

“Featuring Sexton Blake and . . .”

HOW many times has the above statement appeared on the front page of the dear old *Union Jack* and its successor, *The Detective Weekly*? Almost every issue of the former paper between 1903 and 1933 and the majority of the latter until its untimely end in the early days of the late war. Although Sexton Blake was essentially the centre of interest to most of his ardent admirers, there have been many of his adversaries and friends who have been only just a little less popular, in fact I will go as far as to say that many of the characters opposing or assisting the Man from Baker Street in many of his cases have often taken pride of place. I can name many secondary characters, but in this article I am going to try to remind old readers of some of the grand figures who featured in the stories of George Hamilton Teed.

Unfortunately this fine writer has now passed from our midst and we shall no longer be able to see his name on the front page of *The Union Jack* (if it ever returns) or *The Detective Weekly* and

The Sexton Blake Library. Although I have made this remark I have a faint hope that the Amalgamated Press will consider reprinting some of his stories, because I feel sure that the present readers of the adventures of Sexton Blake, who have hardly heard of Mr. Teed, would revel in them, and in addition to this I am convinced that the old fans would welcome reprints with open arms. However, I am wandering from the point a little, so let us take a look at some of the characters I just mentioned.

I suppose Huxton Rymer, Yvonne, George Marsden Plummer, Nirvana, Roxane and others will be remembered by many. Maybe I am a little prejudiced, seeing that Mr. Teed's stories were my particular favourites, but he certainly created more characters for the Blake stories than any other author that I can think of, and he always managed to give them a streak of “goodness” that warmed the reader's heart towards them. In the cases of Huxton Rymer and George Marsden Plummer they nearly always succeeded in getting something as a result of their activities, even

By H. M. BOND

A Review of Some of the Characters Created by G. H. Teed

if they lost the chief objects of their escapades. G. H. Teed's women characters provided the only examples of Blake falling (or nearly so) in love, and this also applied to Tinker in the Nirvana series.

FIRST let us consider Mademoiselle Yvonne. There were many stories written around this young lady and as usual they were set in various parts of the globe. If you are an old reader you will remember the yacht "Fleur-de-Lys" in which Yvonne travelled to the various scenes of her adventures, particularly in her clashes with the members of the crooked combine that killed her father and as a result broke her mother's heart.

Then there was the Hayiti Voodoo Queen, Marie Galante, with whom Blake had many clashes, chiefly when Huxton Rymer found it necessary to be on or near the "Isle of Horror." She was indeed a most fascinating character.

Mademoiselle Roxane seemed to me to be a sort of reincarnation of Yvonne in many respects, but the stories about her, being written some years later than those of Yvonne, were a little more, shall we say, sophisticated.

Also well remembered are Muriel Marl, the glamorous "Gang Girl" who aided Plummer in some of his escapades, Lola de

Guise, and June Severance. The latter was a ward of Sexton Blake and the series of yarns written around her, although not numerous, were nevertheless vastly entertaining.

Some of the very old devotees of Blake will remember Mr. Teed's famous "Council of Eleven" stories away back in the days of the pink cover *Union Jack*, also Hammerton Palmer (another Plummer) and Prince Menes. The latter two characters were often featured in the Yvonne series. I remember one excellent story titled "The Great Ivory Swindle" (one of the *S. B. Library* 1st series volumes) in which Yvonne and Palmer met and clashed. This story was introduced as a separate adventure of the Yvonne v. Blake saga and was one of the few instances when these characters were presented in *The Sexton Blake Library*. Yvonne and Rymer appeared in the very first *S. B. L.*, published in 1915. It was called "The Yellow Tiger."

The Nirvana series was, in my opinion, Teed's greatest venture, and some of the stories were made even more interesting by the introduction of Yvonne as well. Nirvana and Tinker had met in childhood when the former was a pickpocket. She became a famous dancer in after years but still remained a thief,

due to the efforts of certain relations, and of course her meeting with Tinker and their subsequent romance was a subject of which Mr. Teed made full use.

Others well-remembered are the "Three Musketeers," a rather curious trio of clever sophisticated crooks who provided Blake with many a headache.

NO article on the characters of Mr. Teed would be complete without reference to the Chinese prince Wu Ling and the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle. Teed was at home in China, more so than in any other country, and he knew the Chinese character intimately, the result being that his Chinese yarns were always of a very high order. Wu Ling was a thorn in the flesh of Sexton Blake for many years and it is unfortunate that we were never presented with the final clash between him and Blake. Hsui Fsi, or Sir Gordon Saddler, "the mystery man of China," played a great part in most of the Blake v. Wu Ling stories.

Definitely the outstanding stories of Wu Ling, and probably presenting Mr. Teed at his very best, were the Civil War in China series which appeared in 1926. This series of four stories were of the highest quality and

were at the time very topical. I would like to refer here to the one and only Teed serial in *The Union Jack* during the following year, 1927. It was called "The Black Abbot of Cheng Tu." I think this was his finest Chinese story and most likely the best he ever wrote of any description. I say this after very careful consideration of his work, as there were so many of his stories that bid high for this distinction.

It is to be hoped that some, if not all, of these fascinating characters will be adopted by other authors now that G. H. Teed is no longer with us. They would, if adequately handled, provide scope for many more thrilling Blake stories and both old and new readers alike would, I am sure, appreciate them.

I have not gone very deeply into this subject, but I think I have said enough to bring many memories back to Sexton Blake lovers and I am sure that everyone who took an interest in stories about him, particularly during the 1920's, to mention the peak period, will remember all these characters even if they do not remember the author, and will mourn the loss of such a talented writer of light fiction.



Who Is Frank Richards? Ask His Down Under "Cobbers"

Does He Really Exist? Or Is He a Dozen Other Men?

JUST a very few years ago the identity of Frank Richards was a deep mystery to most of the interested individuals in Great Britain, Canada and elsewhere. Who was he, anyway? Did he really exist, or was he nothing but an invisible screen behind which gathered various "ghosts" who busied themselves at typewriters, turning out, interminably, so it seemed, stories of Greyfriars School for *The Magnet*?

A few wiser ones put two and two together and, amazingly enough, discovered that "four" meant that Frank Richards was not six or thirteen other men. He was, they found, Charles Hamilton—who, however, confesses that he feels himself to be more Frank Richards than he does Charles Hamilton. But they could, perhaps, hardly believe the evidence of their own deductions, for was not Charles Hamilton known to be a busy man, writing stories that were published under his own name? But

it must be so. And it was so, though the secret did not become common knowledge until some years after the suspension of *The Magnet*, the paper which was Frank's favourite and in which his work was almost always to be found—always, in the last ten years of its run. Then the correctness of the deductions of those few astute readers was confirmed in letters from Mr. Hamilton. Later, articles appeared in *The Story Paper Collector* and in the professional press in which the facts of the case were made clear.

However, though the bright light shed on this matter of identity spread over Great Britain and to Canada, its rays did not penetrate to Australia—or to a small extent only, probably to but a few individuals, through the media of a reply made by Frank Richards in *Horizon* in 1940 to doubts cast on his existence by George Orwell, and an article, "The Man Who Invented Billy Bunter," by Eric Hiscock, in

An Account of How Light Was Brought Into the
Australian Darkness Surrounding F. R.'s Identity

~~~~~ Related by W. H. G. ~~~~~

the 1944 edition of the magazine *Summer Pie*.

Thus it was that, as late as April, 1945, Mr. R. S. Evans, of Willoughby, N.S.W., could write to *The ABC Weekly*, the magazine of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, stating unequivocally that there was no Frank Richards, that the name was just an "office signature" covering the activities of a multitude of writers. And, incidentally, stating that S. Clarke Hook, poor old chap, was no more than another such office signature.

**H**OWEVER, it is not necessary for me to labour any longer at my typewriter to produce an introduction to this feature. There were other letters to *The ABC Weekly*, which will be reproduced, in whole or in part, as appears desirable to make clear to S.P.C. readers and posterity how this discussion arose "down under," how it progressed, and how it was ended by Frank Richards himself.

For the beginning let us look into *The ABC Weekly* for January 20th, 1945. There will be found a reprint of an article from GEN, the British Services Magazine in the Middle East. It is titled "The Passing of Billy Bunter" and is by Roy Nash, British film critic. It reads:

"Bunter is dead. The exact

hour of his passing I know not, but I mourn him none the less for that.

"Looking through a pile of magazines in a bookshop the other morning, I came upon a paper of incendiary hue known, with becoming modesty, as *The Knockout*. A note on the cover informed its readers that with it was incorporated *The Magnet*. Dry up your pool and you lose your fish. Chop down your oak tree and you have no acorns. Knock out your *Magnet* and you kill your Bunter. . . .

"It is true that *The Knockout* carries a comic strip chronicling the adventures of a well-built person who bears Bunter's name. But compared with the Billie we used to know, this gentleman is a pale, N.A.A.F.I. teacake of a character. The true, the original Bunter was altogether too rich and too ripe a personality to be confined within the narrow frames of a comic strip. This is obviously an imposter.

"It was, I remember, during a bout of the measles that I first made his acquaintance. A very good friend of mine brought me a copy of the yellow-covered *Magnet*, and no sooner had Billie wandered into my ken with an 'I say, you chaps,' on his jammy lips than he had my heart.

"Every Monday morning for years afterwards saw me at The

Shakespeare Book Store with two pennies clutched in my hand, eager to smell the ink of the latest issue of the jolliest of all schoolboy papers. . . .

"For me, in those days, Frank Richards, the author of the Greyfriars stories, was easily the most important figure in contemporary or any other literature.

"When the years of disillusionment came upon me, and I found myself in the haunts of men who write and edit newspapers and magazines, I heard a shocking story that there was no such person as Frank Richards; that the Bunter adventures were written by a variety of hands; that anyone who had a good idea for a Greyfriars story was supplied with complete details of the school backgrounds, with a chart outlining the personalities of all the characters.

"How dull my own school seemed in comparison. Greyfriars was the kind of school every right-thinking boy would like to attend. . . .

" . . . Bunter was a glorious creation, half-clown, half-rogue, a junior Pickwick with a dash of Falstaff. . . . With him dies something of our youth."

PROBABLY the editor of ABC thought that was the end of the matter: just a readable article that filled a page of the

magazine. If he did, he was much in error, as we will see, for he had really "started something."

In the February 11th issue of ABC appeared a letter, the first one that a reader was prompted to write by the appearance of the article, and it reads:

*"Frank Richards or—Francis Bacon?"*

"For those of us, and there are many, who will for ever associate *The Magnet* with adolescence, The Passing of William Bunter is indeed a war casualty.

"The writer of the article mentions the non-existence of Frank Richards, the author of the Greyfriars stories. If the authors were many and varied, how then was such a consistency of style and character behaviour maintained over such a long period?

"That such a consistency exists was my first impression lately when I again read a stray *Magnet*. I recognized immediately the same racy, interesting, masculine style that even in my 'teens impressed me as 'superior' to that of other weekly school stories.

"DULCIE HOLLYOCK.

"Elwood, Victoria."

This letter stirred into action two more readers, whose contributions to the controversy, in *The ABC Weekly* for March 3rd, 1945, follow:

"*Did Frank Richards Exist?*"

"I agree with Dulcie Hollyock. If Frank Richards did not exist, how did all the stories of Billy Bunter appear in the same interesting style and character behaviour over so many years? Have any two writers ever had the same manner of presentation?"

"What of the famous stories of the days of St. Frank's, written by Edwy Searles Brooks, which appeared in *The Nelson Lee Library* for many years? This gentleman actually lived (he was a personal friend of mine), and became a successful novelist of mystery stories. He once told me he knew Frank Richards well.

"E. C. CARTER.

"Kingsford."

The second letter reads, in part:

"*There IS a Frank Richards.*"

"Dulcie Hollyock might be interested to know that the Greyfriars yarns were, indeed, the output of one man's pen, Frank Richards, creator of Bunter & Co., was alone responsible for 33 years for the hundreds of stories. There was no ghosting at any time by other authors.

"A Canadian collector, Wm. H. Gander, publishes a quarterly hobby magazine devoted entirely to publication of articles by enthusiasts on the subject. The

latest issue carries an article by Bunter-creator Frank Richards himself, promulgating post-war plans for the creation by his pen of a fresh series of schoolboy tales.

"LEON STONE.

"Gordon, N.S.W."

SO far the defenders of the idea that there really was a Frank Richards had things their own way, but soon there was to appear some opposition in the person of the already-mentioned Mr. Evans, from whose letter in *The ABC Weekly* for April 7th, 1945, the following paragraphs are taken:

"*Did Frank Richards Exist?*"

"I read with interest and, I must confess, with a certain amount of surprise the letters on *Did Frank Richards Exist?* Both your correspondents declare so emphatically that Frank Richards did really exist, and adduce such apparently incontrovertible proof—as Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks' claim, and the presumably recent article in Wm. H. Gander's magazine—in support of their contention, that I am sure many readers whose interest in the matter was slight must have been convinced that there really was a flesh and blood Mr. Richards who for more than 30 years produced every week a school story of



30,000 words for *The Magnet*.

"Nevertheless both Mr. Carter and Mr. Stone are wrong, in spite of Mr. Carter having been acquainted with Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks, who claimed he knew Frank Richards well, in spite of the article in Wm. H. Gander's magazine, and in spite of Mr. Stone's positive assertion that 'Dulcie Hollyock might be interested to know the Greyfriars yarns were, indeed, the output of one man's pen. Frank Richards, creator of Bunter and Co., was alone responsible for 33 years for the hundreds of stories. There was no ghosting at any time by any other authors.'

"Mr. Carter, I will concede, cannot be held responsible for his friend's statement, but I would be interested to learn on what authority Mr. Stone makes the statement that 'Frank Richards, creator of Bunter and Co., was alone responsible for 33 years for the hundreds of stories, etc.'

"I have before me *The Writers and Artists' Year-Book* for 1915. . . ." [Mr. Evans then proceeds to quote the *Magnet* entry in the *Year-Book*, which invited authors to submit Greyfriars stories for Editorial consideration.] Mr. Evans continues:

"It will be observed that *The Magnet Library* invites writers to submit stories of school life deal-

ing with the adventures of certain popular characters (who are, of course, Bob Cherry, Billy Bunter and their mates), stipulates the length these stories should be, . . . . In a word, *The Magnet Library* is canvassing for stories on the open market, and any author who felt so inclined could submit a story dealing with the adventures of Billy Bunter and Co.

"In face of this irrefragable proof to the contrary, can Mr. Stone honestly maintain that 'Frank Richards, creator of Bunter and Co., was alone responsible for 33 years for the hundreds of stories'? He certainly cannot, but if further evidence is required . . ." [Mr. Evans now quotes two paragraphs from the preface to the *Year-Book*.]

"No, 'Frank Richards' was merely what is known in the literary world as an office signature, as were 'Martin Clifford' (*Gem Library*) and 'S. Clarke Hook' (Jack, Sam and Pete stories in *The Marvel Library*). The Fleetway House organization was noted for this type of publication."

Several paragraphs follow but they may be omitted here, sufficient having been quoted to indicate Mr. Evans' "case" against the existence of Frank Richards. His letter concludes:

"I am afraid neither Mr. Car-

ter nor Mr. Stone is aware of what constitutes a reasonable yearly output of an author. The *Magnet* stories were about 30,000 words long, and to produce a story of this length every week Frank Richards would have had to write 1,560,000 words each year. The average length of a novel being 60,000 words, this would mean that he would have written for more than 30 years the equivalent of 26 novels a year—a manifest impossibility.

“Does either Mr. Carter or Mr. Stone know of a novelist who has ever written 26 novels in a year?”

“R. S. EVANS.  
“Willoughby, N.S.W.”

PERHAPS Mr. Evans thought he had finally and for all time destroyed any suggestion that there was a Frank Richards. If so, he, too, was badly mistaken, for the issue of *ABC Weekly* for May 5th, 1945, had another letter from Leon Stone, in which he quoted from the 1944 *Summer Pie* article by Eric Hiscock—at too great a length for his entire letter to be reprinted here, and in any case it is probable that many S.P.C. readers have already seen the *Pie* article. Mr. Stone's letter commences:

“Readers Say Frank Richards  
DID Exist

“It was with profound interest

that I read in the April 7th issue of *The ABC Weekly* Mr. Evans' copious reply to the assertions that Frank Richards was a living, breathing, human being and not a collection of freelance hacks.

“Mr. Evans produces with great flourish a copy of the *English Writers' and Artists' Year Book* (circa 1915). His case rests entirely on the evidence that Fleetway House called for tales to be submitted by freelance hacks for publication in *The Magnet Library*. He says that no writer could possibly have poured out the tremendous flood of wordage required weekly by such an assignment. . .

“English publishers Hutchinson have for the past two or three years been issuing a quarterly *Pie* magazine. In the summer, 1944, number is an article, ‘Profile of a Boys' Writer—The Man Who Invented Billy Bunter,’ by Eric Hiscock.”

Mr. Stone then quotes from the article to the extent of more than an *ABC* column, following which he wrote several more paragraphs, but one of which needs to be given here:

“So the biography of Charles Hamilton-Martin Clifford-Frank Richards proves that he does exist in the flesh. He did write under different pen-names, he

did create Billy Bunter . . .  
 "LEON STONE."

In the same issue of *The ABC Weekly* Dr. Tom Potter had something to say in defence of the existence of Frank Richards, quoting from Mr. Richards' reply to George Orwell in the May, 1940, issue of *Horizon*.

**B**ESIDES writing to *The ABC Weekly* Mr. Stone airmailed Frank Richards, informing him that his existence was being denied in Australia. Mr. Richards came to his own defense in a very able manner.

"*Frank Richards Replies to Readers Who Deny He Exists*"

— is the heading, in large type, under which his letter is printed in *The ABC Weekly* for July 28th, 1945, and it reads:

"Mr. Leon Stone, of Sydney, has apprised me that some of my readers in Australia doubt the existence of Frank Richards, and that these doubts have been expressed in your columns.

"Of course, a fellow doesn't want to be too positive on a disputed point: so I will only say that, to the very best of my knowledge and belief, I *do* exist; that I have been existing for quite a long time, and fully intend to go on existing as long as I possibly can.

"It is not so wonderful as Mr.

Evans thinks for one man to write *The Magnet* for 33 years. For a good 40 years my output was never less than a million and a half words a year. I could have doubled it by writing in the afternoons as well as in the mornings, which I did not do because I was always rather lazy.

"There is not much room in an airgraph for details. But anyone interested in Frank Richards — especially any Doubting Thomas who does not believe that there is such a person — may read the whole story of *Gem* and *Magnet* in "The Autobiography of Frank Richards," which I have written during the war, to an accompaniment of doodlebugs and rockets, and which will be published as soon as paper is available.

"In this book the story of Frank Richards is told from the year 1890 to the present year of grace; solid evidence, I think, that I am quite a real person.

"In the meantime, I shall be happy to reply personally to any of my "cobbers" Down Under who may care to write to me c/o Pie Publications, 68 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4. It has always been one of my greatest pleasures to know that I had many readers in Australia; and really, it is rather a shock to hear that some of them seem to doubt whether I exist or not. Perhaps

I may add that I have written an autobiographical article for the *Saturday Book*, one of Hutchinson's publications, which will be published this year; and in this Mr. Evans may find a brief sketch of Frank Richards' career from seven to seventy.

"Yours sincerely,

"FRANK RICHARDS."

THIS letter was featured near the front of the magazine, on page 4, and the Editor had a photograph taken of the air-graph and reproduced, the text of the letter being printed below it for clarity. Finding he had a little space left Mr. Richards added a postscript: "I knew Mr. Clarke Hook, who was also a very real person."

On the same page were also printed extracts from a letter written by myself following

receipt of news of what was going on, but it was not needed. A good job had been done by Frank Richards and Leon Stone. It will therefore get no further mention here, except that I wish to place on record the fact that my estimate of the extent of Mr. Richards' contribution to the Greyfriars saga, as given in my letter and printed in *The ABC Weekly*, was inadvertently placed too low, due, probably, to the haste with which said letter was written and dispatched.

SO this is the way in which the facts about the existence of Frank Richards were made known to his many "cobbers" Down Under, and we may be sure that they will await with keen interest the appearance of both his *Autobiography* and his new series of school stories.

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### Cassells, The Penny Pictorial, and The Penny Magazine

MR. T. W. Puckrin, who wrote the article that appeared in our last issue under the heading "Chums," informs us that there were two errors in it. One of them was his, in that he wrote *The Penny Pictorial* instead of *The Penny Magazine* (p. 322, col. 2), the latter being the Cas-

sells publication. The other error was ours and occurred when we read and "set" "Son of White Pep" instead of "Son of White Rep" (also p. 322, col. 2) — "Rep," Mr. Puckrin tells us, being a contraction for Repworth Montmassy.

— W.H.G.

# The Christmas Double Number: A Victorian Tradition

**I**T WAS, I think, that witty French writer and satirist, Voltaire, who remarked that the Englishman has "an hundred religions but only one sauce." Whether this is so or not, there is one observance which has become peculiarly English in sentiment and tradition: the keeping of Christmas.

While this may be ascribed in some quarters to Anglo-Saxon dominance in the affairs of the world, no one will deny that it has influenced writers and travellers all through the long period of political and industrial supremacy which was such a striking feature of the long reign of Queen Victoria.

Though the great festival which marks the turn of the seasons goes back almost to the dawn of civilization, it is only within the last hundred years or so that Christmas has meant something more than a mere event to the great mass of the people. The chief reason for

this, in the writer's opinion, is the growth of education and the astonishing demand for literature of all kinds, resulting from an awakened realization that life is something more than a "walking shadow" and that people are something more than mere lay figures.

This naturally leads one to wonder what the "Double Number," which was such a feature of pre-1914 years, had to do with people's lives generally. Actually it had a great deal to do with them, as older readers of *The Story Paper Collector* will realize.

It will be sufficient to say that Charles Dickens gave the send-off to that seasonable feast of literature which was eagerly looked forward to every December. He gave the impetus to a host of writers, good, bad, and indifferent. The United States felt this reaction as anyone who has read Washington Irving's "Bracebridge Hall" will admit.

Perhaps the giving of Christmas cards and the growth of advertising also contributed to these observances for they all tended to make people's thoughts turn in the direction of festivity

By

HENRY A. PUCKRIN

and frivolity. This had its reaction in the giving of Christmas gifts, which were meant in the case of tradesmen to be a reward for custom but which came to be regarded as a subtle form of bribery. The long coloured candles in a decorated box were an example of this practice which soon died a natural death.

No one, however, could object to the printing of a Double Number of his favourite magazine or weekly journal, which furnished a feast of good things for every member of the family. In addition to this many of the more reputable journals made a practice of appearing in beautifully coloured covers and also of giving one or more coloured lithographs of famous academical paintings. Many of these were mere reproductions to fill wall space but others were splendid examples of the colorists' art. *Pears' Annual* and *The Illustrated London News* were two outstanding examples of the latter.

During the Nelson Centenary celebration of 1905 the cover of *Pears' Annual* carried a splendid piece of colour-printing representing a hot engagement during the Battle of Trafalgar. A year or two later there was another magnificent presentation plate given by the same journal. This was a reproduction of Lady Butler's "Scotland for Ever," a pic-

ture of the famous charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo. Other papers followed suit and it looked as if the Christmas Number had come to stay.

THE great publishing house of Harmsworth was, naturally, not going to be left behind in anything of this kind. Curiously enough this development on their part showed itself in the papers that were published for juveniles and which are well-known to readers of this magazine.

All that was best in Christmas was portrayed in the Double Numbers that were published year after year and which grew better with each succeeding year. The appearance of the shops was enhanced by the bright covers of these papers, all helping to make the festival of Christmas something to which to look forward.

Other papers such as *The Boy's Own Paper* (that grand old-stager that is still running in a modified form) and *Chums* were to be seen in their handsome red and gold bindings, though comparatively few boys were lucky enough to be able to obtain a volume. Still it was something to be able to look at them in the windows and let one's imagination do the rest.

Even the comic papers caught the spirit and gave their star

characters a share in the good things, no doubt to compensate them for their ups and downs during the year.

SO the years rolled on and all seemed right with the world's affairs, though discerning people could see the shadow of Germany's Welt-Politic activities on the distant horizon. This did not have any immediate effect on journalism generally until the declaration of war in 1914 brought everyone back to realities. Even then, no one doubted that things would go on as usual, but it soon became all too clear that an era had closed and a future of doubt and uncertainty lay ahead. The publishing houses were the first to feel this in the cutting down of their paper supplies and its consequences generally. Many papers suspended publication, some were drastically reduced in size, and none were what they had been.

The ending of the first world war did not do much to improve things and people in general accepted this fact with resignation. Many boys' journals struggled on gallantly but the shock to world civilization was too much for many others and they faded out like movie stars, never to return.

Then the second world catas-

trophe was let loose and the Double Number, long missing from the realm of boys' literature, became entirely a thing of the past. Now it is only a memory, but a very dear one to many older readers and some not so old.

What will be the future of the Double Number is hard to say. With the formidable problems of reconstruction awaiting solution the hope of its being revived seems faint indeed. Paper is scarce and poor in quality, writers and artists appear to have other work to do, and it looks as if the world of the future will be a Wellsian conception where he who runs may read and where many talk and few listen. The movies and the radio are firm favorites and present world events in an altogether broader manner than was possible in the days of "peaceful England."

With these thoughts the writer brings this article to a close and leaves the individual reader to draw his own conclusions. Without denying the advantages of the "New Age" (and they are many) there is one feature which it is feared will never be seen again—the Christmas Double Number.



## Drawings From Memory

THE writer does not presume to deal with the subject in any way better than numerous others who have appeared in this magazine—those whom I regard as specialists in their line. Much the same ground will be covered but an endeavour will be made to mention stories which have hitherto hardly been mentioned.

Whether the reader liked his comics or the more meaty two-penny journals, there was something for all. So we will start with the comics—*Comic Cuts*, *Chips*, *Butterfly*, and many others. Do you remember Mulberry Flats, Portland Bill, Little Tich, Constable Cuddlecook, Paul Push, Pyjama Percy and Balmy Bill, Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy? In the more genteel *Rainbow* there were the Two Pickles and Bonny Bluebell.

Then there was the other coloured comic, *Puck*, with "The Three Musketeers," "Romney Hall," "Somewhere a Voice is Calling," Hawkshaw the Detective, Kit Crackshott, "Where Time Stood Still," "Spangles and Stars," and "The School Bell."

The last-named was later issued in *The Wonder Library*, along with "The Blue Lamp," and later still, in 1920, in *Young Britain*, under the title "Just Boys and Girls."

Then we pass on to *The Magnet*, *Marvel*, *Gem*, *Firefly*, *Boys' Realm*, and the rest. Does anyone remember a *Magnet* yarn titled "Skinner's Supreme Sacrifice"? And the *Gem* story of Racke, "Moneybags Minor," and the series in *The Penny Popular* in which Tom Merry & Co. go to the South Seas? The Judith Hate series in *The Firefly* will be well remembered, and even more so the Classical and Modern rivalry in *Boys' Friend* Rookwood stories.

The first *Nelson Lee Library*, "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach," began a long run of this grand little paper, with scarcely a weak story in it, while *The Boys' Friend Library* had some outstanding schoolboy stories, among them three "by Frank Richards": "The Boy Without a Name," "School and Sport," and "Rivals and Chums."

—THOMAS ARMITAGE.





# TWO OF THE BEST

## “The Big Budget” and “The Boys’ Leader”

**T**WO papers of which I have the fondest memories were *The Big Budget* and *The Boys’ Leader*, published by the House of Pearson. The former first appeared on June 19th, 1897, and had an excellent run, for it continued until March 20th, 1909. *The Boys’ Leader* joined it on September 8th, 1903, but, unfortunately, its life was a comparatively short one, for it ran to only 101 issues, the last appearing on August 12th, 1905. This was a pity, for it deserved a better fate. It was a fine, vigorous paper and many of its serials were the very best of their time, or any other.

In appearance and contents the two papers were in some ways similar to their great rivals under the control of Hamilton Edwards, *The Boys’ Friend*, *The Boys’ Realm*, and *The Boys’ Herald*. Both, however, were printed on white paper and they were not quite so orthodox in their make-up as the Harmsworth papers. All five were identical in size, sixteen pages about 11x15 inches,

By

HERBERT LECKENBY

a size very popular at that time, but which seemed to die out with the passing of *The Boys’ Friend*.

Almost throughout Volume One *The Boys’ Leader* had an additional eight-page supplement. *The Big Budget* always had some comic pictures, *The Boys’ Leader*, too, for a short time. It could not be said, however, that *The Big Budget* was, in any way, a copy of *The Boys’ Friend*, although that paper had been in existence over two years when *The Big Budget* came on the scene. At that time, however, Hamilton Edward’s favourite paper was an eight-page half-penny one, and continued so for four more years, whereas *The Big Budget* was never less than a penny.

**T**HE first editor of *The Big Budget* was William H. Maas, assisted by Herbert Wentworth James (who, without the last name, wrote many stories for the papers) and Arthur Brooke. It was the latter who had more to do with the destinies of the paper (and later *The Boys’ Leader*) than anyone else. He was only fifteen years old at the beginning, but within three years he was seated in the editor’s chair with

the distinction of being the youngest editor of all time. Under his guidance there certainly was nothing stodgy about the two papers. Mr. Brooke also wrote articles, especially about cycling, under the name of Carass Yorke.

Just as a feature of *The Boys' Friend* was Hamilton Edwards' "Your Editor's Den" so there was in *The Big Budget* "I Say" and in *The Boys' Leader* "You and I." But whereas H.E.'s column oft-times seemed to suggest the schoolmaster, Arthur Brooke struck one as being more hearty, more "chummy." He succeeded in convincing his readers that when he invited them to write to him he really meant it. What is more, when they did so he never failed to give them a personal reply. In connection with this there is an interesting story. Here it is.

IN the early days of *The Big Budget* there was, out in far-off Cape Town, a small boy who was a regular and devoted reader. To him the paper was perfect, the day he received it a magic day in the week. He looked upon the editor as a real friend and when under ten years of age ventured to write him a letter, and to his delight received a reply. They little realized that with those two letters they were commencing a friendship that

was to last throughout the years. Time passed on, and the small boy, grown to man's estate and with writing in his blood, found his way to a publishing house, one famous for a long line of boys' papers, within a stone's throw of the "Street of Ink." There he soon made his presence felt, and within a remarkably short time was given the responsibility of launching a new boys' paper.

He had never forgotten his regard for the old *Big Budget* and the influence it had upon him in his youth. He resolved to use it as a pattern, and anyone who knew the old and compared it with the new could easily detect the ghostly presence of the paper once ruled over by Arthur Brooke. The new editor did, in fact, succeed in gathering together some of the old contributors. Some of them were no longer available, for this was 1922. Some, unfortunately, like Maxwell Scott, had passed on, but he was able to find such stalwarts as Stacey Blake, Donovan Mart, Sidney Drew, Raymond Lee, Val, and T. W. Holmes. What is more, there came a day when he had the unique experience of welcoming and adding to his staff Arthur Brooke, that other editor and friend who had so inspired him in the long ago. Cannot you pic-

ture the thrill it would give him? I know I can.

That is a delightful story; no better one ever provided the theme for one of those "boy climbing the ladder of life" stories that were so popular in the papers themselves.

NOW let us have a look at some of the authors and artists who helped to make *The Big Budget* the fine paper it was. Among the former were Sidney Drew, Henry T. Johnson, Herbert Wentworth (James), Henry Farmer, Maxwell Scott, Herbert Maxwell, Malcolm Dayle, Stacey Blake, Donovan Mart, Raymond Lee, Claude Heathcote (J. Harwood Panting), and T.C. Bridges. The artists included the famous Tom Browne, Jack B. Yeats (brother of the Irish poet), Tom and Ernest Wilkinson, "Yorick," T. W. Holmes and his brother Fred, Val Reading, G. M. Dodshon, Robert Strange, and A. Morrow. What a galaxy of talent! No greater band was ever got together on any boys' paper.

In No. 1, which, as I have said, made its appearance on June 19th, 1897, two of the serials were "Sawdust and Spangles," by Henry T. Johnson, and "The Strange Ordeal of Alfred Wharton," by Claude Heathcote. There was also a long complete detective story by Maxwell Scott, "Kenyon Ford's Great Ride."

This great writer of detective stories wrote many more stories of Kenyon Ford for the paper, just as he did later of Vernon Read in *The Boys' Leader*. Henry T. Johnson was at his best when writing stories of the circus, so No. 1 must have been interesting to read and I regret that I have never had the pleasure of seeing it.

There would doubtless be one or two other serials but I am unable to name them. I must not forget to mention, however, Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy, whose comic adventures started in that first number and continued throughout the run. Tom Browne did the first pictures and they were later taken over by "Yorick." This latter artist was a man of many talents, for he was also a poet of distinction and for a long time was Professor of English Literature at the University of Tokio. His real name was Ralph Hodgson.

Sidney Drew wrote many stirring serials for *The Big Budget*. He never used a typewriter and wrote in a very microscopic hand, nevertheless his copy was very easy to read and gave the printers no difficulties. He did, however, get very behindhand in sending it along, giving the editor many anxious moments in consequence. He created a very popular character, Graydon

Garth, millionaire and Empire builder. Some of the serials in which he appeared were "A World in Arms," "The Vanished Fleet," "Peril Island," "The Mysterious Army," and "In Quest of the Crystal City." Sidney Drew also contributed some of his clever school stories, a mixture of broad humour and adventure, at which he was adept. Ranthorpe was the school and one story I can remember was "Rivals of Ranthorpe."

Herbert Wentworth also contributed some fine school stories, "Cock of the North," which appeared in 1903-4, being a good example. Other serials which appeared about that time were "Sons of the Sword" and "The Further Adventures of Captain Kettle, Junior," both by Stacey Blake; "Young Splendid of the Circus," by Henry T. Johnson; "The Radium Raid," by Herbert Maxwell, and also by the same author "Straight as a Die"; "By Command of the Czar," by Reginald Wray; and "The League of Dread," by Donovan Mart.

In July and August, 1908, *The Big Budget* was offering very good value with the following five serials: "Brothers Yet Foes," by Donovan Mart; "King of the

Pygmies," by Herbert Maxwell; "In the Limelight," by Henry T. Johnson; "The Lion's Whelp," by H. Wilson Forbes; and finally "Charles Peace—Master Criminal," which was written anonymously. All these stories were in No. 581, and in addition there was a complete story, "Reduced to the Ranks," by Escott Lynn. This was a typical example of the feast of reading this paper from the House of Pearson served up throughout its run.

WHILE I was wracking my brains in the hope of recalling more *Big Budget* serials I had the the great good fortune to receive from Mr. F. Addington Symonds (founder and first editor of *The Champion* and friend to *The Story Paper Collector*) a letter with which he enclosed full details of the serials in three volumes of *The Big Budget* and one of *The Boys' Leader*. They are so interesting that I cannot resist inserting them here. In passing I am sure Mr. Addington Symonds will not mind me saying he was the small boy in Cape Town I have referred to. Doubtless readers of his fine article in *S.P.C.* No. 19 will have guessed that already. Here, then, are the *Big Budget* serials:

**Volume 10, December 14th, 1901, to June 7th, 1902.**

| Serial                  | Author              | Artist      |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| "The Seven Stars" . . . | Maxwell Scott . . . | A. E. Clark |

| Serial                                      | Author                     | Artist         |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| "Dion the Charioteer" . . .                 | H. T. Johnson . . . . .    | Val            |
| "The Mysterious Army" . . .                 | Sidney Drew . . . . .      | Val            |
| "Galbraith of St. Anselm's" .               | Henry Farmer . . . . .     | A. Morrow      |
| "Moreton Stowe,<br>Special Correspondent" . | Stacey Blake . . . . .     | Robert Strange |
| "The Valley of Diamonds" . .                | Raymond Lee . . . . .      | T. W. Holmes   |
| "Chums of the Fifth" . . . .                | Claude Heathcote . . . . . | Robert Strange |
| "Through Traitors' Gate" . .                | H. T. Johnson . . . . .    | Val            |

#### Volume 15, June to November, 1904.

|                                                       |                             |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| "Those Merry Medicos" . . .                           | Herbert Wentworth . . . . . | G. E. Studly   |
| "The League of Dread" . . .                           | Donovan Mart . . . . .      | Val            |
| "The Radium Raid" . . . . .                           | Herbert Maxwell . . . . .   | G. M. Dodshon  |
| "Further Adventures of<br>Capt. Kettle, Junior" . . . | Stacey Blake . . . . .      | Robert Strange |
| "Black Sheep of the Regiment"                         | Herbert Maxwell . . . . .   | G. M. Dodshon  |
| "Old Grit" . . . . .                                  | Sidney Drew . . . . .       | A. Morrow      |
| "Satchel and Sawdust" . . .                           | Claude Heathcote . . . . .  | A. E. Clarke   |
| "Gentleman George" . . . . .                          | Anonymous . . . . .         | G. M. Dodshon  |

#### Volume 21, June 8th to November 30th, 1907.

|                               |                             |               |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| "Change of Blue" . . . . .    | H. T. Johnson . . . . .     | H. R. Wilson  |
| "The Stolen Destroyer" . . .  | Herbert Maxwell . . . . .   | T. W. Holmes  |
| "Too Much Bragley" . . . . .  | Herbert Wentworth . . . . . | G. E. Studly  |
| "For Caesar or the Cross" . . | Donovan Mart . . . . .      | A. Morrow     |
| "Black Bess" . . . . .        | Anonymous . . . . .         | W. M. Bowles  |
| "Knights of the Road" . . . . | Anonymous . . . . .         | W. M. Bowles  |
| "Lights o' London" . . . . .  | Rupert Chesterton . . . . . | Fred Holmes   |
| "Hidden Gold" . . . . .       | Maxwell Scott . . . . .     | Fred Bennett  |
| "Follow My Leader" . . . . .  | Herbert Wentworth . . . . . | C. H. Chapman |
| "Sign of the Severed Hand" .  | George Day . . . . .        | Merham        |
| "Deep Sea Vipers" . . . . .   | Sidney Drew . . . . .       | Fred Holmes   |

**I**N January, 1904, two of the Big Budget serials, Sidney Drew's "Peril Island" and "The Adventures of Captain Kettle, Junior," by Stacey Blake, were published in book form as *The Big Budget Library*. They consisted of 96

pages about  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ ", a page size much greater than that of *The Boys' Friend Library* which did not commence its career until some two years later. The price was the same, threepence, so they were value for money even in

those days when a penny could purchase far more than it can today. They had coloured covers with an illustration by clever Val Reading. However, they do not appear to have been a success, for these two were the only issues published. This was really surprising in view of the scores of fine serials which had appeared in the paper.

NOW I will turn to *The Boys' Leader*. As I have said, No. 1 was published on September 8th, 1903, and was dated the 12th. This created a very interesting situation, for just five weeks earlier the mighty House of Harmsworth had launched *The Boys' Herald* as companion to *The Boys' Friend* and *The Boys' Realm*. Thus *The Boys' Leader* constituted a bold challenge from the less powerful House of Pearson—less powerful, at any rate, in the field of boys' publications. Moreover, Pearson's went about it in no uncertain manner. A considerable sum was spent in advertising the new paper, not a small amount of which went into the coffers of the rival firm as payment for space in the three papers mentioned above. It was not surprising, therefore, that many youthful readers, seeing the conspicuous quarter-page advertisements extolling the virtues of *The Boys' Leader*, jumped to the conclusion that it had some

connection with the paper they were reading, for boys maybe do not read advertisements very carefully. Hamilton Edwards, however, soon took steps to set that right and for months afterwards notices were scattered about his three papers stating that they, and they alone, were the ones under his control.

For a time at least *The Boys' Leader* did appear to be a formidable adversary. Whereas *The Boys' Herald* contained the usual sixteen pages, the *Leader* replied with twenty-four. Eight of these consisted of a supplement called *Funny Pips*, with comic pictures and long instalments of a serial, "His Lordship of Ringmead School," by Claude Heathcote. This supplement, however, was dropped before the end of the first volume.

*The Boys' Herald* also made a big splash with a serial by G. Manville Fenn, a popular writer of boys' books of the type given as school prizes. The *Leader* retaliated with a reprint of one of Jules Verne's stories under the title of "Adrift in the Wild Pacific." I do not think this kind of story cut much ice; the boys preferred the usual authors like Sidney Drew and Maxwell Scott. The other serial stories in No. 1 of *The Boys' Leader* were: "City of Darkness," by Sidney Drew; "Winning His Spurs," by that

veteran Henry T. Johnson; and "The Rival Bushrangers," by Donovan Mart. Among the artists were Val, G. M. Dodshon, A. Morrow, and A. E. Clarke. It was a good start.

Later in Volume I there started one of the best stories Maxwell Scott ever wrote, and that is saying something. Its title was "The Iron Skull," a yarn of Vernon Read, Detective. The plot took the detective on a race around the world against time, a favourite theme with Maxwell Scott. In this instance it was to save the life of a man unjustly accused of murder. I vividly remember the finish to the story. Vernon Read, after a dozen escapes from death, arrived in Leeds on the morning of the execution at Armley Gaol, a few miles away. Followed a thrilling dash by car. Cars did not travel as quickly in those

days as they do now, but he got there just in time, needless to say. Maxwell Scott wrote at least one other Vernon Read story for *The Boys' Leader*, "The Red Hand." I have an idea there was a third called "Lorimer's Legacy," but I cannot be quite sure.

ONE of Sidney Drew's stories of Ranthorpe School, "That Terrible Term," commenced in No. 25. Years later this story, along with those of Maxwell Scott that I have mentioned, were republished in *The Boys' Friend Library* after the Amalgamated Press had apparently acquired an interest in Pearson's — a rather interesting development, in view of the intense rivalry which existed at the time they first appeared.

Here is a list of the *Boys' Leader* serials as supplied by Mr. F. Addington Symonds:

### Volume 3, September 10th, 1904, to March 4th, 1905.

| Serial                                      | Author            | Artist         |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| "Vultures of the Line" .                    | Herbert Wentworth | A. E. Clarke   |
| "The Green Painted Ship" .                  | Robert Leighton   | Robert Strange |
| "Black Diamonds" . . . .                    | Stacey Blake      | .              |
| "The Red Hand" . . . .                      | Maxwell Scott     | G. M. Dodshon  |
| "That Terrible Term" . . .                  | Sidney Drew       | T. W. Holmes   |
| "Chronicles of Crosfield College" . . . . . | R. Chesterton     | Fred Holmes    |
| "The Black Judge" . . . .                   | Stacey Blake      | G. M. Dodshon  |
| "Secret of the South" . . .                 | Herbert Maxwell   | T. W. Holmes   |
| "The Lads of Langton's House" . . . . .     | Sidney Drew       | T. W. Holmes   |
| "The Vanished Fleet" . . .                  | Sidney Drew       | Fred Holmes    |

| Serial                 | Author       | Artist        |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| "Prince Pluto"         | Donovan Mart | C. H. Chapman |
| "Captain of the Guard" | Anonymous    | G. M. Dodshon |

IN this volume there appeared announcements of a competition offering a six months free world tour to the readers collecting the largest number of coupons. Prizes worth striving for, these. About the same time *The Big Budget* offered a unique sort of prize, a hansom cab, complete with horse.

By a great act of kindness on the part of one who had a great deal to do with making *The Boys' Leader* the fine paper it was, I am the happy possessor of Volume One, but, search as I may, I have never been able to secure any of the numbers which followed.

One more instance of the rivalry with the Hamilton Edwards three was the starting of "The Order of Boy Leaders" on similar lines to "The League of Boy Friends"

*The Boys' Leader* under the energetic editorship of Arthur Brooke seemed to flourish for a time; nevertheless it just failed to complete its second year, and as I have said, No. 101, August 12th, 1905, was the last issue. It was then merged with *The Big Budget*.

Maybe there were too many papers of a similar type, for in those days boys had not the

pocket money they appear to have now. It could not have been that it did not give value for money, or that its stories were uninteresting, for they were, in the main, written by the same authors as those in the rival papers and were quite up to the standard. I remember, at the time of its ending, Hamilton Edwards had a comment to make about the passing of the "unfortunate paper." He doubtless felt all-powerful then, but a few years later his own *Boys' Herald* got into stormy waters.

*The Big Budget* carried on for nearly three more years, the final issue, No. 611, being dated March 20th, 1909. It was a good run, but regrettably few copies appear to remain in existence. Years later, in 1922, a new paper, *The Champion*, was launched, and, as has already been related in these pages, that very successful paper contained a good deal of the spirit of the old *Big Budget* and many of its old authors helped materially towards that success.

#### ADDENDUM

THERE is a sad sequel to the writing of this article, for just it was completed I learned, to my great regret, that Arthur



Brooke, that kindly soul of whom I have written, passed away suddenly last March. At the beginning of the year he had seen a rough outline of my article, given me the details of No. 1 of *The Big Budget*, and expressed a wish to see the whole article when it appeared in *The Story Paper Collector*, a magazine in which he took a keen interest. Circumstances prevented me proceeding further with it at the time. Now it is completed too late to be seen by he who made the two papers what they were. As he

was only 15 years of age when *The Big Budget* was launched in June, 1897, he could not have been more than 62 or 63 when death claimed him.

As I have said, he was a real live personality to his army of readers, the sort of editor who made them feel they really played a part in the running of the papers, an editor to whom boys could appeal for sympathy and advice in their youthful troubles. There are too few like him today.

—H. L.

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## A Link With Our Greyfriars?

I HAVE just read "Cardinal Pole," a tale of Philip of Spain and Mary, by William Harrison Ainsworth. A paragraph copied from this excellent fifteenth century period novel may be of some little interest to S. P. C. readers.

His Highness has arrived at Southampton, and is to meet Mary at Winchester. Prior to the official disembarkment from the Santissima Trinidad, however, Philip desires adventure, so with Osbert, a young gallant and nephew of the British Fleet Admiral, he goes ashore at late evening in order to visit taverns and obtain first-hand opinions as to

his coming to our shores. They are returning to the famous Spanish vessel. Young Osbert is speaking:

"It is the risk to your Highness, and not to myself, that I dread. You would not care to have it known that you have privily visited Southampton tonight. Yet it may be so without due caution. Even now, methinks, we are watched. Cast your eyes across the street, and beneath the gate of yonder convent of Greyfriars you will perceive the party of tipsy revellers from whom we have but just escaped."

A link with our Greyfriars? I wonder!  
—H. R. C.



# APPRECIATION



I

**A** FEW months ago I wrote to the Editor of *The Story Paper Collector* suggesting that an item of general appreciation should be included in the magazine before the close of Volume One. Taking this idea a stage further, I also had the conceit to add that I should be the one to write it. However, having been so bold, I now find it is with some difficulty that I grope for the right or suitable words.

There are many occasions when we find it hard to express ourselves upon paper, and then, having done so, the words, in print, appear so hard and cold, a sharp contrast to our appreciative thoughts. Perhaps the easiest and best way will be to be simple, and in continuing it will be my endeavour to speak for all the collectors of our kind over here in the British Isles.

We all do most sincerely appreciate *The Story Paper Collector*. Our Magazine—for surely we may call it that—with its handy size, good quality paper, elaborate printing and make-up, posted to us in a smart, strong envelope, is a real effort, and if this attempt at praise is printed, as I hope it is, the Editor can jolly well blush as much as he

likes as he sets it up. But he must take our warmest praise, knowing that we feel that it is well deserved. The pages are numbered in a suitable fashion to facilitate binding, and no doubt many of us will bind our copies. The illustrations and facsimiles, too, deserve much praise, while the readers have enjoyed seeing their own contributions in print, and reading those of their friends and fellow-collectors.

Very many names are involved in the total number of printed contributions and to refer to each one individually would take much space. If one name appears more than others, it is that of the energetic and likable Herbert Leckenby. "Leck" has done much for the hobby and I feel certain that my fellow-collectors will join me in the inclusion of his name here. I know him very well and know how hard he works—I have, as he would tell you, more than once told him that, in my opinion, he works too hard. However, I could not pass over "he of the inevitable cigarette," as he was once referred to by a certain collector, without extending a "pat-on-the-back" from us all. Well done, Editor, "Leck," collector-contri-

butors! Well done, indeed!

\* \* \* \*

It only remains to be said that it is a great pity that each one of our favourite story writers and artists, together with the publishing houses concerned, could not know of the mark their efforts left upon two or

three generations. The link between Mr. Gander and us all, through his fine magazine *The Story Paper Collector* is something of which to be proud!

It is, then, with something like the foregoing thoughts in our minds that we say *Thank you!*

—H. R. C.



2

VOLUME ONE of *The Story Paper Collector* is to be completed, I understand, with issue No. 25. May I therefore take the opportunity to do a little reminiscencing?

Much water has flown under the bridges since No. 1 appeared. Glancing at that modest little production and comparing it with, say, No. 23, I cannot help being impressed by the progress made as an example of the printer's craft, and I am not the only one. The other day I showed a copy to a friend of mine, a "comp." employed by a firm who can justify their claim of being "artistic printers."

Said he, looking at it with a professional eye, "A very neat job, good paper, nice colour scheme, modern type well displayed."

When I told him a little of the difficulties of producing it—

small plant, shortage of "sorts," running off one page at a time—he added: "I shouldn't have thought it. Anyway, we could not turn out a better job ourselves."

That was a deserved tribute. As to the contents, they are of the greatest interest to those concerned in the hobby of boys' paper collecting. They bring back happy memories of the days that are gone.

I had not the pleasure of knowing it at the beginning. It was about three years ago that I saw some of the early numbers for the first time. I know I exclaimed "My word! Articles on *The Magnet*, *The Gem*, the dear old *Boys' Friend*, and the authors. Just what I have been looking for!" Since then the arrival of *The S. P. C.* has made a real red letter day. May there be many more.

—HERBERT LECKENBY.



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