

The
**COLLECTOR'S
DIGEST**

(Vol.4) No.44 August 1950 1s.00



For Sale

GEM: One bound volume, containing: Nos. 1-10 in perfect condition, and Nos. 15 & 16 complete, but torn at the margins

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1 to 20. No. 1 has centre pages missing; Nos. 2 - 7, 10, 12 & 13, covers only; Nos. 9, 11 and 14 - 20 complete.. .. .
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MARVEL: Vol. 1 dated 30th Jan. 1904: No. 1 in perfect condition; Nos. 2-12, 15, 16, 18, 20 - 26 - Good; Nos. 13, 14, 17 & 19. Torn, pages missing. Vol. 5 dated 1906. Nos. 105 to 130 complete.. .. .

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All the above were Mr. H.A. HINTON's own copies

SCHOOL & SPORT. 1921. School Stories by Frank Richards. Several loose copies.

Offers to

James Hinton, Southam, Addlestone Park.
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FOR SALE: Henty's Union Jack Vol. 2. Nos. 41-92 - (1882-3). What offers. T. Johnson, Raby Cottage, Raby Park, Neston, Wirral, Cheshire.



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Post Free

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AUGUST 1950

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Revelations. A star attraction this month is the "Letter Box", as you'll agree when you read its contents. There's the communication from Walter Webb, for instance. A veritable disciple of Sexton Blake is Walter, if ever there was one. Once he has the mystery of some author's identity to solve, he sticks at it with the tenacity of a terrier, until he has reached a solution.

Last month in some remarks I made to my colleague of Blakiana I expressed my surprise at Walter's statement that Shaw Rae was Ernest Treeton. This was because there had been an impression that Shaw Rae was Harry Blythe, and if that had been so he couldn't have been Treeton. However, Walter gives clear proof that the Shaw Rae-Treeton statement is correct, for no one but a fool would question H. J. Gerrish.

Actually in the interval I had discovered the Shaw Rae-Blyth link-up was wrong. By pure chance I pick up an ancient Ed. Union Jack and therein was a page giving photos of authors of the day. Among them were both Blyth and Shaw Rae. So that was that. Anyone who had studied the styles of the two authors, however, could be forgiven for thinking they were one and the same. The page of photos, by the way, will probably be reproduced in the Annual.

There's a sad note, too, in Walter's letter, for he mentions several authors who have joined the Great Majority. We know of some of them, but I was grieved to note A. S. Hardy and Allen Blair among them. I was unaware that they had gone, though I rather feared it.

I read Allen Blair's first serial, "Pluck Will Tell" in the Boys' Friend, way back in 1901. And how well I remember when I first welcomed Herry Dowler to York some eight years ago he told me he had just received a letter from this author who thrilled us in our youth. We pulled up in the street, and I read it there and then. It was a kindly letter but with a touch of pathos, for he said he was a lonely old man, who found life in war time London distracting.

And Arthur Hardy, unsurpassed as writer of yarns of football. Memories of the Blue Crusaders! That's the mournful side to our hobby. The Grim Reaper has claimed so many of them. I wonder if they meet in some writer's Velhalla and talk over the stories they wrote in the days when there were real, honest, weekly papers for boys.

On a more cheerful note, there's another interesting letter from an author who fortunately is still with us, S. Walkey, famous for the stirring pirate yarns in "Chums" of long ago. They were in a class to themselves. Note Mr. Walkey's generous tribute to Paul Hardy, whose vivid illustrations helped to make those stories so captivating.

I have to thank Peard Sutherland, of Vancouver, for Mr. Walkey's letter, for it was he who gave me the address.

Of Interest to Lee Fans. Jack Wood has got some note-paper adorned with the St. Frenks crest in two colours - red and blue. It looks most impressive. If anyone would like a supply, Jack can get it for them on good quality paper; 250 octavo, £1; 100 quarto, 10/-. If you haven't his address handy, it's - J. P. Wood, Nestaw, Stockton Lane, York.

Those "Picture Stories". Judging by my post bag, readers are in full agreement with my comments on those "read in a minute" stories which are served up for the present day younger generation. But where the School Friend is concerned I should like to add something. One of our lady members is the artist who does the front page story, and all who have seen it will agree she does it jolly well. I confess when I had a look at

the School Friend, I did not recognise her work; friend Len mentioned it after I had written my remarks. But in any case what I said was, of course, no reflection on the artist. They carry out instructions. Some good ideas come from America, but this isn't one of them. Fancy the epic "Bunter of Bunter Court" series in picture story form!

Treasure Trove. I am always pleased when we can publish an advert offering special favourites for sale. There's one such in this issue and it's of particular interest as the papers formed the collection of Mr. H. A. Hinton, who many will remember as editor of the Gem and Magnet for a number of years.

The Annual. Questionnaire and Order forms are coming along in gratifying fashion. Just one request. In submitting please give full Christian names instead of just initials. Christian names seem more friendly.

Since writing last I've got John Medcraft's list of No. One's or some of them. It makes me green with envy; I shan't be the only one. And he's promised an article on serials in the Victorian papers.

We haven't heard of very many No. One's yet. There must be more, so send them along, won't you, or you'll disappoint

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

STOP PRESS: Just to hand copy of "Jack of All Trades", Mandeville Publications, 7/6, 221 pages. A hurried glance sufficient to prove it's Frank Richards at his very best. And look out for "The Scapegrace of St. Jims", (July); "Talbot's Secret" (September) each 6/-; "Tom Merry's Own" (September) 8/6. And later, "The Rivals of Rookwood School", "Who Shall be Captain?" (Carcroft). All Mandeville Publications.

WANTED: Marvel (1d) No. 393. Boys Friend Libraries (1st Series) No's 1, 2, 76, 109, 119, 122, 130, 142, 154, 159, 169, 182, 184, 188, 196, 203, 208, 225, 245, 293, 395, 595. Also Cheer Boys Cheer, 1d Weekly all numbers. E. Blight, "Sandhills", Constantine Bay, St. Merryn, Cornwall.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: G. Gordon, late of Porthcawl, has moved to 180 Bryn Road, Brynmenyn, Nr. Bridgend, Glam.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PASTNo.9 - Boys' Champion Story Paperby John Medcraft

(Note:- Last month a comparatively modern paper, now back nearly 50 years, to one described by John Medcraft's experienced pen. When you've read it, there'll be little you won't know about the Boys' Champion Story Paper. One thing which always intrigued me about it was the "Swops" feature. This used to run to several columns of small type, which would make it appear it had quite a good circulation at one time. - H.L.)

Despite a comparatively short run of 119 numbers, the Boys' Champion Story Paper was far from being a failure in an age of fierce competition for juvenile pence and is still revered by many of us with receding or greying hair who passed a carefree boyhood in the tranquil days at the beginning of the century.

"The Garland" had ended a few months previously and the need for a companion paper to "Nuggets" was filled by Hendersons with the Boys' Champion which first appeared on January 19th, 1901. Probably inspired by the success of the "Boys' Friend", Hendersons adopted a similar format for the new paper, eight large pages containing three well illustrated serials plus correspondence, editorial and exchange sections, price one halfpenny weekly.

The front page serial of No.1 was "Shipwreck Island", to be followed later in the run of the paper by a sequel, "Cruise of the Ice Queen", both first class stories by a fine writer who never lacked originality and freshness of theme, Derwent Miall, exclusively a Henderson author throughout his career as a writer for boys. Also starting in No.1 was "Over Africa in a Balloon" by W. Murray Graydon who wrote for Hendersons for several years before transferring to Harmsworth. Inevitably the road was open to reprints from "Young Folks" and the "Weekly Budget" but all were well chosen and came fresh to the youth of a new generation. First to appear were those soul stirring romances of English chivalry by Alfred R. Phillips, "A Fight for Fame" (Desdichado) and "The Knight's Quest" (Thundersleigh) with all the fine original illustrations by W. Boucher. Later came "The King of the Gladiators" by the same author which had

originally appeared in "Young Folks" under the title of "Glaucus".

"The Scapegraces" by Walter C. Rhodes which commenced in No.20 was the first of his school stories to appear in the Boys' Champion, followed later by "Our Fellows at St.Marks" and "A Varsity Blue". The latter, originally titled "Grayson of St.Olaves", was one of the finest stories of its type and deservedly reprinted several times in the Henderson papers. In No.33 came that grand story of submarine adventure, "The Diving Duck" by talented Derwent Miall. About this time stories of submarines and sirships were numerous, so it is appropriate to record that "The Scourge of the Skies" by John G. Rowe followed in No.40. Earlier, commencing in No.35, the same writer had contributed a thrilling story of South Sea adventure complete with a conventional White Queen of the cannibals, entitled "The Secret of the Golden Fetish".

The practice of delegating the editorship of one number of a boys' paper to a popular sporting celebrity of the day was fairly common in the past and No.35 of the Boys' Champion was credited to the famous K S. Renjitsinhji. We have its parallel today in the many newspaper and magazine articles attributed to well known sportsmen whose sole written contribution is frequently limited to a signature.

From No.47, the Boys' Champion was increased to 16 pages and the price raised to one penny, while many new features dear to boyish hearts were introduced, three pages being devoted to correspondence, hobbies, competitions and exchanges and another, a few weeks later, to comic pictures. In this format the paper remained to the end of its run. The next serial of note in the enlarged paper was a tale of the circus by Edmund Harfield entitled, "Jack Harriden's Adventures" and this he followed up with an absorbing series of complete stories under the general title of "A Railway Guard's Adventures". Then came "The Underground River" and "Banished to Seghelien" by ever popular W. Murray Graydon. At this stage "The Fourth Form at St. Ethelreds" by John G. Rowe was also running and, while I have every admiration for the author's many and varied adventure stories, I am thankful that school stories from his pen were mercifully few.

An unusual school series by A. J. Ireland entitled, "The Dormitory Nights' Entertainments" commenced in No.60. As a relief from normal routine of work and play, Dick Rodney and his friends at Seeham School form a narrators' club in

Dormitory Five and each take turns in story telling after lights out. An interesting series but with obvious limitations. Then in No.73 came "In the King's Name", a grand story of smugglers and the press gang, of French revolutionaries and Regency bucks in the spacious days of the Georges, by Derwent Miall in his best vein. "The Middies of the Gadfly" by John G. Rowe came next and was followed by two fine yarns of Army life, "The Scarlet Lancers" and "The Blue Dragoons" both of which had previously appeared in "Young Folks" and "Nuggets". These were written by George Manville Fenn, affectionately known to an earlier generation of Henderson's readers as Uncle George. Then came "Slingsby's Schooldays", an original and highly diverting story by Derwent Miall. Slingsby and his friends at Minerva House certainly had an enviable schooling under Dr. Vandersee. Old Van, as the doctor was affectionately known among his pupils, had an inventive mania and if his many weird and wonderful creations were not destined to benefit humanity they certainly dispelled any semblance of boredom at Minerva House. This outstanding story was suitably illustrated by Harrison whose humorous drawings were a feature of many illustrated papers of the period. Incidentally, the story was reprinted later in two volumes of the "Nugget Library" under the titles of "Boys of Minerva House" and "Old Van".

"The King of Scouts", a tale of Buffalo Bill by Col. Prentiss Ingraham which had previously appeared in the "Weekly Budget", started in No.103 and this, together with "Kit Crackshot" by Derwent Miall, were the only two Wild Western stories to appear in the Boys' Champion. Another original story running at this period was "The Iron Tooth" by Stewart Lang. This rather far-fetched but exciting account of the adventures of two London messenger boys in the Alps I have re-read several times with undiminished interest, but I still marvel at the skill of one led in retaining his traditional pillbox headgear throughout a series of nerve-shattering adventures amongst glaciers, avalanches and wolves including the human variety. The same author also contributed a different but equally thrilling serial entitled, "The Star of the Sea; or, the Curse of the Fernands". A fine series of sea yarns entitled "Yarns from a Sailor's Log" by C. G. Lawson was also running about this time. Illustrated by Louis Gunnis whose

lean and hungry looking characters have always fascinated me, this series was later reprinted in the "Nugget Library" under the title of "The Exploits of Captain Doyle".

The sands of the Boys' Champion were running out, but no indication of the impending end appeared in the make-up of the paper, and two other serials commenced, the first by Derwent Miell entitled "With Rupert's Cavaliers" and finally, "Fletcher of the 59th" by H. Gillander. Then without preliminary warning came the editorial announcement that, owing to its large and inconvenient size, the Boys' Champion would be replaced with all current features by the handier sized "Pocket Budget". Granted that the paper was over large, surely it was unnecessary to wait two years to remedy a defect obvious from the start. However, the "Pocket Budget" duly appeared the following week carrying unfinished serials from the older paper and many of its features on a reduced scale. Two fresh serials appeared in the new paper, "Round the World in a Motor Car" by John G. Rowe and "The Scourge of the Gold Trail" by Col. Prentiss Ingraham and both finished, but so did the "Pocket Budget" with its 11th number.

So ended the grand Boys' Champion Story Paper, a victim of misjudged editorial policy. Its authors bear comparison with the best of any period in boys' literature while the artists included, in addition to Harrison and Louis Gunnis, W. Boucher of "Young Folks" fame; Phil Ebbutt; G. C. Glover who was also an author; and Fritz Braun whose grand work for the covers of the "Wild West Library" had yet to appear. Truly a paper to stir the pulse of old timers like myself.

CAN ANYONE HELP me to obtain for sentimental reasons any or all the following Nelson Lee (original first series): 17 (7/6 offered), 71, 72, 88, 101, 103, 104; also original Sexton Blake 3d. Lib. No.30, "The Three Trails". Your own price paid, and really grateful for the chance!
J. Richard Treynor, BCM/Adventures, London, W.C.1.

WANTED: Magnets, Gems, Union Jacks, Populars, Schoolboys Owns of Rockwood, St.Jims, Greyfriars. H.E. Twinham, 25 Haselden Road, Lupset, Wakefield, Yorkshire.

WANTED URGENTLY: Gems No's 819 and 946. Josephine Peckman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

The Nelson Lee Column

— Conducted by Robert Blythe —

(All communications temporarily to L. Peckman,
27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22)

Several Lee-ites have recently written to me asking if I can "help" with any of their early N.L. wants. I am glad to say I have been of some assistance; but what prompts me to mention it is the fact that by my interpretation of certain of these letters, they suggest the writers being rather pessimistic in their "wants" outlook. As is well known, Bob Blythe "lost" three N. Lees at the Islington exhibition, fortunately replaced by your humble a month or so later. These three issues have turned up again quite recently in the same nice condition as Bob's replacements!

Again, within the past two months I have had no less than three different copies of O.S. Lee, No.15. "The Spendthrift" (by G.H.Teed).

Well, there you are, chums, you never know what's around the corner. Take heart and "keep cracking"!

Now for the Boys' Realm St.Franks titles.

81, The Mystery of the Broken Windows; 82, Puzzling the Remove; 83, The Secret of the Hut; 84, A Mystery No Longer; 85, Scapegrace and Schemer; 86, The Interrupted Match; 87, Beaten by Trickery; 88, Plotting to Win; 89, Dishonourable Means; 90, The Reward for Roguery; 91, The Spectre of Merton Manor; 92, The Man Nipper Suspected; 93, Deceiving the Remove; 94, The Baffled Schoolboys; 95, The Missing Removites; 96, The School-boy Treasure-Seekers; 97, Hendforth, Poultry Farmer; 98, The St.Frank's Minstrels; 99, To Shield His Chum; 100, Nipper's Great Dilemma; 101, Deserting His Team; 102, Nipper's Ordeal; 103, The Unwanted Captain; 104, A Dream of Wealth; 105, The Boy from the Circus; 106, The Boxer's Gratitude; 107, Alarming the School; 108, Jack Henley's Predicament; 109, His Honour Cleared; 110, Who's for the Regatta?

Finally, by way of a change, here are some more Nelson Lee

(O.S.) titles! 471, The Schoolboy Headmaster; 472, One of the Boys; 473, The Mystery of the Head's Wife; 474, A Schoolgirl's Word of Honour; 475, The Robber of the Remove; 476, The Snake in the School; 477, The Camp in the Desert; 478, The Ship of the Sahara; 479, Trapped in the Desert; 480, Chariots and Gladiators; 481, By the Emperor's Command; 482, Thrown to the Lions; 483, Left in the Desert; 484, The Crimson Eagle; 485, The Scandal at St. Franks; 486, The School with a Bad Name; 487, The Stigma of Shame; 488, Trying Times for St. Frank's; 489, The Schoolboy Boxer's Luck; 490, The Schoolboy Stokers; 491, The Schoolboy Reporters; 492, Saved by the Fourth; 493, Archie's Awful Ancestor; 494, The Secret of the Old Mill; 495, Willy Handforth's Windfall; 496, The Twin's Terrible Tangle; 497, The Mystery Goalkeeper; 498, The Ghosts of Glenthorne Manor; 499, The Secret of the Panel; 500, The Schoolboys' Pantomime; 501, The School of Hidden Dreed; 502, The Schoolboy Drudges; 503, The Phantom Protector; 504, Under the Lash! 505, The Mark of the Savage; 506, After Lights-Out; 507, The Hooded Unknown; 508, Nipper Takes the Reins; 509, The Most Hollow Mutiny; 510, The Schoolboy Mutineers.

Old Boys' Book Club

Northern Section

The July meeting was held at 237, Hyde Park Road on the 15th inst. Pouring rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of the dozen members present. They included our long-distance travellers - Cliff Beardsell (Stockport) and Harry Dowler (Manchester). Fortunately Harry did not attempt to make the journey on his bike.

The meeting opened promptly at 6-30, Reg. Hudson in the chair ruled firmly and business was got through expeditiously. The secretary read a letter from the Leeds Public Library offering a fortnight from September 25th for the Exhibition of Old Boys' Books, and this was considered quite satisfactory. Already offers of books on loan for the big event have been received and it is to be hoped others will rally round. Thanks to the enterprise of Bill Sawyer the Exhibition will in all probability be opened by the editor of the Yorkshire Evening News.

Owing to business and domestic reasons, Norman Smith explained that he found it difficult to carry on duties of treasurer, so it was agreed I should take it on for the time being. As Norman can write better figures than I can I hope it won't be long before I pass the office back to him again.

Quite a useful number of papers have now been got together for the Library. They include Magnets, Gems, Union Jacks, Marvels, Nelson Lees, Schoolboys' Owns, Thrillers, etc. It was decided to loan them to members at 2d. per copy. It will be appreciated if members will exchange as frequently as possible so that outlay by the Club can be recovered. All enquiries to Gerald Allison. A gift of papers from Ernest Hubbard was gratefully received.

I gave a talk on the Magnet and managed to answer some of the questions which followed. Harry Dowler will tell members all about the Boys' Friend at the next meeting. No one knows more about that once king of papers than he.

It was decided that the next meetings should be on Saturday, August 26th; usual time and place. Unless there has to be an unexpected change in date, post-cards will not be sent out to members, so they should accept this as the official intimation, thus saving time for the secretary, and expense to the Club.

Business over, refreshments were taken, the Librarian got busy, and the room buzzed with "I remember when—". I noticed the lady member present smiling once or twice. Guess she was thinking, "And they call women the talkative sex."

The gossip stopped at 9-30 however, and we set off through the rain to our scattered destinations not caring if it snowed as well.

Members present: Miss Vera Coates, Cliff Beardsell, Harry Dowler, Norman Smith, Gerald Allison, S. F. Armitage, W. L. Williamson, Harry Barlow, Reg. A. Hudson, Charlie Price, W. F. Sawyer, and Herbert Leckenby.

Northern Section Correspondent.

(Note: Owing to the London meeting being a fortnight later than usual, the report will have to be held over until our September issue.)

WANTED: 1900-1920 Human Bat yarns; girls' papers; adult magazines if sensational. Sole, Magnets, Gems, Nick Carters, 6d. and 9d. Captain, 1911-1912. E.V. Hughes, "Caswell", 25 Hillsboro' Road, Bognor Regis.

Hamiltonia

— Conducted by Herbert Leckenby —

If Frank Richards could claim royalties every time St. Jims and Greyfriars were mentioned in the newspapers he would gather quite a tidy sum. There are four examples in this issue, three of them amusing.* Particularly so the slip in the Liverpool newspaper. I wonder if the linotype operator, or whoever was responsible, was thinking of the doughty member of the Remove, or merely an expensive racehorse he was backing for the 2-30!

As for Ian Mackey's striking tribute which appeared in the "News Chronicle" some time ago, does not this support what I said last month about Frank Richards and the Honours List, a view, by the way, which is evidently supported by a large number of C.D. readers, if my mail bag is anything to go by.

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That enthusiast out in South Africa, Jim Southway, flabbergasts me. I've said it before, and I make no apologies for repeating it. A week or two ago I received a fat packet from him containing a vast amount of data. One section of it was the whole of the 1683 Magnet stories arranged in alphabetical order. I think I can claim to have a fair amount of patience - where the hobby is concerned - but I guess I should be inclined to dodge the work and headaches arranging all those titles would entail. You're a marvel, Jim. And I can see this list is going to be very useful. For instance, a glance tells me that that famous story "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out" was No. 254, and "Billy Bunter's Birthright" No. 538, and a substitute story. So if you want to know the number of any Magnet story, ask me - and thank Jim Southway.

Moreover, I see in it more fodder for the Annual - "Curiosities in Magnet Titles". For example, ignoring the word "the" I find "Greyfriars" came first in the titles no less than 73 times; that there were three "Herry Wharton's Downfalls" No's 170, 885, and 1257, that "Runted Down" was used four times, that - oh well, wait for the Annual.

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*Press Cuttings referred to unavoidably omitted due to lack of space. Ed.

And now a new contributor to our pages, though a reader for a long time. You'll agree it's delightfully topical, even though you do think with a sigh of the days when the Remove was going on vacation.

THROUGH ENGLAND WITH THE FAMOUS FIVE

(And One or Two Others)

By James Walsh

I did have an idea of "writing-up" the whole of the Greyfriars holiday series.

But as our heroes spent a considerable portion of each year for something like a generation on their travels, I feel that our worthy editor would be strongly averse to turning whole issues of the "Digest" into a sort of Greyfriars Baedeker.

So we'll forego the lure of "faraway places" and, following the track Frank Richards has so ably beaten for us, spend our "holidays at home".

We will, of course, miss the thrilling encounters with savage cannibals, evil witch-doctors and treacherous half-breeds, but we will find many other compensations.

We can in these stories, perhaps more so than in any other aspect of Greyfriars life, identify ourselves with their activities.

We may never plod through burning deserts or hack our way through steaming jungles, but we can follow in their footsteps in our own little island and find the old familiar scenes all around us.

That typical England country house, with the red roofs and chimneys peeping through the trees - it might be Wharton Lodge; that stately pile, obviously a rich nobleman's - it might be Meuleverer Towers (we are somewhat disillusioned when on reaching the massive gateway, we observe a signboard bearing the mystic letters "N.B.C." or the legend "Ministry of-" So Democracy advances.)

That semi-ruinous old mansion we saw on our holiday in Devon or Cornwall - it might be Pollpelly or Pengerth; and why the cynical grin when we suggest there might be Spanish Gold down there in the cove? Are they not - as I read in the papers as I write - drawing up samples from the rotting timbers of a Spanish Galleon in Tobermory Bay? Though, doubtless, any

treasure they acquire will not provide such exciting happenings as Smithy's Doubloons from her sister-ship in Polpelly Cove.

However, we haven't room for yuletide adventures, as was the last, so we'll get back to summer.

My own acquaintance with these stories ranges from the Caravan series of 1921 - of which (forgive the free advert, Mr. Editor) I am desperately anxious to obtain three of the six numbers - to the Blackrock and Thames series of 1939; then which last two (for the benefit of Magnetites who confuse rarity with quality) Frank Richards wrote nothing better of the kind during his career.

However, as we cannot deal with every series individually, I will choose one from the middle period which I regard as being the epitome of all that is desirable in a holiday story.

I refer to the Hiking series of 1933.

The "crowd players" of Greyfriars give way to tramps and gipsies and other rustic characters and we are accompanied by our favourite "stars" - The Famous Five, Billy Bunter, old Mauly and later, Smithy.

We have a wealth of incident and ever-changing scenes and situations; hilarious episodes without number - how could it be otherwise with Bunter in the party or when our other prize comedian, Coker, arrives to take command; others more exciting, occasioned by the bitter feud with Ponsonby & Co. and their desperate attempts to capture the elusive Holiday Annual with its mysterious secret.

And woven through it all, a picture of the English countryside that brings the hot-sweet smell of grass and new-mown hay into my nostrils as I write.

It is in these variegated joys that we have the secret of this type of story being so ideally adapted to one's own holiday mood; more so, in my opinion, than those of the "fareway places".

In these latter, we are treated to bigger slices of what the critics call "gripping narrative" building up to a gradual climax. I am not making a disparaging comparison; one simply needs more time to get down to it.

In the home-travel stories, on the other hand, you can dip into them at odd moments while resting on a grassy bank or waiting for the kettle to boil on the primus and quickly get immersed without the mental effort of picking up the threads of the, admittedly, sketchy plot.

It is paradoxical that a feature which would in our general reading soon cause us to lose interest is, in these holiday stories, not the least of their attractions - their very expectedness.

When starting our summer holidays with the Greyfriars chums we don't need to cock a quizzical eye at the weather - we know the sun will be bright and the skies will be blue.

On our way we'll have the same adventure with the farmer's bull; get chased off an estate by the irate colonel-owner; and stop for refreshment under the shady tree that always stands outside of those delightful little inns we are sure to find, the red-faced inn-keeper, ever fat and jovial, attending busily to our - and especially Bunter's - wants. And, the grub being good, Bunter will suggest spending the rest of the holidays there (both set upon).

And when, tired and dusty, we search for a camp as the setting sun drops lower, lo! there is the same shrewd-eyed yokel who diddled the Co. so often, sitting on a gate, a green paddock ideal for camping just beyond. You know the rest? He offers use of field - for a "consideration"; once installed, second gent turns up, highly indignant - he's the "reel" owner - another "consideration" paid over; finally the last end, this time, genuine owner transpires who usually, but too late, offers use of field for nothing.

Well, we've camped for the last time in that little green dell; the wood nearby, the cool stream rippling at the bottom; the blue smoke from the camp-fire drifting lazily above the trees, the appetising aroma of sizzling sosses mingling pleasantly with the scent of burning wood.

In that peaceful scene we bid them farewell; soon we see them swinging along, those ever-youthful figures - the fat one still puffing in the rear - still laughing at the same old jokes; up the dusty lane, over the stile and across the meadow - the cheery voices grow faint as they vanish from sight - .

That was ten years and more ago.

Though three decades and more had left their youth and vigour unimpaired, that last has dealt less gently with us who journeyed with them; but should our trails meet once more, that happy re-union would find us still, as they, the Young in Spirit.

Will we ever hear that "Hallo! Hello! Hello!" again or a

soft voice murmur "Here we are againfully!" ?

Somehow, the last words we heard before they vanished from our gaze seem to re-echo in our ears -

"I say you fellows, wait for me!"

We will.

Magnet Titles (Contd.)

326, The Uninvited Guests; 327, Rough on Coker; 328, Cornered; 329, The Boy from the Farm; 330, The Wrong Sort; 331, The Missing Master; 332, The Greyfriars Trippers; 333, The Dark Horse; 334, The Shadow of the Past; 335, Looking after Uncle; 336, Wun Lung's Wheeze; 337, My Lord Fish; 338, The Match with St. Jim's; 339, Self-condemned; 340, Harry Wharton & Co's Holiday; 341, Wild Women at Greyfriars; 342, Coker's Conquest; 343, A Cool Card; 344, Ruotions at Highcliffe; 345, Spirited Away; 346, Hard Up; 347, Changed by Adversity; 348, The Grey - friars Spy-Hunters; 349, Won by Pluck; 350, Foiling the Foe; 351, The Photo Prize; 352, Looking for Alonzo; 353, The Reign of Terror; 354, The Black Footballers; 355, Fagging for Coker; 356, The Snob of the Remove; 357, The Return of the Prodigal; 358, Billy Bunter's Uncle; 359, The Patriotic Schoolmaster; 360, Skinner's Scheme; 361, The Rival Ventriloquist; 362, The Fight for the Cup; 363, The Cruise of the Famous Five; 364, Surprising the School; 365, The Schoolboy Auctioneer; 366, Bunter the Blade; 367, The Last Plunge; 368, Captured at Last; 369, Tom Dutton's Triumph; 370, Through Fire and Flame; 371, Bunter's Banknotes; 372, The Hun Hunters; 373, Carried Away; 374, The Fall of the Fifth; 375, Special Constable Coker; 376, When Johnny Comes Marching Home; 377, The Mystic Circle; 378, The Schoolboy Acrobats; 379, Hurree Singh's Peril; 380, Heroes of Highcliffe; 381, The Punishment Policies; 382, The Slackers Eleven; 383, Fifty Pounds Reward; 384, The Scout's Victory; 385, The Old Boys' Challenge; 386, Mauly's Flirtation; 387, The Schoolboy Lawyer; 388, The Mystery of the Gables; 389, The Mysterious Mr. Hobbs; 390, Sportsmen All; 391, The Master who Stayed at Home; 393, Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves; 393, Ponsonby's Plot; 394, The Fellow Who Won; 395, At War with Greyfriars; 396, Backing up Bunter; 397, Coker's Canadian Cousin; 398, A Lancashire Lad's Luck; 399, Champions of the Oppressed; 400, The Sundry Crusaders.

LETTER BOX

A Problem Solved and More
Revelations to Come!

84, Park Road, Sparkhill,
Birmingham 11,
9th July, 1950.

Dear Editor,

Seeing your letter to Maurice reproduced in the C.D. just to hand in connection with my article "Winning His Spure", I thought I would reply to you personally instead of through the columns of Blakiana as Maurice suggested.

My information re W. Shaw Ree being actually Mr. Ernest Treeton came from a most reliable source, for my informant was Mr. Henry Garrish who knew the author in those early days, and you will agree, I know, that there is no man better qualified than he to supply such data in connection with old boys' literature. Harry Blythe was, of course, a quite separate individual, who would certainly have gone far in his profession had not death cut short his career at an early age.

According to Mr. Treeton, St. Annes was not the only school to which Blake was sent, and I will divulge details of the letter's occupation there in a forthcoming article dealing with Blake in the Victorian era, which I have just begun.

Did you know that a young viscount wrote some of the Victorian Blake stories under a nom-de-plume? Such is the case, however, and I have got together some interesting information concerning this author's activities in the early days. His death occurred not so very long ago - just before the outbreak of War, in fact.

Since learning of the death of Arthur S. Hardy I have got together some new and interesting information concerning this popular writer's early stage appearances. Hitherto I had been rather handicapped in that I had always believed Hardy to be the latter's real name, but having discovered otherwise, it has paved the way for some interesting data in this direction. Hardy's real name has appeared on the cover of at least two Boys' Friend 4d. Libraries, and I wonder whether between now and the time my articles appear you will have discovered what

it is? To give you a lead I will supply just one clue. Hardy was not of entirely English birth.

Re Max Hamilton who is believed to be the unknown lady author of some of the early Blakes and several popular serials in Boys' Herald, etc., I feel pretty sure of the identity of the lady, who was (and still is, for I believe that she is still alive) certainly competent enough to write of Blake. Her name I will disclose in my forthcoming article.

In last year's annual, writing of Michael Storm, you stated that he was, in reality, Mr. Charles Ignatius Sempill, M.M. This is correct, but in adding that Mr. Sempill was responsible for "Brooks of Ravenscar", "Rope of Rubies", and "Captain of Abbotsway", you have gone astray. The Michael Storm who wrote these three stories died long ago, whereas Mr. Sempill, is, as far as I know, alive now. Furthermore, Michael Storm was actually the author's name, and I am informed by a writer who knew him that he died in the middle of a serial, which was finished by Cecil Hayter. Unfortunately, the author in question does not recall the title of the story. Mr. Garrish told me some time ago that Michael Storm also wrote occasionally as "Duncan Storm".

Did you know that Allan Blair, Walter Edwards, and Ledbroke Black had all passed on? They all died practically at the same time, just after the outbreak of War. Robert Murray passed on also during this period. Re Gilbert Chester, it looks as though we Blake fans have seen the last of him, for the A.P. have not heard of him for well over a year. Perhaps, like Anthony Skene, he has retired from writing.

If you care to use this letter, or any part of it, as material for the C.D., there's no need to ask - it's all yours!

With Best Wishes and continued success to the C.D.

Yours sincerely,

WALTER WEBB.

(Now who was A.S. Hardy?

Walter's got me all puzzled.- H.L.)

WANTED: Union Jacks (in good condition) issues during years 1920-1924 inclusive. Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Rd., East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

FOR SALE: 5 Vols. Gems between 1907-1913. WANTED: Magnets before 1926. T. Concannon, 6 Wilton St., Off Belgrave Gate, Leicester.

Harry Wherton in the Limelight!

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea,
Broadstairs, Kent.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

July 15th, 1950.

Many thanks for the C.D. and your letter therewith. Good as ever: and I was very pleased to see a familiar fat face on the cover. And I must express my appreciation of the kindly reference to my unworthy self from the Editor's Chair, which however made me smile a little! I am glad to see that the Annual is taking shape, and if it prove as good - which I do not doubt - as the last, it will be well worth the enhanced price.

I was very interested in the question "Why Always Bunter?" in your article on Page 205. By a coincidence, it happens that in the "Bunter Book" I am now writing, for publication next year, our fat old friend takes rather a back seat, and Harry Wherton has very nearly all of the limelight. Just for once B.B. is little more than an "also ren".

"Jack of All Trades" is expected to be out by the end of the month. But there are so many delays in these slow days that I have given up expecting anything till I see it!

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

A Veteran Author Writes

St. Petrock, Dawlish, Devon.

11th July, 1950.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Thank you for sending me the Collectors' Digest; and also for your letter with reference to Mr. Paul Herdy; who, by his drawings, did so much to help popularise my stories of Adventure for Boys. I think it must have been 53 or 54 years ago that he did the illustrations for my story "Rogues of the Fiery Cross"; in Chums; and thereafter he continued the good work as long, I think, as Cassell & Co. owned Chums. He caught the spirit of my yarns in such a wonderful way that his pictures did much in helping to make my tales so widely known and popular. You mention Mr. Peard Sutherland in your letter. He realises to the full the fortunate circumstances by which Paul Herdy caught the spirit of my yarns; and his letters

from Vancouver have given me great pleasure.

In reply to your question as to the date of Mr. Hardy's death, I think it must have been between 3 and 4 years ago, and though we never met - we wrote one another from time to time, and at Christmas I continue to send greetings to Mrs. Herdy, who lives in Sussex. (I gave her address to Mr. Sutherland; who, I think, has recently written to her.) Paul Hardy possessed wonderful gifts; and I remember the model of a great galleon which he constructed, and which, at the time, was much admired. It brought his name before the public after he had ceased to illustrate stories.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

S. WALKER.

(Mr. Welkey was born in 1871. H.L.)

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Look Out for "Hobby Omnibus"

"Newlyn", 18 St. Matthew's Road,
Cotham, Bristol 6.

8/7/50.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

My next book is a "Hobby Omnibus" covering chapters devoted to Cig. Cards, Labels, Old Boys' Papers, Stamps, Coins, Race Tickets, Postcards, Buttons, Medals, etc. etc.

Can you please confirm that the "Old Boys' Book Club" is still in existence, and that you meet once a month. Also would you confirm how often the Collectors' Digest is published, and if devoted entirely to the hobby.

I have written you as I understand you are Vice-President of the Club, and I should like to include all the above information in the chapter devoted to Old Boys' Papers, in the book. Mr. Medcraft has been very cooperative, while Charles Hamilton has been exceedingly good to me.

I would, of course, acknowledge your assistance in the book.

With many thanks,

Yours sincerely, ALFRED J. CRUSE.

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"Twas Truly the "Monster".

50, Porter Road, Derby.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

25th June, 1950.

For some months now I have been reading the Collectors' Digest with increasing respect and enjoyment.

It seems strange to me, however, that whilst the research indulged in by your contributors must be prodigious, at least one series of publications seems to have not only disappeared entirely but also to have vanished from human memory.

I refer to the "Monster Library" series, which was published at monthly intervals about 24 years ago.

"Monster" was indeed the operative word. This excellent "Library" consisted entirely of reprints of complete series of St. Franks stories, each series complete in one volume. The reading matter contained in each issue was, for the type of publication, enormous.

Although the "Monster Library" did not last very long (possibly the price, 1/- per volume, was just a little too much for the average working class pocket) it nevertheless seems strange that such an excellent project should have disappeared so completely. The stories were written when both St. Franks and Edwy Searles Brookes were in their heyday, and a complete set of "Monster Libraries" would indeed be a treasure worth having, from a literary, as well as a collector's point of view,

Yours truly,

W. H. GOODHELD

A number of letters held over. Ed.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: 40 "Cheer Boys Cheer" 1913; 1d Dick Turpins, ½d. and 1d. blue Gems; Christmas Double Numbers Gem for exchange. No.93 The Terrible Three's Christmas Party, 1909. No.250, "Nobody's Study, 1912; No.302, Mystery of the Painted Room 1913. In new condition. WANTED Boys' Friend 3d. Libraries. Some for Sale or Exchange. Many papers wanted. Richard Whorwell, 29 Aspinden Road, London, S.E.16.

A REQUEST: When sending for copies of papers, especially Magnets, Gems and Schoolboys' Own, I should be grateful if collectors would supply some alternative numbers. With papers at least ten years old, and supplies uncertain, it is extremely difficult, though every effort is made, to always find the exact numbers asked for. A few alternatives to work on therefore would be a great help. Always at your service, Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: All collector friends of John Robyns please note: His address is now 13 Raphael Road, Hove 3. 'Phone 33619.



 Please address all Sexton Blake correspondence to the
 Editor of Blakiana, E.L. Bond, 10 Law Men, Rhirfina, Cardiff.

THE ROUND TABLE - AUGUST 1950.

First of all I would like to thank all those members of our little circle who have so kindly responded to my S.O.B. for material for "Blakiana". When I wrote my last Round Table Chat the position was very bad, in fact I did not have a single page of copy in my files. The extra long lists of U.J. titles last month proves that. Now, however, the horizon is much clearer and I can assure all readers of a forthcoming programme of variety and great interest. But please do not "let up" as the Americans put it. I still want all the contributions I can lay my hands on. Don't forget we have an Annual in preparation for publication in December and I shall be delighted to have any original ideas for articles and features, indeed I should be pleased to have ANYTHING you can send along.

My letter box has been more interesting of late too. Several new friends have written to me on various aspects of Sexton Blake lore and this is most gratifying. Quite a number of you have agreed that it is asking too much for us to accept the name of EDWARD GAMER for our dear old

The Round Table (continued).

Tinker. As one reader pointed out, it was not so long ago that Lewis Jackson referred to "Tinker Smith" in one of his S.B.L. novels. As you know Mr. Jackson has done more to relate the personal side of Sexton Blake than any other Blake writer, with the possible exception of the late G.H. Teed, and I am wondering what his reactions to this Carter affair are. During the next month I am going to try and get to the bottom of this matter and will report on any results as soon as I can. Something MUST be done about it, for to change Tinker's name would be to upset the whole of the Blake saga.

Cheerio for now.

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Our Programme!

- Next Month. "Blake Through the Years"
Part 1. The Victorian Era.
by Walter Webb.
- October. "The Mystery of Sexton Blake"
by Charles Baker.
"Return to Baker Street"
by H. Maurice Bond.
Round Table. U.S. Titles.

Coming in the future!

"A New Appreciation of Sexton Blake"
a brilliant new feature by Rex Dolphin.

also articles by Josephine Peckman, Walter Webb and others.

And there will be a series of interesting and remunerative competitions. Ideas please?

M.M.B.

* THE STORY OF OLGA MASMYTH. *

* by *

* Wilfred Darwin. *

Olga Masmyth was a most amazing and unusual character. Apart from her undoubted feminine charms she possessed rare courage and determination. Her fight against the criminal syndicate which had sent her father to prison captured even Sexton Blake's admiration.

Though Blake did not for a moment approve of her actions, he had to admit that her motives were commendable. The Baker Street detective first met the girl in connection with the theft of a fifteen thousand pound necklace from Manor Green, the country house of Sir. Ensor Nathan, Bart.

The full story of this meeting is told in "The Union Jack" No. 1269, "The Mystery of Manor Green."

Blake knew more about the affair than he cared to admit, even to Detective Inspectorarker who was in charge of the investigation. He knew, for instance, that the crime was yet another episode in an amazing scheme of vengeance. He also knew that the theft had been planned, if not actually carried out by Olga Masmyth whose deliberate intention was to ruin the baronet and his family. Though she called herself Lola De Guise, Blake knew, without a shadow of doubt that she was the daughter of Xenophon Masmyth, who had been sent o prison many years before for fraud.

In 1913 Masmyth and Sir. Ensor Nathan had been partners in a rather shady business scheme. When the Algiers Trust, a company controlled by Masmyth, Nathan and others collapsed, all the blame for its sudden demise was thrust onto Masmyth. It was a complete frame up. He was convicted by a French court and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Shocked and infuriated by this act of black treachery and injustice against her father, Olga determined to be revenged. She started by robbing Sir. Ensor Nathan of valuable jewellery. Then followed a further jewel robbery from a store in New York in which Sir. Ensor had a controlling interest, the theft of bonds from the baronet's City Trust, a burglary at his town house in Portland Place and finally the theft of Lady Nathan's necklace from Manor Green.

In the last affair Olga Masmyth deliberately involved

The Story of Olga Masayth (continued).

Soxton Blake, who was a guest at the house, in a very compromising bedroom scene, thus creating a diversion while her partner, a temporary housemaid, walked off with the loot. But Blake was not entirely fooled. Although he was just too late to prevent Olga Masayth from making her getaway he succeeded in tracking her to a hotel. Here the detective cornered her and demanded the return of the stolen article. But as it turned out, the girl was ready for him. She exploded a mustard gas bomb in front of Blake, temporarily blinding him. Needless to say when the detective recovered his sight Olga had disappeared.

In the second story of the series (U.J. No. 1270) "The Girl of Destiny", this remarkable woman turns her attention to the diamond market. Having discovered that the King Gem Company of Hatton Garden had been built up through the financial aid of Sir. Lmsor Ethan, she decides to raid the place. Stephen Meyer, the somewhat weak kneed proprietor of the business is shot dead. Shortly after this unpleasant incident Olga turns up at Blake's apartments. She tries to enlist the detective's sympathy, and, for a moment, almost succeeds. But to Blake his duty is plain. He turns away from her and 'phones Scotland Yard. With G.I.D. men on the way and a locked door and Blake between her and freedom, this looks like the finish to her strange and misguided career. But no, for once more she is prepared for such an emergency. This time it takes the form of a container of sleeping gas which she breaks with her feet. The detective is put to sleep for ten minutes while she makes her escape.

In the third and final story of the series (U.J. No. 1271) "The Captive of the Catacombs", we find Blake and Olga in Paris. The story opens with the escape of Olga's father from prison. Shortly after a man answering to the description of the convict is found dead on the railway line. But hardly has the story appeared in the newspapers than the supposedly dead man turns up at Blake's hotel. He asks for help and tells the detective that his daughter Olga has disappeared. At first it is assumed that she has been kidnaped by the syndicate who had put Masayth in prison and against whom she had for so long waged war. But Blake is disinclined to agree, for he fears a more sinister motive. His fears

The Story Of Olga Masmyth (continued).

are confirmed when Masmyth dies at his feet, having been shot at through the window. Blake is of the opinion that the shot came from the window of a house across the street. He decides to make sure, and is just in time to intercept the murderer as he is leaving the place. There follows a desperate struggle in which the Baker Street slouth narrowly escapes death. The maniac, for such he is, makes his getaway in a taxi, but Blake has the number of the vehicle. Later on he locates the driver who takes him to the place where he dropped his strange passenger. It is a very old and sinister looking house in the slums of Paris. In the basement of this house Blake finds Olga Masmyth's handkerchief stained with blood. Close by is a very ancient church, and underneath a section of the Catacombs. These vaults extend beneath the house, as indeed they do under most of Paris, and in a short time Blake finds a way into them.

At last the detective reaches Olga, but not before he has had a grim fight with her kidnapper. The maniac dies after Blake has fired several shots into him, and disappears in an underground stream. Then, almost collapsing himself he carries Olga Masmyth from that place of the dead. Afterwards he learns that though the man who had murdered Masmyth and kidnapped his daughter was, as he had suspected, completely crazy, he had been in the pay of someone higher up someone obviously connected with the syndicate. He hopes Olga, for her own sake, will not discover the truth, but his hopes are in vain. He receives a telegram from her stating that her agent in Paris has informed her of the true facts. In conclusion let me quote from the actual story:

For this meant that he and Olga Masmyth were again, sooner or later, to be ranged against each other. It meant that the smouldering embers of revenge, which he had thought to extinguish, had leapt up into a new and fierce flame.

WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE by LEONARD PACHMAN.

One evening, whilst entering some newly acquired U.J. titles in my book of records I observed that Blake had adopted quite a number of trades and professions in the course of his long career. The more I found the more intrigued I became, until I simply had to go right through the records to see just how

many and what roles he did adopt. The result was most interesting to me and I am sure it will be to all Blake lovers. Blake undoubtedly adopted many other roles, for this is only a record of those known by means of U.J. titles. Again this does include the S.B. writings in the 3d series, nor does it include the S.B.L. If all the parts he played could be discovered it would probably be simpler to state that he had NOT been! Let us look at the U.J. titles from 1903 onwards. The first role is that of Prison Warder(91) followed by Soldier (93) Railwayman (98) Sailor (102) Fireman(103) & Policeman(115). By this time Blake was getting well into his stride. Thus we find him a real quick change artist as Hanson Cab Driver(107) Mechanic(109) Jockey(110) Actor (111) Postman(113) River Police man(116) Reporter(117) Boofeater(120) Gamekeeper(121) Convict(123) Diver(124). He must have, indeed, been a wonderful actor, for his prowess was applauded by his 'audience' throughout the land all of whom clamoured for more, and Blake, of course, duly obliged. Motorist(127) Circus Hand(130) Aeronaut(133) King's Counsel (135) Photographer(137) Kings Messenger(140) Fisherman(141) Collier(143) Peirrot(151) Steward(152) followed in quick succession and then he had a short rest from this type of activity. However, in a couple of months he was exercising his remarkable talents in the form of Watchman(159) M.P.(173) Doctor(174) Shopwalker(175) Salvation Armyist(177) Dockyard Worker(189) Stock Exchange Broker (190) Society Man(192) Brokers Man(195) Mesmerist(196) Cheapjack (198) Whaler(206) Lumberman(207) Insurance Agent(215) Chemist(220). Then came another 2 month rest which must have been beneficial to his health, for on his reappearance in this field he chose the profession of Wrestler(230). Then came M.S.P.C.C.(235), Pavement Artust(239) Ambassador(246) Longshoreman(248) Chef(256) Tramp(259) Gipsy(265) Hypnotist(268). By this time Blake must have been feeling the strain for it was 6 or 7 months before he got going again, but with the following roles he soon made up for lost time. Publican(297) Showman(298) Lock Keeper(305) Book-maker(308) Consul(313) Playwright(314) Aviator(317) Scoutmaster(319) Squire(320) Juryman(332) Postmaster(340) Trainer(343) Tax Collector (353)-how popular he would be in this role today! Bath Chair Man (355) Territorial(359) Tick-Tacker(360) Ice Cream Merchant(361) Author(368) Taxi Cab Driver(369) Santa Claus(376) Bandsman(379).

(To be continued)