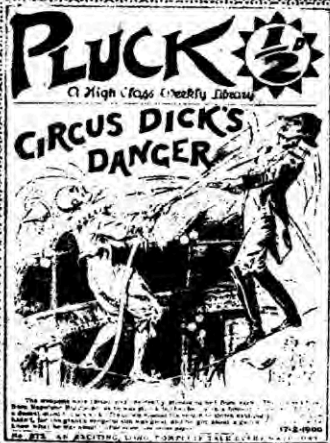


# The Collectors Digest.



(Vol. 5) No. 49 : Feb. 1951 : 1/1 Post Free - 32 Pages Again!

-JAN.

# Yorkshire's Dreadful Dictator

by J. Stewart Hunter

**M**ANY of York's citizens have squeezed past him in narrow Petergate, or as he loitered in tiny Whip-ma-Whop-ma Gate. Perhaps the word "dictator" calls up images of things military, and you remember that York is the headquarters of the Northern Command.

You would be right, for that is Herbert Leckenby's address, but here is no military figure. He is exactly what I said—a "dreadful" dictator!

The explanation? If you read book reviews at all, you can scarcely have failed to notice—for they have appeared under "banner" headings in most of the National and Sunday press—eulogies of a new book called "Boys Will Be Boys," which is a history of all the boys' periodicals which delighted our youth.

But the really authoritative review is yet to be written—and somewhere in York City Herbert Leckenby will be writing it in that minute, not too legible, handwriting that is so familiar to his several hundred subjects. For Herbert Leckenby is the world-recognised authority on the papers which we have all read under opened desk-lids, or in secluded attics; the papers which our parents stigmatised as "Penny Dreadfuls."

Every month, the "Collectors' Digest" of which he is the editor

goes out from York to collectors all over the world; every day before he goes to work in the Telephone Exchange of Northern Command he has skimmed through a thick bundle of "fan mail."

What kind of people are they who so enthusiastically collect this class of literature? There will be a twinkle in Herbert Leckenby's light blue eyes, as he answers the politely unspoken question.

"No, they're not crazy! Among us is the headmaster of a well-known public school; an actor whose name is a household word; clergymen; several writers and artists; and, of course, many varieties of ordinary John Citizen—clerks and coal-heavers, soldiers and shop keepers, manufacturers and musicians."

Certainly there are no "down-and-outs" in the readership of the "Collector's Digest" for the collecting of boys' papers is fast becoming

a "big business." The "Gem" and "Magnet" on which you spent your reluctant Saturday penny in the days before the first World War now costs the collector four or five shillings—and 1,711 "Gems" and 1,683 "Magnets" were issued! It is quite as expensive to collect the Victorian "dreadfuls"; the complete "Blueskin"—a hefty volume rivaling a family bible in size—is worth

ten pounds, and such rarities as "The Wild Boys of London" or "Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber" considerably more. Indeed, much of Herbert Leckenby's correspondence deals with the vexed question of prices—is No. 149 of the "Marvel" to be considered a specialised number, or would it be unethical to offer thirty shillings for a missing number of the "Sexton Blake Library"?

You need not, with memories of glittering uniforms and outthrust chins, fear to meet this dictator. Spare, and of medium height, in unobtrusive tweeds, fiftyish (unless you glimpse the perennial boy in those light blue eyes), he could pass you, unrecognised. That was what he hoped to do on a recent visit to London, but he had reckoned without his enthusiastic subjects, who, from the initial reception at the railway station whirled him through a series of meetings, visits, dinners, theatres, and collection viewings until the very moment he was breathlessly hustled on to a north-bound train.

So, if you meet Herbert Leckenby in the near future, you must anticipate a slightly dazed expression—it is, after all, an unnerving experience to discover suddenly that you have become a "Dreadful Dictator."



Vol. 5. No.49.

1s. 1d.

Post Free

JANUARY 1951

Editor: Miscellaneous Section,  
Herbert Leckenby,  
Telephone Exchange, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

On the Eve of Christmas. I wonder what my Christmas would be like without our "Annual". Without a doubt, not so happy. For the fourth year in succession I have been able to sit back, just a little tired, and visualise hefty packets gliding through letter-boxes all over the land, maybe clinging to them a snow-flake or two as a finishing touch. Yes, you fellows, I can assure you it makes a perfect Yuletide for me. Welcome as you are good enough to say the Annual is, it would not be quite the same if it came along on a midsummer's day, or when the autumn leaves were falling.

The finish this year was not quite as exciting as on that desperate race with the clock three years ago, for we have learnt by experience and we were able to plan well ahead. Everything worked splendidly and at 10-30 on the evening of the 19th I walked

home happy in the thought that we<sup>4</sup> had won through once more.

I had not had time to examine a copy thoroughly, but after supper I settled down with one; and when next I glanced at the clock it was one a.m. I stole up to bed to a peaceful sleep.

Here I must pay tribute to the men who produced it, Mr. Philip Wood. Some of you have paid a visit to his premises in old-world Stonegate, and can testify that to turn out a publication the size our Annual has become with the help of just one lady typist is a really praiseworthy achievement. The cover (the sketches of authors and artists, by the way, were taken from a Boys' Realm of 1905) was the work of a genius. And, when I remarked in the "foreword" that there would be a quarter of a million words in our four Annuals, I feel sure I under-estimated, for this year alone there must be in the region of 100,000. Yes, a fine job of work by Wood's Typewriting Agency.

Oh, yes, despite our experience of last year, we were reckless again, and could not resist adding nearly 20 more pages. This though the editorial pencil was used here and there. Fortunately, we have had to meet drastically increased production costs as we should have done if we had had it printed, so though there will be a deficit, it will be much less than last year's. I'm not worrying a bit if my estimate was a little out, for already I've had 'phone words with Len Peckman, Gerry Allison, Norman Smith and John Shaw. They all set my mind at rest, that it was a job well done, and that's enough compensation for me.

I am sure all our supporters will realise that to produce a volume the size the Annual has become is a somewhat daring venture with what is bound to be a limited circulation. Some day, if our numbers grow to thousands, the proportionate cost will, of course, be much less.

I am just a little concerned because, at the moment, there are still quite a lot of subs to come in, far more than at this time last year. I feel sure, however, that this little reminder will be sufficient to bring them along.

And now I'll wait as patiently as possible to learn if others think the same as those I've mentioned. If you have any adverse criticisms, however, don't be afraid to express them.

Still Another Exhibition. A week or two ago I received a letter from the Director of the Sunderland Public Library saying his Committee wished to put on an exhibition of boys' weeklies. They had written to E. S. Turner (of "Boys Will Be Boys" fame) and he had referred them to me. Could I help? Of course, I replied that I

should be very pleased to loan them papers. Due to a limited number of show cases it will be on a more modest scale than those at York, Leeds and London.

However, I hope members of the clan in this vicinity will pay a visit. The display will be from December 30th to January 27th.

++++++

More About Me. On the eve of my London holiday a representative of "Yorkshire Illustrated", glossy 1/- monthly dealing with affairs in the county of broad acres, came to see me. He wanted some photographs to illustrate an article written by Jimmy Stewart-Hunter some time ago, and humourously called "Yorkshire's Dreadful Dictator". I bashfully underwent the ordeal. One photo showed me at the switchboard, the other at a typewriter surrounded with a number of our favourite papers. Oh, yes; I can just hear some of my friends saying, "If he's got a typewriter, why on earth doesn't he use it." Let me hasten to explain that it was just loaned for the occasion by a friendly Military Police sergeant in a nearby office.

Well, the article duly appeared, with the latter photo, in the December number. The article was a jolly good example of Jimmy Hunter's peewy Scots humour and, as we have a 32 page number once more, I am devoting a page to extracts from it and risking being considered conceited. I do feel though that the graphic way he describes the hospitality I received in London should, at least, be in.

++++++

In conclusion, to the scores of friends who have sent me Christmas and New Year greetings, my most hearty thanks. This is the only way I can hope to acknowledge them.

May there be many happy meetings between members of the clan before the course of 1951 is run is the heartfelt wish of

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

P.S. I am anxious to obtain "Plucks" (1907) containing stories of Brooks of Ravenscar, by Michael Storm. I have No's 155, 158 and 165, and would be glad of any others, as I propose writing an article on them for next year's Annual. If any reader who possesses them does not desire to sell, I should greatly appreciate loan for a short time.

(Note.- Some months ago we ran an article on "The Captain". Since we have received several requests from our older members for more about this once popular monthly. We were fortunate enough to have one in hand from a new contributor, so here it is. E.L.)

### WHY "THE CAPTAIN"?

By Thos. Large

When this magazine was first introduced to me I was about twelve years of age, and my elder brother had discovered two old bound volumes in the local Municipal Lending Library, and we each proceeded to enjoy them. Moreover, at about the same time, having a relative employed in an administrative capacity at the West Wing House of Reading School. it was my invariable practice to make a visit to this seat of learning about twice each week.

This enabled me to spend many pleasant interludes watching the various games being played on the fields, according to the season, and I came to feel a great regard of all things connected with Public School life, although unfortunately I was not destined to be included in the hosts of scholars privileged to attend such high places.

Of course, the foregoing are purely personal reasons for preference to "The Captain". The real, and more obvious, amount to far more than these. "The Captain" had, or has, whichever the reader prefers, EVERYTHING. In the first place, one, often two, and at times even three, long serial stories of school life, and for adventure, were included in each volume, supported by two or three ditto short complete stories in each monthly issue. Other writers have already enumerated, and extolled the work of, the various authors of these stories, and I will content myself to say I preferred those of P. G. Wodehouse, Hylton Cleaver, Gunby Hadeth, Harold Avery, and Richard Bird. Then there were numerous articles on all kinds of sport, with the possible exception of horse-racing, which, as all you readers of O. B. Books know, was always heavily frowned upon by the powers-that-be. Also we had devotion to all Hobbies, articles on foreign travel, Civil Service jobs, and Colonial industries; pages of pictures and Fun & Laughter, and, as interesting as any of the above, The Old Fog, and "Captain Club" pages. But, above all, and mark this well,

"The Captain" was born at a time when our Empire had reached, or almost reached, its most glorious pinnacle, and the magazine fulfilled its purpose in fostering the grand Empire spirit in the hearts of Britain's youth. Who did not thrill to the martial music as the Cadet Corps or O.T.C. units swirled by with regular military step?

Another item I consider very interesting was the publication of school sports results, as, living within a stone's throw, so to speak, of two other well known schools besides Reading (Bradfield and Wellington) a certain amount of "local" colour was lent to those volumes including the above names within their columns. Also I consider that "The Captain" is, with the possible exception of the "B.O.P." much rarer from a collector's point of view, as it was a monthly publication, and the ratio of issues compared with those of penny weeklies was therefore less than 1 in 4. Moreover, it is safe to say that most boys could afford, or may have preferred, to purchase three or four of the latter in lieu of the higher-priced "Captain".

My own collection may be said to have started in 1930, when I hoped that my son would naturally grow up to become interested in the publications, as indeed he turned out to be.

Now, let me say a few words concerning some unique characters in one or two of the better "Captain" stories, taken from random, that is, from those which in my humble opinion, rank as the best. Take, for instance, "Playing the Game" by R. S. Warren-Bell, in Vol. 38. The outstanding character in this story is undoubtedly the Bursar, Mr. Perkins, who, in domineering fashion, intends to have his own way in everything, and generally succeeds, too. With his soft cat-like tread and foxy smile, his spectacles eyes gleaming with good-fellowship, he strikes terror into the heart of the fags, and goes on his way, reporting and rejoicing. He is Claverdon and the school is his life, his only home. Yet there is a hidden better side to his nature; he, whose wants as an old bachelor are few, has saved the better part of his salary for years, and many is the helping hand (financially) he has extended to Old Claverdonians who may have fallen by the wayside. And just at the right moment. In this story we also have "Daddy" Steele, the boy who is "dangerous" at football and chemistry, and who ruthlessly leads the ultimate revolt against certain new rules. Also we have Stuart, the hero; Rankin, the nesty piece of work who, by a trick, wrestles the captaincy for a short time from

Stuart, and another exceptional character in Wheeler, the rough-tongued but clever Northerner.

Take yet another long school story, this time from the pen of P. G. Wodehouse, in Vol. 19, and entitled "The Lost Lembs". In this grand yarn we have, apart from Mike Jackson, the hero, a quaint personality who calls himself "Psmith" (the "P" is his own idea of novelty.) He is whimsical, urbane and fastidious. Pretending to be a Socialist, he refers to all and sundry as "Comrade", but with all his apparent lethargy he is intelligent and a man of action in crises. As for Mike Jackson, he is the sort who can hold a bat all day in scorching sunshine and knock up 277 runs in one innings. In fact, the opposing team doesn't appear to bat at all! Then we have Mr. Downing, the fussy little housemaster in charge of Downing's "ticks", and whose prejudice in favour of his own boys antagonises not a few of the remaining personnel, and is the arch-enemy of our heroes. He is eventually baffled in his attempts to "detect" the supposed misdeeds of the latter. As Mr. Wodehouse describes him, "an excited bullfinch"! Adair is also a character well worth reading of, quite a nice type, and could have been the principal actor in another story.

However, I must not take up too much space, although I could, like Termyson's bruck, go on for ever.

And so, my friends, this is "The Captain" as I see it. If I have omitted anything I should have said, or vice-versa, I trust I may be forgiven, or maybe it has already been dealt with by other, and more skilful, writers.

In conclusion, I may say that this preference does not detract in any way from the great pleasure I have experienced from perusal of all the "Hemiltons" and "Nelson Lees" of which I was a regular reader for many years; but before all, "The CAPTAIN"!

**S.O.S.** Will any collector assist Mrs. Packman and myself to complete our joint collection of Union Jacks? Your price gladly paid for any of the following: 1316, 1314, 1313, 1292, 1042, 1040, 1039, ;038, 1016, 999, 998, 997, 996, 991, 989, 988, 987, 985, 984, 983, 982, 978, 977, 976, 975, 974, 972, 971, 970, 969, 967, 966, 962, 960, 959, 953, 919, 917, 911, 907, 903, 902, 898, 896, 890, 887, 886. Leonard Packman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Northern Section Meeting, November 25th, 1950

There was again a gratifying attendance at 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, on the occasion of the November meeting. Tom Puckrin, of Middlesbrough, brought his brother Harry, an old friend of the hobby circle, along, and we were also able to welcome more new members.

Owing to our usual room being booked for a 21st birthday party, the caretakers kindly allowed us to use one in their own quarters, and a very cosy room it was, too.

Gerald Allison, acting secretary, read the minutes of the previous meeting. This was the first time this had been done, and for that reason he continued with an account of all the other meetings which had been held since the forming of the Club, the compiling of which must have taken him no little time. Then he went on to give the treasurer's and librarian's reports.

Tributes to Gerald's industry were made, and the minutes passed without questions.

Then came the appointment of a new secretary. Norman Smith was proposed and seconded. It was evidently a popular proposal, for no one else was nominated and Norman was elected unanimously.

Next came the arranging of a Christmas Party for December 9th. (As a report of this happy event also appears in this issue, there is no need to say more about it here.)

Tom Puckrin then rose to give a talk on that grand old paper "Chums". He evidently knew his subject thoroughly, for though he had some notes he seldom found it necessary to refer to them. On concluding he received a well deserved hearty round of applause. Several questions were asked and answered. The Library was then thrown open, and brisk business was done. Followed the usual enjoyable discussions.

It was agreed by all that this was the ideal meeting. From start to finish everything ran on oiled wheels, there being not a single discordant note.

Attendance: Reg. A. Hudson (chairman); Gerald Allison, Miss Vera Coates, Harry Berlow, Horace Twinham, W.E. Williamson, Tom and Harry Puckrin, Stanley, Mrs. and Keith Knight, Wm. Harrison, David Pullen, David Killingbeck, Tom Roach, Charlie Topham, Albert Thomas, T. Corner, Clive Simpson, and Northern Section correspondent Herbert Leckenby.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Northern Section

Christmas Party

In all the years of my life never have I enjoyed a party more than that held by the Northern Section at 239 Hyde Park Road, December 9th, 1950. From 4 p.m. until it broke up six hours later there was never a dull moment. For this happy state of affairs main credit must go to Mr. and Mrs. Sutcliffe, caretakers of the rooms, who put on a marvellous tea really reminiscent of pre-war days, and Gerald Allison, that versatile fellow who organised all the fun and games.

Nearly a score of members and wives sat down to a tea in a cosy room warmed by two cheery fires, and then we got down to the games.

First came "20 Anagrams" consisting of a score of familiar schoolboy characters' surnames of Greyfriars, St. Jims and Rookwood jumbled up. The prize, an autographed copy of "Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals", was won by Stanley Knight who had all the lot sorted out almost before some of us had got out pencils to paper.

Next a "Twenty Questions Quiz", Prize autographed copy of "Jack of All Trades". Tom Roach and I scored with thirteen correct.

Then Gerry Allison surpassed himself with a real "smasher", a "Twenty Questions" on the lines of the popular B.R.C. feature. Except that Gerry took on roles of both Stewart MacPherson and Norman Hackforth, it was a true copy down to the passing round of the card among the audience.

Two ladies were invited to form half of the team, but as they were shy it consisted of Stanley Knight, Harry Barlow, Charlie Topham and Yours Truly. We got through ten "objects" and despite the fact that Gerry had thought of some real testers, from a certain abstract sort of thing called Billy Bunter's postal order, down to Reg Hudson's nether garments, the team got every one. The audience played up in real sporting fashion when we got near, yet played fair to the Question Master.

Yes, it was a jolly good event, and yes, Gerry, you're the ideal man for a party.

The games over, the room hummed with chatter. There was a good-humoured verbal sparring match between Vera Coates and

Reg Hudson over the relative merits of Merk Linley and D'Arcy; but generally they were male jaws that were going, the ladies looking at each other significantly.

Yes, from beginning to end it was a "reight good do", the only regret that several members were prevented from being present.

Attendance: Reg Hudson, Gerald and Mrs. Allison, Norman Smith, Harry Barlow, Mrs. H. Leckenby, Stanley, Mrs. and Keith Knight, Will. H. Williamson; Harry Dowler (Manchester), Tom Roach, Miss Vere Coates, David Pullan, David Killingbeck, Charlie Topham, T. Corner, and correspondent Herbert Leckenby.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The next meeting of the Northern Section is on Saturday January 27th, at 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds, 6 p.m. Start the new year well by attending the first meeting. record attendance, please! AND February Meeting, 10th instant, (2nd Saturday).

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB XMAS DOUBLE NUMBER MEETING

East Dulwich. December 17th

In days of yore we who collect the books of our youth were thrilled at the Yuletide season to buy the magnificent Xmas double number. As these are a thing of the past it was with great enjoyment that we enjoyed chairman Len's Xmas double number meeting complete with a snowfall. Seventeen members braved the elements and what an enjoyable time we had. The seasonable refreshments complete with holly decorations were enjoyed to the full. Quickly dealing with the formal business, the entertainment side was commenced. The first item was the enjoyable discussion by the Whiter brothers on the respective merits of St. Jim's and Rookwood, Ben taking the former and Bob the latter. It was agreed that the two speeches given were very good and although both of the debaters like both schools they cooked up some very good and amusing arguments. On the chairman taking the vote a smile must have crossed the face of Owen Conquest as Rookwood won by 7 votes to 4.

The Christmas double number quiz devised by the host then took place. Every question was about a double number issue of the old books we loved so well and when the result was announced Bob Whiter was adjudged the winner with Bernard Prime and Cliff Wallis deadheading for second place. Bob Blythe was a good fourth. Now that the last quiz of 1950 has been held, here is the honours list for the year. This is based

on the scoring of three points for a win, two for second place, and one for a third place.

1st, Len Peckmen 19 points.  
2nd, Bob Whiter 16 points.  
3rd, Ian Whitmore 13 points.  
4th, C. Wright 12 points.

Other scores were B. Whiter 9 points, J. Geal 7 points, Ron Crollie and Bob Blythe 5 points, Elcenor Peckmen 4 points, Harry Homer, Clive Simpson and Cliff Wellis 3 points, B. Prime, A. Blunden 2 points, Roger Jenkins, Eric Payne and Frank Keeling 1 point.

In all fairness to all competitors, some members do not have the chance to enter all of these popular competitions, but it can safely be written here that the first four members deserve their success.

The next item was a version of Twenty Questions with Len Peckmen as Questionmaster. The team consisted of Roger Jenkins, Charlie Wright, Bobby and Bob Whiter. The team guessed all the questions and the thanks of all present were given to the northern club for the use of their questions.

Then the get-together chats took place, also the sales and exchanges, and after the venue of the Annual General Meeting and election of officers was fixed, the company gradually broke up. The venue fixed was 706 Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London N.22, on Sunday January 21st, when all members are asked to attend if possible.

Attendance: Len & Josie Peckmen, Charlie Wright, Tony Blunden, Roger Jenkins, Ron Deacon, Jim Parrott, Frank Keeling, Roger Southwood, R. Godsave, B. Prime, H. Flatman, Robby, E. Reynolds, Ben & Bob Whiter, Cliff Wellis.

BENJAMIN B. WHITER.

OFFERS INVITED for Number one Nelson Lee 1915, No. 1 S.O.L. 1925. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, London, N.7.10.

WANTED: Boys' Magazines Nos. 332 to 396. W. Darwin, 76 Western Road, East Dene, Rotherham.

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

# Nelson Lee Column

Conducted by Robert Blythe

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

Well, Chums, I am afraid you will have to put up with me for a bit longer! I regret to say that Bob Blythe's progress has been retarded, and, in consequence of this, he has asked me to carry on until April. He is now recuperating at Lowestoft, and I am sure you will all heartily concur with me in my wishes for his complete recovery in the near future.

To start the year off, I think the following will be of real interest to all Lee-ites.

I have recently been in correspondence with someone whose name is not familiar to me, though probably known to some of you - a Mr. Ron Mabbett. During the course of our letters he has told me all about his activities some years ago in connection with St. Frank's.

It appears that this bright enthusiast was the producer of several plays featuring St. Frank's, supported by a band of Lee-ites. They called themselves "The Jolly Juniors", and judging by the photographs and local Press reports, their shows were excellent.

I cannot do better than to quote from Mr. Mabbett's letter:- "— with E. S. Brook's permission and good wishes I decided to put St. Frank's on the stage. So I worked on a series "Handforth's Iron Rule" (N.L. 1st New Series No.24, Fifth of a series of six issues. L.P.) and got out a play in 4 acts. I called it "Fun at St. Frank's", and I stuck to the original dialogue as much as possible. We put on this show at Fairford on December 4th 1930 and it was a great success. —and then there was "The Death Grip" (N.L. 2nd N. Series No.47) featuring Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard. This was produced at the Assembly Hall, Fairford, on March 25th 1931. — then finally, in 1932, we attempted Pentomime. Again the Old Paper provided the script. This was "The Babes in the Wood", and the basis of the thing can be found in N. Lee (O.S.) No.500, "The Schoolboys' Pentomime". This was a great success and we were asked to repeat it at Kempsford, a large village some 3½ miles from Fairford. We gave it there and the room was packed, standing room and all - to its limit!

Circumstances such as my new job, longer hours, members of the party leaving home, etc., finally broke up our jolly little company. But the memory lives on; no doubt the young men and women of that party sometimes recall those happy days as I do. I wonder?" —

Well, I guess that is something to remember and to be proud of. Maybe some bright lads will get together in the future and give us "old 'uns" a treat of this description! Perhaps also, one day some of the names of the "Jolly Juniors" may be found in the C. Digest "Who's Who". It's a small world anyway; so here they are:-

Ron Mabbett (Producer), Blanche Fry, Cecil Messenger, Gwendoline Boreham, Edwin Richens, Eric Poyman, Rachel Boreham, Sidney Richens, Margery Cole, Fred Westmacott, Reggie Tozer, Leslie Cox, Cyril Barnfield, Arthur Goodman, Bert Waine, Olive Cuss, Philip Blacksteff, and Ethni Well. That a smashing band of Lee-ites!! In conclusion, I cannot do better than to quote from the Wilts. & Glos. Standard, Dec. 1930, on "Fun at St. Frank's".

"F AIRFORD B.L.D. An enjoyable evening's entertainment, arranged and produced by Mr. Ronald Mabbett in aid of the funds of the Fairford Silver Prize Band, was held in the Assembly Rooms on Thursday evening, Dec. 4th, when his "Jolly Juniors" party presented a play, "Fun at St. Frank's." The play is a plot in which several of the boys of St. Frank's are involved. The "Hero" (Hendforth), who is the unwanted skipper of the Remove, imagines he is poisoned by some "squiffy" meat paste he had for tea. Knowing this, the schemers of the Remove plan to dress up one of their confederates as a nurse, who is to "get round" the unfortunate Hendforth by persuading him that he is too ill to carry on the duties of skipper. Unluckily for them, however, one of Handy's pals overhears their plans, and informs his chum of them. While he is so doing a knock comes at the door, and Dora, Hendforth's girl chum's cousin, enters. Never having seen her before, he immediately jumps to the conclusion that she is the fake nurse come to fool him.

Consequently he treats her very roughly (Oh, Handy!). Immediately afterwards Irene, (Hendforth's girl chum) rings up to say Dora, her cousin will be at St. Frank's shortly. Next enters the "jester". Handy, under the impression that he is the girl, Dora, listens to him and promises to resign.

However, at the conclusion, as he is about to go to the

common-room and announce his resignation, Irene, Dora, and other Moorview schoolgirls arrive and an explanation follows. Songs and sketches completed the programme."

### VOTING COMPETITION NO. 1.

#### Analysis of Voting

This competition has aroused great interest, and the final results are full of surprise. As the entries came in, the votes were carefully listed, and with the passing of the days, excitement ran high in the editorial office. "A", the Barring-out Stories, led throughout the entire period, and the conviction grew that this item was far and away the most popular of all. It was surprising, in a way, for the Barring-out there was one that was repeated time and time again in the various papers. One assumed, somehow, that rebellion against authority would not appeal so strongly to the adult mind. But the assumption was wrong, as the results show, proving that when a theme is popular, one cannot have too much of it.

Very close on the heels of "A" came "I", the Serious Character Stories. It was a striking triumph for those fine tales with Herry Whorton in the lead, which must have been in the minds of many. An easy third was "F", Comedy stories featuring Bunter. This proved that the fat Owl has lost none of his popularity, but it also shows that Mr. Frank Richards will not be putting a foot wrong if he occasionally writes one of his fine serious stories as a change from the ever popular Bunter.

Next in order came "D" and "C", proving that while holiday yarns are popular, readers prefer the lads to remain in the old country. Now there came a very big drop to "G", Comedy stories of Coker, proving that while the Fifth-former has his following, he is not everybody's "cup of tea".

7th and 8th, well down the list, came "E" and "B". The Schoolboy Cracksmen stories were only one point ahead of the Thriller Stories. Neither made a good show, which would seem to point to Telbot's style of story having passed its heyday in the popularity field. Finally, a very big drop to "H", Adventure stories of the St. Frank's type. Rather surprising, perhaps, as one would have thought that St. Frank's had a fairly large following. The voting, however, would seem to show that these tales do not appeal to the adult mind, whatever they may have done in earlier days.

And now for Competition No. 2. Forms enclosed.

# "Hamiltonia"

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

There's been some more very interesting publicity for Greyfriars. It started in a "fourth leader" of "The Times" on November 8. (Yes, "The Times" again, you fellows). It referred to a long ago "Magnet" story concerning Harry Wharton's missing jacket button. It was followed by a letter from Frank Richards a week later. Then a columnist on the "Glasgow Herald" took it up and on three days quite a lengthy discussion took place in "An Editorial Diary" in that paper.

For the benefit of those Hamiltonians who have not read that story written in 1908, I might explain that it concerned a nervous habit Harry Wharton had at the time of twisting a loose button on his jacket. He entered for an exam, and a certain member of the Remove who had a grudge against him cut it off in the hope that it would upset Harry.

In the "Glasgow Herald" Vernon Smyth (Spelled with a "y") was named as the culprit. Actually it couldn't have been, for he wasn't at Greyfriars then.

Anyway, on the following day "An Editorial Diary" started off like this:

"Professor D. W. Brogen, a scholarly voyager to whom distance is no object, arrived in Glasgow yesterday from London, ostensibly to address a meeting in Clydebank, but in truth to put us right about the spelling of the name of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

It is significant that he came to us directly from the railway station to state with a wealth of corroborative detail that we accept with admiration as definitive that the name is Smith, not Smyth - Vernon Smith."

There was more of it, sufficient to prove that Professor Brogen had been a devoted reader of the Magnet.

Quite a lot more appeared about the button incident. I only wish we could reproduce it all, but for reason of space that is impossible.

There was more that day about Sexton Blake, Tinker, and others of our heroes. Not bad, you know, in a paper like the "Glasgow Herald" in these days of newsprint shortage.

Further to the "mystery of the loose button", Frank Richards

wrote to me asking if I could name the particular story and when it appeared. I remembered the story distinctly, for it was one which had always stuck in my mind, but I could not quite place it. However, I was sure I knew someone who could, so I rang up John Shew, our No. 1 authority on Gem and Magnet lore. Having explained what I wanted, he said in those quiet tones of his, "Oh yes, I think I can tell you. Can you hold the line a minute?" It was hardly more than a moment before he was saying, "Yes, it was No. 3 of the Magnet, 'The Mystery of Greyfriars' and the boy who cut the button off was Peter Hazeldene." Just like that.

Now it would appear that the confusion over Vernon Smith arose because another story with a similar plot, written by a "substitute", appeared some ten years later, and if you will now turn to the "Letter Box" you will see some interesting news from Frank Richards on this, and on how the original story came to be written.

I have devoted a good deal of space to all this. I think deservedly, for it is a striking proof of how even the more serious and influential of our newspapers are willing to devote space to the once humble halfpenny Magnet and Gem, and the famous characters who will never die.

THE PICK OF THE SERIES. No. 2.

The Lancaster Series. (11 stories, from No. 1209. Opening story in Magnet dated April 18th 1931)

When the Lancaster series appeared, the theme of the School-boy Cracksmen was by no means new. Mr. Hamilton had characters of this type at all his schools. But Lancaster, a senior boy, nearly 18 years of age, was more convincing than any of the others could be. Dick Lancaster was a great cricketer, and, as such, had been persons great at country houses, where he had committed secret robberies. One wonders whether Mr. Hamilton based these stories on the famous Mr. Raffles, - the similarity is considerable.

At any rate, it was a fine series. In fact, in the years which followed, Mr. Hamilton never surpassed the superb character work which he put into his pen-pictures of Dick Lancaster. — "It was curious how Lancaster had won golden opinions from every sort of fellow at Greyfriars, and from the masters, too. In class, he delighted the good old Head; in the French set, in the mathematics set, he delighted Monsieur Cherpentier and

Mr. Lescelles. At games he delighted the games-men, numerous and powerful at a school like Greyfriars. But the studious men liked him too and found they had plenty in common with him. His influence in the school was enormous, and could easily have made him a thorn in the side of authority, had he liked; but he set an example of cheerful respect to the prefects which was good for the "Bloods", and was followed by some of them. Paget of the Third, his fag, adored him, a feeling shared by all Paget's form. Great men as he was, colour-men in his first term, Olympian to the eyes of the juniors, he always had a kind word and a kind smile for any fag he knew—"

Such was Lancaster, who played his part on the Greyfriars stage for eleven stories, and then dropped into oblivion. A magnificent little set of stories, worthy to rank with the Magnet's greatest, with many original twists of plot, and marred only by a rather abrupt and unsatisfying finish. In book form, the Lancaster series would have become a school classic.

Speaking of schoolboy cracksmen naturally brings to mind Talbot of St. Jim's, who had made his appearance nearly 20 years before. Talbot, popular though he is with a great many, was never the convincing character that Lancaster was, perhaps because he was too young for the part. Talbot played the lead in countless series in the Gem, plenty of them written by the "sub" writers. But the Talbot scope was limited, and a great many of the plots were repetitive and inclined to be tedious, though some fine character work was done in the description of Tom Merry's unswerving friendship for the "Toff".

Rookwood, too, had its schoolboy burglar, in the character of Kit Erroll. The Erroll series in the "Boys' Friend", later re-printed in the Popular, make pleasant reading, though the plot, at any rate today, appears hackneyed and overplayed.

### THE OWL OF THE REMOVE

By P. A. Walker

Some weeks ago I spent a pleasant evening chatting to a friend who happens to be a headmaster at a boys' school. The conversation had turned towards a discussion about some of his boys. In the case of one particular individual my friend passed the comment:-

"He reminds me," he said, "of Billy Bunter."

"Billy Bunter!" I exclaimed, "then you used to read the Magnet."

"Well, yes, I suppose I did," said my friend, "about forty years ago!"

"You haven't read it since then?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "But not regularly. I should imagine that the last time I actually read the Magnet was in the 1920's. But, of course, one uses the term 'like Billy Bunter', in the same way that one refers to other famous fictional characters."

"Yes, I see what you mean," I said. "Even whether you ever read the old Magnet or its contemporaries, or not, one has heard of Billy Bunter."

Which, I submit, is an astonishing thing. Billy Bunter! William George Bunter! The Owl of the Remove! Who hasn't heard of him?

The one name which emerges above all from the vast array of schoolboy characters created by Charles Hamilton.

Why is it?

Why has this selfish, hopeless cecding, lying, snobbish fat fellow implented himself into the minds of the British public? He is even referred to in the same manner with which one uses the famous names of Dickens: David Copperfield, Sam Weller, Mr. Pickwick, and many other characters of fiction.

Going back to the early days, when the appearance of the Magnet on the bookstalls on Monday mornings was the week's great thrill; when its terra-cotta coloured cover reminded me of my father's "answers"; when the days were hot and it always seemed to be summer; when leisurely farm-carts rumbled down the village street, and horses stopped to drink from the trough in the market square; and when the world of Greyfriars and St. Jim's was your world, too.

Going back to those days, we find that the weekly appearances of Billy Bunter revealed a much different type from the fat, obtuse Owl of the Remove of later days. He was timid and shy, and appeared to spend a large proportion of his time preparing succulent meals for his firm friends the Famous Four; later the Famous Five. He was known as "Billy". He was certainly not inceptible of a little falsehood now and then, but never indulged in the gigantic "whoppers" of a more recent period. He was admittedly short of cash, and his long expected postal-order was on its way then.

But he was not the fat, idiotic Bunter whom we know so well today. He emerged as the years slipped by.

Presumably it was a slow process. Bunter seems to be pretty much Bunter since about 1920, although further deterioration is noticeable towards the late 1930's.

One does not recollect in the early Greyfriars years that he indulged in "sporting behaviour" with Pon and Co. There is no early memory of Bunter smoking. His excursions on the turf came at a later date. He does not appear to have been a constant source of anxiety to his form-master, Mr. Quelch. Nor does Bunter Court seem to have figured in his imaginations.

I am wondering if, at some time, some researcher into Greyfriars and St. Jim's lore is going to discover a Magnet in which Billy Bunter's name is not mentioned! It is quite astounding to consider how many times Frank Richards found it necessary to "drag in" Bunter in order to bring the series to a successful conclusion. Without Bunter the criminal could never be brought to book. Without Bunter the world-wide excursions of Harry Wharton and Co. could not have happened.

Christmas mysteries and escapades at Wharton Lodge in Surrey weren't possible without Bunter. Even if Bunter was not invited to Harry Wharton's Christmas party he would turn up.

New boys' destinies at Greyfriars were somehow unaccountably woven into Bunter. The Bounder's frequent backslidings, and his rebellions against various temporary form-masters required Bunter to help to unravel the tangle. Without Bunter the carevenning exploits and summer holidays of the Chums of the Remove would have fizzled out.

Curiously, the early Greyfriars stories merely use Bunter as a background character, though he did have occasional yarns in which he was the central figure. However, as time progressed we find the name of Bunter appearing regularly in the Magnet titles. Mr. Leonard Peckmen has shown us in a series appearing in the Collectors' Digest the number of occasions Bunter's name has been used in the title of the story in the Magnet - "Bunter - the Hypnotist", "Bunter - the Blade", "Billy Bunter's Postal Order", and so on. Why this curious and fabulous character should achieve such popular appeal it is rather difficult to imagine, but eventually the Magnet wasn't even satisfied with its own title, and added the information that it was "Billy Bunter's Own Paper" during the

last few years of its illustrious career.

Of course, Bunter was a handy sort of fellow to have around the place. If he was required to dodge swiftly behind the inevitable screen which graced all studies at Greyfriars from the Head's downwards, he was to hand. By this means, the grim secret of the new form-master, or the painful past of a new man in the Remove, was known to Bunter.

Despite his gabbling tongue, Bunter could be relied on to keep this information to himself for at least the next nine issues of the Magnet. It is fascinating to recall the many happy hours spent with the Chums of Greyfriars and Bunter.

Probably my earliest recollections are of Bunter being depicted as a Hero! He has no alternative but to save Mr. Quelch's niece, Cora, from being severely gored by an enraged bull.

The wonderful series published around 1920 dealing with the exchange of schools by Billy and his cousin Welly Bunter, were, to my mind, some of the best school stories ever written. Many may remember that Billy Bunter went to St. Jim's, and Welly replaced him by going to Greyfriars. Despite many narrow escapes they managed to avoid detection for about a dozen numbers of the Magnet and Gem.

This series was illustrated by one of my old favourites, Warwick Reynolds, and I have a picture in my mind of the Owl of the Remove sitting down to a marvellous repast of "sosses and chips".

Apart from this series Bunter made incursions into the pages of the Gem on numerous occasions, cropping up at cricket matches and other sporting events, usually to the disgust of the fastidious Arthur Augustus.

Another astonishing feature of this Bunter business was the production of a lesser edition in his Second Form minor, Sammy. Luckily, Sammy remained primarily in the background, and we were not unduly irritated by his presence. Two Bunters not being sufficient we were treated to a third, in the large shape of Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School for girls, a feminine counterpart even more distasteful than the one and only W.C.B.

At this time of the year it is delightful to browse amongst the tales of our youth, and I am sure that no better way of spending Christmas could be found than re-reading some of the old Magnets and Gems.

The Magnet Christmas Number for 1916, "The House on the

Heath" comes readily to mind, and in this story of blizzards, remote country houses and German spies, Bunter is the first to find himself in the clutches of the rascally Hun officer. Naturally, this fact is the chief reason why the spy is eventually brought to justice.

Other famous series with Bunter as the chief character are the amusing "Bunter Court" episodes, and his selection as chief of a cannibal tribe whilst on holiday in far distant climes.

To conclude this brief resume of the fetuous Owl of the Remove, it is amusing to remember that he had his counterpart in many other yarns by Mr. Charles Hamilton.

Tubby Muffin of Rookwood, Baggie Trimble and Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's, Chunky Todgers of Cedar Creek in the Canadian backwoods, and, if memory is correct, a Tuckey Toodles of the school on board ship, a series of yarns appearing in the Greyfriars Herald.

However, there is only one Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, his pale blue eyes peering from behind huge spectacles, a fat boy created by Charles Hamilton in 1908, and still on the scene more than 40 years later, with his name on the front cover - "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School".

---

MAGNET TITLES (Continued from November issue)

448, the Great Bat Mystery; 449, Billy Bunter's Bolt; 450, For D'Arcy's sake; 451, The Mystery of Mauly; 452, The Stolen Study; 453, The Bounder's Guest; 454, Fishy's Latest; 455, Under Bunter's Thumb; 456, The Rascal of the Remove; 457, Maulverer - Detective; 458, Coker's Spy; 459, The Rivals of Greyfriars; 460, Billy Bunter's Reformation; 461, The House on the Heath; 462, The Way of the Transgressor; 463, Foul Play; 464, Victims of Visitors; 465, Getting Rich Quick; 466, In Hot Water; 467, The Deserter; 468, Linley Minor; 469, Bunter's Big Brother; 470, The Fellow Who Funked; 471, Sir Jimmy of Greyfriars; 472, The Great Fat Cure; 473, The Herlock Sholmes of Greyfriars; 474, Viscount Bunter; 475, The Prefect's Plot; 476, The Greyfriars Flying Corps; 477, Harry Wharton's Rivals; 478, The Rebel; 479, Colonel Cherry's Campaign; 480, The Remove Election; 481, Head of the Poll; 482, National Service at Greyfriars; 483, Sir Jimmy's Secret; 484, His Father's Honour; 485, Two of the Sixths; 486, Peter Todd's Vengeance; 487, The Fall of the Bounder; 488, The Bounder's Metch; 489, The Last Straw

490, The Bounder's Way; 491, Sir Jimmy's Pal; 492, Sharing the Risk; 493, Against His Own Side; 494, A Lesson for Skinner; 495, On the Wrong Track; 496, Hurree Singh's Secret; 497, Parted Pals; 498, The Greyfriars Organiser; 499, On the Make; 500, The Schoolboy Inventor.

WANTED: Magnets (600-900). Gems (pre-1000). Populers. Holiday Annuals. Pre-war Triumphs. Hotspurs, Wizards, Skippers, Adventures, Rovers. Boys' Friends. Pilots. Boys' Magazines. Modern Boys. Hotspur, Wizard and other Annuals. All with School Stories. Good prices paid. P. Willett, 67 Ford Bridge Road, Ashford, Middx.

WANTED: Collectors' Digest Annuals, 1947, 48, 49, and monthly numbers 1 - 48. Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10.

WANTED URGENTLY: Gems Nos. 819 and 946. Josephine Parkman, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

WANTED URGENTLY: Magnets before 1540. Gems before 1608. S.O.L's 411, 384, 381, 378, 379. Newnes Dick Turpin Libraries. Dixon Hawke Libraries. Also 10/- each paid for C.D. Annuals 1947, 1948, 1949. Brian Honeysett, 65 Orchard Road, St. Annes, Lancs.

WANTED URGENTLY: Pre-war Film Funs and between 1940-1945. Will exchange Rangers, Thrillers, Nelson Lees. Also Bullseyes wanted. Reasonable prices. Pete Checkley, 18 Terlington Road, Coundon, Coventry.

WANTED: Boys' Friend 3d. Libraries: early Magnets and Gems in good condition. Particularly wanted Magnets 95 and 148. Also S.O.L's 'first 200 preferably). Ernest Hubbard, 58 South View Crescent, Sheffield 7.

FOR S.A.L.E: Collectively or separately, 80 B.O.P's, 330 Champions, Also 6 Champion Annuals. Offers. Details. B. R. Edgeley, 9 Southway, Carshalton, Betches, Surrey.

# Letter Box

1.

## The Affair of Harry Wharton's Button

November 23rd, 1950.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

You may have seen the mention of Harry Wharton and his loose button in the fourth leader of the Times on November 8th, and my letter in the same paper on the subject in the issue of November 15. Now people are writing to me to ask where and when that Magnet appeared. I am sure that it was in 1909, but the date, naturally, I don't recall, or the title of the story. Could you help me there?

2.

November 25th, 1950.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

John Shew certainly is a mine of information. I remember remarking once that I would rather depend on him than on myself in any doubtful point. I just couldn't recall the name of the story or the number of the Magnet or date in which it appeared. I am indeed surprised to learn that it was so far back as No. 3; that must have been in 1908, not 1909, as I had supposed, and I could not feel sure whether it was Hazeldene or Bulstrode who cut off the button. Vernon-Smith was not at the school at that time, neither was Bolsover, whom one correspondent has suggested in a letter to me.

I have been quite surprised by the interest this little incident has aroused, — and still more so, by what you tell me of the Glasgow Herald. Do please send me on those cuttings; I am most eager to see them.

I can give you a spot of inside history if you are interested. After my letter in the Times, a Mr. Christie wrote to the paper from Jesus College, Oxford, to say that a similar incident occurred in the life of Scott as a schoolboy, and hinted that I had lifted it therefrom.

I immediately wrote to the Times again, pointing out that the story was undoubtedly a true one, founded on fact like many other Magnet stories, and giving the name and address of the daughter of the real "hero of the button", who is still living, and is a lady of title, living in Kensington, asking that the name be not published. The Editor wrote to me to say that

without publishing the name, my letter would lose its point, so it did not appear. I did not, and do not, feel at liberty to publish the lady's name, so there it ends. But it may interest you to know that the button incident was a real happening, which I formed into a plot for a Greyfriars story, and that the letters in the Times were read by the daughter of the schoolboy of earlier days, on whose adventure the incident was founded.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

3.

November 29th, 1950.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for your letter this morning with the cuttings from the Glasgow paper. I am also returning herewith the "Clinical Excerpts". It really was pleasing to see our fat friend figuring in so grave a journal. Many thanks for sending it along.

I have been getting a lot of correspondence about that dashed button. Luckily, I have now had full particulars from John Shaw, so shall be able to answer questions on the subject.

The statement that the button incident was repeated in 1919 is quite unfounded. If anything of the kind did appear, it can only have been a dud story by an unauthorised hand, using up the incident a second time. If this be so, I never saw it or heard of it.

I of course gave Lady ——'s name to the Editor of the Times, only stipulating that it should not be published. I could hardly let her in for a bombardment of correspondence, such as has come my own way.

I was very interested in the result of the voting. They always used to say at the A.P. that a "barring-out" was a sure card to play! so I am not really surprised at the result.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

Again the "Long Arm"!

P.O. Box 3, Beaconsfield,

Cape Province, South Africa.

4th December, 1950.

Dear Editor,

Well, I just had to write again today. I have

been reading Walter Webb's article in the September Digest "Blake Through the Years" and got the shock of my life when I read that Patrick Morris was in real life Viscount Mountmorres. This astounded me as I knew Viscount Mountmorres very well. You see Walter omits to mention that Viscount Mountmorres between his term as a curate in Ryde, I.O.W. and becoming Rector of Wokingham, he was Vicar of St. Mark's Church, South Farnborough, near Aldershot. (Young Southwood will know the Church well). As I have told you before, I was born in Farnborough and St. Mark's was my Church. I was, in fact, a choir-boy, and later on a Boys' Club Leader when he was Vicar. He was certainly a great man and many times I have sat in the Vicarage listening to him telling stories of his adventures in all parts of the world.

What a peculiar world we live in. I should never have thought Viscount Mountmorres was a Sexton Blake author!!!!

All good wishes,

A. J. SOUTHWAY

Great News!

December 22nd, 1950.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Many thanks for the Annual today; and for the C.D. the other day. I have not had time to read the Annual yet, as it arrived only this morning; but I have glanced into it, and must say that it looks good.

Perhaps you will be interested to hear that my autobiography is to see the light at last. I have been revising it and bringing it up to date, and it will be published next year by Skilton's. It is about the length of a Bunter book; and you would hardly guess how much I had to leave out — I could easily have made it 600,000 words instead of a mere 60,000. But I have no doubt that the readers will be satisfied with the smaller quantity!

Best wishes for Christmas, and every sort of good luck in the New Year.

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

January.

\*\*\*\*\*  
B L A K E A N D A.  
\*\*\*\*\*

1951.

A HAPPY, PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR TO ALL BLAKE FANS.  
.....

G. ALLISON reviews:-

THE SIXTH BLACK LIBRARYNOV/DEC 1950.

Heavy going this month I am afraid. Instead of the Christmassy stories of the snug rooms at Baker Street, with Mrs. Cardell serving up a Dickensian meal, and Blake and Tinker gathering around the festive table with friends (or foes) - what have we?

Two of the most unconvincing and complicated muddles published for months.

NO. 227. THE TRAILER OF MIDWINTER by REX BARDING.

In this tale we do get Blake on page 1, but he is so unreal, like everyone else.

A woman whose husband is supposed to have been dead for twenty years, has kept him in an underground cellar all that time! On page 46 Blake says:-

"The woman is half crazed with worry, which, naturally Shirley has always thought to be due to still grieving over the loss of her husband."

Naturally? And after THIRTY YEARS?

Later, on page 58:- "It is quite simple really" went on Blake. But is isn't you know!!!

NO. 228. THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS by JOHN BRUCE GOND.

Here the entire action takes place on one night, in or about a small wood.

The place is completely crowded with blackmailers, murderers, policemen, poachers, housewives, bus-conductors, professors, spies, inn-keepers, etc etc. Also Blake. Also dogs, (not Pedro).

You can't see the wood for the cast.

G. ALLISON.

UNION JACK TITLES.1923.

- |       |   |           |
|-------|---|-----------|
| 1004. | The Palace Of Mystery.                                |           |
| 1005. | The Case Of The Stolen Locomotives.                   |           |
| 1006. | The Return Of Gunga Dass. (Dass)                      | Gregory.  |
| 1007. | The Temple Of The Blind. (Owl)                        | Symonds.  |
| 1008. | A Strange Legacy.                                     | Toed.     |
| 1009. | The Case Of The Bamboo Beds.                          |           |
| 1010. | The Secret Of The Mine. (Owl)                         | Symonds.  |
| 1011. | The Vengeance Of The Black 8. (Grant)                 | Quiroule. |
| 1012. | The Case Of The Petrol Turbine.                       |           |
| 1013. | On Secret Service.                                    |           |
| 1014. | The Pearls Of Benjaminsin. (Rymor)                    | Toed.     |
| 1015. | The Painted Window.                                   | "         |
| 1016. | The Brand Of The I.D.B. (Yvonno).                     | "         |
| 1017. | The Case Of The Indian Fakir.                         |           |
| 1018. | The Scopro Of Solomon. (Three Musketeers)             | "         |
| 1019. | The Valley Of Flies. (Adrian Steele).                 |           |
| 1020. | The Mystery Of The Moving Mountain. (Plummer)         | Toed.     |
| 1021. | The Adventure Of The Renegade Spy. (Dass)             | Gregory.  |
| 1022. | The Case Of The Crimson Curtain. (Zenith)             | Skene.    |
| 1023. | The Tabu Of Confucius. (Wu Ling)                      | Toed.     |
| 1024. | The Return Of Beauclair. (Mostrolé)                   | Jackson.  |
| 1025. | Plague. (Zenith)                                      | Skene.    |
| 1026. | The Slave Of The Thieves Market. (Wu Ling)            | Toed.     |
| 1027. | The Case Of Tinker's Tourist Trophy.                  |           |
| 1028. | Tinker - Wireless Operator.                           | Toed.     |
| 1029. | The Battle Of Brooklands.                             |           |
| 1030. | The Case Of The Professional Tennis Player.           | Murray.   |
| 1031. | The Adventure Of The Giant Bean. (Wu Ling)            | Toed.     |
| 1032. | The Impostor Of The North West Mounted. (Blenslayer). |           |
| 1033. | The Mycena Of Paris.                                  |           |
| 1034. | The Case Of The Steel Lined Room.                     |           |
| 1035. | The Affair Of The Lacquered Walnut.                   |           |
| 1036. | The Mystery Of The Chateau Bleu. (Charon)             | Quiroule. |
| 1037. | The Man With The Limp. (Dass)                         | Gregory.  |
| 1038. | X inc. (Zenith)                                       | Skene.    |
| 1039. | The Gargoyle's Secret. (Kov)                          | Murray.   |
| 1040. | Bail Up!  |           |
| 1041. | The Mark Of The Peak. (Plummer)                       | Toed.     |
| 1042. | The Case Of The Crippled Monk.                        |           |
| 1043. | The Case Of The Golden Pebble.                        |           |
| 1044. | The Living Mask. (Zenith)                             | Skene.    |

UNION JACK TITLES (1923) continued.

- 1045. The Case Of The Kidnapped Pianist.
- 1046. ~~London~~ <sup>London</sup> ~~Under~~ <sup>Under</sup> The President Bandits Of The Blue.
- 1047. Huxton Rymor - President. (Rymor) Teed.
- 1048. The Black Eagle. Teed.
- 1049. The Straits Of Lystory.
- 1050. The Case Of The Six Rubber Balls.
- 1051. The Case Of The Phantom Frying Pan. (Moonslayer). Teed.
- 1052. The Devil Woman Of The Makali. (Lobangi) Haytor.
- 1053. The Shadow Of The Past. (Kostrol) Jackson.
- 1054. The Flaming Spectre Of Cloono. (Kildro) Broois.
- 1055. The Scareb Of Ament Oba. (Ribart)

We now have pleasure in presenting the first instalment of the continuation of the wonderful feature by WALTER WEBB.

BLAKE THROUGH THE YEARS.

It was in the Double Xmas number of the year 1896 that the story "Bravo, Blake!" was published. In this exploit of the great detective, W. Shay Mac revealed the fact that Sexton Blake received part of his education at a school called Ashleigh.

Blake was reminded of his brief and happy stay at this public school when, on leaving his chambers at Norfolk House one morning and leaving the busy, jostling, roaring Strand, he turned down a thoroughfare leading to the Thames embankment. Here he saw a young fellow he seemed to recognise in a vague sort of way, rowing up the hill towards him followed by an elderly gentleman.

Blake was amazed when the young fellow, without any apparent cause, reeled and staggered and fell in a heap on pavement. The detective's amazement increased when the elderly gentleman, on reaching the prostrate figure, behaved in exactly the same way.

Staying his own headlong rush, Blake sought to discover the nature of the unseen force that had laid low the two men. He quickly discovered it. On either side of the street was situated residential mansions, let in flats, and opposite to where the men lay, was let in a square iron

plate, bearing the name of an electric company. The electric wires supplying the mansion outside where the victims lay, with light and motive power, passed from the street mains through a hollow way under the pavement, and in the little tunnel a leakage had occurred, charging the flagstones above and around with electricity and turning them into gigantic electric batteries. Careful not to approach too close, lest he, also, be struck down in the same way, Blake reversed the stout cherry stick he was in those days in the habit of carrying about with him, and stretching forward managed to slip the creak under the arm of the younger man and drag him out clear. After medical attention the victims quickly recovered, Blake having meanwhile recognised in the younger man an old school chum of his, Harry Everton.

It was during his later years of residence at Ashleigh Public School that Blake had met Everton and his younger brother Frank. They had been known to him as Everton Major and Everton Minor; had been but little fellows during the time of young Blake, who, at that time, was generally regarded as the hero of the school, and held in greater estimation and almost in greater awe by the smaller boys than the Head himself. Old "Bravo Blake" was how he came to be known in those happy and care-free days at Ashleigh, when, as an 18 year old youth, he had enjoyed the admiration of his schoolfellows, and it is interesting to record that Shaw Rae fixed the period for his narrative as nine years later, thereby making Blake's age at the time of writing as 27.

When Harry Everton asked him to spend a week or two at Everton Towers, his home, Blake readily accepted the invitation, and it was immediately following the conclusion of a particularly severe thunderstorm that the old school friends arrived at their destination, to be met by Frank Everton, who, tearfully told his brother that their father had been struck by lightning and was lying dead in the study.

After examining the body Blake's interest was aroused by the fact that, although the window of the study was open and the panes were streaming with moisture, none had entered the room, which was perfectly dry, a circumstance which developed in Blake all his professional instincts.

The Everton brothers had a cousin, one rival Everton, the son of their father's younger brother, who was born in

India. On the death of his father the previous year, Raval came to England and settled down to live with his cousins. Blake's reaction on seeing Raval for the first time was a feeling of distrust, for although appearing very upset over his uncle's death, it seemed to the detective that Raval Everton was playing a part.

Acting upon a sudden inspiration Sexton Blake unpacked his camera. It is a well known fact that when any man is killed by a sudden and violent shock, quite often the last scene he looked upon on earth is imprinted on the retina of the eye, and there the impression remaining for some time. With this in mind the detective photographed the features of the dead man, following which he made an enlargement, the result being that on the retina of the eye clearly discernable was the figure of Raval Everton.

He was standing with a strange looking object in his hand, an instrument which Blake recognised as an electric battery, which obviously was used to cause the death of Squire Everton.

For the sake of the family name and honour, Blake was asked not to take the matter any further, but although agreeing to hold his hand for the time being, it was far from the detective's intention that Raval should go unpunished, and, in significant tones he reminded Harry's Uncle, Sir. George Chenworth, that whereas yesterday there were four lives between Raval and the succession of the Everton estate, to-day there were but three, and advised the baronet to be sure and see that those three were not further reduced. It is time here to introduce young Charlie Everton, the youngest of the Everton brothers, an eleven year old boy, for he was one of the three towards whom Blake referred.

In order to get away from unpleasant associations for a time, Sir. George took a small seaside estate in Argyllshire, and extended an invitation to Blake to accompany Harry, Frank, Charles and Raval and his self to Scotland. The detective, very uneasy in mind for the safety of the brothers, accepted, and his fears were fully justified, for Raval made an attempt on the life of Charlie.

Sir. George, having just purchased a number of small,

wiry, ponies, Rawal dared Charlie to ride one of them, a fiery tempered animal, who obviously would have needed a skilled hand to hold him in check. Rawal's taunts so stung the youngster that he immediately jumped upon the animal's back, whereupon, unnoticed by the rest, Rawal jabbed the open blade of his penknife deep into the animal's flank. Mad with agony the pony galloped off with Charlie clinging to its back. Blake gave chase on one of the other animals, and it was towards Deepsock Moss, a bottomless bog in which anything once engulfed was sucked down never again to appear, that the runaway made for. Across open moorland with its masses of purple heather, pursued and pursued thundered, the firm ground gradually becoming softer, and made yielding, until at length, on the very verge of the bog, Blake drew lever, yanked Charlie from the back of the maddened pony, just before the animal plunged into the bog.

There, Blake was compelled, in an agony of mind, to watch the frenzied struggles of the demented pony as it was sucked gradually down deep into the mud.

To be continued.

Readers of *ELANIAN* are urgently requested to submit suitable articles for inclusion in future issues of the G.D. Send your contributions to H.L. Bond, 10 Bar Wen, Rhinbina, Cardiff.

Next month:-

U.J. Titles for 1922.

The Man from the Surco.

Blake Through the Years.

The Round Table.

H A P P Y   N E W   Y E A R .