunic.

And Lobangu (here Hayter was developing an idea used by Haggard) had his uncanny gift of second sight. In "The Long Trail", "The Holding of the Kana Pass", "The Treasure of Sonora", "The Golden Reef" and "The Island of Death" he foretold happenings of the future and the mysterious red veil that presaged killings.

Cecil Hayter's Lobangu stories included some very fine yarns; U.J. No. 206 "Sexton Blake, Whaler" in which Blake and his party are ambushed in Africa near the coast. Escaping in a whale boat they drift far out to sea and are picked up by a Yankoe whaling ship. After the murder of the cabin boy on the ship, they make

their escape and spend some time in the polar regions before being rescued. U.J. No. 504 "The Long Trail" was a great story. (I still have the tattered copy that I purchased on that June Thursday long ago in 1913.) In 1912 Conan Doyle had published "The Lost World", and this has strongly influenced Hayter's story. Of all the Sexton Blake's I have read I think it still to be the best.

A list of Cecil Hayter's stories appears in the 1953 C. Digest Annual. My knowledge of the Lobangu stories ends with U.J. No.912. Alas, I have also not read all the early ones. To the list in the Annual, however, I can make one or two amendments. I have a note that No. 201 was "The Sleeping Sickness". I read this story as a very small boy over forty years ago, but faint memory suggests to me that it was a sequel to "The Slave Market". I can say definitely that No. 866 "The Marley Farm Mystery" was by Hayter. In this story Blake and Tinker join Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu in a house Sir Richard has taken in Scotland, and become involved with a gang of Chinese dope smugglers. It is in this tale that we are told that as Lobangu encounters the Chinese knife men : "Lobangu was one of the quickest men alive with steel", and he certainly proves it.

Incidentally, No. 795 "The Moon of the East" was a story of Sir Richard Losely, but not of Lobangu.

I have a note also of certain B.F. Lib. Lobangu stories. (1st series.) No. 88 "The Mammoth Hunters"; No. 246 "Sexton Blake's Zulu"; No. 429 "Thro' Unknown Africa"; No. 433 "In the Hands of the Head Hunters".

Lobangu was a great creation. To my mind, of all the followers of Rider Haggard, Hayter came the nearest to him in Lobangu.

"Bayete Lobangu, Bayete".

WANTED: S.O.L's. 19, 257, 259, 261. Condition important. Can someone please help? REV. A.G. POUND, 68 FINNEMORE ROAD, BIRMINGHAM,9.

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# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

In the "Post-Bag", you will see an interesting letter from Frank Richards, part of which concerns the spot of bother with Gilbert Harding.

Well, just after I received it I got one from Ron Crollie of Romford, and lo! and behold! Ron goes a long way towards clearing up the mystery, still another illuminating example of the keenness of the Hamilton fan.

Ron says the quotation is from "Bowling Out Bunter", Magnet No. 934, 2nd January, 1926. He quotes several paragraphs from it and they are word for word.

Peter Todd, however, does not call Bunter "a pesky galoot", or threaten to make "potato scrapings" of him. But, Fisher T. Fish, does, a little later in the story.

So it would seem that St. John Cooper was quoting from that story, but was rather careless in doing so; apparently he didn't seem to think it mattered if he put the slang of "Fishy" into the mouth of Peter Todd. Evidently he was blissfully unaware that there are such fellows as Eric Fayne and Ron Crollie about.

Another important point is that according to John Shaw's list (and we can rely upon that) "Bowling Out Bunter" was not a genuine Frank Richards story, but by one of the "substitutes". St. John Cooper maybe can be forgiven for not knowing that, but justifies the accepted Frank Richards in feeling annoyed.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE NAME'S THE SAME AGAIN: Here's a quote from a very interesting letter from Bill Hubbard, out in the troubled Kenya Colony. Says he:

"Now here is something that might interest some of your readers and find a place in the "Hamiltoniana" section. In the issue of "Yachts and Yachting" dated 22nd Jan., 1954, there is a very fine article on a new fast ocean racer cruiser that is being built by Messrs. R.A. Newman & Sons of Poole, to the design of the well-known firm of Frederick R. Parker and Partners. The owner is a prominent yachtsman, Sir W.G. Vernon Smith, C.B.E. Some relation of the "Boulder" no doubt?

The yacht has not yet been named, but it is expected to be out in the coming season so I will let you have any details of her performances if she enters for any of the big ocean races."

---oooOooo---

BILLY BUNTER THE BOLD by FRANK RICHARDS - Cassells 7/6

Reviewed by GERRY ALLISON

Once again the familiar yellow cover of a new Bunter book has appeared to delight the eyes of all true Hamiltonians and every lover of a good school story. The new book is the funniest in the series.

Billy Bunter is again the hero - or should I say villain - of the piece. His incensed Form-mates, determined to make him "behave" send him to Coventry, and how Billy hates it.

There is a delightful Form-trial with Lord Mauleverer in the judge's chair, which reminded me irresistably of the trial-scene in "Alice". Just compare the following passages.

... "and that, Gentlemen of the Jury, concludes my case," said Johnny Bull, "and I ask for the utmost punishment which it is in the power of this court to inflict."

"Very well," said Lord Mauleverer. "Prisoner at the bar - I sentence you...."

"Hold on, Mauly!" interrupted Harry Wharton. "You haven't heard the defence yet, and the jury hasn't found the prisoner guilty!"

And here is Lewis Carroll. Immediately after the accusation:-

"Consider your verdict," the King said to the jury.

"Not yet, not yet!" the Rabbit hastily interrupted. "There's a great deal to come before that!"

Well, like the Knave of Hearts, Bunter had also been stealing tarts, although he swore he had never seen them, and there were only four, anyway.

His wheezes to escape from Coventry are really funny and made me laugh out aloud at times. And how surprised the Removites are when he turns out a hero after all.

Yes, Billy Bunter the Bold is quite up to standard and is worthy of being added to one's collection. As George Mell said in the 1953 C.D. Annual --- "like vintage wine Frank Richards improves with age, and his sure touch shows no sign of faltering."

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POTTED PERSONALITIES. (Second Series). No. 2.

PETER HAZELDENE. Few readers can have liked Peter Hazeldene, for there seems to have been absolutely nothing about him to like. Furthermore, though he was part of the Greyfriars story right from the beginning, he never played the lead in one outstanding series.

Yet a few lines about Hazeldene, from one of the most brilliant series, will for ever remain in my memory, and these few lines convince me that this fellow was the most true to life of all the Hamilton "bad" characters. It was in the Harry Wharton versus Mr. Quelch series that Hazeldene, selected to play in goal for Wharton's weakened Remove team, was urged by the Bounder to leave his skipper in the lurch. Hazeldene tries to pick a quarrel with Wharton. Frank Richards told us that "Hazeldene had made up his mind to do a mean thing - and it was easier to do a mean thing if he worked himself into a temper first." A splendid piece of character painting.

I doubt if any of us has ever met a fellow capable of such planned villainy as Skinner, Loder, or Racke - or a wealthy half-good, half-bad fellow like the Bounder or Cardew. But we must all, at some time or other, have met Peter Hazeldene - weak, easily-led, turncoat, and today; selfish to the core and with few, if any, redeeming points.

In very early days Hazeldene had the appropriate and quite original nickname of "Vaseline". Perhaps it was a pity that Frank Richards dropped the name, for Hazeldene has ever been "Vaselinish". After all, Vernon-Smith became less Bounderish but is always known as the Bounder. I have wondered sometimes whether "Vaseline" may be a trade name, exclusive to the firm of producers of this very necessary preparation, and Hazel's nickname may have been dropped in consequence. It's unlikely, and in any case your guess is as good as mine.

Hazeldene has appeared regularly down the years, in minor supporting roles, as they say in the films. The few series in which he has played a large part - the one about the weak uncle, in hiding from the police, and also the Muccolini circus series, to mention two - have not been among Magnet masterpieces. All the same it must be felt that Hazeldene was a skilfully painted character of the weak, unattractive type, and the Greyfriars story, as a whole, would have been the poorer without Hazel.

Solution of Crossword No. 4. Across: 1. Vernon Smith, 9. Nose, 10. Oom (the Terrible), 12. United, 15. Digby, 17. Lone, 18. Erin, 19. S.E. 20. T.R. (Tom Redwing). 21. Abhor, 23. Straight runs, 27. Host, 28. Mien, 30. Sodden, 33. Column, 36. Rao, 37. Roe, 38. Herb, 39. Africa, 42. Kid, 43. Snore, 44. Esme. Down: 1. Vaults, 2. Ruin, 3. One, 4. Node, 5. S.S., 6. Mediation, 7. Tog, 8. Hobson, 11. Myers, 13. North, 14. Texas, 16. Inbred, 22. Hundreds, 24. Rollers, 25. Items, 26. H.M.S., 29. Scrap, 31. Ear, 32. Noble, 34. Oof, 35. Near, 38. Hie, 40. In, 41. Coin.

The first correct solution opened by the Editor was sent in by D.B. Webster, 7 Crosby Road South, Liverpool, 22., to whom a postal order for 5/- has been sent.

—oooOooo—

FIRST DAY OF TERM!

By RAYMOND JONES

"Here we are, here we are! Here we are again!"

Yes, it is Bob Cherry, of course, his voice raised in song. Not, perhaps, musically, but with plenty of volume. He hangs from the carriage doorway at a dangerous angle, his brandished cap beckoning his chums "like the plume of Navarre in olden days" over the heads of the throng on the platform of Lantham Junction.

For it is first day of term. The Christmas ghost has walked his last along the dark passages of Mauleverer Towers; the Boxing Night festivities at Wharton Lodge are no more than a pleasant memory; the remains of Bunter's Christmas dinner lie cold in the ash-bin, demuded of the steaming glory that marked the passage of turkey and pudding to the groaning festive board. Even the snow which gleamed frostily over the park is now slush in the unswept corners of the platform. But lift up your hearts, for we are back at Greyfriars!

No matter if we have just returned from Wharton Lodge after Christmas, or from the arid deserts of Africa at midsummer, no matter how exciting the adventures we have left behind, there is always a gladness when we return to the old school. It is a home-coming. So exuberant are the many descriptions we have of these scenes at Lantham and Courtfield that one is lead to suspect that the author himself, much as he has enjoyed his wanderings, is glad to be home again, to meet the many characters he left behind at the close of the old term.

They are all here now: Temple of the Fourth, furiously chasing his topper along the platform; Coker sprawling half in and half out

of a carriage doorway, violently disputing its possession with the heroes of the Remove; Wingate striding the platform, a whale among the minnows; Quelchy, his gimlet eyes quelling each riot, his voice, like unto the rasping of a rusty saw, bringing order where there was war. The train leaves, and Toddy, Smithy and Redwing and Squiff, have bundled into the carriage with Harry Wharton & Co, and their very names are a tonic to us. Bunter has clinked his last penny into the automatic slot machine, and is grunting discontentedly between Johnny Bull and the Bounder. Coker, of course, is now sitting on the platform, his hair a mop, his collar hanging by a single stud, his jacket split up the back, struggling for his second wind. And as the train departs, the station staff breathe again.

On the way to the school there may be trouble with a new boy. Bunter may produce a smoke, or Smithy leave the train at Redclyffe for a surreptitious visit to the Three Fishers. Here, in the train, the pattern for the new term will be fixed. The plot is already moving. Bunter will "lose" his ticket and will try to extract his first loan of the term, but owing to the absence of the long suffering Mauly, he will fail. The pattern is clear. We know what will happen, and we love it.

Presently, the old grey tower of Greyfriars rises above the trees, and one wonders whether it is glad or sorry to welcome the schoolboy horde after a month of peace. At Friardale there is a rush for the brake, and when the school is reached, there is Gosling at the gate:

"Hullo, hullo, hullo, jolly old Gosling," roared Bob.

William Gosling grunted.

"Glad to see you looking so well, old dear," said Bob affably.

The Greyfriars porter gave another grunt. Opening day of term was not a happy day to Gosling.

"Ain't he looking well, you men?" said Bob, appealing to his comrades. "Don't he look younger than ever?"

"He do, he does!" agree Johnny Bull. "Nobody would take Gosling for more than a hundred today."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Bob thoughtfully, "Must'nt exaggerate. Say a hundred and twenty."

And here is Fishy, jerking across the Quad, bottled up conversation streaming from his bony jaws. We enter the house, and silent corridors spring to life, echoing to hurried feet, shouting voices, banging boxes. Form masters rustle hither and thither,

even their scholastic calm ruffled in the glorious confusion of first day of term. Studies are struggled for, but in some miraculous fashion remain in the hands of previous owners, though occasionally Bunter will intrude and thrust himself upon some hapless occupant, after the "loaves and the fishes", much to the satisfaction of Peter Todd. Listen now to Wharton and Toddy "going it":

"You can't expect to land him on us!" roared Wharton.

"You can't expect me to land him on myself, if I can jolly well get out of it," grinned Toddy. "Look here, I'll let him come into No. 7 if he wants to! That's the most I can offer."

"He means to stick to my study!"

"Good!"

"He's planted himself there now!"

"Fine!"

"He won't go!"

"Splendid!"

And, of course, in No. 13 Bob Cherry is hanging a picture, with disastrous results to the wall and to Bob's usually sunny temper. The picture, perhaps unregrettably, is destined to finish its career very soon, round the neck of our old friend Coker of the Fifth.

In Hall we listen to the Head, and to Wingate, captain of the school. The dying sun shines in through the high windows of the great Hall, on to the assembled school. The Head's voice, in the speech which has varied so little from term to term, from year to year, rises quietly to the old, black rafters in the vaulted roof. The school is calm, for the moment.

But now we are back in the Remove passage — Study No. 1. A study supper is in full swing. The Famous Five, Smithy and Redwing; Mauly, perched gracefully on a quarter of a box, the remainder being occupied by Billy Bunter; Toddy, Squiff, Tom Brown and Hazeldene, are all on the scene. Good things are passed across many heads to Skinner and Fishy over in the doorway. A fire roars in the hearth, the ruddy light shining on a dozen cheery faces. Footer jaw is in progress. Outside the winter darkness has fallen. Soon it will be time for dorm. Let us leave this scene as I am sure we should leave it if this were a film, the cameras taking us back through the window, so that suddenly we are out in the cold night, looking in through the bright diamond panes. As we move

away the cheery buzz of voices fades:

"Pass the cake, old chap. Don't be mean with the cake! I'm going to stand you fellows a topping spread when I unpack my box."

"Why not unpack it now?"

"I've mislaid the key! I say, this is a decent cake — not like what I get at Bunter Court, of course, but really decent! I say, you fellows, I haven't told you yet about the festivities at Bunter Court. Two of the princes came —"

Who knows what is in store for us this term? Crooks, new boys, new form masters, or the old favourites — it matters nothing who holds the stage. The play's the same, the supporting cast assured, the scenery painted and the story written by the master hand. Greyfriars is immortal. A term begins, passes gracefully away, ends upon a note of faint regret; the holiday adventures come jingling along, like a happy, painted fair, and when they have gone it is first day of term again. That is the magic of Greyfriars; it is constant, unchangable; an oasis of essential peace in a changing, tumultuous world.

Ladies, gentlemen — I give you a toast! To Greyfriars — and its creator. As long as we live, so will they!

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#### MAGNET TITLES (cont'd)

No. 1259, The Swot of the Remove, No. 1260, The Bounder's Folly, No. 1261, Harry Wharton's Enemy, No. 1262, The Fool of the School, No. 1263, The Vanished Sovereigns, No. 1264, The Bounder's Luck, No. 1265, Billy Bunter's Vengeance. No. 1266, Saving His Enemy.

#### POST BAG

##### Hilda Richards Returning!

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

March 11th, 1954.

Many thanks for the C.D. "Billy Bunter the Bold" comes out today: as I see you have duly noted in this issue.

That "quotation" in Gilbert Harding's book has not yet been traced. It appears that Mr. St. John Cooper "collaborated" with Harding in producing the book, and he tells me that the "quote" is bona fide: though at the moment he is unable to give number or date. These he is going to supply later. I await them with interest.

I was very much interested in W.F. Champion's article, which

brought back recollections of a celebrated case, on which the story was founded. The whole thing really did happen, very much as it was described in the story.

You may be interested to hear that "Hilda Richards" has been annexing the typewriter from Frank of late: and that the "Girls of St. Kate's" may make an appearance in the near future.

With kindest regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

(Note: St. John Cooper is the son of Henry St. John, well remembered by older readers. We too will be interested to hear the details. - H.L.)

SIDNEY WARWICK : AN APPRECIATION

By F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS,

Founder & Chief Editor, "The Champion".

IN 1922, the first year of The Champion's flamboyant career, Mr. Willie Back, one of the Directors of the Amalgamated Press, introduced me to an elderly gentleman of grave, Victorian courtesy, with a quiet, cultured voice and a charming smile. His name was Sidney Warwick and he inquired diffidently if I would be interested in an adventure serial which he, in collaboration with his son Francis, proposed to write.

That serial appeared in The Champion under the title of "The Secret of Lost River" and was an immediate and sensational success. It was followed by others, including "Sinister Island" and "Phantom Isle" (the Warwicks, father and son, had a flair for stories about islands!) all of which were milestones in the paper's history. This naturally meant that, as Editor, I saw a lot of Sidney Warwick; and, in fact, he and his family (his gracious wife and his two sons Francis and Alan) became my firm friends. Even after I had left the editorial desk and had gone to rusticate in the country as a free-lance, Sidney Warwick often visited me; and it was only after I had gone to South Africa, in 1930, that we lost touch with each other. Now the news of his death comes as a great and grievous shock.

I valued Sidney Warwick's friendship, as I admired his gentle courtesy, his kindly, generous nature, and his deep and wise experience, both as a writer and a man. He had great talents (he

had, before he met me, already written many novels as well as serials for the Daily Mail, Evening News, etc.,) but he was a modest man and it was always difficult to get him to talk of himself or his achievements. He always seemed so surprised, too, that his work for me was so successful and he was naively delighted when I gave him proof of this in the many appreciative letters received from our readers.

He was a real gentleman in the best sense of the word; a man of impeccably good manners, kindly and considerate, modest and retiring and completely unspoilt by his outstanding success. He belonged to, and graciously adorned, the old Victorian school, which set such store by good breeding, politeness, and all those sterling but now "old fashioned" virtues that rightly commanded both respect and affection. His passing is a loss that it will be hard indeed to fill.

## GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S



At last, I can find space to tell you all about our grand competition, but first of all I think you might like to know a little about the background to it. A month or two ago, two fellow enthusiasts wrote to me quite independently suggesting that it was time the Leeites had a competition of their very own and a suggestion with which I was in hearty agreement.

Letters passed to and fro as we ironed out the details to suit the ideas of both parties, and the net result, I think you will all agree, is a competition which should suit everyone whether you

read the Nelson Lee Library from the very beginning, or whether you, like myself, came in at the opening of the First New Series.

I want you, first, to write (on one side of the paper only, please!) explaining in between 350 and 425 words: WHY I PREFER READING ST. FRANK'S STORIES TO THOSE OF GREYFRIARS, ST. JIM'S AND ROOKWOOD.

Remember - one side of the paper only, and 350-425 words!

THEN, add a further 75-150 words, to make a total not exceeding 500 words in all, on MY FAVOURITE ST. FRANK'S CHARACTER, and WHY!

For the best full article embracing both subjects, there will be a prize of £1.10s. (THIRTY SHILLINGS).

For the second best there will be a prize of £1 (ONE POUND).

For the third best there will be a prize of 10/- (TEN SHILLINGS).

I hope all past and present Franconians will rally round to make this competition a really outstanding success. Entries MUST reach me on or before MAY 31st, and the results will be published in the July C.D.

In view of future commitments, I hope YOU will get out the pencil and paper, the pen and paper, or even the typewriter and paper, NOW, so that we shan't have to postpone the judging because of lack of entries! I want an answer from EVERYONE who shows in the Annual that the N.L.L. is his first choice.

You must have some reason for that preference. So why not let us all know what that reason is, and at the same time possibly win a good prize! The winning entries will be published.

With the June number of the C.D. we shall be starting a conducted tour of the St. Frank's country and meeting its leading, and its less distinguished, personalities. In the May number Jim Sutcliffe contributes a well-timed and finely written introductory article. And now for the completion of Bill Champion's article

### CONSPIRATORS UNLIMITED!

Soon after this, Handforth catches it even hotter! In the fond belief that the whole Remove is behind him, he marches purposefully to Starke's study and proceeds to tell that much-disliked Sixth-former just what he and the lower-school think of him. I think this part of the story quite funny. After the preliminaries, the junior carries on:

"And we feel it our duty, as representatives of the Remove, to point out to you, Walter Starke, that you are a cad and a bully!

We consider that you are unfit——"

"You—you cheeky young dog!" roared Starke, jumping up.

"Oh, let him carry on!" grinned Kenmore. "It's quite amusing. I was just wondering if Handforth imagined himself to be a group. It's the first time I've heard a fellow using the plural——"

"You'll hear him using a few yells in a minute!" growled Starke. "What the thunder do you think your game is, Handforth? What do you mean by coming here and insulting me in this fashion?"

"We couldn't insult you, Starke!"

"We—we!" shouted Starke. "Are you dotty, you little idiot?"

"I said we—all of us!" declared Handforth.

"All of you!" yelled Kenmore. "Why, you're alone, you silly donkey!"

Handy smiled in a superior fashion. "If you think you can scare me, you're mistaken," he said. "I'm doing all the speaking, I'll admit; but these other chaps are ready to back me up if you start any of your rot! I suppose you know that I don't stand any rot? I've come here to tell you that the bullying has got to stop——"

"Pitch him out!" exclaimed Starke harshly. He didn't wait for Kenmore to act, but walked round the table and grabbed Handforth firmly by the shoulder.

"Now, you chaps!" roared Handforth. "Go for 'em!"

He was whirled round, and his eyes goggled as he saw that he was completely alone. He gasped; and while he was gasping Starke used his fists to advantage.

Without doubt, Handy is knocked about frightfully, although he has certainly asked for it! Breathing fire and murder, he storms back to the junior quarters, but is a trifle mollified when he finds Nipper making plans to form "The Combine", or "The Council of Eight", a secret society whose aim is to suppress the bullying seniors once and for all. A bunch of picked juniors go down to the vault under the ruined monastery to work out a plan of action, and there bump into — "The Mysterious X!" They chase him over Little-Side towards the River Stowe, but lose sight of him in the darkness. Next instant they see a dim figure and pounce— but imagine their surprise when they discover their victim to be none other than Frinton, of the Sixth! This episode naturally causes Nipper to conceive half-formed suspicions of Frinton, but he decides to keep his own council.

Next day, Starke outshines himself where bullying is concerned;

lines and lickings are dished-out right, left and centre, and, in the evening, feeling in very good humour, the prefect walks across the dark Triangle to the College House to speak to a Sixth-former there. As he strides beneath the gloomy chestnuts, he suddenly becomes aware of several dim and ghostlike figures converging on him, but before he can utter a sound he is roughly seized and a sack is pulled over his head. He is picked up and carried off, and not one sound does he hear from his captors. After being carried some considerable distance, the senior is surprised and alarmed to find himself lifted onto a kind of hand-cart, and in this fashion transported for perhaps a quarter-of-an-hour. Then he is lifted off the cart and again carried some way. Eventually he is set down, his feet anchored in some wooden contrivance not unlike the stocks of old, and the sack is removed from his perspiring head. He finds himself in pitch darkness—and still that uncanny silence!

Starke is just beginning to feel really panicky when a dim light suddenly glows just above his head, and he finds himself in a small room, the walls and ceiling of which are draped with curtains of nondescript colouring. And then, just as the bullying prefect finds his nerve going, a vague and sinister voice speaks right in his ear, but when he twists round madly, he finds nobody there! Needless to say, Nicodemus Trotwood, the Remove ventriloquist, is the voice!

To put things briefly, this mysterious voice proceeds to give Starke a well-deserved lecture about his bullying activities, ending with a solemn warning of what will happen if he doesn't mend his ways in the future, the while the helpless senior fumes and threatens, and grinds his teeth with impotent rage. Then the light goes out, he is freed from the stocks by many hands, the sack is again pulled over his head, and the lengthy process of carrying and wheeling in the hand-cart is gone through once more. At the end of all this he is set down and left. His hands have been left free, and, after a struggle, he is able to remove the sack and untie his bound feet. He finds himself sitting on an isolated boulder, alone, on the wide expanse of Bannington Moor. In a murderous rage he dashes back to the school, two miles away, but finds he is unable to pin the outrage onto any of the juniors. So, all he can do is report the affair to his cronies of the Sixth and Fifth.

Next day, Kenmore does most of the bullying, in a spirit of

bravado, so Kenmore's name is given priority at the top of the list by the "Secret Combine". That evening, by a clever bit of trickery, the bully is inveigled out of his study and into the Triangle, where he is at once collared. He goes through the same procedure as did Starke on the previous evening, only this time he hears and recognises voices — Handforth's, Grey's, Farman — and, in spite of his fury, feels some satisfaction. He'd make it hot for those kids when he got free!

Arrived at the mysterious curtained room, Kenmore finds, to his great alarm, that he is being effectively held by a different kind of contrivance. He is lying face downwards, with hands and feet firmly held, and a cushion under his body, in 'a most convenient position for the infliction of corporal punishment.'

In a funk, Kenmore waits. He doesn't have long to wait. The dim light glows, the sinister voice speaks in his ear: "Prepare for your punishment, O brutal bully!" a gloved hand holding a cane appears through the curtain, and the swishing begins. When at last he is freed, Kenmore runs, as fast as his soreness will permit, from the windswept moor, and it is easy to appreciate his frustration when, arriving at St. Franks, he finds that Handforth, Grey and Farman have been with M. Leblanc, the French-master, the whole evening! Trotwood again!

Kenmore is finished! One dose of the "Secret Combine" is more than enough for him. In a filthy temper, Starke threatens to ostracise his friend unless he carries on with the "Reign of Terror" — but the sore one is adamant. And next morning, when the juniors learn of the rift, they are naturally jubilant.

But the cunning Starke is by no means finished. He pays Teddy Long to discover who is behind the "Combine", but doesn't meet with much success. The juniors soon discover what is happening, and obligingly "fix" things — to the great discomfort of both Long and Starke!

Then "The Mysterious X" appears on the scene once more; Frinton is again involved — but there is no denouement.

After a day or two of slightly diminished bullying, Starke inveigles Fullwood, the cad of the Remove, into helping him in his fight against the juniors, and this time meets with more success — at first!

The astute Ralph Leslie Fullwood, who has no love in his heart for Nipper & Co. manages to get on the track of the "Combine" on a night when Jesson has been singled out for correction. He

discovers that the punishment-chamber is actually a little vault-like room off one of the old quarry tunnel-workings on the edge of Bannington Moor, but the drapings effectually conceal the rough, rocky walls.

He reports his momentous find to Starke, whose next move is clear.

Next day, dozens of juniors feel the weight of Starke's heavy hand. Lines and lickings are the order of the hour, so, naturally, Starke is singled out by the "Combine".

In the evening, Starke makes it his duty to walk across the dark Triangle, where he is at once collared. He is again transported in a like manner to last time, for upwards of half-an-hour, at the end of which time he is fixed up nicely in the stocks. But the Sixth-former is happy in the knowledge that he has previously arranged for a big gang of seniors to be waiting just along the tunnel, in readiness to collar the juniors. At the same time, he is a bit uneasy that they have let him be put in the stocks before putting in an appearance.

"Sheer rot, waiting until I'm actually inside!" muttered Starke fiercely.

But possibly Jesson and the others had determined to capture the "Council of Eight" red-handed — actually at their work. Starke wouldn't mind if rescue came before the birching commenced. But he would mind very considerably if he received as much as one cut.

However, Starke not only receive one cut — he receives fifty-five cuts, without doubt the worst hiding of his career; and his shouts and yells for help are of no avail. Careful as Fullwood had been, his movements had been noted by Reggie Pitt, who had been acting as scout on the night retribution had been meted out to Jesson. So the punishment-chamber had been speedily dismantled, and re-erected in the curious old building on Willard's Island. Starke had had no clue that he'd been transported over water, as the juniors had marked-time on the punt that took them across the River Stowe, and he naturally thought that he's been carried over dry land.

Well, that affair just about puts paid to the bullies "Reign of Terror". Towards the end, Nipper and his merry men manage to get a document signed by Starke and Jesson, to the effect that they are bullies of the worst order, and that they are in the habit of frequenting the White Harp Inn after lights' out.

Then the affair of "The Mysterious X" draws rapidly to a grand climax. It appears that Frinton is being blackmailed by a man named Sheldon, and is being forced, on occasion, to give a hand with the nofarious work.

Nelson Lee gets captured by this Sheldon, who is the real "Mysterious X", and tied to a stake in a lonely cave near Caistowe. The tide is coming in, and things look black for the detective; but Frinton, who learns of his Housemaster's plight, swims across the rough sea and does a spot of rescuer work, nearly losing his life in doing so. This brave act earns him his pardon -- which enables us to relax in our armchairs with satisfied sighs, at events once more turning out so well.

## OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

### LONDON SECTION

A large array of "Billy Bunter the Bolds", "Silver Jackets", a Rookwood paper and Quiz by myself, a grand Quiz by brother Bob, grand impromptu talk by Bob Blythe and chairman Len in sparkling form, all these went up to make the March meeting at "Cherry Place" equal to any of the previous gatherings of the "Happy Brotherhood". New member, P. Vernon Lay must have been impressed by his first meeting and a hearty welcome to the ranks was sent to Bernard Thorne of Toronto, Canada.

Official business was dealt with and a satisfactory financial report was accepted. Bob Blythe, Nelson Lee Librarian, stated that there was not a lot of borrowing in his department and as Roger Jenkins, Hamiltonian Librarian was away up north it was agreed to leave this matter over until next month.

The two quiz competitions brought some very good questions, Bob Whiter was the winner of the Rookwood one and Len Packman won the miscellaneous one. Whilst on the subject of quiz' it was announced that a challenge had been received from the Leeds Club. This was accepted and four members agreed to compile the questions in the four sections.

It was agreed to hold the April meeting on Sunday 11th, at Hume House, 136 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. and after sales and exchanges and a general get together call over time came and so homewards on our divers ways.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING: March 13th, 1954: In the temporary absence of J. Breeze Bentley I opened the meeting. This gave me the pleasant duty of saying how pleased we were to have Roger Jenkins with us again. It is just a year since his last visit. Roger replied that he had thoroughly enjoyed that occasion and was sure it was going to be repeated.

The minutes were read and passed and treasurer-librarian Gerry Allison, as usual, had some interesting correspondence to read. One letter was from Stanley Smith, who mentioned the subjects of three 'talks' he had in mind. Our secretary was asked to write him and assure him we should be delighted to have all three.

Gerry also told of a generous gift of a number of Aldine "Robin Hoods" some of them being the originals of 50 years ago. The kind donor was W.T. Thurbon of Cambridge. This is not the first time we have had reason to thank him.

Followed - "Scholars" a diversion arranged by the same Gerry Allison. This kept everyone entertained for a good half hour. Molly Allison came out the winner, the prize being a volume of the B.O.P. Probably her arm ached before she got it home.

A number of quizzes followed.

Next meeting - the Annual General Meeting, April 10th.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING, March 15th: Our esteemed Wolverhampton member, Mr. Jack Ingram, gave us one of his Greyfriars character studies tonight; dealing with that Olympian Being Dr. Locke. Good wine needs no bush as the esteemed and ludicrous old English proverb remarkably observes, and these character studies need no recommendation to those who have heard one. It only needs to be added that this talk not only came up to expectations but even exceeded them.

After a certain amount of formal business had been discussed we gave Jack a clear field.

Dr. Locke is, of course, one of Charles Hamilton's most important characters, and so we find a very skilfully drawn one. He follows the Arnold tradition and is therefore a Doctor of Divinity. Typical headmastership policy includes floggings and expulsions for transgressors preferably administered publically.

It is interesting to note that he is a less harsh version of the famous Mr. Quelch; being similarly tall and angular. Dr. Locke shows scholarship, firmness, kindness, shrewdness and judicial calmness.

Mr. Ingram illustrated his talk by readings from, and references to, stories in the "Magnet", showing instances of the Head's discernment and judgment in dealing with Wharton, Cherry, and Mr. Prout's problem child, Coker.

The time went all too soon, but we showed our appreciation of this splendid talk by a hearty round of applause.

As ever time is our worst enemy on club nights and so it was soon time for lights out once more.

EDWARD DAVEY.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION, 14th March, 1954: If only in point of the large attendance at this evening's meeting, a successful programme was assured, no less than eighteen being present.

The chairman opened the proceedings by welcoming our guests, Sir F. Bowman and friend, and then dealt with club and section matters, which were of only a minor nature this month. The secretary followed with the financial report, and, without further delay, the eagerly anticipated discussion on "Charles Hamilton - his merits and demerits as a writer" occupied our full attention.

Don Webster briefly outlined what he considered were faults in Mr. Hamilton's work, as did others present, and the points raised were more than sufficient to give scope for a most spirited discussion. Practically every member had some comments and observations to make, either in support or against, and the personal views expressed were extremely interesting, if not always convincing.

After refreshments, Sir Frederick took up the cudgels on behalf of Mr. Hamilton; he suspected that the adverse criticisms of our beloved author's work had been actuated by a desire to provoke controversy, and that the critics' affection for the stories were sufficient to discount their fault-finding. He himself was "prepared to fight to the death" on behalf of an author for whom he had nothing but unqualified admiration; considering his prodigious output his standard of writing was remarkably high, and none could deny that they had, without being "namby-pamby", been a power for good amongst youth, an attribute not noticeably prominent in the boys' books of today. In common with all present he deplored the lamentable fact that the "Magnet", etc., no longer existed, and sincerely believed that the youth of today was the loser by it.

Jim Walsh said that although Charles Hamilton was, of course, not infallible, the fact that his characters were so famous today and played such a big part at meetings like ours was sure proof that he had no superior in his field.

Next meeting April 11th.