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# THE COLLECTORS DIGEST

Editor  
Miscellaneous Section

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C/o Central Registry  
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York

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S. Wales

An Amateur Magazine devoted entirely  
to story paper collecting hobby

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THE EDITOR SAYS - "THANK YOU":

As Co-editors, my colleague and I are probably rather unusual. Instead of discussing plans across a table, or seated in a couple of chairs by a fire, we are over 300 miles apart. We have to confer by post or an occasional 'phone call. You can't say much in six minutes, and when you are suddenly cut off at the vital moment, as has happened more than once, it tends to be exasperating. Thus our task in getting No.1 published within five weeks of initial planning was no easy one. Moreover, in the beginning, we had to meet numerous set backs and disappointments. Optimistically we fixed a date on which we might have the issue completed, and we may be forgiven a feeling of satisfaction when we say our object was achieved on the very day. The only alteration was, we gave eight more pages than we originally intended! No editor, scanning the first copy of a newspaper destined for a mammoth circulation, could have felt prouder that we did when that day arrived. Now the copies have been dispatched to the majority of English counties, to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eire, to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the U.S.A. Not much time has elapsed, but already expressions of opinion are flowing in. As we read them we feel it was all worth while, for so far, it is flowers all the way, kindly, generous compliments from all sides. Particularly pleasing were congratulations from three masters of the art of story writing. Mr.F.Addington Symonds, Mr. R.A.H.Goodyear, and Mr.Charles Hamilton, and a very generous tribute from Mr.Joseph Parks, publishers of our contemporary "The Collectors' Miscellany". In just one or two instances was there a note of criticism. One came from an esteemed friend who happened to be born before the great majority of us. To him, naturally, there appeared to be too much about what he termed "the moderns", but nevertheless he paid a tribute and wished the C.D. every success. Well there were the days when there was a goodly company of collectors who valued "The Boys of England", "The Boys Standard", "Comrades" and the rest, just as highly as the younger generation do "The Magnet", "The Sex-

son's library" and others of the "moderns". But inevitably, Father Time has taken his toll, and the ranks of the Victorians are sadly thinned. Happily there are still some who are as keen as ever, and the journals of the nineteenth century have an honoured place in the history of boys papers. We shall endeavour to give those who are left their quota and if any of the little band care to submit articles on their favourites we shall be pleased to have them so that others can see there were fine papers too, long before they were born.

It is quite impossible for us to reply to all the friendly letters that have come along nor to acknowledge, so we say here to each and every one, "THANK YOU".

Yours sincerely,  
HERBERT LECKENBY.

P.S:

As we stated that payment for No.1 was optional, some of those who have not written possibly thought there was no necessity to acknowledge it, intending to start their subs. with No.2. We are, therefore, sending copies of this Issue to all who received No.1. We should be grateful, therefore, if all who wish to continue would let us know promptly to enable us to calculate requirements for No.3.

"The Collector's Digest" Subscription Rates:

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

Advertisement Rates:

Small Advertisements 1d per word (name and address will be inserted free of charge).

Contributions intended for publication are, if possible, to be typewritten on sheets the same size as this page.

STOP PRESS!

Billy Bunter returns from the Grave

Just in time for insertion in this issue came a letter from Frank Richards containing some surprising and remarkable news. It will set his army of admirers agog with excitement. Here it is:-

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

2nd Dec. 1946.

Very many thanks for your letter and copy of The Collectors Digest. It makes very entertaining reading indeed.

I should have written sooner to thank you for this but I have been up to my venerable ears in Greyfriars. Did I tell you that at long last I have decided to let Billy Bunter come back? The A.P. have now no objection and in point of fact it was impossible to refuse to do what so many old readers demanded. I was astonished indeed, that is putting it mildly, by the shoals of letters that followed the Picture Post article almost all of them asking for Greyfriars again. I don't understand it even yet. Nine to one want Greyfriars, not more than ten per cent asking for St. Jims and not more than two or three per cent for Rookwood. In view of this Greyfriars had to come back, but you can guess that I was very glad to hear from the A.P. that they had no objection.

"Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School", a story of novel length, will be published by Charles Skilton & Co. Ltd. The price is not yet settled but will probably be about 6s.0d. The first volume will be followed by more at regular intervals. It is rather a new idea to publish Bunter in the form of substantial volumes, the length of an average novel, and I shall hope that it will be a success.

Merretts I expect, will be putting out 1s.0d Bunter volumes. Now that the fat old bean is coming back there will not be a Bunter shortage in the future.

By the way, Topham and St. Olive's are now on the market. They can be had at Woolworths. The publishers tell me they can't supply by post owing to staff shortage.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards.

(Well, that's grand news for the New Year! The Topham and St.Olive's stories by the way are priced 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d, and appear as the Mascot Schoolboy and School-girls Series respectively. One in "Top Study at Topham" and the other "Pamela of St.Olive's". Editor.)

(Later: 16th Dec. Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School is now in the publishers hands).

### "THE LOVABLE D'ARCY"

by Herbert Leckenby

Returning to my office one summer evening during the war I stopped to speak to the military policeman on guard at the entrance. He was a battle scarred veteran, of rather fearsome countenance, but quite a harmless soul when you got to know him. The hour was late and if he kept his weather eye open he could relax a little. Sticking out of my pocket was a roll of "Gems", papers I hoped to browse over for odd moments during the night watches. We chatted for a while then he said "Got owt to read there - summat to pass the time on after t'officers' been round?" Rather bashfully I withdrew the papers; I was rather doubtful about a "Gem" being of interest to a grim faced "red-cap". But I got a pleasant surprise! The one which caught his eye happened to be that last blue covered issue, "Under Gussy's Protection" (No.436). A wide grin spread over his face, transforming it so that the troops wouldn't have recognised him, and he exclaimed, "Well, Ah'll be damned, Gussy! Where the hell did you get this?" He was as excited as some collectors' I could mention, opening a parcel containing some long sought for "Magnets" or "Union Jacks". "Bring back memories, do they?" I said. "Memories? Ah'll say they do" he chuckled, "Why Ah remember buying these, this very number in fact, this very ruddy number. Ah'd just left school". (Yes, he'd once been a boy!) His grin broadened, "Ee, how I used to laugh at Gussy. - What a beggar he was for falling in love with t'girls. I'll borrow this if yer don't mind".

I said I didn't mind, and handed him one or two more, then passed on to duty thinking I had done my day's good deed. A day or two later, when he handed them back, he was profuse in his thanks. As we parted

he said with a chuckle, "Pity t'Gem doesn't come out now. If it did Ah wonder how poor owd Gussy ud' be doing about his blinking clothing coupons?" I had to laugh at that illuminating thought. It did make one regret more than ever that the "Gem" was no more. How WOULD D'Arcy, or Martin Clifford, have dealt with that perplexing problem.

Well, the other night I was turning the pages of that last of the blue covers and it recalled that episode with my friend the 'red-cap' when the nights were grim. Then I fell to ruminating over the trials and triumphs of one of the most lovable characters in the whole history of juvenile fiction, or any other fiction for that matter. His slim, elegant figure vanished into the shadows of ancient St. Jim's a long time ago, but his memory lives with us still. Let us recall him for a while.

The Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, second son of the Earl of Eastwood, was the leading humorous character of the "Gem", just as Billy Bunter was of the "Magnet". But there the comparison ended, in all other ways they were as the poles apart. It says much for the inimitable skill of the one we knew as Frank Richards - Martin Clifford, that he could write week after week, for over three decades, about two such diverse characters and leave one longing for more at the end as much as one did at the beginning. D'Arcy was slim and debonaire, Bunter was obese and slovenly; D'Arcy was generous, Bunter was greedy; D'Arcy was handsome, not even Bunter's mother would say he had any good looks; D'Arcy was good at games and set a horse with grace; Bunter hardly knew the difference between a cricket ball and a football and would have fallen off a donkey; D'Arcy, scion of a noble house, was a friend to all men; Bunter, son of a third rate stockbroker, was a snob. Yet, for over 30 years they each made millions laugh, D'Arcy's lisp, his monocle and his concern for clothes caused as much amusement as Bunter's famous postal order. And there was even a difference in our mirth. You laughed AT Bunter but laughed WITH D'Arcy. You liked to see Bunter get into trouble, but had an instinctive wish to see D'Arcy get out of it. And even sometimes there was something like a tear behind our

laughter in the case of "the swell of St. Jim's". There were the occasions when he fell in love, for instance, and, as the military policemen said, he did quite often. Well, it was all very natural, boys in their teens DO fall in love, even in their early teens. And D'Arcy like the rest, oft times fell a victim to the tender passion with members of the opposite sex whose years were many more than his; an actress maybe. On such occasions he showered her with gifts, and ignored, with lofty contempt, the chaff of his chums. Then in the end, when the lovely lady chided him gently, pointed out that by the time he had left school she would be in her forties and maybe bringing up a family and dismissed him with a motherly kiss. You laid your "Gem" down with a suspicion of a lump in the throat and a sigh like "poor old Gussy". It was all very human, and 'Martin Clifford' handled the touch of pathos with masterly skill.

D'Arcy, ohivalrous fellow that he was, had a sublime faith in his fellow men. There was an occasion when he ran away from St. Jim's, not on account of his own misdeeds, but through some trouble his scally-wag younger brother had got into. Tramping to London he made the acquaintance of a tramp, and they journeyed on together. They spent the night under the stars, with mother earth for a bed. When D'Arcy woke he found he was alone. He came to the conclusion that his friend the tramp had gone down to a nearby stream for a wash. Dear, guileless Gussy! He came to earth a little later when he found his watch and money had departed too!

John N. Pentelow, in those delightful biographies of the boys of St. Jim's, summed up Arthur Augustus perfectly in a sentence when he described him thus:

"Simple, yet no simpleton, proud without a touch of snobbery, brave and tender hearted, a very human boy, and yet a great gentleman in the best sense of the word".

Yes, that was Gussy exactly. It was written when the "Gem" was only about eleven years old; he had many trials and adventures after that, but he remained the same to the end.

George Orwell, that provocative critic, in one of

his essays, has a sneer at the "Gem" and the "Magnet" saying they were full of snob appeal with a deliberate policy of making the youthful reader have a proper respect for the higher stratas of society. Maybe he was thinking of D'Arcy and Lord Mauleverer. But Orwell was talking through his hat. Arthur Augustus never made any village youth raise his hat one inch higher to the squire, or a London boy step off the pavement for a dweller in Mayfair. Anyway, the man who was responsible for D'Arcy effectively dealt with Mr. Orwell.

D'Arcy, as J.M.P. so aptly put it, was a very human boy. He had his faults thank goodness. He was stubborn once he had made up his mind, nothing would move him. If he had decided to spend half-an-hour choosing a tie, and a train he and his chums had to catch went in twenty minutes, they would miss the train unless they got him to the station by main force. He had also a firm belief that he could sing tenor solos, when everyone else was sure he could not. He again had a high opinion of his powers as a sportsman. He had some justification there though, for some times he flew down the wing to secure a vital goal, and on many occasions his flashing blade hit off the runs just when they were wanted. And his conceit was usually only a pose, for he was always willing to retire gracefully in favour of a better man when the occasion required it.

My friend the red-cap wondered how D'Arcy would have got over the clothing coupon problem. One almost wishes the "Gem" could have continued if only to let us see how that grave situation would be dealt with. One thing we can be sure of, Gussy would have played the game. He would not have dabbled in the black market, he would not have taken coupons from the other fellows, even from his brother Wally, who never bothered much about clothes. He wouldn't have to hand out coupons for toppers if he could get them. Shiny suits would not look well with glossy toppers, but Gussy would loyally have dressed that way even if it had meant a puckered brow and a heavy heart. Unfortunately we shall never know.

D'Arcy was at St. Jin's a long time, but not a day too long. He was there before Tom Merry. Some of us

knew him before the "Gem" was born, for we remember his sensational entry in the days of the yellow backed "Pluck". For over three decades countless boys revelled in his escapades in that magic corner of Sussex where all the inhabitants used the same calendar for over thirty years, yet paradoxically kept pace with the world outside. One sometimes wonders what would have happened if they had all been allowed to grow older like ordinary mortals. Fortunately they weren't, but if it had been so we can imagine D'Arcy in due course of time, becoming Captain of St. Jim's. And we can be sure he would have made a good one. He would have ruled with a firm, but kindly, hand, and kept a fatherly eye on the tenants of Study 6 in the Fourth Form passage, and the scallywags of the Third.

If that had been the policy we can visualise D'Arcy doing his bit in what we used to call "the war". He would doubtless have been an officer in the Guards, unperturbed and immaculate in the dirt of the trenches. We can imagine his men saying "We'll follow good old Captain Gussy and his window pane anywhere".

Then, when peace had come again, we might have read of D'Arcy following in the footsteps of his brother, Lord Conway, and taking a party of a new generation of St. Jim's boys on a Continental tour or in a Giant aeroplane to the Southern Seas. Later still of him really falling in love, and not being rejected as in days of yore. And then --- Well, I think I had better stop, for by this time he would have been - well no, no one could imagine dear old Gussy at fifty-five.

### THE 'HOLIDAY' SERIES:

by Tom Armitage

During the run of three famous schoolboy weeklies, "Magnet", "Gem" and "Nelson Lee", some of the most popular stories were those which eventually became known as the holiday series. Of course each year included many one or two-week yarns with a holiday flavour, notably at Easter and Whitsun, but those I wish specially to mention were practically all mid-summer vacation period and dealt with the always exciting adventures of our schoolboy heroes abroad. The "Gem" didn't feature many of these stor-

ies, only about 28 to 31 "The Floating School", 46 to 50 "Tom Merry Out West", etc., 1187 to 1911, South African Series, 1297 to 1302, United States. 1641 to 1644 Brazilian Congo series, 863 to 869 Sahara series, 965, etc. Indian series, 1017 to 1026 South Seas, 1099, etc., Hollywood series, 1228 to 1236, Pacific series. Whilst the holiday stories in the "Gen" were quite readable, one did not get the same satisfaction as with the "Magnet" series as in these, Frank Richards gave the most detailed and accurate descriptions of every foreign land in which his characters sojourned for a time. But by far the most consistent of holiday stories were in the "Nelson Lee Library". Every August, with few exceptions, the St. Frank's boys were to be found in foreign lands. Fortunately they had a kind of pet millionaire, Lord Dorrinore, perhaps the most popular of all "globe trotters" in schoolboy fiction. Mr. Brooks rather drew the long-bow shall we say, in some of his holiday stories, but still, time has proved that what was fancy in, say, 1924, was fact in 1944. For instance, the wonderful "Ship of the Sahara" which could journey on land or sea by the use of caterpillar tractors. On comparing a "Magnet" series 1589-1598, with a "Nelson Lee" series 529-536, one finds that the Greyfriars stories are more detailed, perhaps a shade more satisfying. (Both above examples are South Sea stories). However, one began to look forward to the "grand new summer holiday series" in the N.L.L., and E.E. Brooks certainly gave his readers plenty of enjoyable reading. Let us run back over the years and see what we had to read about. No. 158, 15th June, 1918, contained the first of an eight weeks series "Captain Burton's Quest". This was the first of the holiday series as the St. Frank's stories had only been running since July of the previous year and readers were just beginning to know the characters. This series was a pretty good one, about the South Sea Islands, which seem to be ever popular with boys. Reprinted in the "Monster Library" No. 1, 1925. Next came an African series, Nos. 213 to 220. In 1920 came a rather longer set of stories, 264 to 274, dealing with the discovery of a race of white giants in South America. By now we were getting used to the situation. This was

a really good series with all the favourite characters in the limelight, Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, etc.

(Continued)

### LETTER BOX:

As we anticipated, Pat's letter brought an avalanche of indignant retorts. We can only find room for extracts from two or three of them. In fairness to Pat, however, we might mention that one correspondent agreed with him to some extent, but he wanted plenty of news about the papers in question.

Dear Sir,

Your reader "Pat" whose letter appeared in No. 1 of the C.D. is evidently not a connoisseur of good literature else he would not have made the remarks he did concerning the school stories in "The Gem" and "The Magnet" Libraries. The writer of those stories is a genius, and is the only true great writer nearly all of whose works have consisted of stories intended exclusively for young readers. The stories in "The Gem" and "The Magnet" were intended to appeal to readers of a wide range of ages - from about eight to eighteen - hence the need for many of them to contain a number of amusing incidents very simply described to attract and interest the younger readers. The early "Magnets" were undoubtedly intended for older readers than the "Gem", for they contained very few incidents of this type. Then, commencing in about 1919, the now famous character, William George Bunter was made much more prominent, thus making the "Magnet" appeal to a much wider range of ages than hitherto. Complete plots were never repeated, but there were occasional repetitions of these, which, however, would not be noticed by readers taking the papers every week, even over a period of many years. W.G. Bunter can hardly be said to be likeable, but he is, nevertheless one of Mr. Hamilton's most brilliantly drawn characters. In this respect he is like a great many other famous fictional characters that we may not actually like, though we are very interested in them, and greatly admire the skill with which they are depicted. (Compare Shakespeare's Falstaff

and Sago). The object of this letter is not to convert your reader "Pat" to an appreciation of the "Magnet" and "Gem" but a refutation of his remarks is necessary lest they should mislead other readers.

Yours truly,

John R. Shaw.

Pat's letter amazes me. I did not think anyone could call the "Magnet" and "Gem" over-rated. I disagree that the same sort of plots were served up regularly. The appeal of the stories lay in the fact that they never affected the impossible; as for Bunter, he was never intended to be taken seriously. Anyway the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The "Magnet" and the "Gem" records take some beating - and here's my name too.

Tom Sinclair, 9 Branston Terr. Leeds 10.

I think Pat is very hard on W.G. Bunter; as Billy holds a special place in schoolboy fiction. In my opinion the 'freak' characters of the Greyfriars stories, notably Coker, Fish and Alonzo Todd, are the making of them - with Bunter at their head.

J. Begerley, "Moorings", Pensilva, Cornwall.

WANTED: Certain early Magnets, Gens, Plucks; especially Gens Nos. 16, 22, 385. Gladly buy or exchange. Shaw, 6 Colney Hatch Lane, London, N.10.

WANTED: Dreadnoughts - complete. Price, etc. to H.J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge, Bridport, Dorset.

WANTED: ½d Gens and Empire Libraries, 2/- each offered. No. 30 Tom Merry & Co; No. 38 Tom Merry's Conquest; Boys Friend 3d Library wanted, 15/- each offered; ½d and 1d early Gens and Magnets. Interested in all old Boys Papers.

Richard Whorwell, 29 Aspinden Road, London, S.E. 16.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries; Thrillers; Cherry Tree Libraries; Magnets; Schoolboys Own Libraries; in good condition.

John W. Gocher, Jr., Victoria Cottage, Constitution Hill, Sudbury, Suffolk.

LET ME BUY your duplicates of Schoolboys Own, Magnet, Gem, Monster, Nelson Lee, Greyfriars, Popular, Your Britain. Special exchange service for Schoolboys Own, 4/- dozen plus your duplicates; also buying bound volumes (only) of Captain, Punch (after 1925) B.O.P. (after 1912), Wide World.  
J. Baguley, "Moorings", Pensilva, Cornwall.

REQUIRED: Early Magnets, red covers; also early Gems, blue covers. Highest prices paid.  
T. Satchell, 84 Ankerline Crescent, Shooters Hill, London, S.E.18.

FOR SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1937, 1938; also 25 Gems, 1918-20. Offers invited.  
R. Johnson, 31 Argyle Street, Birkenhead.

WANTED: Magnets between 1925 and 1933. List supplied on application; also Gems and Holiday Annuals, 1920, 1930, and 1931.  
Robert H. Whiter, 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London, N.22.

WANTED: Magnets, Gems, Schoolboys Own Library, etc. Please send details to:-  
A.M.O. Adley, D., L/FX775918, Air Gunnery Section, H.M.S. Gannet, Eglington, Northern Ireland.

WANTED: Aldine Publications, Turpins, Durvals, etc. Lady, 4 Nuneaton Road, Dagenham, Essex.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library, 1920-35; Union Jack, 1920-32; Detective Weekly, 1933-34.  
W. Golcombe, 256 South Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

WANTED: Magnets and Schoolboys Owns, to complete set for binding. Send serial numbers and price to:-  
R.M. Jenkins, Galpe, 2 Town Hall Road, Havant, Hants.

WANTED: To complete a run - Union Jacks, Nos. 1243, 1244, 1245, and 1252. Any reasonable price paid for these issues.

H.M. Bond, 172 Caerphilly Road, Birchgrove, Cardiff.

WANTED: Sexton Blakes issued 1920-1930; also Blake Bust. Any reasonable Price paid.  
Rex Dolphin, The Wicket, Hyde Heath, Amersham, Bucks.

BOUQUETS:

(A few taken at Random.)

I like the paper very much indeed. The general set up is excellent and I particularly like the cover. The large type for the title is a great advantage. I have read the whole paper and like all the contents especially the tribute to Mr. Gander, the Crossword, and Mr. Jenkins article.

John R. Shaw, 6 Colney Hatch Lane,  
Muswell Hill, N.10.

.. ..

Excellent material, varied and good. It should certainly go down well with all collectors.

J.W. Geal, 60 Fleetwood Road,  
Kingston, Surrey.

.. ..

Yours is a worthy effort. I sat down to read it at once. It is a feast of reading. I am already awaiting your next issue.

W.L. Bowden, Redruth, Cornwall.

.. ..

A grand effort. The lay-out is good with clear and easily read print.

M. Colcombe, 256 South Avenue,  
Southend-on-Sea.

.. ..

Extremely interesting and very brightly produced. I hope it has come to stay and I should certainly like to see future numbers.

F. Addington Symonds, 37 Holders Hill Drive,  
Hendon, N.W.4.

.. ..

I like it immensely. A splendid paper.

Harry Dowler, 86 Hamilton Road,  
Longsight, Manchester, 13.

.. ..

Delighted to get the "Collector's Digest". I hope it may have a long and glorious life. It is a splendid achievement.

J. Parks, 2 Irwin Avenue,  
Saltburn-by-Sea.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS:

(Continued from Page 14)

No.385 marked an important event in the destinies of the "Marvel". The story title was "The Eagle of Death" and it was the first of the famous Jack, Sam, and Pete stories. Another appeared in a fortnight, "The Death Sentence". Just over thirty of them appeared in the 1<sup>st</sup> series and when the price was increased S.Clarke Hook was busy writing them, with the exception of a few odd weeks, for nearly twenty years. Years later, too, some of these stories of the 1<sup>st</sup> series were republished in the "Ranger" somewhat revised and with the names of the characters changed.

Here are some of the authors, who, in addition to S.Clarke Hook, wrote frequently for the three papers. Maxwell Scott, Henry St.John, Reginald Wray, Arthur S.Hardy, Paul Herring, Alec G.Pearson, Mark Darran, John G.Rowe (who also wrote under six pen names), Herbert Maxwell and Charles Hamilton who, as Frank Richards, became the most famous of them all.

The artists included A.H.Clarke, F.Braun, T.W.Holmes, A.White, Fred Bennett, "Val", W.M.Bowles, and R.J.MacDonald.

It is interesting to note that R.J.MacDonald is still active and Fred Bennett's work was to be seen not so long ago!

Looking through some very early issues recently I came across some of the familiar sketches of Geo. Gatcombe, he whose - of, so pretty girls, very handsome men, and stern hawk faced mistresses, appeared hundreds of times in the pages of the "Girl's Friend". In those early U.J.'s. I was surprised to see he wrote the stories too!

And now I will tell a little story of my own.

Some time ago I was able to add a few more of these three papers to my collection. As I looked through one particular copy caught my eye. It was one of the "Marvels" with a Jack, Sam and Pete story entitled "The Haunted Fort". I immediately sat up and took notice, a grin spreading over my face. My thoughts went racing back through the years. The teacher was a burly, easy-going sort of fellow, always known as "Sammy". He had some quaint, unorthodox ideas on teaching, some of which were very popular with the lads in his charge. For instance, each

Friday afternoon he would say "Now for the next hour you can read anything you like, but have your history books by you just in case anyone comes in." Yes, as I've said, we liked some of Sammy's ways. Well, out would come our "bloods" (I usually acting as a kind of universal provider) and for an hour we were absorbed in Dick Turpin, Deadwood Dick, and the rest, instead of the doings of Henry VIII or Queen Anne. Yes, there were times when we quite liked school.

However, one afternoon that was NOT Friday, I had done my sums and I noticed Sammy was busy reading a newspaper. From my pocket came one of my papers and I settled down to read it. It was "The Haunted Fort". I was unlucky, for I came to with a start when I saw Sammy towering over me. "Hi, what's the idea? It's not blood and thunder day" he snapped. "Hand it over". I did as I was told.

After prayers, I stole back to the class room in quest of my "blood". Sammy never went to prayers, and there he was sitting back in his chair, his feet on the lid of his desk, reading "The Haunted Fort". "What do you want?" he growled. "C-c-can I have my paper please, sir?" I asked timidly. "No, you can't. Clear off! Can't you see I'm reading it?" was Sammy's retort, as he waved me away with an impatient gesture. Disconsolately I went off home.

However, next morning he dropped the paper on my desk with a non-committal grunt. More than once after that when he net me outside he would say with a grin. "Well, how's Jack, Sam and Pete getting on?"

Sammy died long years ago; I am much older than he was when he confiscated my paper, but I can still when I feel the urge, turn to that very "Haunted Fort" and the others which recall the days when I was young.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, Monster Libraries, Union Jacks, Sexton Blake Libraries, Detective Weeklies, Thrillers, Magnets, Gens, Populars and Schoolboys Own Libraries C. Simpson, Ebor Mount, York Place, Knaresborough, Yorkshire.

WANTED: Chums, 1903; Captains, Boys Realms, All Sports, Sports Budget, Football Favourite, Penny Pictorial. H. Dowler, 86 Hamilton Rd., Longsight, Manchester, 13.

## AUTHORS AND THEIR PEN NAMES: by Herbert Leckenby

When, some three years ago, the truth became known about the authorship of the St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood stories, it caused a great surprise. In fact I know some who had read the stories for years who said they could not believe it. There were others who had suspected at least a part of the truth. This, maybe, was to some extent due to the fact that the boys of the three schools were well acquainted with each other. But this, of course, could have been an arrangement between three authors, as a one-time editor of the papers rather led us to believe.

However, throughout the years, the secret was well kept. This was really due to the fact that when for the time being Charles Hamilton was Marton Clifford, he completely doffed the mantle of Frank Richards, and when he was writing about Rookwood he forgot all about St. Jim's. No one can say, for instance that Harry Wharton was in any way a second Tom Merry. There is no doubt that for years he succeeded in being three men, and that wasn't either himself or Ralph Redway or Miss Hilda Richards. That may seem a little involved, but readers will know what I mean. The foregoing leads up to the topic of authors and their many pen names - a fascinating topic which has intrigued me since the far off days when I was a care-free boy. The details which follow have been gathered in various ways; a decided style which easily betrayed the writers' hiding under another name; slips on the part of the editorial staff; information from authors and editors themselves; and the help of good friends with a similar bent.

Probably the best example of the author who simply could not disguise himself was dear old J.N. Pentelow. Call himself Jack North, Richard Randolph, or what he liked his distinctive style stood out like a beacon light. Even when reading one of his short sports articles there was no need to look for his initials at the foot, for you were aware of him after the first few paragraphs.

Others were not so easy to detect. There was David Goodwin, for instance. He had a crisp, unexaggerated style with very few mannerisms to betray him.

I had a suspicion, however, he was also John Tregellis and I kept my eyes open for information. Came a time when serials by both authors were running in two of the Amalgamated Press papers at the same time. One day I noticed that the Christian name of the hero of one story had slipped into the place of the other. I remember how I seized on that clue with a feeling of self-satisfaction. Later David admitted to me that he was also John.

(Continued)

WANTED: Bunter Court series of Magnet. Buy or exchange; or loan, please. Also Magnets and S.O.L's. in general similar.

W.E. Edwards, Ivydene, Solid Lane, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex.

FOR SALE: Detective Weekly, 1 - 150; Thrillers; Chums; Boys' Herolds, 1 - 26; Champion, Vol. 4; Pluck, Vol. 1; Holiday Annuals, etc. All bound.

H. Dowler, 86 Hamilton Road, Longsight, Manchester 13.

Tom Armitage, 205 Batley Road, Alverthorpe, Wakefield, wishes to thank all who have assisted with titles for his records. Further titles would be very welcome.

WANTED: Magnet No. 1,626, and others near it. Schoolboys' Owns, Number 283 (The Phantom of the Highlands), 284 (Ghost of Bannington Grange), and others. Good prices paid.

William L. Bowden, 7 Penryn Street, Redruth, Cornwall.

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

Mr. F. Addington Symonds tells us in a cheery letter that his prize novel with the unusual plot - "Murder of Me" (Chosen Books) sold immediately 100,000 copies, and that it is to be filmed. Also that another prize story is being published is a serial by Pearsons. Further, he is busy with three more novels. All this in addition to his every-day vocation. No 40-hour week for Mr. Addington Symonds!

Mr. R.A. Hudson, 5 Throstle Row, Leeds, 10, spotted the following dialogue in "The Hanging Rope" by Martin Kent (Eldon Press, Ltd.):—

"Make 'em fight it out, you'd be surprised how many friendships start that way".

"Just like the school books", marmoured Dick, "Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton, eh?"

Dick sat up. "I didn't know you were a Magnet fan. Just fancy that now. You run across 'em all over the world."

"Grand days! Yes, I used to buy it on the way to school on Monday mornings, and read it all the way up the road. I was always late on Mondays."

Dear old Harry Wharton & Co. Their names will never die. Thanks, Reg. Magnetites will be interested. (Editor).

#### MORE BOUQUETS:

Warmest felicitations on your splendid venture. I wish it a record long life for it is brilliantly produced and edited. Your tribute to Mr. Gander most absorbing.

R.A.H. Goodyear, Wintergreen,  
Wheatcroft, Scarborough.

.. .. .

Congratulations on a really splendid effort. Believe me I shall look forward to getting my copy regularly in future.

Leslie Vosper, 13 Kinlet Road,  
Shooters Hill, S.E.18.

.. .. .

Very favourably impressed with No.1, and very keen to see No.2. The duplicating has been done very successfully and has been turned out much better than I would have expected.

R.M. Jenkins Oalfe, 2 Town Hall Road,  
Havant, Hants.

.. .. .

## BLAKIANA

A section of the "Collectors' Digest" devoted to the Man from Baker Street, Sexton Blake. All communications relating to Blake matters, including letters from members of the Sexton Blake Correspondence Club, to be addressed to H.M.Bond, 172, Caerphilly Road, Birchgrove, Cardiff.

### THE EDITOR SAYS:

That at the time of writing this second Editorial I have not yet had any comments regarding No.1 of "Blakiana", but it has only just made its appearance and so we must wait until the next issue in order to discuss any brickbats or bouquets that may come our way. I sincerely hope, however, that the contents of No.2 will please you even more than those of No.1. I was most fortunate to obtain, at short notice, the splendid tribute to the work of that clever Blake artist, Eric R.Parker, and although the author wishes to hide his light under the proverbial bushel I think I might say that he has some claim to distinction in the artistic field. I am sure you will all enjoy his article and I hope that I shall be able to give you more from his pen at a later date. I should much appreciate comments on this item by the way. The second feature of our 2nd issue is contributed by myself. This article was originally scheduled for publication in "The Story Paper Collector" but owing to the unfortunate suspension of that valuable paper this was impossible and so I considered that it would be of interest to you in "Blakiana". I had hoped to include another Blake Crossword in this issue but as you will realise the compilation of such a puzzle is far from easy owing to the very limited number of names and words to be used, and so, at the moment, puzzle No.2 is still in the embryo stage. I hope, however, that some of you Club members will try and make up a puzzle of similar nature. We shall be pleased to publish it, or any other type of puzzle for that matter.

so long, of course, that it deals with Sexton Blake material.

The re-appearance of Rex Handinge with a story in one of the October issues of the S.B.L. has caused quite a bit of controversy. It appears that most of the old Blake fans think it a very poor effort and I must say that I agree with most of the adverse criticism. In the first place the plot is very weak and the characters weaker! There did not seem to be any tangible clues, and, as one member put it, the author almost convinced him that Blake was the murderer! This, of course, was an exaggeration, but it certainly was all very confusing and I feel that Mr. Handinge should be warned that he will lose all his old friends if he continues to write in such a manner. As has been the case in nearly all the recent Blake stories, the atmosphere was very poor, and Blake a far from human character, just another 'tec, in fact. We await the appearance (as promised by the Editor) of another old contributor, Warwick Jardine, and we hope that he will not make the mistake of falling into the same rut as the majority of the modern writers.

In conclusion, may I once again ask all you readers, and club members in particular, to get cracking on those ideas you have for articles! We want 'em all. If you are a Blake fan this is YOUR paper and we want YOUR contributions.

Cheerio for now,  
H. M. BOND.

#### NEXT ISSUE:

"I visit Baker Street" - No.1.  
Sexton Blake Quiz - - No.2.

#### THE SEXTON BLAKE CORRESPONDENCE CLUB:

We have pleasure in welcoming three new members to the Club. (Actually Mr. Stowe's name should have appeared in No.1. Apologies, Dennis.)

(22) Dennis E. Stowe, 695 Queslett Rd., Birng'ham, 22A

(23) D. Ford, 42 West Bond Street, Macclesfield.

(24) Henry J.H. Bartlett, Peas Hill, Shipton Gorge,

Bridfort, Dorset.

THE ART OF ERIC PARKER:

By "Nemo"

What is your conception of Sexton Blake? Of Tinker? Of Mrs. Hardell? Of Insp. Coutts? Wu Ling? Zenith the Albino? Plummer? Rymer? Sir Henry Fairfax?

Your answers to these and a score of similar questions depend almost certainly on the impressions you have absorbed of the work of one man, Eric R. Parker.

It is many years now since this brilliant illustrator first showed the followers of the Sexton Blake saga how little they, and other illustrators, really knew of the characters who were already world-famous. No portrait of the artist, so far as I am aware, has ever appeared, to acknowledge the fact, but it is quite certain that to 'ERP' belongs the credit for the 'authenticity' and conviction of the mental portraits in the minds of several generations of U.J., D.W., and S.B.L. readers.

Not always was Eric Parker the brilliant draughtsman he has now become. By comparison with his present polished technique and deft style, his early work was admittedly crude. But always - even in the early nineteen-twenties, it was in advance of the work of his contemporaries. Always it had a slickness and magnetism that enhanced the attractiveness of the text and gave vivid realism to the characters and the atmosphere.

'Atmosphere' is, I think, the secret of Parker's power. His delineation of the characters has changed with the years: his craftsmanship has matured; but the atmosphere of his work had always been individual and unmistakable - whether in the sombre gloom of the Paris catacombs, the vast spaces of a 'Western' or 'Eastern' locale, or even in those delightful cameos illustrating the humours of 'Tinker's Notebook' and the 'Detective Supplement'.

Of Sexton Blake himself it is safe to say that Eric Parker is the only possible portraitist. The unique charm of the famous Bust was no more typical of the great detective than have been a thousand or more black and white sketches. It has, in fact, been true that often Eric Parker illustrations have presented a far better picture of the immortal sleuth

than has the story they have illustrated.

And yet 'ERP'S' Blake has not always been the same! Once he was a thin man with a mop of curly hair. Later he became rather more burly and his hair proportionately thinner! There was a period when he was drawn too tall and gaunt for realism - but invariably Parker's Blake was the best of his time. Blake in essence. Even the shape of the famous nose has varied from period to period - but in Parker's work the detective could always be recognised by his nose and his poise - by the lift of a brow or the turn of an eye. By his shadow! Even in disguise!

After his portrayal of Blake himself, Parker's greatest triumph, in my opinion, was the penetrating representation of Det.-Insp. Coutts. Aggressive, cocksure, burly, bucolic, Coutts as he should be; Coutts as he is - but Coutts as no other artist has ever portrayed him.

But it was not only in the acute perception of physiognomy and physique that Parker had always excelled. Equally important has been his masterly introduction of convincing 'props'. Whatever the scene or the mood, somewhere in the sketch would be something distinctive to heighten its realism. The peculiar paraphernalia of that particular part of the world was always exemplified by some unobtrusive but essential detail.

And too, in Parker's work the clothing of his characters has always been in 'character'. Essentially 'right'. Right for the character, right for the circumstances, right for the season, right for the period. Not for Parker the elementary device of portraying all the villains in slouch hats and long overcoats. Not for him the dated style. Is there a car in the sketch? Then it's the latest model! A Girl? Then her dress and coiffure are in the height of fashion. A table-lamp? a chair? a telephone? Then you can depend that they're 'a la mode'.

Not for Parker, either, the convenience of a few stock poses, the formula for a hand, the easy profile, the conventional perspective. And yet, with it all, he combines an appearance of amazing facility.

And his racial types. No pigtail and mandarin's sash to tell you that a Parker character is Chinese!

Totally unnecessary. In fact, one of his most typically-brilliant Chinese characterisations, Dr. Li Sin, appeared usually in Western evening-garb.

So one might continue the list of individual traits in Parker's fascinating style. His brilliant use of shadows (if the oxymoron is permissible). His colour-sense, as exemplified in the 3-colour S.B. Library and Annual covers, and in the equally distinctive 2-colour covers of the old Union Jack.

Seldom can it truthfully be claimed that any man is indispensable; but to replace E.R.P. as an illustrator of Sexton Blake stories I can imagine literally no one. He is in a class apart, and of him it can be said - as of few artists - that he reveals, by virtue of his own brilliant imagination, much that would otherwise be indiscernible not only to the eye of the reader, but to the mind of the author.

It was in Sexton Blake stories that ERP found his metier and made his deserved reputation, and it is fortunate that the S.B.L. still commands his brush. Let us hope that the anticipated return of a Sexton Blake Weekly will evoke more of the unique skill in black-and-white of his equally facile pen.

The toast is : "Eric R. Parker - creator of 'talking pictures!'"

#### THE TRAVELLING DETECTIVE:

By H.M. Bond.

Being a few recollections of the foreign adventures of Sexton Blake and some of the authors responsible for recording them.

.. .. .

The more I turn the many pages of my collection of Sexton Blake stories the more I realise what a vast amount of travel that has been done by this famous character. In the early days of the Union Jack 2nd series, between the years 1905 and 1915 there were a considerable number of yarns of foreign adventure, but this number was far exceeded from that time on. Not only was the Union Jack the only publisher of these 'tec adventure stories of Blake though. The very first numbers of the Sexton Blake Library in 1915 were set in foreign parts and a very large proportion of the succeeding libraries were so devoted.

As one would imagine there have been numerous authors of Sexton Blake stories who have been world travellers, some of them very well known to most old S.B. fans, and they had the happy knack of blending their own experiences into the stories. As is to be imagined this fact lent an air of authenticity to the yarns and one felt instinctively that a certain author thoroughly knew the places or characters he was writing about.

The first author I bring to mind is Cecil Hayter who was responsible for that staunch ally of Blake's, Lobangu the Zulu. Mr. Hayter also created Sir Richard Losely who was a friend of the detective's when both were at school. Actually the history of their subsequent rise to fame in the upholding of the law, one in London and the other in darkest Africa is a little hazy, but long after Losely appeared in Mr. Hayter's 'Sexton Blake at Oxford' there appeared in the old Union Jack, stories of their meetings in the dark continent, and Lobangu was introduced in one of these. He came to stay. Later on that great traveller Rex Handinge adopted Mr. Hayter's famous characters and the result was good. I suppose it can be said that Rex Handinge was, and still is, the most travelled of Blake authors. His wanderings through Africa have provided material for an excellent travel book called 'South African Cinderella'. I expect most readers interested in the older Blake stories will recall his unique yarn 'The Black Cloud'. Yes, Blake certainly had some spine chilling adventures through the medium of Mr. Handinge.

Andrew Murray caused Blake to travel to many different climes and seemed to write with some authority on them all. His stories set in the Middle East were of a very high standard and he was particularly at home in Palestine. How many remember his wonder tale "The Mosque of the Mahdi" published in No. 52 of the S.B.L., 1st series? A few titles of Mr. Murray's stories will convey to the reader the type he specialised in. All the titles I quote were published in the 1st series of the Sexton Blake Library. No. 4 'The Rajah's Revenge' (India); No. 84 'Settler or Slaver' (Africa); No. 88 'The Mandarin's Son' (China); No. 36 'The Sheikh's Son' (N. Africa);

No.53 'The Secret of the Glacier' and No.73 'North of 55°' (The Frozen North). There is no doubt that Andrew Murray was indeed a most versatile writer and he will be remembered with pleasure for a long time.

(Continued)

SOLUTION TO S.B. CROSSWORD No.1:

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CONTROVERSY:

As I stated in my first editorial the C.D. will welcome letters from readers especially if they are of a critical nature, for there is nothing so interesting as an exchange of views. We have just received the following letter from Mr.Wm.Colcombe of Southend on Sea:-

Dear Editor,

It has always been a puzzle to me the big amount of admiration that G.H.Teed had evoked from Blake fans. Admittedly a fine descriptive writer, but surely the first thing a writer of Sexton Blake stories should do is to write a detective story not a travelogue on China or N.Africa or somewhere equally remote, after all, if one wants a travel book one prefers to buy one as such, not a book masquerading as a detective story which is all G.H.Teed's stories are.

Yours truly.

Wm. Colcombe.

.. ..

No doubt many readers will wish to reply to Mr.

Colcombe and I shall welcome their remarks. As G.H. Teed was, and still is, my own special favourite writer of Sexton Blake or any other stories, I feel that I should set the ball rolling and say what I think. In the first place it was never intended that ALL Blake stories should be sheer detective stories. The old U.J. catered for readers of all ages and tastes and many of them were keen on stories set abroad, not merely detective stories so long as they featured their favourite character Sexton Blake. Being that as it may it took a very clever writer to combine adventure with detection and there has never been anyone who could handle such stories as Mr. Teed. Not only did he base most of his stories upon his own personal experience but he made of Blake a man who was a human being as well as a sleuth, not, as some of his contemporaries, a man with second sight. Compare the English of Mr. Teed with that of most other Blake authors and you will see the difference. And in any case all his stories were not set in foreign climes, I can give details of dozens of splendid yarns with locale not far from London. And who create the cream of the U.J. and S.B.L. criminal characters? Was it not Mr. Teed with his Yvonne, Roxane, Wu Ling, Rymer, Hsui Psi, San, Marie Galante and a host of others. And again topicality! Every Teed story I can remember had some bearing upon a topical theme. He was always on the spot, as it were, and gave his readers stories that breathed actuality.

It is obvious that friend Colcombe is not a lover of Teed stories because he is a lover of detective stories only and therefore not as keen a Blake fan as he would have us believe, for if he were really 100% for Blake he would be only too willing to praise Teed, the man who did more for the character we know and love than any other writer. Very often a bad detective story can become a best seller simply because it's author is a master of the art of writing. G.H. Teed was a master of writing the Blake story and I think that if votes were cast he would inevitably be at the top of the poll.

The Editor.