



The STORY

CHRISTMAS

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COLLECTOR

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A Wish to All Who Deserve It—

A Merry Christmas
and
A Happy New Year

As Merry and as Happy as Present World
Conditions Will Allow



A Glance at a Real "Xmas Number"—

The First "Boys' Herald" Christmas Number, 1903

By W. H. G.

"THOSE were the days!" writes Matthew M. Hunter in his article "The 'Xmas' Number," reprinted on another page. And there is no doubt he is right when it comes to Christmas Numbers of boys' weekly papers. The odd thing is, though, that he probably enthused about the Christmas Numbers of the old "penny dreadfuls" of the 1880's or thereabouts, while if I use the same expression it will be concerning the papers published during the years 1900-16.

However, there is no doubt we could agree as to the merits of the Christmas Numbers of the various boys' papers of the post-1914-18-war period, even though he was writing in 1925 and I in 1941. For of all the boys' papers issued in England during the last twenty years the only ones that seemed to make any effort to be really "Xmassy" in their Christ-

mas Numbers were the "Magnet" and the "Gem" Libraries—with the "Boys' Friend" and "Boys' Realm" during the earlier years of the two decades and "Modern Boy" during the later years also turning out some fair samples.

But, although these papers had Christmas adventures, ghosts and puddings, secret passages and snowstorms, the lack of any "double numbers" reduced very much the amount of Christmas gaiety compared with that which could be contained in the old-time Christmas double numbers with their 32 or 60 pages—depending on the size of page—that were issued in earlier years

Let us take a look at one of those bumper Christmas Numbers, choosing No. 19 of the "Boys' Herald," dated December 5th, 1903—the first Christmas number of this paper, which was the third member of the "Boys'



Friend"—"Realm"—Herald" group.

Attention is attracted first by the smooth-paper cover, printed in colors—a special treat those days, reserved for special occasions. Including the cover there are thirty-two pages of about 10½x14 inches. The date, December 5th, certainly seems quite a long way before Christmas. But that was the practice with these special issues; some appeared as early as the third week of November. The idea no doubt being to spread out publication of the enlarged Christmas Numbers so as not to overtax the resources of the printing works and the readers' purses.

The first inside page has a holly-decorated heading: "The Boys' Herald" Christmas Double Number. On this page commences "The Secret Chamber," "a Christmas story of the Civil War, by the Popular Author of 'Cavalier and Roundhead.'" It deals, not with the American Civil War, but with the days of King Charles I, in the year 1643, "when England was in the throes of the fierce struggle between King and Parliament." This story was illustrated by VAL, a very popular artist of that time.

Four pages are devoted to

"The Secret Chamber" — the secret chamber, a very necessary item for a good Christmas story! —and then we come to the Editor's page, "Your Editor's Advice." Editors of those days were strong on advice, in striking contrast to present-day editors. Maybe the boys of today don't feel they need advice; in any case they don't seem to turn to their favorite weekly paper for it. On this page are paragraphs of advice to a boy looking for hard work (!), a would-be author, and one who wants to be a motor-car driver.

There is also a column devoted to the important question of smoking, the advice given being similar to that of "Punch" to a young man about to be married: "Don't!" The "Boys' Friend," "Realm," and "Herald" were to the fore in the "Don't smoke, boys, until you are twenty-one" campaign. It must have been terrible tobacco that was used those days, judging by the terrible effects of smoking it that were presented as a warning.

Turning another page brings us to a serial, "The Seventh House at St. Basil's," one more in Henry St. John's grand list of successful school stories—all stemming



from the original story, "The Boys of St. Basil's," in the "Boys' Friend" back in the late '90's. The following appears under the title: "Mr. Henry St. John is famous as being the finest writer of school tales living."

Next is a one-page complete story, anonymous, "The Grip of Steel," and then a half-page article under the heading "The Battle of Life." This week the subject of the sketch is Lord Strathcona. Following this is the "second complete Xmas tale—a laughable story of the famous schoolboy ventriloquist,"—it is "A Christmas Spree," and again no author is given. This story fills four pages, with the help of a short article on "Heralds and Heraldry," bringing us to "Rajah Dick;" or "The Island King," the first instalment of a South Seas serial by another very popular author, David Goodwin.

Then follows an article on "Xmas Ventriloquism"—maybe it is different from the everyday variety—and another serial, "Trapper Dan," by Geo. Manville Fenn—yet another writer of grand stories for the boys of forty years ago. This is "a Story of the Backwoods of America and the wild American Indians."

The illustrations are by Fred Bennett, with an unmistakable style, whose work was still appearing in Amalgamated Press boys' papers within the last few years.

"Rabbits for Pleasure and Profit" can be studied, and then there is another serial, "Nelson Lee's Pupil," by Maxwell Scott, pictures by H. Lane. Nelson Lee was the great detective in those days; Sexton Blake had not yet come forward enough to eclipse him. Lee already had acquired the services of Nipper as his assistant. In the "Boys' Friend" just two or three years later, Nipper was going to school at St. Ninian's; after another twenty-five years he was still going to school, in the "Nelson Lee Library," at St. Frank's!

Already glimpses have been given of a lengthy program, crowded into the twenty-eight pages devoted to stories and features, but there is yet more to come—another Christmas story, "His Father's Honour," by "Popular A. S. Hardy." Arthur S. Hardy contributed short stories to the halfpenny series "Boys' Friend" and came to be one of the A.P.'s very popular sports story writers. He was especially

strong on football stories, as witness his long series of "Blue Crusaders" Football Club yarns in the "Boys' Realm Football and Sports Library," which cumbersome title was later abbreviated to "Sports Library." The artist who illustrated the Hardy story was E. E. Briscoe.

And finally, to complete and round out the bill of fare, there is "Wings of Gold," "A Thrill-Story of Adventure in an Unknown Land." It was by Sidney Drew, and remains vivid yet in the memories of the "old boys" who read it as young ones back in 1903-4. One of them has expressed the opinion that this story alone is worth the price of the entire volume!

This serial commenced in the first issue of the "Boys' Herald," and told of the adventures of a group of men who, travelling in an airship known as an "aeronef," discover a new land while on their way to the South Pole. There were in all twenty-three instalments of this great story, which was illustrated by H. M. Lewis.

Now, having arrived at the last page of this particular Christmas Double Number, we also have come to the last line of

this description of it, certain that those were indeed the days, and fully determined to read "Wings of Gold" without undue delay!

BRITISH BOYS'
BOOKS AND PAPERS
WANTED

Chuckles, Popular, Dreadnought, Greyfriars Herald
—any issues.

Gem Library—½d. Series—Nos. 1-25, year 1907.
New Series,— Nos. 1-300;
442-777; 1588-1611.

Magnet Library—Nos. 1-777.

Penny Popular— 1st Series:
Nos. 1-25; 222-286; any issues of 2nd Series.

Nelson Lee Library— Nos. 24 and 25 of the final series.

Schoolboys' Own Library—
Any numbers written by
Martin Clifford and Owen
Conquest up to No. 200.

Triumph—Nos. 812 and 814.

C. F. F. RICKARD
1512 First Street West, Calgary,
Alberta, Canada.

The "Xmas" Number

By MATTHEW M. HUNTER

(Reprinted from "Vanity Fair," No. 17, December, 1925)

ONE of my boys had just brought it in and it was lying on the table when I entered—a brilliantly colored thing—the Christmas Number of a modern boys' paper.

After attending to the wants of the inner man, with my feet on the fender and a good pipe going, I took it up and dipped into its contents. They were uninspiring. A few stories placed in every period of the year but Christmas; some jokes, illustrated full page and colored. Anything less "Xmassy" would have been hard to find.

And looking at it our mind went back to the Xmas Numbers of the old "Penny Dreadfuls." These WERE Xmas Numbers. For a matter of four weeks, the announcement on the second last page of our weekly favorite had prepared us for its coming. A complete story, "The Haunted . . ." something or other.

It would have the old village inn with its roaring fire, its

hearty landlord. There would be snow outside: mysterious travellers: a mysterious deed: a ghost: in short everything necessary in an Xmas Story. Of course we knew what it would contain, we knew the whole bag of tricks, but our knowledge didn't prevent us, on the morning of its appearance, being at the stationer's before the worthy man had time to take down the shutters, eager to get the long anticipated number in our hands, and scan its pages.

With what interest we did it, too; glancing at the illustrations; applying a critical and experienced eye to the new serial just starting, and weighing it up in a way that would have made its author tremble, if he could have but seen it. Verily! those were the days!

We again glance at the modern sample of Xmas literary fare in our hands and throw it contemptuously aside. It is a poor thing: the unworthy product of a degenerate age.

Story Papers of the Past

By HENRY A. PUCKRIN

THE "Golden Age" of boys' literature in Great Britain was between the years 1895 and 1912 or '14. During this period the various London publishing houses produced a series of weekly and monthly papers which, in the words of a "Boys' Friend" sub-caption, were intended to "amuse, instruct, and advise" the youths and adolescents of that time, and in this they succeeded admirably.

Almost the only paper which survived from earlier days was the famous "B.O.P." It and the equally well-known "Chums" were issued in weekly and monthly parts, the monthly edition containing a coloured art plate. These two journals were still being issued quite recently, though not as weekly papers; the "Boys' Own Paper" has for many years been published as a monthly magazine only, with annual volumes, while "Chums" has for some time appeared just in the yearly volume form.

Whilst the "B.O.P." undoubtedly stood in a class by itself,

many of its stories and articles could scarcely have appealed to boys in any way, but the writers were no doubt influenced by the tastes of the later Victorian period and meant them to be equally "enlightening and instructive."

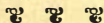
Articles and accounts of exploration, discovery, missionary work in Africa and elsewhere, were issued in company with a first-class series of school, adventure and city life stories by such writers as Paul Blake, David Ker, Ascott R. Hope, the Rev. A. N. Malan, Dr. Gordon Stables, and the best known of them all, Talbot Baines ("Tibbie") Reid. Few working class youths read this paper however, and it came into line by being more topical in its general appearance in accordance with the 20th century advertising spirit.

A particularly fine story in this paper was one printed about the years 1880-85. It was called "The Last of the Paladins" and dealt with the days of the Emperor Charlemagne, written and illustrated by men who had studied the period thoroughly. It con-

cluded, I think, in the famous "Battle of Roncesvalles" which resulted in the massacre of Roland, Olivier and the rest of the "brave bodyguard."

As to "Chums" it will only be necessary to remark on the fine stories that appeared in its pages from the first number—the splendid, manly writings of such men as Max Pemberton, Capt. Frank H. Shaw, S. Walkey, Maxwell Scott, Andrew Soutar, R. S. Warren Bell, and others whom the

writer cannot at present call to mind, but who have, no doubt, been "well and truly remembered" by many admiring readers. Anyone who possesses bound volumes of either "B. O. P." or "Chums" has treasures of which to be proud.



¶ The second part of this article by Mr. Henry A. Puckrin, who contributes to our pages from England, will appear in the next issue.

WANTED

The Following Weekly Story Papers

"Magnet" Library — About 150 Nos. between 1 & 1241.

"Boys' Friend" (New Series)—Some 600 Nos. between 1 and 838, and between 1120 & 1378.

"Greyfriars Herald"—All of First Series; Nos. 9, 15, 30 to the end of Second Series.

Am also interested in the GEM Library, the POPULAR, and the EMPIRE Library

WM. H. GANDER

Transcona, Manitoba, Canada

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