

The

(Vol.4) No.47. Post Free 1/1.
November 1950.

Collectors Digest.



From the John Medcraft collection

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Vol. A. No. 47.

Post Free

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NOVEMBER 1950

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

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

The Day Draws Nigh. We're into the month of fog, but alls clear where our Annual is concerned. Since last writing more fine contributions have come to hand. One is Roger Jenkins "The Bounder of Greyfriars. As I anticipated its a worthy successor to his "Cardew" so popular last year. Then here's "Down Gray's Inn Road" by Tom Strype making his first contribution to the Annual. Tom has walked the famous thoroughfare everyday for years and knows every nook and cranny. Among others we've splendid sketches for the Blake section by Wilfred Darwin, a real teaser of a quiz by Jack Wood, and a clever Sexton Blake Puzzle Corner by Rex Dolphin.

I am pleased to say orders so far are well in

advance of last year. The gratifying part of it is that a considerable proportion of the orders have come from "new chums", so it looks as if we can count on an increased circulation. If this proves to be the case we should probably be able to afford a few more pages despite our experience of last year. But so far there's a number of our friends who have not yet ordered. We feel sure we can count on them, but we should like to be sure for naturally we must go carefully. A few copies left on our hands would be a serious matter. Last year some ordered just too late. So the moment you read this, order without delay if you haven't already done so. If you've lost the order form send without it.

And there's more questionnaire forms still to come in. It's a huge job compiling the Whos Who, and we want everyone in.

Error. We seem fated to make errors in Bill Martin's adverts just of late. Despite scrutiny, one crept in last month for the price of Bullseyes was given as 7/- . No doubt everyone would recognise it as a mistake, for they know Bill better than that. Anyway, it should have been a 1/-. Sorry Bill.

Compliment! Last month the C.D. was a few days late, though it wasn't actually due to my holiday, but to various other unavoidable causes. Anyway the consequence was I received quite a batch of letters making anxious enquiries. There's a kind of a hint of a compliment in that, I venture to think. Anyway, we'll try and catch up with this number.

Lapse. In my holiday report last month I said the Old Boy's Book Club was born in the home of the

Whiter brothers. When too late I realised I had made a mistake for, of course, the honour goes to 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich. Sorry Len. As I said I was writing the account of my glorious holiday at 2 o'clock in the morning, so perhaps I could be forgiven for "nodding".

Yours sincerely,
HERBERT LECKENBY.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST

No. 12 - The Bad Boys' Paper .

Oct. 5, 1889 - March 1, 1890 - 21 numbers.

By Herbert Leckenby.

By no stretch of the imagination could a paper with a name like that, and a run of less than six months be termed a popular one; it would be more appropriate to call it a peculiar paper. I had heard of it, but until recently had never seen a copy; then it happened a couple of copies were among a quantity of papers kindly loaned by John Medcraft for the Leeds Exhibition. Looking at them after that event was over, it struck me it wouldn't be a bad idea to include it in this series, even though it didn't qualify, just as an example of the quaint ideas of some of the Victorian publishers.

The one responsible in this instance was Guy Rayner (S. Dacre Clarke) who could claim to have produced and killed more papers in less time than any other publisher who ever lived.

Where "The Bad Boys' Paper" was concerned one wonders whether he was a humourist, a cynic, or an optimist.

According to the copy before me the paper was published on a Tuesday, and we can imagine this exchange of words on that day of the week in some Victorian home 60 odd years ago. "Can I have my Saturday pocket money today, father, please?"

"Today my son! Why its only Tuesday!"

"Yes I know father. But I want to buy "The Bad Boys' Paper. It comes out today and I can't wait until Saturday."

"Bad Boys' Paper, eh!" Stern Victorian father tugs at his beard with one hand and reaches for his slipper with the other. "Bad boys get no pocket money whether its Tuesday or Saturday. Come here."

However, in No.1 the editor tried to explain his reason for giving the paper such a title. It wasn't very convincing. Here is what he said.

"What a strang title! will be the first exclamation of almost every person who sees this journal "The Bad Boys' Paper!" How shocking! But wait a bit, Mr. Critic! Not quite so fast; before you condemn us just take a peep inside. Nowadays it is the fashion to deceive the public by goody-goody titles, and we have resolved to depart from the wicked custom. We are not going to preach, boys; not a bit of it. Our one aim and object is to provide a healthy and entertaining journal, and we have chosen our new title in preference to any that have been suggested to us. Some of our well-meaning friends have given us an array of head-lines such as "The Boys' Instructor" (this would frighten away the average boy); "The Boys' Sunday Journal" (what do boys want with a Sunday Journal?) "The Boys' Friend" (Nabby pamby); "The Boys' Best Book" (great goodness, every publisher has been laying claim to the best book for a hundred years or more) etc. etc., and for a time we were in a quandary. What should we do for a title? We wanted something attractive. Our friends claimed that there was no Sunday Journal for boys, and that in consequence faithful readers perused all sorts of wicked things. This argument decided us to issue a Journal for boys that could not possibly be mistaken for a Sunday School book, because six days out of seven are quite sufficient for amusement.

Now we flatter ourselves that with such a title our paper cannot be mistaken for a tract, although

its contents are far superior to the majority of papers supposed to be fit for study on the Sabbath Day. What is our programme? Plenty of stirring tales and pictures, and an enormous circulation. That is what we want, and if any person can point out a single paragraph which contains a wrongful thought or suggestion, we will forfeit our right to cater for faith again. ...Hurrah then for Guy Rayner's "Bad Boys' Paper" and let us hope, if it should fall into the hands of any bad boy, that he will never again commit any worse action than is found in its pages."

There was more of it in similar strain, but I think the above will suffice. Incidentally note how disdainfully Guy Rayner dismissed "Boys' Friend" as a title for a boys' paper. Well as we know, a more astute editor started a paper with that title six years later and it ran for more years than the "Boys' Bad Paper" did weeks.

Actually though, the Bad Boys' Paper wasn't really a new paper at all. The previous week it had been called "Boys of the Isles". It had been running 36 weeks and, as evidently it wasn't proving a success, quixotic Rayner simply made a startling change in the title, and started again at No.1. He had a habit of doing that kind of thing.

It may be said that seeing it was such a flop it should have been called the "Boys' Bad Paper", but, to be perfectly fair, it would appear to have been much on a par with most of the boys papers of its time. It had 16 pages of the usual size, the paper was of decent quality, and the type good, and easily readable.

The front page of No.1 showed an exciting scene from a serial "The Brigands Revenge". On page 2 the start of the story was headed "Rodney Ray the Scapegrace" or "The Brigands Revenge". Followed another serial "Jack Robinson" or "A Struggle with Fate". A third was "Kaleo the Destroyer" or, "Jack of the Jungle", by John Holloway. The same author also contributed the first story of a series "Brave

Boys of London" - "The Red Spectre". Then there was "Our Comic Story Clubs" - Hananiah Fudger - The Tailor of Many Tales, by Edwin S. Hope.

In addition the paper carried in smaller type short instalments of three serials which had been running in "Boys of the Isles", "Lion Jack" by P.T. Barnum (the great Showman). The Bad Boy of the Family", and "Jack Selwyn". The latter was by none other than by J.N. Pentelow who needs no introduction. I wonder what he thought about writing for the "Bad Boys' Paper". However in No.1 his contribution only ran to half a column. To complete there were jokes, a competition with six half-guineas worth of fireworks as prizes, and a column of answers to correspondents with no explanation as to how they got into No.1 of a "new" boys' paper.

In No.10 a new serial, "Rolando" by Guy Rayner himself started. He was described as the author of "Caractacus the Unconquered", "The Queen's Shilling", "A Born Fool"; "On the Warpath"; "Hat Marchmont" etc. etc., A versatile, happy-go-lucky, optimistic sort of fellow Guy Rayner, but a failure at running a paper for boys.

After a run of 21 weeks, the "Bad Boys' Paper" was replaced by one bearing the more orthodox title "The Boys' Graphic". It was rather more successful for it ran for a year, nearly a record for Guy Rayner.

WANTED URGENTLY: Gems Nos. 819 and 846. Josephine Packman, 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries, 1st series 13 & 21. 2nd series 405, 407, and 513. also collecting Boys' Friend Libraries. What have you? H.C.N. Price, 22, Northdown Road, Margate, Kent.

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

Old Boys' Book Club

Northern Section

Exhibition and Meeting.

Saturday September 30th was an eventful day for the Northern Section. Several of us met at the Exhibition where we saw a continual flow of visitors who, as was plainly evident, found much to interest them in our display. We were happy to see there, too, Ernest Hubbard of Sheffield, who had come over for his first meeting. The others there were Cliff Beardsell of Stockport, Harry Dowler who once again had travelled from Manchester, Tom Puckrin after a long journey from Middlesbrough, myself, an easy 25 miles, and the 'locals', Reg Hudson, Gerry Allison, Harry Barlow, and Norman Smith.

After tea we proceeded to Hyde Park Road where we found several more members, and two prospective ones present.

Naturally there was a good deal of talk about the exhibition, but firm chairman Reg. Hudson soon had everyone down to business. Secretary, treasurer, and librarian gave their reports, and matters arising from last meeting were discussed. A good deal of correspondence was dealt with.

I then gave a brief account of my happy holiday among the members of the London Club.

Then came a quiz with twelve questions, some of them very thought provoking, compiled by Reg. Hudson, who also generously gave two prizes. Cliff Beardsell came out first, with Tom Puckrin a close second.

The next meeting was arranged for Oct. 23th at the same address.

Members present: Miss Vera Coates, Reg. Hudson, Gerald Allison, W.H. Williamson, Harry Dowler, Tom Puckrin, Cliff Beardsell, Harry Barlow, W.H. Sawyer,

Horace Twinham, Earnest Hubbard, S.F. Armitage and Herbert Leckenby, Northern Section Correspondent.

Note: It was stated in the report in the October number that members could buy the Bunter Books through the Club at a reduced price. This was due to a misunderstanding, and when purchasing the full price must be paid. Any concession afterwards will come out of Club funds. H.L.

LONDON CLUB

Wood Green Meeting. Sunday, 15th October.

There was a splendid attendance on this occasion and a very representative one indeed. With A. Jacobs from Italy, John Boland from Dublin, the formidable trio from the Rookwood county viz. Roger Jenkins of Havant, E. Cox of Southampton and Roger Southwood of Farnborough, the "Terrible Three" from Surbiton and Kingston, John Goal, Ian Whitmore and Tony Blunden, Frank and Mrs. Keeling of Stanmore, Harry Homer from Sussex, Ron Crollie of Romford and J. Murrell of Chadwell Heath and the locals in Len Packman, Charlie and Olive Wright, Jim Parratt, C. Wallis, A. Young, R.J. Godsavage, Alan Stewart, Arthur Lawson, P. Podro, Ron and Marea Deacon, E. Reynolds and the three Whitters Will, Bob & Ben. This made a grand total of 29 members. But this did not deter Chairman Len as he defeated all comers in the very difficult quiz. Calling on Mr. Lythe a week or two ago to present him with his prize which he won by proxy at the Hove meeting I was amazed to see he had had a bash in compiling the quiz for the current month's meeting. He tried it out on me there and then and I tender my best thanks to him for such a grand effort. The "Stinkers" questions were very good but as already stated our Len filled first place once again. Five points behind in the second place was John Goal, Roger Jenkins was third and Ian Whitmore, of the penny "Magnets" fame, was fourth.

The formal business was disposed of and in the temporary absence of treasurer Bob, away with the

Remove Dramatic Society rehearsing the "Desert Song" a very good financial statement was given by the secretary.

The club's price lists for the "Magnet and Gem" were revised so as to bring them up to date. These can be had on request from the secretary.

It was formally proposed to have a debate next month on the merits of St. Franks and Greyfriars. Roger Jenkins very kindly taking on the latter and Chairman Len taking up the cudgels on behalf of St. Franks. It is to be hoped that this debate will be the forerunner of many more and several useful suggestions were made as regards subjects.

The club was pleased to welcome the two overseas members A. Jacobs and John Boland. Several letters and postcards of apologies were read from members unable to attend.

The next meeting will take place at the home of Charlie and Olive Wright, 12, Ashburnham Place, Greenwich, London, S.E.10 on Sunday, November 19th.

Mention must be made here once again of the excellent catering arrangements and the two previous hosts who donated the catering fee to the funds of the club.

"Forsam et hoc olim meminisse juvabit".

Benjamin G. Hiter.

For Sale or Exchange for Boys' Friend Libraries 156 Modern Boys 1930, 127 Rangers, Nos. 1 to 130. K.C.N. Price, 22, Northdown Road, Hargate.

Eric Payne offers for sale certain Gems and Magnets of a 11 vintages from 1907 to 1940 at prices according to condition. Also a few copies of Modern Boy and Boys' Cinema in excellent condition at 1/- each. The Modern School, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

WANTED!!! Collector's Digest Annuals for 1947, 1948, 1949. Also Collector's Digest monthly numbers 1-40. Bill Martin, 93, Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUALBILL OF FARE - A FEAST FOR EVERYONE.

The Collectors' Who's Who (dozens of new chums).	
The Popular Popular	by Eric Fayne,
The Rise and Fall of the "Boys Friend	by Herbert
.....	Leckenby.
Roc	by W.H.Gander,
The Magnet Serials	by J.Breeze
.....	Bentley.
How they Arrived (St. Franks) Part II	by J.P.Wood.
The Bounder of Greyfriars.	by Roger L.
.....	Jenkins.
Serials from Victorian Journals ..	by John Medcraft.
Monogram on the "Confederation" ..	by Harry Homer.
They came to St. Jims.	by L.Packman.
Down Grays Inn Road	by Tom S.Strype
The Artists Who's Who	
Bold Robin Hood	by W.T.Thurbon.
They wrote of Sexton Blake	by Herbert
.....	Leckenby.
What might have Been.	by P.A. Walker.
An Amazing Pair, the Gem and Magnet	by Herbert
.....	Leckenby.
They Possess No. 1's.	
Sexton Blake Puzzle Corner	by Rex Dolphin.
Fun at School (a teasing uiz) ..	by J.P. Wood.

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HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR COPY YET? THE IDEAL COMPAN-
ION FOR THE CHRISTMAS FIRESIDE.

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7/6d each offered for any of the following Monster
Libraries in good condition 1,14,15,16,17,18,19.
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S.E.22.

A FAMOUS CRITIC AND THE BOYS' FRIEND.

Neville Cardus ("Cricketer" of the Manchester Guardian) whose articles and books on the summer game are a joy to read, has written his autobiography in two volumes. In the second, called "Second Innings", in telling of his boyhood in Manchester, he has quite a lot to say about the "Boys' Friend". Here are some extracts. I am sure they will interest all story paper collectors, and old readers of the Green 'Un especially will heartily echo his sentiments.

"When I was a boy I read nothing but school and adventure stories in publications from the House of Harmsworth - Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, who realised shrewdly and quickly that a lower class of youth was rising from a poor respectability, rather above devouring the out-and-out panny dreadful of the period, yet a youth that would not go as far as a ready acceptance of the Boys' Own Paper, which was obviously for the sons of gentlemen. Harmsworth, in the "Boys' Friend appealed to the products of the council or "board Schools"; this paper gave us school stories in which the atmosphere of Talbot Baines Read was rendered accommodatingly urban and not too esoteric for readers whose social ambitions concentrated on escape from the artisan to the clerkly stratum.

I was not allowed, even in my semi-literate home, to read about Deadwood Dick, in a frankly lurid paper called "Pluck", also a Harmsworth publication, for his net was generously flung; my first sense of mortal sin came to me when one night I stole to bed with a candle in my pocket and "Pluck", and in a dim light encouraged at the age of thirteen a galloping megopia. I would read with my held breath, the bedclothes drawn over me like a curtain almost as though to conceal from the eye of God himself what I was doing. One night my grandmother came suddenly into the room and I pushed the "dread-

ful" under my pillow, picked up a school text-book and said I was preparing a lesson. As far as I remember, this was the first deception I ever practiced unrepentant. But the Boys' Friend was not included on the family index of pernicious and demoralising literature, probably because it contained school stories by an author named Henry St. John, and also because it was edited by one named Hamilton Edwards, a drawing of whom appeared at the top of a column "From my Den". This drawing depicted a man definitely aristocratic of mien, in a well-stocked library. In the school stories of Henry St. John the masters were presented as the sworn enemies of the boys, which was a refreshing change from and truer to life than "Eric, or Little by Little" by Dean Farrar, a gilt bound volume used as a school prize, in which the boys were friendly with the masters to the point of taking tea with them on Sunday afternoons and discussing their futures, here and in the world to come. I objected to all improving stories on principle.

Hamilton Edwards each week addressed his 'dear readers' man to man, and from time to time he would take us into a sort of professional confidence and tell us he had recently been kept up all night perusing the N.S. of a new school story by Henry St. John - a "ripping" one, far more engrossing than even this author had ever before written; and the first instalment would appear in a few weeks, so please order from your newsagent a copy of the Boys' Friend to be delivered to your home every Wednesday without fail.

Henry St. John's boys were dressed in Eton collars and jackets, but we could easily recognise them as of our own breed and speech; they used onomatopoeia such as "Hullup! Ouch! Phew! Snakes! The French master was invariably called Froggie, and he wore a cape and a tall hat that narrowed towards the top. The extent of his French ranged from "Nom de pipe!" to "La foi!" Sometimes he came under the suspicion of being a spy; apparently the

time devoted to hearing in Henry St. John's public schools was scanty and fortuitous.

Harmsworth principle authors of adventure serials were Maxwell Scott who invented Nelson Lee the detective, and Sidney Drew, 'creator' as Hamilton Edwards called him of Ferrers Lord the millionaire who built a submarine that could also fly and became master of the air and the sea, and of course disclosed his formula to the British Government in a moment of severe international crisis. In the walks of fiction explored by the Boys' Friend no allusion was ever made to women or to any females of any age whatsoever, young or old, except maybe to the matron in the tuckshop of Repminster School. If any boy of Henry St. John's fancy referred merely to his sister, he was promptly called "spooney" by his companions. In the more mature universes of Maxwell Scott's and Sidney Drew's the man was devoted wholly and austere to celibacy, their various activities seemed to give them no time for anything else. Even at the end of a serial, when Ferrers Lord or Nelson Lee had come triumphantly to fame and full accomplishments of the task they had put their hand to, when villainy had been vanquished, they did not marry and live happily ever afterwards. The author reserved to himself the right to use them again in any sequel demanded by Hamilton Edwards at any future time, according to taste, circulation and public demand.

The Boys' Friend was printed on green paper and the pages large, and there was apparently an abundance of them when each Wednesday morning I would surrender myself to its allurements. Seldom in after life have I known literature to cast so potent a spell as this, at the end of a 'thrilling' instalment, I would be brought up with a shock by the words "To be continued next week"; and the distance from now until next Wednesday was an abyss not to be bridged, hardly to be endured. The days would pass, no doubt this time next week" would sooner or later come. I was philosopher enough always to support myself with this positive belief; but at the

moment, after emergence from bliss, I felt that all one's doings, all one's comings and goings and eatings and sleeping and playings of games, all would be vanity and an ache or numb acquiescence, so much stretched out patience in a void. One week I found out that if I went into the City and waited at the railway bookstall until the London train came in I could sometimes actually buy the Boys' Friend late on Tuesday evening, towards nine o'clock. After an eternity of suspense the man behind the bookstall would open a parcel, and there, behold and see! were the folds of the green paper; and I would run from the station in possession, almost before anybody else of the secret of what happened to Ferrers Lord when it was discovered (last week) that the supply of oxygen had run out while they were all in the submarine. But now and again the train would arrive with no bundle of the London papers on it, and I had to go away empty, the summer evening wasted, the Manchester streets desolate, miles of them to tread before I reached home.

....For long I remained loyal to Maxwell Scott, Henry St. John and Sidney Drew. I looked up their names in Who's Who, and when I couldn't find them I did not think the less of these writers, but regarded Who's Who as an incomplete work of reference."

(Well, Neville Cardus' memory let him down once or twice. Pluck was never guilty of publishing a story of Deadwood Dick, and fair damsels were not altogether missing from the pages of the Boys' Friend. Quite often the hero saved his employer's or the headmaster's daughter when a runaway horse was bearing her towards the edge of a cliff or quarry.)

But many an old-timer will see themselves in his graphic description of that long, long wait between instalments. At the very time Harry Dowler was waiting in another part of Manchester not far away, and Frank Pettingell too. If only they had known each other what chats they would have had. But, there was no C.D. then to bring them together! H.L.]

"Hamiltonia"

— Conducted by Herbert Leckenby —

I am indebted to John Stokes of Dublin for a copy of "Times Pictorial" published in that City. In it is an article by 'Nichevo' a pen name, John tells me, of the editor of the "Irish Times". The writer devotes most of his article to comments on Ballantyne's "Coral Island", but he also has something to say about the boys' weeklies he used to read. These included the Union Jack, Magnet and the Gem. Where the latter is concerned, he makes a shocking mistake, for he says reminiscently: "Then there was an incredible boy called Skimpole whom we all hated. He was the cad of the party."

We hated Skimpole, did we? Skimpole, that dear old lovable crackpot who couldn't hurt a fly. Of a truth one's memory plays strange tricks. Send "Nichevo" a Gem someone with "skimmy's" benevolent features displayed on the cover.

(Since writing the above I have heard Frank Richards has sent "Nichevo" a Bunter Book, much to "Nichevo's" surprise and delight

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Some time ago alert Bob Whiter spotted some sketches by C.H. Chapman in "The Cyclist". As the famous artist has been out of the limelight since the Magnet closed down, Bob sat up and took notice. He wrote to Mr. Chapman through the paper, and to his delight got a reply and an invitation to visit Mr. Chapman at his home. Needless to say Bob promptly accepted. He had a very happy time and I cannot do better than quote him in his own words.

"Mr. Charles Henry Chapman is 72 years of age. He started life as an architect. When 28, drew for Pearson's 'Big Budget'. In 1910 or 1911

(to the best of his memory) took over the Magnet illustrations on the death of A.H. Clarke. He confirms that he was told to copy Clarke's style. He also worked on "Ally Slopers Half Holiday". From 1912 to 1928 he illustrated the Magnet covers and interiors doing all his work in a hut in an orchard at his home.

He and Leonard Shields were great friends. Leonard Shields could not always cope with the work sent him by the A.P. and he would sometimes send uncompleted drawings to Mr. Chapman to finish.

Mr. Chapman also said Frank Richards in his estimation was the finest author the A.P. ever had. He could type off a story with the typewriter on his knee, smoking and chatting at the same time. "An amazing fellow".

Mr. Chapman is a charming man, full of energy, twinkling blue eyes, and a keen cyclist. He is a brilliant artist, his rooms being covered with paintings of all descriptions.

He is no relation to S.H. Chapman, whose work appeared in the "Champion" and other A.P. papers".

Congrats. Bob. Through your keenness you've provided Hamiltonia with some fine copy. That's particularly interesting about Mr. Chapman completing work for Mr. Shields. It explains why one was sometimes puzzled as to which one had been at work.

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Those of you who have seen or heard Douglas (Cardew the Cad) Robinson on stage or radio, may have wondered whether there's any connection with St. Jim's. Well there is. Whilst in London I had the pleasure of an introduction to him, for he is a friend of Harry Homer's. Harry told me afterwards that one day he happened to display a Rookwood story in front of the wireless favourite. The latter exclaimed "Why where did you get that?" Why

are you interested?" asked Harry. "Of course I am" retorted "Cardew", "where do you think I got my name from?" - Harry then told him something of the activities of the Old Boys' Book Club and interested him still more.

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On the first Saturday afternoon of the Leed's Exhibition quite a group of people got into conversation at one of the stands. Two or three were members of the Club, but the others were people who had just dropped in to see our display. And from what they said right well they had enjoyed it. None of them had seen a Magnet or Gem for years, but the stories evidently remained vividly in their memories. There was one jovial fellow whose face fairly beamed as he recalled Coker, Alonzo, D'Arcy and other familiar ones. The eyes of a lady with him twinkled through her glasses as she joined in. Undoubtedly she had read many Magnets in her younger days. Another lady of more serious mien paid tribute to the good influence the stories had had on the youth of earlier generations and deplored the fact that there was nothing to compare with them today.

Others joined in and although it was very illuminating and interesting, one more striking proof that Greyfriars and St. Jims will never fade from the memories of those who read the stories in the days when they provided a weekly feast.

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MAGNET TITLES (continued)

433. Kicked out of the School; 434. Frank Nugent's Folly; 435. Fighting to the Finish; 436. Called to the Colours; 437. Run to Earth; 438. Monsieur Wibley; 439. The other Bunter; 440. The Giant at Greyfriars; 441. The Schoolboy Farmers; 442. Sticking to his Guns; 443. His Own Fault; 444. The Trickster Tricked; 445. Rake's Rival; 446. A Split in the Study; 447. The Sentence of the School;

Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe.

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

I've let myself in for something, and here is how! At the last O.B.B.C., meeting I challenged Hamiltonians to a debate, with myself supporting St. Frank's, against Greyfriars. Roger Jenkins has taken me on and, believe me, it should be good. Mind you, as is well known, I am just as much a lover and collector of Hamiltonia as anyone, but I am equally a St. Frank's fan. The result should prove interesting and will, of course, be reported by the Club's Secretary, "Ben (Sexton Blake) Whiter in his "Report of the November Meeting." The object of this, the first of a series of debates, is twofold. Firstly to prove that diversity of opinion can be expressed in a spirit of fun and good fellowship. That is what "our Hobby" stands for! Secondly, to further the knowledge of our less informed attending Club members. Well, I'm in for a tough time - but good! This month brings the Nelson Lee First New Series" titles into action. Cheer up, Bob, only about another year and the job will be finished!

Nelson Lee Library (1st New Series, Comm. 1.5.1926)

1. Sports Mad at St. Frank's;
2. Handforth's Bad Day;
3. The Folly of St. Frank's;
4. The Salves of St. Frank's;
5. Handforth the Martyr;
6. St. Frank's Goes Mad;
7. Handforth to the Rescue;
8. Handforth gets the sack.
9. St. Frank's saves "The Ashes";
10. The Yellow Hand at St. Frank's;
11. St. Frank's at Lord's;
12. All Aboard for China;
13. In the Dragon's Clutch;
14. Handforth takes a Chance;
15. The Prisoners of Foo Chow;
16. Handforth the Hostage.

(Contd. page 326)

Letter BoxPeter Walker Intrigues Frank Richards.

October 16th, 1950.

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

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the October C.D. I am extremely interested by your rather tantalizing reference to Peter Walker's article in the Annual, and shall look forward to seeing it. Peter's description of purchasing the Magnet and concealing it between the Radio Times and the Listener is very amusing and a curious thing is that he was quite unconsciously following the example of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who used to put the Magnet inside a copy of the Times on a railway journey as is related in a very early Gem, -- I think somewhere about 1910, as near as my recollection serves.

I see that you are aware that Tom Berry's Own Annual is out, so I won't mention that as an item of news. "Billy Bunter among the Cannibals" is published today; better the lateness than the neverfulness, as Hurree Singh would say.

Lately my letter-box has had some rather unusual contents: letters with Singhalese stamps and postmarks. The cause, I learn, is an article on the subject of Billy Bunter and his author in the Ceylon Observer of Colombo, written by Mr. Tambimuttu, who came to see me last year. It is both surprising and pleasant to find so many readers of the old papers in Ceylon; and luckily they all write in excellent English, ---- Singhalese, I fear, would leave me guessing!

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,
Frank Richards.

Cheer in Canterbury!

3, South Bank Lodge,
 Surbiton, Surrey.
 Sept. 23rd.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

On a visit to Canterbury during my holidays I paid the almost unheard of sum of 1d each for 63 Magnets between the numbers 340 and 916. They include 40 of the 800's, and the following "double" numbers: - "357" "The Return of the Prodigal" 48 pages, "374" "The Fall of the Fifth" (Easter) 52 pages, "461" "The House on the Heath" 4¹ pages, and "723" "The Mystery of the Xmas Candles" 24 pages, all in excellent condition.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
 Ian Whitmore.

Melson Lee Library (1st New Series) Continued from
Page 324.

17. The Legions of Foo Chow; 18. Handforth the Reckless; 19. St. Frank's at Bay; 20. Handforth's bad Bargain; 21. Vote for Handforth; 22. Lord of the Remove; 23. Handforth's Flag Day; 24. Handforth's Iron Rule; 25. Knocked Off his Perch; 26. St. Frank's on its Honour; 27. Every Boy his own Master; 28. The School without Rules; 29. The Cads of St. Frank's; 30. Caught in the Meshes!; 31. All the Fun of the Fair; 32. Uncle Handforth; 33. The Remove on the Warpath.

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Last Minute Flash:

The Competition Forms given separately with this number have been kindly supplied by Eric Fayne. He has also given the Prize of £1.



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Please address all Sexton Blake correspondence to the
Editor of Blakiana, H.H. Bond, 10 Drv Wen, Rhwrbina, Cardiff.
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THE ROUND TABLE - NOVEMBER 1950.

Most of the correspondence that I have received of late are in praise of Walter Webb's excellent feature dealing with the early days of Sexton Blake. Readers will be pleased to know that I have just received further grand material on the same subject from Walter and all being well will publish the next instalment in the January 1951 issue of the G.D. I would have included some of it next month but want, if possible to make the December Blakiana an all Xmas one. I would like to ask any of you who would like to contribute reasonable material to let me have it within the next couple of weeks, in any case before the 12th of November. Once again dear old Gwyn Evans will be in all our thoughts over the festive season and once again his wonderful Christmas yarns will be taken down from the shelves and devoured by many a Blake fan. Goodness knows why Anthony Parsons and some of his colleagues do not try and introduce a Christmassy flavour into the Xmas month issues of the S.B.L. It would be a treat and no mistake. But if things go on as they are at the time of

writing we shall be lucky if we get any Xmas issues of the Library at all, for with the possibility of the London strike being continued there will be little material coming from the A.P.

A few days ago my colleague, Herbert Lockenby, sent me along a perfectly preserved copy of "The Boys' Herald" dated January 16th 1909 containing an instalment of the serial "Sexton Blake at Oxford" which, as you all know was written by that old favourite Cecil Maylor. You will all be interested in the following extracts from this story:-

"Later he (Blake) found himself mechanically wandering towards Spot's rooms again. He was a bit overtired and in an undecided and altogether unsatisfactory frame of mind. Spots, for once, was in, and by himself, lounging in a capacious armchair, and yawning profusely, whilst his scout was talking vain and noisy attempts to tidy up. On the stairs outside, Blake noticed a small, stubbly-haired urchin, who looked rather as if he had been drawn through a kitchen flue backwards. He had a merry, twinkling expression--so far as it was visible through the grime-- a snub nose--a sort of glorified button--and was liberally befreckled. As Blake came up, the urchin gave a warning "Hist!" to the scout, and affixed himself in a corner of the landing.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "What did you do that for?"

"Mr. Loozly don't like old Judkins about when he has friends," said the urchin promptly. "He was a true Cockney youngster, with all a cockney's cuteness and wit.

"Oh, he doesn't, eh?" said Blake. "And how did you know I was a friend of Mr. Loozly's? There are a dozen other rooms on these stairs."

"Why, you're Blake," was the prompt reply.

"Oh, I am, am I? Anyway I've got a pretty good memory for faces, and I don't remember you. How often have you seen me?"

"Once! Thursday, three weeks ago. You and him was crossin' the quad, and he called you by name." Blake whistled softly to himself, struck with an idea.

"How long have you been in Oxford?"

"Month come Tuesday."

"Ah! How many shops are there in Promitor Street?"

"Four left-hand side, three right goin' from here. Corner shop on right bookseller's, next furniture, third Tunstall's, the-----"

"Easy on, my son!" interrupted Blake. "Do you know London at all?"

"Dorn there, an orphlin."

"Understand how to send a telegram?"

"Tho are you gottin' at? Think I'm a country bumpkin?" was the indignant answer.

Blake chuckled and lifted up his voice.

"Here, Spots, same out here, I want you!"

Spots came out, still yawning.

"That's up, old man?"

"Introduce me to this infant prodigy, and tell me all you know of his villainous past!"

"The kid? Oh, he's an iver picked up in the streets by Judkins, my scout. Cute little beggar. Runs errands for me sometimes. You young sweep; you look more like a tinker than ever. Go and jam your head under a tap!"

"Tinker! By jove!" said Blake, chuckling. "Here, young 'un, go and scrape the superfluous soot off and come back in ten minutes! Here's a bob for you."

The urchin snatched up the coin and vanished.

And that, according to Mr. Huxter was the first meeting of Blake and Tinker, who, according to the same story was then about nine or ten years of age. As Blake was not yet out of his 'teens at the time it would appear that his now famous assistant is hardly the "handsome young man" we are led to believe in the current stories. In fact the gap between ages of detective and assistant is very narrow. But this, in my estimation, is just one more instance of the lack of co-ordination between editors and authors in the old days before Blake became the famous sleuth we know to-day. Even in 1909 he was in the molting pot as it were.

H.H. Bond.

 AN AMAZING AGELESS MAN.

by CHARLES VEIGET.

Could the creator of Sexton Blake return to life, and read the saga of his creation, he would be amazed at the complex Sexton Blake of to-day. He has become, in the hands of his one hundred odd authors, a brilliant detective with a world wide reputation, a doctor, a pathologist, analytical chemist, a brilliant linguist and a superb character actor, and of course, a fine boxer, a deadly revolver shot and other accomplishments too numerous to mention in one article.

He has been everywhere in practically every guise, from China as a coolie to Saffron Hill in Clerkenwell as an ice cream man. He has been in the Foreign Legion, been a cab driver, a seaman at different times, in fact he has been in almost everything in every walk of life, and yet, withal, this tall athletic, grin faced man, whose eyes can be like blue ice on occasion, or twinkle quite merrily, is a kindly human individual, a friend to the ex-convict who is genuine in his efforts to go straight, a kindly helper at numerous times to the poor who are labouring under injustice and unable to afford high fees.

He has already lived through three wars, he was presented on the stage in the early nineteen hundreds, has been on the films, and on the radio, and still his popularity never seems to wane, his finger is always on the pulse of current affairs, always ready to step in the breach to clear up diplomatic tangles for the government, a brilliant member of a brilliant secret service, and on the rare occasions that he is in doubt he has always his famous index to fall back on, kept up to date by the indefatigable Tinker.

Quite a good number of the authors have passed, but Blake is still with us to give pleasure, and in a lot of cases an education, because the scenes in foreign countries and the customs of different peoples are, in most cases, amazingly correct, and so through the countless stories that have been written one can gather a surprising amount of knowledge of this old world of ours.

His assistant Tinker is no less famous, picked up in the streets and trained by the famous detective and brought

to Baker Street to make up the famous household, and the other two members of which are Pedro, the famous bloodhound, and Blake's housekeeper Mrs. Barroll, the cheerfully murders the Kings English on any and every occasion.

When Sexton Blake first appeared on the scene, hansom cabs were the order of the day, but to-day he follows that car in his sleek steamlined Rolls "The Grey Panther". Dozens of his famous and oft times ruthless opponents have passed on, but this ageless man goes on from success to success, still solving knotty problems for us, forgery, robbery, murder, he takes them all in his stride, always finding the one slender clue, overlooked by the much maligned but hard working Scotland Yard officials.

Although married, so little is known of his wife, he can be considered a celibate, but that doesn't mean he is a woman hater. He is always courteous and helpful to the opposite sex. He did have a great fondness for the famous Mademoiselle Yvonne Cartier, but as he steadfastly refused to let love interfere with his chosen vocation, he ruthlessly set it aside.

Different authors created different C.I.D. inspectors, who were really foils to his character, but were also a great help to him at times, the most famous being Detective Inspector Courtts of the Yard; well known for his florid complexion, his hard hat and his fondness for Blakes cigars.

So we leave this ageless man, the same lean athletic figure in 1950 that he was in 1894, seated in his armchair in his old dressing gown, Tinker by his side and Pedro at his feet, and Mrs. Barroll hovering in the rear. The equally famous Index in its revolving bookcase, a bright fire casting a glow over all, this peaceful scene to last until the next case comes along to galvanise them all into action still once again.

THE END.

YOU WILL BE PUZZLED !!! ???

When you try to solve the G.D. Annual Puzzle Corner.

GERRY ALLISON reviews

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

SEPTEMBER 1950.

Most of the stories in the present series are written to the following formula. First some exciting action or dramatic intrigue. Then Sexton Blake is introduced 'from a distance'. Gradually he traces his way to the scene of the opening action.

It is then that many of the tales go to pieces. When the author has to explain all the excitement and activity with which his story began, he often perpetrates the most appalling rubbish.

No. 223. "WHEN THE JURY DISAPPEARED" by JOHN HUNTER.

Entirely unconvincing. The title is as fatuous as the story itself. Skip it.

No. 224. "THE MYSTERY OF THE ITALIAN RUINS" DEREK LONG.

Written to the above formula, but with humorous and good characterization.

An Inspector Tryon (new to me) of Scotland Yard, was very solid. Quite in the Barker/Coutts tradition. And Percy Bates, a would-be Humphrey Bogart, almost stole the show.

The action never flagged; both Blake and Tinker were themselves, and although there were no surprises the whole story was logical and credible.

Not to find any bits of humourslike the following was really delicious.

"Hey, copper. I'm being followed".

"Don't call me copper", said the copper coldly.

GERRY ALLISON WILL BE BACK NEXT MONTH!

And if you disagree with these criticisms PLEASE let us know.

Coming Soon:- "THE NOVELS OF ANTHONY SHERIDAN".