THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

APRIL-JUNE 1946

No. 27.
Vol. 2.

A Quarterly Magazine Featuring Articles of Interest to Collectors of British Boys' Periodicals of the Past

: : AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE : :

A WORD BEFORE "CALLOVER"

IN recent exchanges of letters between my 'umble self and our worthy Editor it came about, through a perfectly natural sequence of paragraphs, that a "Gallery," or "Who's Who," was thought to offer interesting relief to the standard features of *The Story Paper Collector*.

The proposed series of thumbnail sketches would, we said, be not of the writers and artists of our favourite papers, but of the story paper collectors themselves.

While not claiming any attempt at classification, for such a task is most difficult, I must admit deliberately honouring our friend John R. Shaw with first place. This, since in my most inconsistent make-up I have a percentage of the sentimental.

John is a good fellow and takes his collecting most seriously—it is, in fact, his world. Recently he suffered a body-blow. A splendid little lady, a talented artist, passed on, for, it seems, some mothers' hearts are not quite strong enough to withstand the strain of a dominating dictator's secret weapons.

Ten years ago John had a battle of his own. It was a matter of three hard attacks of infantile paralysis. We require no further imagination to realize the amount of pleasure that he derives from being a "story paper collector."

He says, to use his own words, "I feel that I ought to be placed well down the list in the 'Who's Who'." We deem it otherwise.

—H. R. C.

The Above is an Introduction to Our New Feature, Who's Who, *the First Entry of Which will be Found on Page 33 of This Issue*

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR is printed and published by Wm. H. Gander, P. O. Box 60, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

The Story Paper Collector

Articles of Interest to Collectors of British Boys' Periodicals of the Past

No. 27. April-June, 1946. Vol. 2.

99 AUTHORS & A DETECTIVE

By HERBERT LECKENBY

SOMEONE once said everybody in Fleet Street had written Sexton Blake stories. That was an over-statement, of course; nevertheless those who have would make an impressive company if got together. That could never be, for the sleuth of Baker Street has been written about for over fifty years and many of the early authors have joined the Great Majority. Some of the later ones, too, unfortunately. Maybe they all gather together in some Valhalla where writers go and discuss the more sophisticated Blake stories of today and compare them with those they themselves once penned.

However, I don't suppose anyone knows exactly how many different authors have written of the detective with the strange Christian name. Nearly all the early stories were written anonymously, and the men who did know them are no longer here to tell. It has, though, been one of my little hobbies to collect the names of Blake authors, with the result that, partly by my own efforts, and the invaluable help of those Blake admirers, Maurice Bond and John Gocher, I have been able to get together a list of just one short of one hundred. It is a very interesting list. Here it is in alphabetical order:

John Ascott, D. L. Ames.

Harry Blythe, E. Harcourt Burrage, Allan Blair, T. C. Bridges, Stacey Blake, Coutts Brisbane, John Brearley, Lester Bidston, Edwy Searles Brooks, John G. Brandon, Gerald Bowman, Ladbroke Black, Louis Brittany, L. H. Brooks.

Gilbert Chester, John Creasey, Lewis Carlton, Bruce Claverton.

Mark Darran, Arnold Davis, T. C. Dowling-Maitland, Sidney Drew, George Dilnot, John Drummond, Maurice B. Dix, L.C. Douthwaite, Ernest Dudley.

Gwyn Evans, Alfred Edgar,

William J. Elliott, Walter Edwards.

C. Vernon Frost, Victor Fremlin, Martin Frazer, Anthony Ford.

W. Murray Graydon, Stanley Gordon, Clifford Gates, Hylton Gregory, Richard Goyne.

Cecil Hayter, Paul Herring, H. Gregory Hill, Rex Hardinge, John Hunter, C. Malcolm Hincks, R. L. Hadfield, D. L. Huddlestone, A. S. Hardy, Stanton Hope, Stephen Hood, Roland Howard, Edward Holmes.

Lewis Jackson, Warwick Jardine.

Beverley Kent.

Frank Lelland.

Hal Meredith, Robert Murray, Andrew Murray, Herbert Maxwell, David Macluire, O. Merland.

Mark Osborne.

John Nix Pentelow, Michael Poole, Barry Perowne, Anthony Parsons, Arthur Paterson, John Purley, Arthur J. Palk.

Pierre Quiroule.

W. Shaw Rae, George Rochester.

Henry St. John, Maxwell Scott, Christopher Stevens, F. Addington Symonds, Anthony Skene, John Sylvester, Joseph Stamper, Richard Standish, Donald Stuart, S. Gordon Shaw, Hedley Scott.

George Hamilton Teed, Norman Taylor, Walter Tyrer, H. Townley.

Paul Urquhart.

William P. Vickery.

Reginald Wray, Cedric Wolfe, Reid Whitley, Trevor C. Wignall, Stanford Webber, George D. Woodman.

YES, ninety-nine of them, I believe; a pity I could not make the century. I could have done so if I had included the cases where authors have written under more than one name. For instance, Sidney Drew wrote a few *Sexton Blake Libraries* under his real name, Edgar Joyce Murray, and Alfred Edgar is also Barré Lyndon.

In just one instance have I made a possible exception: Harry Blyth and Hal Meredith. Let me explain. Harry Blyth in the long, long ago wrote that famous "Sexton Blake, Detective," in No. 2 of the halfpenny *Union Jack*, generally stated to be the veryfirst Blake story. But, as I have explained elsewhere, that was not so, for a few months earlier in the first volume of the halfpenny *Marvel* there were four stories about him. The first of them, in No. 6, was stated to have been written by Hal Meredith. Some time ago I had the opportunity of reading some stories by Hal Meredith and Harry Blyth, and I am confident they were written by the same hand. However under the special circumstances I have included both.

If there are other instances of

dual identities, and there may be, they are included in all ignorance.

Some in the list have written only an odd story or two, but there are others who have tapped out the words "Blake" and "Tinker" thousands of times. Away back forty years ago William Murray Graydon was thus employed and if ever it could be ascertained who wrote the most stories he would be very near if not at the top of the list. In those days he had a rival in Mark Darran (the man who introduced Inspector Spearing), and for years up to the beginning of the First Great War they between them did a big proportion of the yarns.

Mark Darran, however,—that was n't his real name—was killed in that war, but Murray Graydon went on for several years more. Later, his mantle fell most worthily on the shoulders of his son, Robert Murray, and he for many moons delighted *Union Jack* readers with his great stories of The Confederation, in my humble opinion some of the most fascinating Blake stories of all time.

Others in the top flight, who helped to make Sexton Blake the greatest of all detectives of fiction, were George Hamilton Teed, he of the classic pen and world wide knowledge (Maurice Bond, that S. B. authority, told you something about him in *Story Paper Collector* No. 25); Andrew Murray, clever writer with a crisp style who created Carlac and Kew; the energetic Gwyn Evans (who died before his time) with his fantastic, yet plausible, stories of Splash Page of Fleet Street; Gilbert Chester with his racy stories of the brother and sister crooks, Gilbert and Eileen Hale (a fascinating baggage, she); Pierre Quiroule, another with a smooth, easy style whose tales of "Granite" Grant were fortunately many; Lewis Jackson, who introduced Kestrel, the Mummer, one of the most bizarre and spell-binding of all the crooks; Anthony Skene with his unusual character Zenith the Albino; and Donald Stuart, who, whilst down and out, wrote his first Blake story on scraps of paper on the Thames Embankment.

THERE were others who appeared less often, yet who kept up the high standard of Blake lore: in the early days Maxwell Scott, who turned out a yarn of the Baker Street man between others of Nelson Lee; F. Addington Symonds, who told of "The Raven" and Claire Delisle back in 1921; and Trevor C. Wignall, famous Fleet Street sports writer, who reveals in one of his Autobiographies how

he wrote his first Blake story and how much he got for it.

There is a name in my list which came as a real surprise to me when I learned, a short while ago, thanks to John Gocher, that an old favourite of mine, J. N. Pentelow, had written yarns of Blake. There is no doubt about it, for John had it on the highest authority. Here are two of his stories in the second series of *The Sexton Blake Library*: No. 95, "The Three Masked Men," and No. 101, "The Cleopatra Needle Mystery." I would like to read those yarns.

ANOTHER name in my list has a distinction in this company: T. G. Dowling-Maitland, who contributed a story or two when *The Union Jack* was very young. This writer also wrote under the name of Max Hamilton, but the names concealed the identity of a woman. I wonder if she was the only one to try her hand at a Sexton Blake story.

Which reminds me that some time ago I was listening to a radio feature in which a number of detective story writers were asked to say whom they considered the greatest detective in fiction. Two of them were women, one writing under a masculine name. I pricked up my ears. They mentioned So-and-so and Dr. That, and Sherlock Holmes, of course. As they went on I said to myself: "When are they going to make the obvious answer, 'Sexton Blake'?" But they never did. Of a truth, strange. Surely they did not ignore him because his adventures only appear between paper covers. It was an insult to my Regiment of Authors who have helped to thrill more millions through fifty years than all those they mentioned put together, yes, even including the other man from Baker Street.

SLIPS THAT PASS

From No. 855 of *The Magnet Library*, page 27, column 3:

"Wingate of Clavering School* is the same as Wingate who makes Bunter shiver in his shoes, only better and wiser!"

But Wingate who made Bunter shiver in his shoes at Greyfriars was named George, while Wingate of Clavering was named Gilbert!

*In the earliest issues of "The Gem Library."

GREYFRIARS AND ELSEWHERE

By ROGER M. JENKINS

"AND that," remarked the bookseller with callous indifference, "is the last copy of *The Magnet*." I stood thunderstruck. *The Magnet* was an institution which had—like all English ones—grown venerable with age; it had never occurred to me that there could ever be an end to it.

But the year 1940 brought many shocks to the British nation. It was, in fact, the end of an era. Among the things swept aside by the Austerity Broom was Mr. Charles Hamilton's eventful connection of over thirty years with the Amalgamated Press. Many and varied had been the characters drawn by the facile pen of this author: King of the Islands, the Rio Kid, the Packsaddle Bunch, Dr. Sparshott & Co. of Grimslade, Frank Richards' Schooldays, and countless others. But none achieved such fame as the characters in the immortal schools of Greyfriars, Rookwood, and St. Jim's.

I must confess I never guessed the secret behind the authorship of these stories. That the schools had a close affinity, I was of course aware. I remember noting that Frank Richards could write about Rookwood and St. Jim's with the same skill that he could chronicle the events at Greyfriars—as, for instance, the memorable time when Bunter, after heaving a trunk at Mr. Quelch by mistake, ran away and spent several days with Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver. But it seemed to me, nevertheless, that a different atmosphere, a different code of conduct, existed at the three schools.

This might have been due partly to the fact that, whereas no new Rookwood stories were written after 1926 and very few of St. Jim's after 1931, Greyfriars received constant attention to the very end. But I am inclined to think that the roots of the matter go deeper than this. One must go back to the very beginning.

One of the reasons for Mr. Hamilton's adoption of different pen-names was that he felt himself free to write from different angles. When he was Frank Richards the juniors behaved with decorum so far as other schools were concerned; the only times there were feuds with Highcliffe were when Skinner and Ponsonby engineered

them. But when he was Martin Clifford or Owen Conquest the fellows were always indulging in acts of friendly rivalry with Rylcombe Grammar School and Bagshot respectively.

Again, there was little form rivalry at Greyfriars. But at St. Jim's and Rookwood, whenever there were no outside conflicts, the houses and forms were continually at loggerheads. This does not mean that the Greyfriars Remove were not made of such stern stuff as were their opposites at other schools. Temple & Co. were frequently put in their place, whilst Coker must have regarded the Famous Five as the biggest menace to civilization. But this pulverizing process, so to speak, took place at Greyfriars only when the victims had asked for it. This was not so elsewhere. Poor old Gussy was always being bumped by Figgins & Co. before they'd given him a chance to invite them to Eastwood House for the coming vac. And Tommy Dodd was always having his face rubbed in a puddle by the Fistical Four before he had time to explain that he had stepped into Classical precincts only with a view to challenging them to a cricket match.

GRUB-raiding was another topic that met with a mixed reception. Whereas Billy Bunter and Tubby Muffin constituted practically the only threat at their schools, at St. Jim's no-one's spread was sacred to tuck-hunters of the other house. True, Baggy Trimble would pinch food irrespective of any considerations of loyalty, but he suffered for it even more than Bunter did, I imagine. Possibly the St. Jim's fellows had to put up with so much of it from various quarters that they felt Baggy was the last straw.

It is, too, undeniable that Trimble was the most unpleasant of the fat juniors. He had all of Bunter's bad points—inquisitiveness, untruthfulness, boastfulness, dishonesty—and none of his good ones—generosity and happy disposition. Bunter often provided amusement at Greyfriars, but Trimble excited only disgust. The character of Tubby Muffin was perhaps drawn not so distinctly as those of Bunter and Trimble, but all three nevertheless are worthy of a great deal of examination, for they are among the most gifted characters ever drawn by Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Hamilton's skill in character portraying was superb. Few authors since Dickens have possessed the ability to make their creations live, but without doubt Charles Hamilton is one of them. No doubt the longevity of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* con-

tributed to this air of permanence; the neighbourhoods in which the schools were situated had been described so many times that they were surprisingly real. There must have been few readers indeed to whom Courtfield Common or the footpath by the Sark were not as real as the mundane locality in which they themselves lived. But the fact that every character had a different personality was the main reason for the phenomenal success which their creator so rightly enjoys. Moreover, there were no extreme characters—no total depravity or paragons of virtue. All of them, sometime during their careers, took the stage for a while to reveal hitherto unsuspected traits in their natures, and whether it was Harry Manners' Feud or Smithy's Sacrifice it undeniably added colour to the character's fame and fortunes.

THE masters themselves deserve the first review, if only from the point of view of respect. Two images will always remain fresh—Mr. Prout boring the men in the games study, and his portly counterpart Mr. Greely giving lessons in deportment. Mr. Hacker and Mr. Ratcliff were another couple of somewhat different calibre from the others, perhaps unmatched for sheer irascibility—unless it be by the sour-tempered Mr. Selby. Snobbish Mr. Mobbs and the doddering Dr. Voysey were a well-drawn pair, though not often playing a part. Messrs. Railton and Dalton deserve mention as the most popular masters. But none achieved more fame than Henry Samuel Quelch. For over thirty years he grimly tapped out his "History of Greyfriars," caned Bunter, thrashed out knotty points in Aeschylus with the Head, and caned Bunter again. Yet his stern treatment of his form was just what was required to set off the other characters in the Remove. And as the most fatuous of them all said, "Quelch is a beast, but a just beast!"

Harry Wharton was another success. Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver were the counterparts of the sunny-tempered Bob Cherry, but Harry possessed a streak of pride and stubbornness that made him a potential nuisance when his anger was aroused. Every few years we were treated to really gripping stories relating to his feuds which served to remind us of his hectic early days at Greyfriars.

Frank Nugent was another realistic portrait, the good-natured fellow who had one blind spot—his minor. But I wonder how many know that Frank was based on his creator's "own dif-

fident self"? Yet another brilliant sketch was that of Alonzo Todd, and his likenesses Herbert Skimpole and Clarence Cuffy. Poor Skimpole! Alonzo was peculiar, but I am sure he would never have left his money about the quad for the deserving poor. Alonzo was generally treated with kindness, but I am afraid Gore and Towle used to take it out of their tame lunatics.

Another popular character at Greyfriars was Coker, who was never so successful as Grundy and Gunter at laying down the law. It would be difficult to assess who was the most fatuous of the three. Perhaps the credit for this can go to Coker, the senior. But doubtless had the others possessed an Aunt Judy they too would have been in the Fifth!

FISHY—Fisher T. Fish—was unique. Although he never excelled his brilliant performance in the holiday at Portercliffe Hall, he was always around to provide tit-bits for the edification of *Magnet* readers. Other Americans—like Van Duck—were presented to us in the course of time, but none of them was the equal of Fisher T. and his legendary account book which once landed the whole Remove in a rebellion on Popper's Island.

Two relatives, D'Arcy and Cardew, are worthy of special notice. I suppose that, after Bunter, Gussy was the most famous of Mr. Hamilton's creations. His studied elegance and way of speaking are, we learn, taken from an editor who remained blissfully unaware of the fact for many years. Cardew, too, was elegant, but not so simple a soul as Gussy. Rather mischievous and deceitful, he reminds us of the Bounder with his shady ways, but unlike Vernon-Smith he was charming and courteous to everyone.

PERHAPS it would not be out of place to say a few words here about *The Gem* itself. I have always regarded its later career as somewhat tragic. During the nineteen-twenties the substitute writers employed from time to time by the Amalgamated Press brought the fortunes of this paper to such a precarious state that in 1931 it nearly stopped. It was saved, however, by the republication of the early St. Jim's stories, which were all the work of Mr. Hamilton, of course. Now I cannot help feel that this was an unfortunate step to take. Without casting any slight on these early stories, I think most people will agree with me that the genius of an author becomes more fertile every year—indeed it would be an insult to say otherwise. If

only Mr. Hamilton could have written fresh tales for *The Gem* in 1931 I am certain the fame of St. Jim's would have rivalled that of Greyfriars. If anyone is uncertain of this, let him imagine what *The Magnet* would have been like if from 1931 to 1939, instead of a new adventure, the early Greyfriars stories had been printed each week. But, unfortunately, the peculiar circumstances which existed in 1931 precluded any other course being taken, and St. Jim's had to mark time until early 1939 when Mr. Hamilton started writing stories for *The Gem* again. But Trimble, Cardew, Talbot, and many other popular characters had been in cold storage too long.

Be this as it may, however, it will at least be undisputed that as the years pass, the market price of all Mr. Hamilton's work is jumping to as much as six or more times the original selling price—which is surely unparalleled. The unfortunate thing is that, although his work may be as good as Dickens', it will never be reprinted, unless some benefactor chooses to do so when the copyrights expire. Nevertheless, such a stock of it exists that most ardent readers are able to retread at least some of the paths of old.

Although Greyfriars, Rookwood, and St. Jim's have gone, Sparshott, Carcroft, and Oakhurst are coming to take their places. Soon many thousands of readers all over the world will be paying tribute once again to Charles Hamilton—the most versatile and prolific writer of his kind.

THE "DREADNOUGHT" LEAGUE

WE find that the *Dreadnought* League was already well established in *Dreadnought* No. 11, Vol. 2, August 10th, 1912. It apparently flourished for about a year, but during 1913 League matters gradually gave way to regular "Editor's Chat" matter and news of coming features in the paper. In No. 71, October 4th, 1913, appeared the last "*Dreadnought* League" heading, the title of the page the next week being "A Chat With My Chums." That was the end of the *Dreadnought* League. It is odd that a League that had, according to its "Admiral," flourished so mightily should have faded away and died so quickly.

MRS. BARDELL

A Short Article About Sexton Blake's Famous Housekeeper ☙ By H. M. Bond

IT IS to be wondered if the creator of Mrs. Bardell, the eternal housekeeper of Sexton Blake, based his character on the famous lady with whom Mr. Pickwick was so distressingly involved in Charles Dickens' "Pickwick Papers." Certainly the Dickens character provided a most suitable example of the type, and it is doubtful if a better one could have been found. The comparison between Mrs. Bardell of Baker Street fame and her predecessor was even more amplified when one considered the use made of her by one of the leading Sexton Blake authors, Gwyn Evans. Nearly all this writer's characters were of Dickensian flavour, and he seemed to delight in them.

On several occasions Mrs. Bardell was the star character of the special Christmas stories that Mr. Evans specialized in, and old *Union Jack* readers will remember with pleasure such tales as "Mrs. Bardell's Christmas Pudding" and "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve." Mr. Evans' brilliant characterization, coupled with Eric R. Parker's eminently suitable sketches, made these Christmas issues unique in every respect. They were detection, romance, and jollity combined. I mention these things in an attempt to remind the reader of Mrs. Bardell in her heyday, for most certainly she was at that stage while the pen of Gwyn Evans was busy during the middle 1920's.

Nearly all the Sexton Blake authors have used Mrs. Bardell at one time or another, some by way of passing, and others giving her a definite place in their stories. Noticeable, too, is the difference in her speech when featured by various writers. Only one other writer apart from Gwyn Evans gave her the real London accent, and he was Gilbert Chester. Those little twists of speech which were known as Bardellisms to regular readers of Blake stories some years ago are, to my mind, one of the essential points going to the making of this buxom housekeeper, and it never seemed quite right for her to knock on the consulting room door to announce a caller in ordinary plain English. How much more fitting it was, and still is, to hear Mrs. Bardell announce the arrival of "Defective-

Suspector Coutts." Maybe some of these Bardellisms are a little too much of a good thing, but however one looks at it they are fitting to the character, and I hope future Blake authors will copy some of her little "isms" for their stories.

THE creator of Mrs. Bardell was, as far as I can find out, W. Murray Graydon, who, I believe, also gave the world Pedro the bloodhound. I don't know where or when Mrs. Bardell first appeared as my records are not yet complete, but I can trace her back to the first World War.

Of course, as times change the characters of a saga must do likewise and Mrs. Bardell is no exception to the rule, although her mode of dress is even now, to say the least, antique, as antique, let us say, as the famed old red dressing gown so beloved by Sexton Blake, and so abhorred by his housekeeper. Many are the times that the sleuth has received a spanking new dressing gown from Mrs. Bardell, but after a short life each one of them has been replaced by the original—it certainly must not be of the utility quality!

Another thing to marvel at is the number of shocks the dear old dame has had to put up with in her capacity as general factotum to Blake. She has been gagged and bound on numerous occasions and it is a wonder that some of the rough treatment she has received has not had the effect of making her resign her position. But of course, as Mr. Herbert Leckenby puts it in his "Memories of Old Boys' Papers," Sexton Blake is eternal, and the same must apply to all the other essential characters that go to make up the Baker Street establishment.

Gwyn Evans, to whom I referred in a previous paragraph, also created the angular Mary Ann Cluppins, the sister of Mrs. Bardell, and he wrote many little sketches of conversation between these two. The weird and wonderful use to which Mrs. Bardell put the English language is very evident in all the dialogue sequences of Mr. Evans' sketches. Here is an example of the sort of thing to which I refer. It is an extract from a story entitled "The Masque of Time" in the Christmas number of *The Union Jack* for 1929. Mrs. Bardell and her sister are discussing Sexton Blake's Christmas plans.

Mary Ann Cluppins: "And where does Mr. Blake intend to spend his Christmas?"

Mrs. Bardell: "At 'ome, in course. 'E 'as 'ad several invitations to castles and mansions, but 'e decided on spending the restive season by 'is own fire-

side. What you might call a quiet 'ome-like Xmas. An' I'll tell you Mary Ann Cluppins, if I don't buy that pore man a noo dressin' gown this Xmas my name ain't Maria Bardell. The thing 'e wears now is that debilitated it would fair disgrace a scarecrow."

Also very amusing was the light-hearted banter exchanged between Mrs. Bardell and Splash Page, the once popular newspaper reporter of *The Daily Radio*, also created by Gwyn Evans. He was forever pulling her leg, and, on one occasion when making her a Christmas present—but let us quote the actual words of the story:

"Don't worry, Ma," says Splash, "Christmas comes but once a year and when it comes it brings good beer."

He pressed a crackly note into the housekeeper's plump fingers.

"Buy yourself some silk stockings, Ma, or one of those Celanese casseroles you were tellin' me about."

Mrs. Bardell bridled, muttered something about "rude and owdacious newspaper importers," but her eyes twinkled.

These little episodes make the Blake Christmas stories unique and I can think of nothing to compare with them. Mrs. Bardell has never before or since been handled so brilliantly.

In conclusion, I am sure all old readers will always remember Mrs. Bardell with affection. She is a lovable character and an essential member of the large family of *Union Jack* creations. Gwyn Evans, who made more of her than anyone else before or since, is unfortunately among the authors who are no longer with us, but he will be remembered with gratitude by many.

COCK OF THE WALK

In No. 25 of *The Story Paper Collector*, page 360, line 17 of column 1 should read "Cock of the Walk," not "Cock of the North."

E. O. H.: A PEN PICTURE

By T. ARMITAGE

WE have read with much pleasure splendid articles in *The Story Paper Collector* on favourite schools and schoolboy heroes: Harry Wharton, "a born leader," Tom Merry, and various other shining lights. But to my mind there is one other deserving of special mention, though up to now little has been written of him. I refer to Edward Oswald Handforth, of St. Frank's—better known as "Handy."

It is no doubt true that Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood set the standard for school stories, and one got the impression that *The Nelson Lee Library* was somewhat of a side-issue, having as it did a detective interest each week, either more or less. However, for those who followed it, St. Frank's got to be as much of a real school as Greyfriars and the rest. Some there are who would prefer Nipper, Pitt, and Fullwood, but still I think Handforth was the favourite.

So at this point let us turn back the years to July 28th, 1917. That week saw the issue of No. 112 of *The Nelson Lee Library*, entitled "Nipper at St. Frank's," and here we meet Handforth and his two chums Walter Church and Arnold McClure. For a time, of course, the limelight was mostly centred on Nipper, then making his way to the captaincy of the Remove, and for a while each week brought some mystery for Nelson Lee (Mr. Alvington) to solve.

At this period Handforth was shown as a rather blundering chump and he and his chums tended to bring to mind Coker, Potter, and Greene of Greyfriars and Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn of St. Jim's. Occasionally he had a slightly more prominent part in which he usually performed some fatheaded stunt, as in No. 169, "Handforth, Detective," and No. 175, "Poor Old Handforth." Then later, in No. 258, "Handforth's Handful," he comes a little to the fore, as his sister Edith's husband is mixed up in a plot concerning a diamond.

Handforth was forever at loggerheads with his long-suffering chums, but in No. 261, "The Split in Study D," the quarrel is quite serious. All comes right further on, however.

From this time Handforth gradually came to the front and also lost most of his fatheadedness. In No. 386 we are intro-

duced to Willy Handforth, who takes his place in the Third. He had the knack of extracting five "bob" from his major, Ted, on any pretext.

When, with No. 436, the Moor View girls come on the scene and the belle of the school, Irene Manners, picks out Handy as the object of her admiration, his stock rises in no uncertain way and from then on he is to the fore in every series. One of the finest was that which introduced Barry Stokes, Nos. 471 to 476.

THE last eight numbers in the first series, Nos. 561 to 568, were practically all Handforth, so, appropriately, his picture was on the cover of No. 1 of the new enlarged series, May 1st, 1926. He had the limelight all through a fine sports series, following this with a trip to China. Back at St. Frank's in No. 20, Handy is practically the leading figure in every series of stories until about No. 174.

None who read them will forget the four powerful stories, Nos. 76 to 79, in which Walter Church is thought to be dead, and only Handforth stubbornly refuses to believe it. How right he is, is shown in the sequel, and no author has given a finer description of staunch friendship than Edwy Searles Brooks did in these great stories.

This series of *The Nelson Lee Library* ended with No. 194, and in January, 1930, still another series was commenced, but with a detective interest. However, with No. 15 came short stories of the St. Frank's boys. For weeks Handy managed to land into comical scrapes, and then, until No. 161, the stories were full length again. But one feels that Handy, though still in evidence, was not quite the Ted Handforth we had known. *The Nelson Lee Library* came to its end with a short series of twenty-five numbers, February to August, 1933, and these appeared to be mainly reprints from earlier years.

I doubt if, from mid-1923 until mid-1928, any schoolboy of fiction enjoyed the great popularity of Ted Handforth. Big, clumsy, aggressive, but with the heart of a lion; a sportsman and good at sports, with a weakness for detective work and the writing of farcical, though to him serious, stories; clownish when it suited him, but nobody's fool; a firm friend and a thoroughly human boy—that was "Handy."

The Story Paper Collector WHO'S WHO

No. 1: JOHN R. SHAW

JOHN Rodolph Shaw was born of English Midland County parents on March 13th, 1918. He has a colour of mid-dark brown, and a height of five feet, two inches. His mother was an artist, and his father is a surveyor who at one time was a Government valuer in a western county.

Carefully housed and packed, in the medium-sized, quiet-looking home just off Muswell Hill Broadway, near London, is John's collection, which, for the express purpose of this article, he carefully valued at two hundred pounds. Having been in the large room with its wall-coverings of various sketches and paintings, and old-world atmosphere, I have seen the collection and know that John's figure is by no means exaggerated.

He is essentially a Charles Hamilton fan, his favourite paper being *The Gem*, with *The Magnet* a very close second. *Populars*, *Greyfriars Heralds*, and *Holiday Annuals* are, too, very much in evidence as one browses around the large piles of story papers.

His favourite character is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, followed by others such as Ralph Reckness Cardew, Harry Wharton, and Bob Cherry. Prefers tales of the more serious type and the schoolboy holiday adventures, rather than those involving the great William George Bunter. Reading *The Gem* every week from 1933 to the last number, John commenced to collect in 1941.

Opera, chamber music, poetry, and art are among his other interests, and another treasure in this "house of books" is the complete "mint" volume of *The Story Paper Collector*, to which he contributed in the first number of the second volume.

A Series of Short Articles About Our Contributors, Collectors, and Readers :: Compiled by H. R. C.

An Introduction to This New Feature Appears on Page 18 of This Issue

"THE SCOUT"

A Noble Survivor of Happier Days :: By T. W. Puckrin

IN one of the many articles written by Mr. Herbert Leckenby for *The Story Paper Collector* reference was made to the many boys' papers of the past. He has extolled their manyfine qualities and lamented those that have fallen by the way-side. The wars which have mainly been responsible for these literary catastrophes have left in their train few survivors. One of these is *The Scout.*

The writer of this contribution remembers the beginning of the Scout movement by Sir Robert Baden Powell and its subsequent repercussions. It is now a matter of history how the movement spread all over the world with a rapidity and an enthusiasm that has perhaps never been equalled. In a decade a small body of Scouts grew into an international organization and there was hardly a country which did not muster some uniformed devotees of the greatest Scout of all.

It was only natural that a boys' paper dealing with Scouting should make its debut in the year 1908. That paper was *The Scout*, published by Pearson's, and it was an immediate success. Not quite as large in size of page as the famous *Boys' Friend* and its two companions, it was printed on white paper.

While I cannot remember the contents of the first issue, I do recall one of the early serials, "The Boys of the Otter Patrol," by E. Le Breton Martin. The story ran along conventional lines, the Patrol had its encounters with other Patrols and circumvented poachers and other enemies of society, and altogether behaved much the same as the immortal Tom Merry and Harry Wharton were doing at that time. Great stress was laid on the Scout "code," the necessity of being prepared, and the ability to get oneself out of a tight corner unaided. Some months ago the complete story came into my possession and it seemed that I had gone back more than thirty years.

There was a serial, too, which told of the further adventures of the Otter Patrol and sent its members to France, a fashion which became increasingly popular among boys' heroes as time passed.

Scouting was not the only subject to find a place in *The Scout.* One of its best serials was "The Phantom Battleship," a particularly fine naval story by Ru-

pert Chesterton. Reference has been made to this story in previous issues but it will bear retelling. Richard Vanstone, dismissed from the navy for insubordination, joined the "Phantom Battleship" as a gunnery lieutenant, in company with other adventurers of kindred spirit. They declared war upon a tyrant named Sancillo, who had usurped the presidency of a South American republic, and who was outwitted after a series of thrilling incidents.

RUPERT Chesterton, of whom more anon, was a master of naval technique and his description of the armament of the Phantom Battleship was without a flaw. The highspot of the story was the fight between the solitary battleship and Sancillo's navy. How the Phantom Battleship fought its way out of a trap set by the cunning Sancillo is a masterpiece of description and this story alone would entitle Rupert Chesterton to a high place among schoolboy authors.

Other stories which came from his pen were "Singleton the Searcher" and "Roddy the Runaway." The first was a detective story and the second the inevitable school story. Another of his efforts was "The Secret of Sexton's Folly," a story of smugglers who dealt in illicit saccharin. I remember this story being published by Newnes in complete form many years after it appeared in *The Scout*, but under a different title.

Other stories which come to mind are "Strong Hand Saxon" and "Grant the Grenadier." The first was a story laid in Canada along the usual emigration lines. The second dealt with the exploits of a British soldier during the Peninsular War. This story was also published in book form in the years when *The Scout* was on the decline.

Time marches on with boys' papers as with everything else, and *The Scout* gradually drooped and lost in circulation as new generations of schoolboys came along. Simultaneously the quality of the stories seemed to fall also. I remember picking up a *Scout* about 1920. I opened it and read "The Captain of the Phantom," a sequel to "The Phantom Battleship." But the sequel, like many others, was a poor copy of the original story. Why this should be I do not know, but it is always so.

With that my contact with *The Scout* came to an end, and all that remains is to sum up and bring in the final verdict. At its best *The Scout* was first-class value for money. It ranked with *Chums*—indeed there was a distinct similarity between them. Both aimed at giving the

highest type of juvenile adventure, at the same time avoiding that touch of sensationalism which seemed to pervade the Harmsworth papers.

The last word has yet to be written, for *The Scout*, a noble survivor, still remains, an official organ of the Scout movement. I understand its fiction output is nil, its contents being mere recordings of Scout activities. Will it ever stage a "come-back"? I doubt it.