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**COLLECTOR'S
DIGEST**

Vol. 11, N^o 117.
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September, 1956.



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—THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST—

Vol. 11 No. 117

Price 1s. 6d.

SEPTEMBER, 1956

Editor, HERBERT LECKENBY,
c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
7, The Shambles, York

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

MY BEREAVEMENT: Since the July number was published I have received a great number of kind expressions of sympathy, many of them from overseas. Time and time again I have been told I would find comfort among my friends of the hobby. How right they were I have been overwhelmed at the thought of the number I possess. Again my heartfelt thanks. I feel it would be sacrilege if I ever destroyed those letters.

BY THE CROOKED SPIRE: At 8 a.m. on Sunday, August 5th, Jack Wood and I set off by bus to Leeds. There we were joined by Gerry Allison, then on by train to Chesterfield to meet Harry Broster of Kinver, Worcestershire, the county which had the sauce to beat Yorkshire at cricket recently. We were out early that Sunday morn but not as early as Harry for he had left home at 6 a.m., set off on a four mile walk in order to catch a train from Birmingham. There's enthusiasm for you.

Our trains arrived at the town with the Crooked Spire within a few minutes of each other and left in the same fashion. In between we had six very enjoyable hours.

We parted vowing the meeting must be repeated with more members joining in if possible. Harry hadn't to do that four mile trek home but he said he wouldn't have minded if he had.

AND, NEARBY THE MINSTER TOWERS: On August 10th, Rowland Storey on his way home to Newcastle from London broke his journey at York and spent several hours browsing over the papers he had read when a boy. He vowed he had enjoyed himself. Then on the 15th Tom Porter (no connection with one Poynter needless to say) and Beryl

Russell came over from Ripon. Jack Wood acted as guide over one of York's show places, showing them with relish recently dug up Roman coffins and skeletons. Then we went along to my home where we were soon buried in books! A good time was had by all.

In between these visits to me I paid one to my oldest hobby friend, Harry Dowler. I certainly found the hours passing pleasantly in his Manchester home.

Yes, indeed, thanks to the comradeship of the Brotherhood I am passing from the shadows.

THE 10TH ANNUAL: The Annual is making splendid progress. Already on stencils are "Libraries Through the Years" by Bill Lofts; "The Captain" by Frank Vernon Lay; "Annual Reveries" by George Mell; Eric Fayne's "Red White and Blue"; and "The St. Ninian's Story", Percy North's account of Nipper's education before he arrived at St. Frank's.

In hand I have J. Breeze Bentley's "Vernon-Smith's Feud" and an article on some of the real 'bloods' over 100 years or more by Ronald House. And I know of others who are busy on their contributions. Geoff. Hockley, Roger Jenkins, Gerry Allison, Len Packman, Bernard Thorne and Bill Hubbard. Yes, it's going to smash all records.

As for orders, they are coming in nicely, but slightly behind last year at this time. So if you haven't sent yours yet please do so as soon as possible as we shall have to make an early start running off.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY.

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OBITUARY

King Death has been busy since our last number for he has claimed Hugh W. Fennell, veteran collector and a subscriber to the C.D. since No. 1 and Henry J. Garrish, prominently associated with the Amalgamated Press and Harmsworth Press for over 60 years.

I never had the pleasure of meeting Hugh Fennell but I had many of his cheery letters and heard a lot about him through Len Packman.

As for Mr. Garrish, Walter Webb is telling you that we are in his debt for a lot of 'inside' information.

Mr. Garrish was editor of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d Marvel and its companions in their early days. He was also a prolific writer of stories under many pen names, including George Garrish, Harry Belbin and John Edmund Fordwich. These yarns always had a delightful blend of stirring adventure and dry humour. Outstanding were those of The Captain, the Cook and the Engineer in 1d Pluck. For a long period he and E. Newton Bungey wrote nearly all the serials in comics like "Chips", "Comic Cuts", "Puck", and "Jester and Wonder".

HERBERT LECKENBY

Here are tributes from Walter Webb and Len Packman.

HENRY J. GARRISH

Like many other old-timers who read that sad announcement in last month's issue of the "Collectors' Digest", the passing of Mr. H.J. Garrish was a matter of deep regret to me. Although never having had the pleasure of meeting him, I had, through the medium of the post, corresponded with him several times.

Mr. Garrish was, as his replies indicated, a very busy man. You knew that by the way his sentences came - short, crisp, and straight to the point. To a question the reply would come with forthright abruptness - no frills, nor trimmings of any sort, just a plain straightforward answer to a question, straight, or roundabout.

Yet, in his directness, Henry Garrish was the essence of courtesy, and my impression was that, far from being irritated at my persistent enquiries - as many another might - he showed a sympathetic understanding and, in fact, really welcomed them. In

support of this contention let me quote the footnote to a letter Mr. Garrish wrote to me in his own handwriting (the footnote, not the letter, which was, of course, typed by his clerk) on the 26 April, 1950:

"Send along any further queries if you will kindly be content to "pause for a reply"."

And when I took Mr. Garrish at his word and sent in as many queries as I could think of, I found him just as willing to co-operate as previously. On one occasion when he could not answer a query he passed it on to Mr. L.E. Pratt, retired editor of the "Sexton Blake Library", and I had the unusual distinction of getting a letter from that difficult-to-contact gentleman without having the necessity to write first!

In not one instance was a letter not answered by H.J.G., and, few in number though they were, quite a lot of the character of the man was revealed in the replies. Never did he express himself more truly when he wrote and said: "Speed and mass production have sadly spoilt promising writers. You cannot do good work in a hurry." How aptly those few words explain the reason for the famine of really good writers today! Certainly, in the early days of Henry Garrish speed and success did not go hand-in-hand. On the contrary, the road to success was long, tedious and often dispiriting, but such was the calibre of the man that he reached the end, whilst others dropped at the wayside.

Truly, the literary world has gained nothing at the passing of Henry J. Garrish - but it has lost a lot!

WALTER WEBB.

HUGH WORDSWORTH FENNELL

One of the elder members of our circle and a subscriber to the Collector's Digest from the commencement, Hugh W. Fennell passed away on 29 July, 1956, after a comparatively short illness.

A man of unassuming and kindly disposition, Hugh Fennell was an authority on the Victorian and Edwardian papers. His personal collection was large and varied, his favourites being "Blueskin", the "Blue Dwarf" and the Aldine "Robin Hood" and "Invention" Libraries; he was also greatly interested in Science Fiction stories.

In his earlier years Mr. Fennell was on the staff of the A. Press, drawing cartoons for the comic papers and writing many of

the stories in "Butterfly", "Comic Cuts" and "Merry and Bright", including "The Doings of Dr. Dread" and "The Woman with the Black Heart".

At a later date Mr. Fennell wrote many stories for Hulton's "Boys Magazine" and Thompson's "big five".

Hugh W. Fennell will be greatly missed, not only by his family, but by all members of "The Brotherhood of Happy Hours", none more so than the present writer who is indebted to him for many acts of kindness over a number of years.

LEONARD PACKMAN.

DEATH STRIKES AGAIN: I have been deeply shocked to hear from Ben Whiter of the death on the 18th August of Percy North of Basingstoke. I was so looking forward to seeing him next month. To think that he will never see his article and map in the coming Annual, referred to in my chat.

A fitting tribute will appear next month. - H.L.

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Blakiana...

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN
27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London S.E. 22.

Quite a lot has happened in connection with the Sexton Blake Library since the August issue of the Collector's Digest was published. Actually the events all occurred in July, but as BLAKIANA has to be in Herbert Leckenby's hands by the 18th of the month (for publication in the following month's issue) it was of course too late for the details to appear in the August number.

In the following pages you will read all about it, for Len has put it in the form of an article. When you have read it I would ask each and every reader of BLAKIANA to drop me a line giving me your candid comment. I shall be seeing the Editor of the S.B. Library at a later date, at which time the replies I receive from you will be very useful.

As for myself, the whole matter necessitated much careful thought before committing my comment to paper. In any case it is a certainty that opinions will be divided, but, whether you agree with me or not, my own considered opinion is one from which I see no reason to vary. My comment will be found following Len's article.

In view of such a momentous matter I am asking "our Herbert" to tell us what he thinks about it, and I am hoping his comment will follow mine in this issue.

JOSIE PACKMAN.

THE MODERN BLAKE AND THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY by LEONARD PACKMAN

Following a letter from Eric Copeman to Mr. W. Howard Baker, the Editor of the Sexton Blake Library, Mr. Baker in his reply expressed a desire to be placed on the mailing list of the Collector's Digest. Herbert Leckenby was advised accordingly, and he at once wrote to Mr. Baker enclosing copies of June and July C.D. The next thing was a letter from the Editor to Mrs. Packman inviting her, as organiser of Blakiana, to call and see him, as he felt that she should be fully informed of the changes which are taking place

at present in the S.B. Library. Unfortunately, by necessity Mrs. Packman has been, and continues to be engaged upon extensive overtime at the Office, and is therefore unable to make any appointments. However, being better placed for time I offered to visit Fleetway House on her behalf and advised Mr. Baker accordingly. An appointment was made, and on the afternoon of 26 July I was shown into the Editor's sanctum. In substance, the following is what transpired.

I was greeted by a gentleman whose age I estimate to be in the early 'thirties. Mr. W. Howard Baker at once put me at my ease (with the aid of a cup of tea!), and then, without further preliminaries, we got straight down to it.

Sensing what was in my mind - and Mrs. Packman's - Mr. Baker assured me that the transition from Baker Street to Berkeley Square, and all that goes with it, is not so drastic (to the exclusion of Tinker etc.,) as would appear on the fact of it. Tinker, for instance, would in due course be given equal prominence - once the new set-up is working smoothly; in fact, a story Mr. Baker is at present working on features Tinker with a personal problem which Blake unravels.

Mr. Baker now proceeded to explain the reason for the transition, and what the picture will be like in a few months time.

In the first place, it will be appreciated that the older readers - the 'old faithful' so to speak - are gradually slipping away, as of course we all must do when our time comes. In place of them is the product of a modern age, with streamlined sophistication and ideas undreamed of by their grandfathers. At the same time, while the stories of Blake were always topical the style had not been in keeping with the times; in other words it is logical to expect such a man as Blake, with his knowledge and background, to be modernised. In actual fact (said Mr. Baker), as the years had advanced from the 'twenties, Blake had remained many years behind the times. The result, viewed from the Amalgamated Press angle, became more and more obvious and - if Blake was to remain 'alivo' - something had to be done about it.

Here, Mr. Baker agreed with me that the transition was very sudden and should have been elaborated upon at the time of the change-over. (In fairness to Mr. Baker it is equally obvious that he had to move quickly!). To a certain extent this is being rectified, but as the issues of the S.B.L. are already printed and in

hand for many months ahead it will not, unfortunately, be possible to do this before October. However, for the benefit of our readers Mr. Baker has kindly permitted me to give out the following extract, taken from the statement to appear in the October issue of the S.B.L's;

"To thumb through the files of the Sexton Blake Library should be to see the history of an age in miniature; for every trend, every changing taste, should be reflected in the monthly quota of stories. Sexton Blake must not be dated, as Holmes is, or Sam Spade and Charlie Chan are. The stories in which he now features keep abreast of, and sometimes, with strange prophecy, ahead of the news. Blake is the Lanny Budd of the sleuths, sharing the secrets of the great, and being a part of history as it is made; and yet human enough to concern himself with the problems of the 'little man'."

Thus it is that we find Blake with a suite of offices in Berkeley Square (but, according to Mr. Baker, still retaining his living quarters at Baker Street), complete with staff comprising Miss Pringle, Marion Lang and Paula Dane (not forgetting Tinker).

Mr. Baker went on to explain that the reason why Paula is at present featured more than Tinker is in order to acclimatise the reader to having her around; to a lesser degree the same applying to the other females. When once this is done - and Mr. Baker thinks about the end of the year will be appropriate - the intention is to have them all working together and sharing equally in the cases of the future.

Mr. Baker also tells me that Detective Inspector Coutts will appear in some of the stories, and that 'Splash' Page, re-named 'Splash' Kirby, will be found in a story to be published very shortly.

I was about to suggest that some of the names of Blake's old adversaries, such as Kestrel, Zenith, Plummer and Rymer, might be used for some of the modern criminal characters - although of course not appearing as the same personalities as of yore; but here Mr. Baker forestalled me by asking me to let him have a pen-picture of such characters as I have mentioned, in order that he might 'get to know them' and use them at a future date. (Needless to say I have sent Mr. Baker the details he requires.)

Pausing for a moment to light a cigarette, I glanced round the room. On one side was a long, neat row of S.B.L's (modern); on the

mantel-shelf a bust of Sexton Blake (slightly the worse for wear, as a result of the blitzes he'd been through during the war); on a long table at my side were large, coloured originals of S.B.L. covers, and a pile of photographs specially posed for by models, depicting 'stills' from the stories, the latter to adorn the inside covers of the S.B.L. I then learned that the finest work was being put into the covers. The artist, Mr. De Seta, is one of the 'top-liners' of today - as can be seen from the great detail put into his work; the models are also 'top-liners', and the photographers experts of their craft. Sexton Blake certainly is being given a 'New Look' - from cover to cover!

To round things off I asked Mr. Baker a number of questions and learned several interesting facts. To my mind the most interesting fact of all is that W. Howard Baker is also 'Peter Saxon'. Here again I have Mr. Baker's permission to release this information. Mr. Baker is not Arthur Maclean, Arthur Kent or James Stagg (the latter shortly to make his first appearance as a Blake writer). I also learned that the S.B.L. is not only published in the Argentine in book form and in Sweden in cartoon form, but in Spain, Finland and Sweden in book form as well. Mr. Baker presented me with two of the Swedish books, "Den Falske Baronen" (The Case of the Bogus Baron, S.B.L. current series No. 276, by W. Tyrer) and "Bar Mysteriet" (The Mystery of the Mason's Arms, No. 277, by A. Parsons). The cover designs are quite good, though not in the same class as our S.B.L. The size and format of the book is similar to the "Ellery Queen Magazine". I hope Mr. Baker won't mind me mentioning it, but somebody slipped up when putting the author's name on the covers of these two issues; they have been transposed!

One question I asked was: 'Will such authors as J. Hunter, A. Parsons, W. Tyrer and R. Hardinge be writing any future stories in the S.B.L.?' The answer is - yes!

So there we have it. Speaking for myself I have very little comment to make. It is certainly far better to have Blake with us in his 'New Look' than to have him 'die'. Furthermore, if the Editor keeps to what he says I think I shall become acclimatised in time - I am in fact beginning to become resigned to the situation and find myself taking some interest in the 'modern' Sexton Blake. (Mr. W. Howard Baker lived for some years in Australia, and in both speech and looks he is very much like Mr. A. Gorfain of the "Silver

Jacket" who was over here and came to one of the O.B.B.C. Meetings last year. Mr. Baker is also a staunch Hamiltonian, possessing a large number of Magnets of the 1930's which he would not part with for any money in the world.

As one of the old 'dichards' I still cannot agree that this modern treatment makes Sexton Blake any more interesting. I do not like the introduction of so many young lady assistants. Tinker was always the one to accompany Blake on his travels; he also acted as Blake's secretary, looking after the 'Index' all through the years. Admittedly there have been many women in the Blake Saga - Yvonne Cartier, Fifette Bierce, Claire de Lisle, and later Roxane Harfield, Lola de Guise, Marie Galante and June Severance - but all these ladies just came and went; Blake and Tinker remained together always at Baker Street.

As for becoming a modern detective - well, Sexton Blake used all the methods, scientific and otherwise, long before some of the current detectives were ever thought of! To the older Blake fans it is well known that Blake was a fully qualified doctor as well as being a man of science, and many of his greatest successes were obtained through the use of his scientific knowledge. His own laboratory at Baker Street was at one time better equipped than that of the 'Yard'. Thus, Tinker also had the advantage of being trained from boyhood by Blake.

However, this is only my opinion regarding the situation generally. It is at least pleasing to know that we have Mr. Baker's word for it that Tinker will not be neglected, and that there is a possibility of one or two of our old favourite characters returning, albeit in modern guise.

JOSIE PACKMAN.

MY POINT OF VIEW

By HERBERT LECKENBY

Josie asks for my opinion, well here it is. As one sufficiently aged to have read Blake stories almost from the beginning, and for the last few years an editor in a modest sort of way, I am, so to say, between the devil and the deep sea. I have, needless to say, fond memories of the great days of Plummer, Kestrel, the Confederation and the rest. Yet I have to remember that I am sometimes rapped on the knuckles because I don't give more space to

the papers of 50 or more years ago. I have to reply that alas! there are very few left who remember them, and therefore if I want to keep the C.D. going I must cater for those interested in the papers of a later day. Thus willy-nilly I find myself leaning towards the new policy where the S.B.L. is concerned. We've got to realise that the majority of those who read them have never heard of George Marsden Plummer or Yvonne. All they want is a good racy story and they certainly get it in the new S.B.L.

I believe there's some raising of eyebrows over some of the covers, but you couldn't have Paula Dane portrayed in the skirts of Yvonne, now could you? Nor would it be the Yvonne we used to know if she returned in the form of the shapely Paula.

Anyway the new editor assures us that some of the old favourites will be coming back. 'Splash' Page in a new guise, for instance. That seems to me to be the ideal solution.

LATE NEWS: Bill Lofts has brought off another 'scoop' and the biggest yet. He has had a long interview with Mr. H.W. Twyman, for many years editor of the "Union Jack". Mr. Twyman kindly supplied Bill with a lot of valuable information about the old authors and stories. Yes, Bill's done it again.

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CORRECTION: In Frank Vernon Lay's account of his interview with Mr. E.E. Briscoe it was stated Mr. Briscoe was an R.A. This was an error, but he has exhibited at the Academy.

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HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

I am indebted to Charles van Renen, Uitenhage, South Africa, for the following interesting cutting from, I believe, a South Africa periodical. According to its story even His Majesty, King George VI had a knowledge of Billy Bunter.

"Honeycombs from Birkhall and adjoining farms were always served with hot home-made scones, buttered cookies, and wafer-thin jam sandwiches. Once the chef served these wafer-thin slices of bread and butter, cut on a machine, to a boys' club tea party King George VI was giving at Balmoral. The King watched his sturdy young guests demolishing three and four slices at a time, then sent a message to the kitchens for plenty of good thick "doorsteps," well buttered, to be served instead.

Later, he teased the chef unmercifully, telling him he did very well for the Royal Family, but if he wanted to feed a lot of healthy boys, he's better go away and read the Billy Bunter stories to get some idea of their appetites."

THAT JUBILEE: May I remind St. Jim's fans in particular that November brings the 50th anniversary of the first story. So far I have not received many contributions to enable us mark the event in fitting manner. So would you please get to work in the next week or two.

Anthony Baker's contention last month that Greyfriars should be modernised brought two amusing retorts, one from Frank Richards himself. Here they are:-

August 4th, 1956.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the C.D., which dropped in like a little ray of sunshine on a wet and woeful morning. I was much amused by Anthony Baker's idea of modernising Greyfriars. Oddly enough, by the same post came a letter referring to that venerable establishment as "the one stable spot in an unstable world." I think we'll keep it stable: but I will consider modernising it when I hear

that the Tower of London has been done up in a nice new pink distemper, Westminster Abbey given a coat of whitewash, and Stonehenge turned into a block of flats! Then we'll all be delightfully modern!

Our fat old friend is due for another run on T.V. beginning in September. I had some very happy days writing a new series of the plays.

I have lately added another string to my bow, in the shape of producing Latin versions of songs from Gilbert and Sullivan. This is very amusing work, and it is extraordinary how comically Gilbert goes into the stately tongue of Horace and Cicero. I doubt very much whether any publisher will rise to the bait, but what's the odds so long as you're 'appy? Here is a specimen from the "Duke of Plaza-Toro" which may amuse some of the readers:

Ab extremé acié in bellum
 Cohortem ille ducebat,
 Ubi enim veniebat proelium
 Nedum excitans hoc orat,
 Sed semper in fuga primus
 Totius legionis,
 Altissimus, fortissimus, clarissimus, Dux
 Plaza-Toronis!

I have marked the elisions for the behoof of any reader who might like to try singing it to the old tune.

With kind regards,
 Always yours sincerely,
 FRANK RICHARDS

Tel: Elmbridge 3357.

The Modern School,
 Grove Road, Surbiton.
 4th August 1945.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Two appeals for "Modernity" in the August issue is a sad jolt to those of us who think the pre-war papers so very superior to those on the bookstalls today.

Anthony Baker's jolly letter is intentionally amusing, but I hope that Mr. Richards may never be tempted to take it seriously. It would be distressing if Mr. Quelch had to burn his cane for fear of being summoned for assault; if the Remove had to pause in their Science or Biology while the class went for their milk; if Vernon-

Smith broke bounds in order to see an "X" film in Courtfield; and if Bob Cherry and Marjorie Hazeldene appealed to the magistrates for permission to marry against their parents' consent.

Joking apart, surely we have often read of the Chapel at Greyfriars. And didn't Bunter once lose his memory through diving into the Greyfriars swimming bath when it was empty?

Yours sincerely,

ERIC FAYNE.

The Nelson Lee and Blakiana sections come in as guests in Jack Murtagh's happy account of his visits to members of the Brotherhood 'down under'.

BILLY BUNTER FLIES THE TASMAN

By J.R. MURTAGH, New Zealand.

Billy Bunter has been in some strange places and right at this moment he's here with me in spirit if not in reality as I write this at an altitude of 17000 feet half way across the Tasman sea between Australia and New Zealand, the total distance is approximately 1300 miles between the two countries. Here's how it all comes about.

I am just returning from a six week visit to Australia, mainly Sydney, and feel somewhat like I know our friend Herb must feel on his way home from his annual visit to London. The hospitality and kindness shown to me during my visit by Australian collectors has been terrific. Syd Smyth and his charming wife just about adopted me while I was in Sydney and their home in the shadow of the mighty Sydney Harbour Bridge was a home away from home to me and many a pleasant hour I spent there, browsing through Syd's very fine collection of Magnets, Gems and other papers containing Hamilton Stories and many a spread we enjoyed together that would have made Billy Bunter's eyes sparkle with glee. Syd has a very lovely and understanding wife who put up with all our enthusiastic chatter about old boys books smilingly and always kept me well supplied with cups of tea when I called having discovered that tea was a weakness of mine.

One Sunday afternoon Syd drove me over to Ernie Carter's place a nice home in the suburbs where Ernie lives with his sister. What a wonderful collection he has of Nelson Lees, Sexton Blakes,

Union Jacks, Magnets, Gems etc. Ernie has a bound volume of the first 25 Magnets in absolute mint condition and lacks only 70 Nelson Lees for a complete collection. The hours slipped by like minutes while we talked and browsed over Ernie's collection - I was only sorry I did not get another opportunity to visit him while in Sydney.

Before I left I also visited Eric Copeman and once again received a real Australian welcome even though, unlike the others, I had never met or even corresponded with Eric. I found his wife was a New Zealander so we were pals right away and an invitation was made on the spot to stay for lunch. Eric has a very fine collection of S. Blakes, Union Jacks, Nelson Lees, Magnets and Gems, mostly nicely bound and in spotless condition. He has told his wife Rosemary that if ever the house gets on fire to save his books and never mind about the furniture, refrigerator, carpets etc., - any of the shops in the city stock all those things but where would one find a shop to replace all his treasured books. Eric has lots of other books including the Tom Merry Books, Bunter Books and books by Berkley Gray and Victor Gunn, being our friend E.S.B. of course. I took Syd Smyth along to Eric's place the following night and we had a most enjoyable evening browsing and talking about the merits and otherwise of the various A.P. papers and characters and schools therein, to finish up with a most enjoyable supper produced by Mrs. Copeman, who by the way is a S. Blake fan.

Last but by no means least Vic Colby. I had never previously met him or written to him but I phoned him and those magic words "Old Boys Papers" did the trick and I was at once invited out to his very nice home in a suburb of Sydney. I spent a whole day there as Vic was on his holidays. Vic is a real Sexton Blake fan and has one of the finest collections of Sexton Blakes and Union Jacks that I have ever seen - even some of the early $\frac{1}{2}$ d Union Jacks. I went through them all one by one and what memories they brought back of by-gone days and how we talked of old favourites. We were reluctant to break off to have the splendid meal that Vic's very pleasant wife prepared for us; like the other collectors' wives she soon discovered my weakness for tea and kept me well supplied.

Vic told me of his first introduction to the Nelson Lee (he has a few and if I'd talked to him much more about them I feel he would have really developed into a keen Nelson Lee collector). Anyway it seems that when he was just a schoolboy he visited the home of a pal of his and found his pal had dozens and dozens of

Nelson Lees pegged out on his mother's line to dry; seems he had found them in a pool of water at the end of a neighbour's backyard where they had been thrown out. All the chaps had sad stories to tell of how in misguided moments in their youth they had taken heaps of Magnets, Nelson Lees, Gems, Union Jacks, etc., along to the local second-hand bookshop and disposed of them for a ½d and a 1d each, but we have all done that haven't we. I myself sold a large suitcase full of 3 or 400 Sexton Blakes, old series, for a penny each many years ago and piles and piles of Magnets, Gems, Boys Magazines and Detective Weeklies for ½d each. Thank goodness I wouldn't part with my Nelson Lees and Union Jacks.

As I sit on the plane writing this, as I am homeward bound, I am happy in the thought that I've made some very nice new friends in Australia this trip (I've had 7 previous trips) and renewed my friendship with other friends, and I'm going home with many pleasant memories, an armful of Magnets, Populars and Union Jacks, three more of my wanted Nelson Lees, some very early Boys Friend Libraries such as "Nelson Lee's Pupil", "The Silver Dwarf" etc.

Before I left I asked Syd if he remembered a Magnet which contained a story in which Billy Bunter saved a little girl from the path of an oncoming train and sure enough he produced it, Magnet 1016 "Bravo Bunter" and he lent it to me to read on the plane on condition I guarded it with my life, which of course I am doing. I've just finished reading it before starting to write this and that's how Billy Bunter comes to be flying the Tasman with me. A fine story it is too: Bunter saves a little gipsy girl from the front of the goods train while he's on a wild goose chase looking for a picnic Wharton & Co. are having. How he came to do it nobody knows, not even Bunter, but to quote from the story "Bunter petrified with horror was motionless, but somewhere buried deep under Bunter's layers of fat was a spark of genuine British pluck for all of a sudden Billy Bunter as if moved by a hidden spring over which he had no control bounded out upon the railway line - he snatched up the child and staggered forward etc. etc."

Nobody believed Bunter's story of course, especially as it changed from a goods train to a passenger train, with passengers leaning out the windows cheering wildly as he repeated the story. However, the truth came out in the end and the Remove shouted Bunter a feed and all was well. It's nearly 30 years since I first read this story, little dreaming at the time that the next

time I read it it would be at the height of 17000 feet above the Tasman sea, travelling at over 300 miles an hour, for when that story was published on Aug. 6th, 1927, the Flight of the Tasman had not been made by man, it was to come the following year on the 10th of September, 1928, when Kingsford Smith and C.P. Ulm flew the Tasman in 14½ hours. Today passenger planes fly it in 5 hours. I wonder if Billy Bunter has ever flown the Tasman before.

I feel that Nelson Lee fans will think I've deserted them for Bunter & Co., but it is not so, St. Frank's is still and always will be my first love and I smiled to myself when I read recently that Frank Richards has written a book called "Schoolboys In Space". What do you have to say now, you Hamilton fans who ran E.S. Brooks down because of his so-called fantastic themes. E.S.B. beat Frank Richards by about 30 years with a story of Schoolboys in Space which ran in The Boys Magazine about 1927. Then under the pen name Reginald Browne he wrote the Swan book "The School in Space" published in 1947, so that's one up for us E.S.B. fans.

Don't take it to heart anybody, it is I hope, and always will be, good natured rivalry and I for one look forward to reading Frank Richards' new book. I've just started collecting Magnots again so if any of you chaps have any in good order and not too dear, no matter how common, drop me a line. I managed to finish up with a free advert but I think you'll agree Herb I've earned it. Hope to produce a few articles on St. Frank's and the Nelson Lee Lib. in the near future - it's mainly a question of time.

RESULT OF POINTERS NO. 3

The best possible score was DREADNOUGHT (38); MARVEL (18); PONSONBY (26); MORNINGTON (34). Total 116 points.

A postal order for 5/- has been sent to W.O.G. Lofts for his entry in this contest; first received.

POTTED PERSONALITIES, 3rd Series, No. 1. By ERIC FAYNE

BAGGY TRIMBLE

My own view has always been that the introduction of Trimble into the St. Jim's Story was not a particularly happy move. There can be no doubt that Trimble was the direct result of the ever-growing popularity of Billy Bunter, and the Fleetway House thought

to cash in on the demand for the inimitable old fat man of Greyfriars.

But though Bunter's fatness, fatuousness, and foibles could be bestowed upon Trimble, there is a magical charm about Bunter which, like the return halves of railway tickets, is not transferable. Bunter was and is unique. Efforts to copy him are doomed from the start. Bunter's unpredictable charm was never seen in Trimble, who was never anything but repulsive.

Trimble was as unnecessary as he was unpleasant. The dramatic personae of St. Jim's was amply strong enough without the introduction of a facsimile of a character from another school. I think that the Gem gained less than nothing in Baggy Trimble.

But.... credit where credit is due. Oddly enough, Trimble appeared in two Gems beyond price — a couple of brilliant stories which appeared in the middle Twenties, when he became "TOO GOOD FOR ST. JIM'S". Trimble, — smug, sanctimonious, and mischief-making, — was an adulterated joy. How strange is life! Baggy was worthwhile in the Gem Story for these two yarns alone.

And now for a change we'll have another crossword.

"COLLECTOR'S DIGEST" PRIZE CROSSWORD, No. 3

1		2		3		4	5		6	7
						8		9		
10	11		12		13	14				
15								16		
17			18		19		20			
21			22							
		23					24		25	26
	27			28			29			
30									31	
32							33	34		
35							36			
37						38				

We hope that solving this puzzle may provide you with five minutes' amusement. Just to add to the interest, a postal order for 5/- will be posted to the sender of the first correct solution opened by the Editor. If you do not wish to cut your C.D., make a careful copy of the square.

ACROSS: 1. In the old paper, his christian name wasn't Teddy. (2 words, 6, 3)
 6. Half of that. 8. It looks as though Marjorie Hazeldene could make herself cheap.

10. Bulkeley might become a dealer. 14. Come in! 15. Curly kale in the grounds of Eastwood House. 16. Tom Merry's is red and white. 17. Would Harry Wharton & Co., wear these if they went to the Frozen North? 20. According to Lowther, Gussy has one in his eye. 21. A bit of shush, please. 22. Carne is poisonous. 23. Much about nothing? 24. Mr. Hamilton, in short. 27. Won't Dame Mimble even give it where it is due? 29. Where Bob Cherry is, in term-time. 30. See 5. 31. Thanks, briefly. 32. What bad, bold Bunter did in the box-room (2 words, 3, 4.) 33. An associate of Tom Brown. 35. See 18. 37. Trace around before the box for the Highcliffe creeper. Provides food for thought, at any rate. 38. See 6 down.

DOWN: 1. This fourth-former is in the Shell, I'm sure! 2. Another of those assistants. 3. If the fifth-former lost his head, he might go through it. 4. Like your copy of the C.D., at this moment. 5. (with 30 across) A Chinese boy associated with Frank Richards (2 words; 3, 4.) 6. (with 38) Is this how the Bounder wins at cards, at the Cross Keys? (3 words; 3, 2, 6). 7. Fishy in the Magnet, and terrible in the Gem. 9. In this case, Mr. Quelch might take his History of Greyfriars with him. 11. All from a plea Cherry makes. 12. Going rotten, and no wonder, with Cardew in it. 13. How Gosling regards the cream of youth. 18. (with 35 & 20 down) Does Mr. Quelch keep this in his desk? (4 words, 1, 3, 2, 6) 19. Is a caned one uncomfortable? 20. See 18. 23. It's part of a riddle; so dry, of course. 25. Itchy in pants. 26. This image could be astute. 27. Where Harry Wharton met Mr. O. 28. I can reform in South America. 30. Describes Gussy fancy waistcoat. 34. Did the golden one of the Gem have blue covers? 36. Preceded by 31, it could make the end of Kangaroo.

MAGNET TITLES (cont'd)

1570. Bunter Gets the Boot; 1571. Billy Bunter's Twin; 1572. Good-Bye Greyfriars; 1573. Bound for the Wild West; 1574. On the Texas Trail; 1575. Harry Wharton & Co. in Texas; 1576. The Schoolboy Range-Riders; 1577. Ructions on the Ranch; 1578. A Prisoner in the Desert; 1579. The Raid on Kicking Cayuse Ranch; 1580. The Man with the Hidden Face; 1581. The Trail Thief's Secret; 1582. The Trail Thief's Last Ride; 1583. Bunter the Hypnotist; 1584. Walker on the Warpath; 1585. Five in a Fix; 1586. Up for the Sack; 1587. Punishing Ponsonby; 1588. Loder's Unlucky Day.

NELSON LEE

COLUMN

* * * * *
 by JACK WOOD
 NOSTAL, 328 Stockton Lane,
 YORK.

Having returned from Mordania, we are at home and abroad again this month with another interesting article from the pen of Norman Pragnell, who recalls one of the earlier series after St. Frank's was burned down by Zingrave's airship. So, over to Norman and the story of

"DACCA" THE DEVIL DWARF

When the Second New Series was launched in January 1931, all Nelson Lee readers anticipated something great in the way of new stories. The opening three issues were something of an anti-climax after all the boosting that the Editor had given to the wonderful changes that were alleged to be happening to our Paper. The much heralded Cyrus Zingrave series turned out to be rather a damp squib. Three single stories only, complete in themselves, and far removed from the traditional series, which usually consisted of eight numbers. However, when these three stories were brushed away and forgotten, there appeared one of the few really fine series that we were to read between 1931-1933. This dealt with Nelson Lee's fight against Dacca - the Devil Dwarf. What a remarkable personality he was - the cultured leader of the Bulgarian people in one form, and a villainous hunch-backed dwarf in the other, probably the toughest adversary that Nelson Lee ever had to face. Let us read again how Edwy Searles Brooks compared him with Zingrave.

"That vile thing possesses the strength of a dozen men. I have never known anything like it. Make no mistake, boys, we are up against a deadly enemy this time - far more deadly than Professor

Zingrave and all his myrmidons of the Green Triangle!"

In this series which ran to five numbers, most of the regular St. Frank's characters appeared, although in somewhat different guises. Nelson Lee was given the main role, and this was certainly a change for the better. For far too long Nelson Lee had taken a back seat while other less gifted characters than he, had hogged the limelight. Any reader, being introduced to the Nelson Lee Library for the first time between 1926-1930 might have wondered why the book was so called. It is surprising that the Editor did not adopt the style that was to appear in the "Magnet" and put "Handforth's Weekly" under the title "Nelson Lee Library". The story opens with the problem that confronted the British Government concerning the disappearance of aircraft whilst crossing over the frontier of Bulghanistan, one of the many states in India. No reports had been received of any of the aircraft crashing and it almost seems as if they were literally spirited away. The Bulghanistan ambassador was unable to help in any way at all, and stated quite emphatically that his country knew nothing about the matter at all.

Nelson Lee and the St. Frank's juniors enter the story by a chance S.O.S. coming through Browne's short wave radio. Amongst a jumble of signals and words comes an address of a lane in Romford, and it is to there that the juniors rush post-haste in Browne's and Handforth's cars. At an old house they discover imprisoned a famous aircraft designer who has been missing for some weeks. He is found in a very bad way, but before his death, he warns the boys of a horrible dwarf possessing the strength of many men. The juniors make their escape back to Grays Inn Road, and there Nelson Lee learns the full story. Feeling that there is a tie-up between Dacca - the Devil Dwarf and Sir Akbar, the Bulghanistan ambassador, Nelson Lee decides to break into the ambassador's house that very night. Disguised as a tramp he does so and makes the discovery that Sir Akbar and Dacca are one and the same person - a modern Jekyll and Hyde. To prove this to the outside world is not so easy and so Lee seeks an interview with the Air Minister, who refuses to credit Lee's story. While the interview is taking place at the Air Ministry, Sir Akbar is announced, but Lee, furious that his story is not taken seriously, goes to Scotland Yard to give them the facts, as he knows them. Meanwhile Sir Akbar fakes a struggle behind the Air Minister's study, and returns as Dacca, - kills the Air Minister,

and steals the secret plan of a new aircraft. Scotland Yard meanwhile takes Nelson Leo's story more seriously and raid Sir Akbar's house, but unfortunately finds no evidence whatsoever that the Bulgarian government is concerned with the missing aircraft. This leads to a personal dressing-down for Lee, by the Prime Minister himself - certainly a new experience for Lee. Let us read a few lines of this dressing-down as Brooks wrote it.

"Bungled" said the Prime Minister angrily. "That's the word I said, Mr. Lee, and that's the word I meant. You have bungled atrociously. This is no occasion for politeness."

"So it appears" said Nelson Lee compressing his lips.

"From first to last you have misled the Home Secretary and myself. What is worse, you have caused us to blunder too. I must insist Mr. Lee, that you withdraw from this case at once."

Lee's actions are vindicated however for at the end of the interview Sir Akbar is announced. Lee makes his final bid to prove his story. He tells Sir Akbar that unless he changes into his other self - a dwarf - in front of the Prime Minister, The Home Secretary and himself, he will shoot him dead.

Here is how Brooks wrote it.

"Lee stood there, a relentless figure. He took no notice of Sir Akbar's bluff. He had seen the glint in the other man's eyes, and he was more than ever certain that his theory was correct.

"I am not mad, Mr. Mortimer" he said quietly. "But I am old-fashioned enough to have a love for my country. Either Sir Akbar obeys my orders and changes himself into Dacca the dwarf or I will shoot him as he stands. One or the other. In either case England will be rid of her worst enemy."

"You shall suffer dearly for this, Lee!" said the Premier harshly.

"If I am compelled to kill this man I have no doubt that I shall be hanged" replied Lee. "Well I am prepared for that. For the good of my country I will cheerfully go to the gallows. Either this man dies by my hand, or he transforms himself into Dacca the Dwarf. Never before in my life have I been so determined."

Lee's gamble comes off and the Prime Minister and the whole country soon learns the true story. Lee is not quick enough to capture Sir Akbar, alias "Dacca" who makes off to his London aerodrome, and despite the efforts of police and officials makes off into the blue.

Nelson Lee, acting upon the instructions of the Prime Minister takes off with Lord Dorrimore and a small party of juniors in an attempt to reach Bulghanistan in advance of Sir Akbar. But disaster falls upon the party and they are brought down by an enemy plane right in the heart of Bulghanistan. A crash landing is made, and as a result, they find themselves with no means of communicating with the outer world. Eventually they are captured and taken to the capital where they meet the supreme ruler, The Ameer of Bulghanistan, alias Sir Akbar, alias Dacca the Devil Dwarf. After a series of thrilling escapades, including being lowered in a cage down into a pit of rats, Nelson Lee's party eventually escape and release many of the captured British airmen, with their planes. Those that are able, take to the air and bomb the military objectives in the city. Panic follows, and as a result Lee captures the Ameer, and forces him to board Dorrimore's plane. The Ameer makes his last physical change to Dacca, and in a shriek tells Lee that he will never take him alive. He carries out his threat and throws himself out of one of the plane's windows. The story ends with a large formation of the Royal Air Force, flying over the capital, acting upon the instructions of the new Air Minister in London. Complete panic reigns in the capital and as a result, the town surrenders to the British and Lee and his party return to England, their job being well done.

Reflecting on this series one can see that here was a milestone in the writing career of Edwy Searles Brooks. Gone were some of the crudities of his earlier style. Here surely was the first of his stories in the Nelson Lee Library that was to lead him to become world famous as a writer of detective thrillers. This particular story was re-written in 1945 as a complete and successful novel. (Victor Gunn's Dead Man's Warning - J.W.) It may be true that Brooks realised this and failed to write any further great St. Frank's story during the last two years in the life of the Nelson Lee Library.

This is the writer's own view and is somewhat contradicted by Brooks in a letter a year ago. He says in answer to a question "Was I fed up with St. Frank's in 1932-1933? Definitely not. The deterioration in the stories was due to Editorial "help". They thought they knew how to write school stories better than I, and told me what to do. So, in that sense I was fed up, but I was fighting a losing battle."

It was a pity that "Dacca" the Dwarf was disposed of. He was - apart from Zingrave - the best adversary that Lee had to fight against, and further fine stories could have been recorded dealing with Lee's struggle with "Dacca". All the more so, since Zingrave was played out, being a mere shadow of his former self. Better had Zingrave been destroyed and Dacca kept alive.

Now, let us try and sum up the reasons which made the "Dacca" series such a fine one.

First, it was technically the best written story that had appeared for some time.

Secondly, it gave the feature roles to Nelson Lee and Nipper, this being something that was only a memory to many of us.

Thirdly, the story introduced a new and skilful adversary for Lee.

Finally, because the series was written with the same interest and enthusiasm that marked many of the series of earlier years.

The writer of this article realises that there will be quite a few Nelson Lee readers who do not agree with some of the sentiments we have expressed, particularly where Edward Oswald Handforth is concerned. These views have only been given after careful consideration, for the writer believes them to be true.

In our next article in the series "Those Unpopular Three Years" we shall discuss the story in which Nelson Lee and some of the juniors were marooned in the Sargasso Sea.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Note: Owing to the holidays there are no reports from London and Midland this month.

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, August 11th, 1956.

Pouring rain in the morning did not prevent an excellent attendance. It included Tom Porter and Miss Beryl Russell of the Midland Club. Tom, of course, also being a member of Northern. They received a cordial welcome from chairman J. Breeze Bentley. Unfortunately they had to leave before the end of the meeting.

Jack Wood instead of winning the quizzes gave us a very entertaining talk on "Through the Highways and Byways of Hamiltoniana".

It dealt with the Hamilton schools other than those we usually talk about. Jack, in his usual thorough way had dug out quite a lengthy list which took him until after the break for refreshments. It included one about which a story appeared in "World's Comic" round about 1900. It was interesting to note how names made familiar by the 'big three' kept cropping up at the lesser known schools sometimes in different roles.

Next meeting September 8th when Gerry Allison is taking for his subject - Cousin Ethel.

H. LECKENBY.

Northern Section Correspondent.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION - Sunday, August, 12th

After the good attendance for the previous month's meeting it was too much to hope for a repetition, and with holidays claiming at least six of our 'regulars' it was quite a small gathering at Waterloo House. A pleasing feature, however, was the surprise visit of Jack Wood from York, who soon made himself at home and he proved a most entertaining and amiable companion. (Come again soon, Jack, you're most welcome.) After the usual formalities had been dispensed with, Don set the members present a 'Pointers' Quiz, which John Burke had solved in next to no time, with Norman Pragnell a good second. Following the interval for refreshments, two sides were chosen for a team game, and how one member escaped a 'prefects beating' for nearly giving the game away remains a mystery. Next meeting - Sunday, September 9th, 7 p.m. prompt.

D.B.W.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Will all readers please note that an article on Charles Hamilton published by Mike Moorcock in his Book Collector's News for September 1956 is without the knowledge of the (London) Old Boys' Book Club. It should also be noted that Mike Moorcock's resignation from the Club will be requested at the next meeting.

LEONARD PACKMAN,
(Co-Founder of the Old Boys' Book Club)

LOYALTIES

Breathed there the boy with soul so dead
Who never to himself had said:
"This is my choice; the mag. I'll read
With stories of a heroic breed."

Who, as a man, has never yearned;
Nor ever from a bookstall turned
Without the hope that, somewhere by
A hoard of Gems or Magnets lie?

Who never knows nostalgia's pull
Nor memories of a youth more full,
More vital with each happy hour
Of F.R's genius in full flower?

And other giants who, by their pens
Made countless hosts of now, staunch friends?

Nay! tell me not. It's past belief
That in these days but few seek relief
From the puerile "strips" that "grace" the stalls
And a narrow screen within four walls!

I say, thank heavens the loved Immortals
Find a welcome still within our portals
Where erstwhile standards high and proud
Proclaim our joys and loyalties aloud.
Where Xmas still with the season's thrill
Has all the trimmings plus the old Brook's chill.
Oh, he that has never known such joys
Can never say truly "Boys will be boys"!

L.R. ASHLEY.

LAST-MINUTE FLASH

Geoff Hockley's article just arrived - a smasher!