

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

JULY
1949

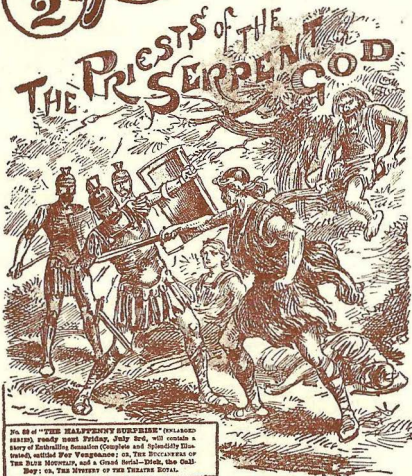
Number 35
Volume 2

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FROM
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No. 87.

Vol. IV.

Front Page
of
The
Halfpenny
Surprise
No. 87,
dated
June 26th,
1896.

It was
E. J. Brett's
answer to
Harms-
worth's
Marvel,
Union Jack,
and
Pluck.

The Story Paper Collector
WHO'S WHO

No. 9: JOHN MEDCRAFT

[By One Who Knows Him]

THE FOREMOST COLLECTOR in our hobby today is John Medcraft, whose wonderful collection covering a century of Old Boys' Books has to be seen to be believed. John, whom his friend, the late Barry Ono, used to call his disciple, has a profound knowledge of Victorian penny dreadfuls and bloods and modern story papers up to 1914, but pleads guilty to little interest in post-1920 publications. In his own province he is the No. 1 expert, but sentimentally the only books he values are comic papers, Henderson's publications, and early Harmsworth's of 1895 to 1914.

Born in 1894 (inconveniently at Christmas, he states), John is a Londoner and proud of it. His greatest misfortune came when about to leave school, when over-fondness for swimming seriously affected his hearing, which never fully recovered. "I had a good job in prospect but that was washed out," he said, "and instead of the office I entered the factory. How I hated the work, but stuck it grimly." He stuck it to good purpose for he

is now a director of a thriving company.

From the day, fifty years ago, when enraptured by his first copy of *Chips*, John's chief interest has been books, as a reader up to 1915 and as a collector from 1919 onwards. During 1915-1918 he strayed from the fold and lightly discarded most of his earlier treasures, many of which took years to replace. "But," he said, humorously, "I got in on the ground floor when many rarities of today were cheap and comparatively easy to acquire." Thirty years of collecting have borne rich fruit yet he still lacks certain longed-for items, notably the first two years of Henderson's *Lot-o-Fun*. So you lads who bewail the lack of this or that after searching for a mere year or two should take heed.

Apart from his all-absorbing hobby, John's only other interest is sport and he admits having been a good class boxer and gymnast in his youth but something of a failure at team games.

John's favourite writers are J. N. Pentelow, R. A. H. Good-year, Derwent Miall, Maxwell Scott, David Goodwin, and, until the rot set in, S. Clarke Hook, with John Proctor, W. Boucher, Arthur Clarke, Hutton Mitchell, J. Abney Cummings, and Leonard Shields (earlier work) the preferred artists.

A Series of Short Articles About Old Boys' Books Collectors

The Story Paper Collector

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

No. 35

JULY, 1949

Vol. 2

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

By HENRY ADAMS PUCKRIN

FROM TIME TO TIME reference has been made in the pages of *The Story Paper Collector* to the well-known volumes whose name heads this article, but so far no one seems to have described them at length. It is a subject about which a book could be written quite easily, but for the fact that the passing of time dims one's memory. This can, therefore, be only a brief review of them, but it may serve to vibrate the chords of readers' memories.

The first numbers of *The Boys' Friend Library* appeared in 1906. The stories were mainly reprints of serials which had appeared in *The Boys' Friend*, *The Boys' Realm*, and *The Boys' Herald*, but there were some original yarns. The first three were "new" Jack, Sam, and Pete stories written by S. Clarke Hook. The fourth was Maxwell Scott's "Birds of Prey," the fifth was the famous "The

Boys of St. Basil's," by Henry St. John, and the sixth was another S. Clarke Hook tale, "Pete's Boyhood."

They were neat little books of, at the beginning, 144 pages plus covers. Not too large to be held in the hand or carried in the pocket, they could be taken anywhere and served to while away many a weary hour.

But they did more than this. The authors were, almost without exception, men who had studied their subjects very carefully and were thus able to quote chapter and verse for the statements they made. This point was emphasized by the *obiter dicta* on men and things in general, and thus they were able to refute the oft-made charges that they were "cheap and rubbishy writings for an unintelligent and sensation-loving public."

They were eagerly looked forward to by their loyal readers,

and as there were (after a start at two issues a month) three, four, and for a time five, issued every month, there was a goodly supply for them.

THREE STORIES stand out very clearly in the writer's memory, two of them Sexton Blake yarns. "A Woolwich Arsenal Mystery" was written against a background of international spying, with Germany as the chief conspirator. Sexton Blake was engaged by the British War Office to regain plans of a stolen machine-gun. "Sexton Blake in Siberia" was published a few years later. In this story Blake and his companions, becoming involved in Russian politics, were sent to the Siberian platinum mines. The third story was "Brooks of Ravenscar," and was about an upper-form school-boy who was a mixture of crook and gentleman. Though well-written and entertaining, the ending of this story left one in some doubt as to whether he received his just deserts for his rather questionable manner of investigation.

Year after year *The Boys' Friend Library* appeared, apparently little affected by the march of time and world events, although the pages were reduced in number and the price was increased as

these changes became necessary. It continued publication until long after the end of *The Boys' Friend*, the weekly paper from which it took its name. This long run is a great tribute to those grand writers who worked so loyally under Mr. Hamilton Edwards and his successors.

Adventure on land, sea, and in the air, in school, office, and mill, by flood, fire, and field, were all read and appreciated by an army of readers. But there is an end to all things and the end of *The Boys' Friend Library* came in 1940. During the last few months there was a gradual change in the name to *Bullseye Library* and *Knockout Library*, two under each name every month. Now the B. F. L. is but a memory.

No more than the fringe of an immense subject has been touched upon and the writer can only apologize for the sketchiness of this article. But if it has brought back the past for a few brief moments he will be satisfied that it has served its purpose.



The Boys' Friend Library Start and Stop Data

1st Series—No. 1, September, 1906, to No. 764, May, 1925.

2nd Series—No. 1, June, 1925, to No. 724, June, 1940.



A BEGINNER VIEWS THE HOBBY

By ARTHUR J. SOUTHWAY

I AM AFRAID I can make no real claim for offering this article other than, perhaps, that I am the first from South Africa to be on our Editor's mailing list. Perhaps it is only fair to say that I am what is called a "rio neck" in this country, in other words a newcomer, as I arrived only last July from Brighton in dear old Sussex.

The reason for my coming to South Africa is, however, well and truly connected with my new-found hobby. As a reader of *The Nelson Lee Library* in late 1926 or 1927 I advertised for a pen-pal and had several replies. I decided on one of the boys and we corresponded regularly until in 1938 he came to England to holiday with me, and extracted a promise that I would return the compliment the next year.

Alas, Adolph had other ideas and instead of South Africa I soon found myself in Europe decked out in a smart uniform. However I have at last made it and needless to say we are both very eagerly looking forward to the day when we can possess that *Nelson Lee* which brought us together. Maybe some reader can tell us the number as neither of us is certain of the exact date.

But I have digressed, so back to the purport of this article which, perhaps, should have been called "A Beginner's Pleas," for it is to the article writers, the collectors, and other High Priests of our hobby that it is addressed on behalf of beginners like myself.

When I decided upon becoming a collector I realized that I would have to set a limit on my ambitions and therefore decided to collect only books dealing with the delightful schools of my youth, i.e., Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, and St. Frank's. Even now this seems more than enough as fourteen magazines and one "annual" turned out these stories. Before I make my pleas I would like to make it clear that at the time of writing I have no copies of *The Collectors' Digest* and only a few of *The Story Paper Collector* and *The Collector's Miscellany*.

My first reaction upon making inquiries from one or two writers of articles in these magazines was surprise to find that collectors, as a rule, do not include "volume numbers" in their records. This may or may not be important, but I rather imagined that collectors endeavoured to note all particulars in their col-

lecting. For myself, I have set the following target in regard to each paper: (a) original price, (b) cover colour, (c) serial number, (d) volume number, (e) date, (f) series, if more than one, (g) authorship, i.e., genuine or imitation, (h) title, and a final column for any note or remarks.

With the exception of volume numbers and, of course, titles, I have been fairly successful, but only entirely because of the grand spirit of goodwill, fellowship, and helpfulness which seems to exist (nay, which does exist) between collectors. Messrs. Leckenby, Jenkins, Shaw, Packman, and our Editor, have been kindness itself in their efforts to assist me in compiling my catalogues, and no doubt many others will come to my rescue once I know them.

NOW WHAT I FEEL we beginners would appreciate from those "in the know" would be (as regards that part of the hobby upon which I have concentrated) articles as follows: an article on *The Penny Popular* giving us details of the reprints, Nos. 237 to 286, 1st series, and telling us from what papers these were reprinted and the numbers thereof; similar articles on *The Monster Library* (which I understand were all reprints of early Nelson Lees), giving the original numbers; on *The Nelson Lee Lib-*

rary, 4th series, Nos. 1 to 19 and 23 to 25, again reprints of what?; and *The Gem Library*, Nos. 1221 to 1624, all reprints. All would be very welcome, I feel sure. I believe that *The Dreadnought*, in 1915, contained reprints of early Magnet stories and could be treated in the same way.

Our Editor's grand articles on The Greyfriars Gallery prompts me to suggest that, if St. Jim's, Rookwood, and St. Frank's were the subjects of similar portrait galleries, we have articles thereon. Another piece of interesting information would be the disclosure of in what years stories of these four schools appeared in *The Holiday Annual*. No doubt Greyfriars appeared every year, but I believe St. Frank's is found in only two.

A very interesting article could be written by a Nelson Lee enthusiast telling us if all the St. Frank's stories were genuine, or whether "ghost writers" were employed. Again, were the stories in the first person, "as related by Nipper," written, as later stated, by Edwy Searles Brooks? I have often wondered whether there was any connection between Maxwell Scott, who wrote the earlier Nelson Lee and Nipper stories, and Edwy Searles Brooks. Was there? Another interesting article could be made, I feel sure, out of the twelve stories of St.

Jim's which originally appeared in *Pluck*, as we are informed that they were re-written for *The Gem*. In what numbers of the latter paper were they?

I BELIEVE THAT an article has already been penned on the arrival of the various characters at Greyfriars, so it is likely that others will come along giving similar details in regard to St. Jim's, Rookwood, and St. Frank's. Why not go a step further and give, not only the scholars, but also details of the schoolmasters, tuck-shop keepers, matrons, servants, porters, etc., and then progress to the "outside" characters and the environs of the schools?

Another interesting short feature would be a list of the issues of the various magazines where the price was increased for one week only, such as in the case of Christmas or double numbers. I believe this happened very frequently with *The Magnet* just

before the price was increased from a halfpenny to one penny early in 1910.

I hope that these tit-bits will give food for thought. No doubt there are many more interesting features which I have overlooked and which will come along, one being a list of serial numbers with titles, such as our friend Herbert Leckenby has compiled of *The Boys' Friend Library for The Collector's Miscellany*.

Finally, may I suggest, with the hope of contradiction, that the following is a complete list of the magazines and books in which appeared stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, and St. Frank's: *The Magnet Library*, *The Gem Library*, *The Penny Popular*, *The Boys' Friend*, *The Pluck Library*, *The Greyfriars Herald*, *The Boys' Friend Library*, *Chuckles*, *The Schoolboys' Own Library*, *The Nelson Lee Library*, *The Dreadnought*, *The Monster Library*, *The Boys' Realm*, *The Nugget Library*, and *The Greyfriars Holiday Annual*.



* As Mr. A. J. Southway tells us in the above article, he lives in South Africa. In case any of our readers should be prompted by what he has written to write to him, here is his address: P. O. Box 3, Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.



THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY

Reviewed by WM. H. GANDER :: Part Five

PROCEEDING from Sammy Bunter, Number 31 in the Gallery, to Number 32 (*Magnet* No. 496), Dr. Herbert H. Locke, Headmaster of Greyfriars, is somewhat like going from the ridiculous to the sublime. Dr. Locke, as pictured, appears rather stern, as doubtless he needs to be, but one imagines he possesses a sense of humor.

Of the Greyfriars Headmaster Mr. Pentelow writes: "There is no unfairness to him in saying that he is not as strong or as decided a character as the old friend upon whom he is apt to lean pretty heavily in times of trouble—the master of the Remove Form [Mr. Quelch]. Dr. Locke is a most lovable man. When he errs in justice it is generally on the side of mercy. But not always . . ." Mr. Pentelow points out that there have been times when Dr. Locke treated too leniently fellows who did not deserve lenience, and has dealt too harshly with others who did. "But it must be remembered that the masters do not know all that the boys know of the doings of such fellows as Skinner and Snoop."

"Dr. Locke's life has been no easy one. He has more than his

share of troubles. There was the loss of his daughter Rosie . . . found after years had passed. There was the heavy debt incurred by borrowing from Vernon-Smith's father . . ."

That was in the long ago, and Dr. Locke's life in later years has been more tranquil—if the life of a headmaster can ever be regarded as tranquil. J.N.P. concludes: "If he were more perfect, calmer in judgment, he might be a better headmaster; but he could hardly be a better-loved one!" True enough; and those who are also acquainted with the Heads of St. Jim's and Rookwood, Dr. Holmes and Dr. Chisholm respectively, will probably place Dr. Locke first in their esteem. He is related to Ferrers Locke, the detective, who has come into the Greyfriars yarns occasionally, and whose adventures were more extensively told of in other series of stories.

Cecil Ponsonby, whom we meet in *Magnet* No. 497, Number 33 of the Gallery, "is a very complete rotter indeed." So says Mr. Pentelow, who continues: "There may be in him better things." We, who have been acquainted with the leader of

the "bad hats" of the Highcliffe Fourth Form longer, may be excused for doubting it. He has shown few signs of "better things," tending rather to worse things! "A very complete wrong 'un, Ponsonby!" He is, and on that note we will leave "Pon," who is a cousin of Frank Courtenay, whom we have already met in this review.

NUMBER 34, in *Magnet* No. 498, is a "double-header" in that it features George Tubb and Percival Spencer Paget of the Greyfriars Third Form. The lower forms do not come into the Greyfriars stories very much, so a brief quotation will do for G. Tubb and P. S. Paget. "George Tubb, leader of the fag tribe, is a sound, decent, good-hearted youngster, a little bit rough and ready in his methods, no doubt, but with no harm in him. Percival Spencer Paget, his chum, is . . . a little dandy, with a particularity as to his clothes, his hair, the back of his neck, and the region behind his ears that is not shared by every member of the fag tribe. But he, too, is sound and straightforward." And that will do for Tubb and Paget of the Third.

We next meet a Greyfriars Removite who, while not often playing an important part in the

stories, is always there, ready to take an active role when called upon. He is Richard Russell (Number 35, in *Magnet* No. 499), of whom we read: "A quiet and rather reserved fellow on the whole, a good second-rate performer in the playing-fields . . ." Russell came into the limelight when he, after taking lessons from a pro. boxing trainer, "in the enforced absence of Bob Cherry boxed for the junior section of Greyfriars in the Public Schools Competition at Aldershot. And he won honours for Greyfriars, too!" That was probably the high-spot in his career. Dick Russell is one more who appeared in the very first Greyfriars story.

Another master is presented to us the next week, Mr. Paul Prout, who has charge of the Fifth Form and who, next to Mr. Quelch, is probably the master who is best known to *Magnet* readers. He is a man who, once met, is not soon forgotten, with his stories of bear hunting in the Canadian Rockies in the 1880's. In the 1880's! As Mr. Prout is still master of the Fifth Form in 1949, when the 1880's are a lot longer ago than they were in 1917, perhaps he would have been wiser not to have given his hunting activities a definite date! "It is very unkind and improper for certain mem-

bers of the Fifth to say that it was Mr. Prout's face that frightened over the precipice the bear whose skin adorns the floor of Mr. Prout's study, and not that gentleman's unerring rifle which bowled it over."

"Pompous he is, and quick of temper," we are told, but the summing-up is: "A good sort, 'Prouty,' even when most pompous and absurd." Mr. Prout is Number 36 in the Gallery, in *Magnet* No. 500.

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE (Number 37) is pictured by Mr. Chapman as a good-looking fellow, not as supercilious in appearance as one might have expected. "The great Cecil Reginald is a baronet's son, the captain of the Upper Fourth Form," and has a very good opinion of himself—as good as has Horace Coker of himself, which makes it a very good opinion indeed. "But Temple is—and in this also he resembles Coker—by no means a bad sort."

One's memory of Temple is largely that of an over-confident captain leading his team into a match with the Remove—football or cricket, it makes no difference—as if victory was already theirs, and leading it off the field

defeated. "The picture of elegance, always sporting a topper when possible . . . But there is no harm in these things; and, after all, it is a heart of the right sort that beats under the stylish waistcoat!"

Now we come to one of the lesser-lights of the Remove, yet one who has played, and played superbly, many a part in which better-known Removites would have flunked: William Ernest Wibley (Number 38, *Magnet* No. 502), the Remove's best actor and leader of that form's Amateur Dramatic Society. Those who were reading *The Magnet* during its final year of publication will remember the long series of stories in which "Wib" proved once again his great ability at impersonation. At the time the Gallery was written he had already demonstrated that ability, and he is met time and again through the years, always brought to the fore by his skill at acting and impersonation, for his other talents are not outstanding, even if he thinks they are. "Wibley is more actor than anything else. In other walks he is without distinction, very much the average boy. But a boy of the right sort."

Part 6 Will Appear in the Next Issue

THE FRANK READES, SR. & JR.

In reference to the article, "Frank Reade, Jr.," in S. P. C. No. 34, Mr. J. P. Quaine, of South Yarra, Victoria, Australia, writes:

I DO NOT DOUBT that Luis P. Senarens created Frank Reade, Jr., but he did not commence the series, if he only began to write in 1877. I have an old book called "The Hut in the Forest," published by American Novel Co., 105 Nassau St., New York, in 1869, which carried an advertisement on the back page running thus: "American Novels, No. 45. 'The Steam Man of the Prairies'." It relates the particulars of a veritable phenomenon, made by a gentleman of St. Louis, which was taken out on the prairies by himself, a trapper, a Yankee and an Irishman, where it became the hero of the most extraordinary adventures, etc."

There is more of the "blurb" and then the price: 10 cents. This was the yarn issued in *The Boys' First Rate Pocket Library*, No. 31, under the title "The Iron Hunter; or, The Steam Man of the Prairies." It dealt with the elder Frank Reade, who turns

up an interested spectator and advisor when his son began his inventions later on.



Mr. Quaine's letter prompted a search through a file of *The Dime Novel Roundup*. Information was found which verifies his statement that Luis P. Senarens did not originate Frank Reade, Sr.

In *Roundup* No. 88 it is stated that the first Frank Reade, Jr., story, written by Luis P. Senarens, was in *Boys of New York* in 1876, the title being "The Steam Man of the Plains," and that the elder Frank Reade retired, becoming Frank Reade, Sr. In *Roundup* No. 114 Mr. Senarens is quoted as writing: "I was started on the Frank Reade stories." In No. 140 we are told that Harry Enten wrote the first four of the Reade stories that were reprinted in *The Wide Awake Library*, and it is stated that Mr. Enten wished to have his name over the stories when they originally appeared, but the publisher refused this request and Mr. Enten stopped writing Frank Reade stories. — W. H. G.

THE GUNBY HADATH BOOKS

To the Editor,
THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR.

Sir:

I was particularly pleased to receive *Story Paper Collector* No. 33 with the article on Gunby Hadath by Mr. Leonard M. Allen, as I was partly responsible for it being written.

Before I left England (in July of 1948) I advertised for some books by Gunby Hadath and had a letter from Mr. Allen offering some of the books required. A little later he wrote me again, stating that he was writing an article on this author and asking if I could help him in any way. Now, as Gunby Hadath had been writing to me for some time I considered the correct thing to do was to forward Mr. Allen's letter on to him, which I did. Mr. Hadath replied direct to Mr. Allen, sending me a copy of his letter on April 4th, 1948.

Apart from "Wonder Island" (which is being republished by the Stanmore Press, and a copy of which has been promised to me by this firm as soon as it is available) and "Fortune Lane," which is at present on order, I have a complete set of Mr. Hadath's school and adventure stories, totalling forty-eight, and also a further thirteen which he

wrote under the pseudonym of John Mowbray.

I note in Mr. Allen's article (page 103, second paragraph, he states: ". . . were later published in book form, in some cases with the titles changed. Thus, 'The Feats of Fozzle' became 'According to Brown Minor' when offered by Hodder and Stoughton . . ." I believe this was the case, but my copy of this book is entitled "The Feats of Fozzle" and was published by Adam and Charles Black, 1913.

With regard to the two books mentioned, i.e., "Sparrow in Search of Expulsion" and "Sparrow Gets Going," there was a third entitled "Sparrow in Search of Fame."

Mr. Allen quotes next a book entitled "The Mystery at Ridings," but this may be a misprint as it is, of course, "The Mystery at Ridings." He goes on to say ". . . and a number of short stories entitled "The Big Five." This book (my copy is O. U. P., 1932) is actually one complete story of some 288 pages.

In the third paragraph on page 103 Mr. Allen states that Mr. Hadath wrote a book entitled "Playing the Game." My copy of "The Outlaws of St. Martyn's" is published by Par-

tridge (no date) and on the first title page it is stated that the story is by Gunby Hadath (I quote) "Author of 'Playing the Game' and 'Never Say Die,' etc." Seeing this, and noting that I did not have this title on my list, which was in the first place supplied me by Gunby Hadath himself, I wrote to Mr. Hadath who replied on July 20th, 1946. This letter, written from his home in the Haute Savoie, France, and which I now have before me, states: "No! Never did I write a book (or short story) entitled 'Playing the Game' unless I wrote it in my sleep and Partridge pubd. it when I wasn't looking."

Two books from Gunby Hadath to appear shortly are "The Atom" (O. U. P.), which should appear in the spring, and "The Shepherd's Guide" (C. & J. Temple Ltd.).

It is not generally known, I believe, but "Felix O'Grady" and "James Duncan" were also pen-names of Gunby Hadath. I believe stories under these pseudonyms appeared in *The Captain* and *Chums*.

ARTHUR J. SOUTHWAY.

Beaconsfield, Cape Province,
South Africa. Feb'y 13th, 1949.

A copy of Mr. Southway's letter was sent to Mr. Leonard M. Allen.

Here are his replies to the points raised by Mr. Southway:

"The Feats of Foozle"—I cannot reply to Mr. Southway's remark on the same title being used when the book was published by Black. My copy is definitely titled "According to Brown Minor" and published by Hodder and Stoughton. They are the same stories that appeared originally in *The Captain* under the "Foozle" heading.

Sparrow—The titles I quoted are not supposed to cover all the books by Gunby Hadath. I consider the "Sparrow Gets Going" story to be a more logical sequel than "Sparrow in Search of Fame," the latter being a collection of short stories.

"The Mystery at Ridings"—This title is correct; the double "d" was apparently a typing error on my part.

"The Big Five"—I find, on checking, that Mr. Southway is correct and the story was a long complete yarn. I confused this book with one of the same title by Richard Bird, which was a collection of short stories.

"Playing the Game"—When I mentioned this title I was, of course, referring to stories in *The Captain*. Adopting Mr. Southway's method I have before me a copy of Volume 24 of that magazine. On page 435 of the

February, 1911, number commences a story of this title with the author plainly given as Gunby Hadath, illustrations by S. T. Dadd. The yarn, a short one, dealt with (I quote) "a momentous Soccer Match," and I can only conclude that Mr. Hadath must have overlooked

this when replying to Mr. Southway. The plot concerns a village team playing a friendly match with a local League side, and the success of the blacksmith's apprentice who, at the last minute, substitutes in goal for the pro's and gives an outstanding display.

—LEONARD M. ALLEN.

UN-PUBLISHED JACK HARKAWAY

Referring to the book "Boys Will Be Boys," by Mr. E. S. Turner, Mr. Raymond L. Caldwell, of Lancaster, Penn., U. S. A., writes:

ONE STATEMENT that I ran across [in "Boys Will Be Boys"] was quite interesting to me. In connection with the list of Harkaway titles on page 80 Mr. Turner wrote: "It is said that there was another Harkaway story, 'Jack Harkaway in Search of Wealth,' which was proofed but never published."

I happen to have the printer's proof of that story—though the title is "Jack Harkaway and the

Secret of Wealth." It is on sixty-four pages (printed on one side only, as proofs are) and clipped together between two pieces of cardboard.

I got it some years ago in a collection I bought. I've often wondered about it but never bothered mentioning it to anyone. . . . I suppose it can be considered rather rare for there surely were not very many such copies run off.

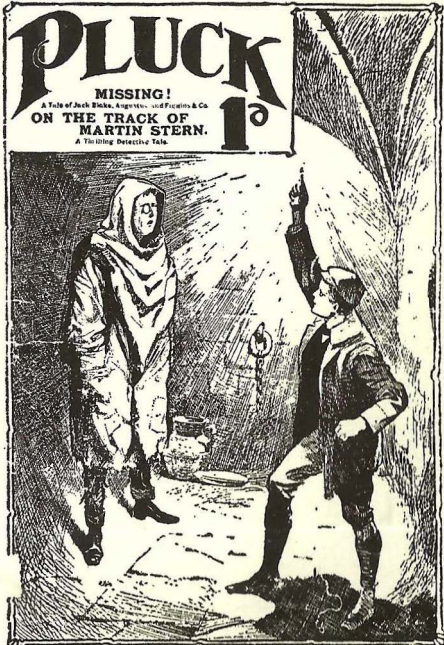
THE GREAT NAME OF BILLY BUNTER

DURING A BROADCAST of the "Round Britain Quiz" (on the B.B.C.) on March 21st, 1948, when the names of certain valets of characters in fiction were asked for, one of them was

Lord Peter Wimsey's valet, Bunter. In an aside, Professor Brogan said, "The great name of Billy Bunter was taken over by Dorothy Sayers for a mere valet."

—Contributed by J. A. Birkbeck.

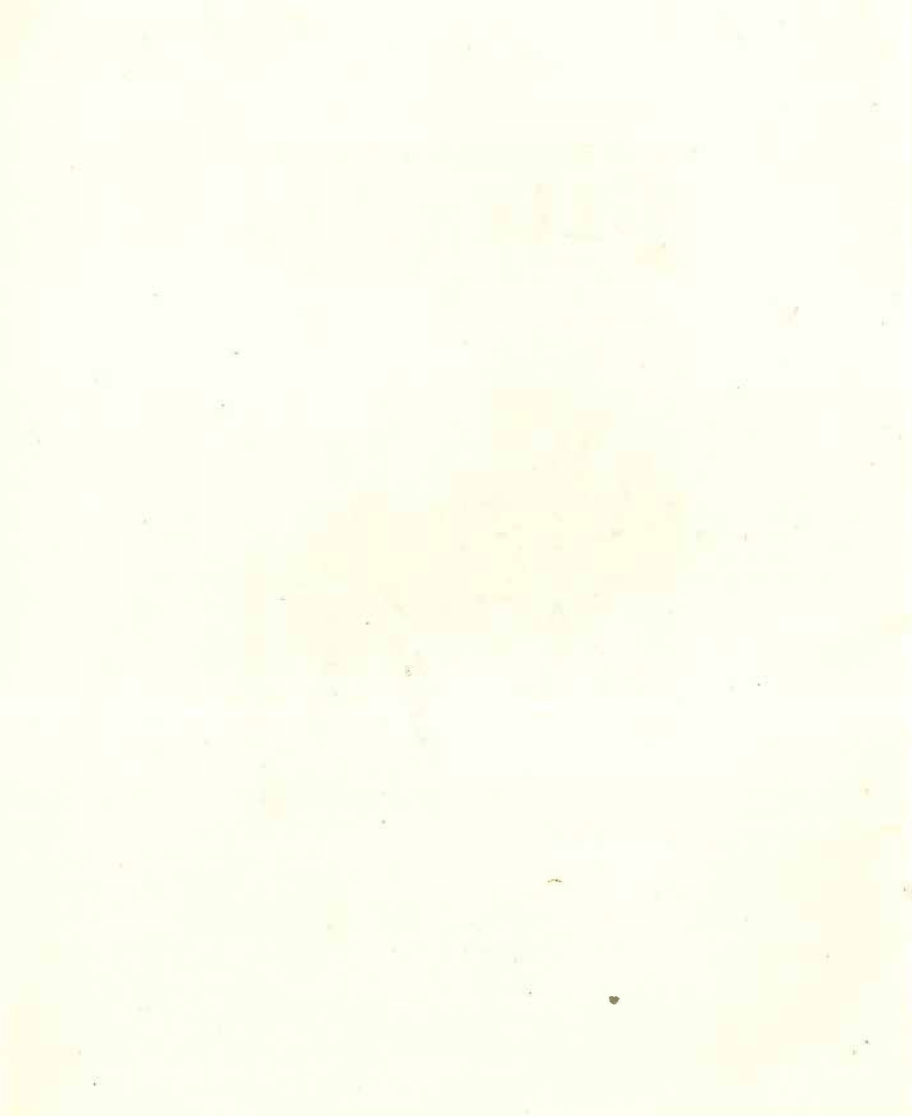
Special School Tale by Chas. Hamilton



THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S WAS A PITIFABLE OBJECT TO LOOK AT. "BY NAT!" EXCLAIMED BLAKE. "NOBODY WOULD TAKE YOU FOR A BOWLING SWELL NOW." (See page 12.)

Front cover of *The Pluck Library* (New Series) No. 123, dated March 9th, 1907. In this issue is one of the early St. Jim's School stories, "Missing!"

[Facing page 144.]



NOTES BY A READER: 6

IN A MAGAZINE "QUIZ" this question was asked: "Which one of these plays was not founded on fact—*Eugene Aram*; *Sweeney Todd, the Barber of Fleet Street*; *Maria Marten and the Red Barn*?" The answer, of course, is "Sweeney Todd." The Fleet Street gentleman was a myth, born in the fertile brain of one Reskett Prest, but he undoubtedly got his idea from somewhere and that somewhere was "The Terrific Story of the Rue de la Harpe, Paris." This appeared in *The Tell-Tale* of 1824. The point is, was this a true story? If so, one can even say that "Sweeney Todd" was founded on fact.

I have never seen anything of an official record of that affair, but I am inclined to think there must be some truth in it. It is quite possible that such a barber existed, but of course Prest magnified the affair and added a lot to it. We may even go far as to say that there was some truth in the pie-shop story.

We are indebted to Mr. John Medcraft for giving us the story of the Rue de la Harpe in *Collector's Miscellany* No. 8. This mentions the pastry cook as being the partner of the barber and that those who were murdered by the razor of the one were

concealed by the knife of the other in the patties. The Rue de la Harpe is mentioned as a long, dismal, ancient street in the fauxbourg of St. Marcell. The place where the barber shop was located was a gap, and a memorial bore words to the effect that no human habitation should ever be erected there.

In spite of all these particulars I would be more pleased if a definite date had been given, with information as to where an official account could be seen.

WHEN I CALLED at the British Museum to see if the Barry Ono collection had been catalogued I found that the only item under the name "Ono" was "The Great Barry Ono Song Book," 1916, 5th enlarged edition. Barry Ono was a clever song writer and had several songs published.

In the catalogue I also found "Wallace, the Hero of Scotland," one of Dick's Standard Plays, 1888, by William Barrymore. Wallace has always been a subject of interest to me, ever since I read the story of the same name in *The Boy's Champion Journal* of 1889. This, however, was not the story's first appearance, for it was in *Rover's Log* in 1873 as "Wallace, the Lion of Scot-

land," in *The Boy's Standard* in 1882, and in *The British Boy's Paper* in 1888 as "Lionel Graeme." Its last appearance was in *The Boy's Standard* in 1892 but it was not completed as this journal was suspended with all the serials left unfinished. The author evidently got his idea from Jane Porter's "Scottish Chiefs," which was published in 1841.

THE OTHER DAY I picked up my copy of "Blueskin" for a casual glance and became very interested in it. There is something about this old yarn which is very fascinating. Whoever the author was (Viles or Smith), he was a clever writer and knew how to grip the reader's interest. I have been reading the part dealing with Colonel Thorne, alias Captain Howlett, the pirate, and how Jonathon Wilde and his men gain an entrance from the sea and exterminate the pirate gang. One can almost say there is not a dull moment in the whole book. Of course, "Black Bess" is the more famous story, and in my opinion the finest Dick Turpin story I have read. I like it even better than Ainsworth's "Rookwood." But in spite of that I have always had a liking for Jack Sheppard.

The only thing about "Blue-

skin" that I take exception to is that the author brings Sheppard back to life after being hanged at Tyburn and he and Blueskin live to be old men. Barry Ono once explained this by saying that in Sheppard's time there was a very strong belief that he escaped the gallows and it became a sort of tradition.

IN AN INCIDENT in the early part of "Black Bess," the Dick Turpin story that ran for five years in penny numbers, Dick Turpin and Tom King break into a deserted mansion called Durley Chine. In examining the place they come upon a cupboard in which they find two skeletons. It appears there were two lovers who were shut up in the cupboard by the irate husband.

An item in *The Sunday Dispatch* tells of a ghost-hunt in Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire. According to a story, a pair of lovers were locked in a cupboard by the girl's irate father two hundred and fifty years ago. The skeletons were discovered by Dick Turpin when seeking refuge there.

There seems to be no doubt that the author of "Black Bess" founded his episode on this.

—HENRY STEELE.



BETWEEN OURSELVES*

ONE OF THE DUTIES of writers of serial stories for the popular boys' weeklies of years gone by was to provide a good "curtain" for the end of each instalment. The purpose of this was to ensure that the youthful reader, kept a week in suspense, would buy the next issue.

We have read of the author who left his hero bound and gagged, facing imminent death, and was then late with the following instalment. The entire editorial staff were at their wit's end to find a solution to the problem so someone else could undertake the writing of a few chapters. Then, at the last possible moment, in came the missing author who sat at a typewriter and wrote, "With one bound Jack Strangeways was free . . ."

We have been reading some stories in *The Boys' Friend*. In Volume 5, new series, there is a serial, "Detective-Warder Nelson Lee," by Maxwell Scott, who is reputed to have been a master of the suspenseful ending to instalments. One of his endings which rivals that mentioned above is in *Boys' Friend* No. 241. Nelson Lee is descending from a window on a rope which is

cut. The large front-page illustration shows Lee falling, while the final paragraph of that instalment reads: "Quivering with excitement, the detective climbed through the window and began to swarm down the rope. He was half-way down when a face . . . appeared at the window. Then a knife-blade flashed, the tense rope parted, and Nelson Lee fell hurtling to the ground . . ."

From the picture one is certain that Lee will be at the very least seriously injured. Not having to wait a week for the next instalment, we turned at once to No. 242 and read: "Luckily the detective dropped on his feet, and although he was pretty severely shaken, he quickly pulled himself together and dashed across the yard, blowing his whistle as he ran."

Certainly Maxwell Scott got Lee out of a dangerous spot in a neat way, but that opening paragraph leaves one with a let-down feeling after the closing one of the previous week.

WHILE ALL MAY NOT be grist (to be guilty of a cliché) that comes to the mill of an Old Boys' Book collector, this member of the clan has a hard time

*Was the Editorial heading in No. 1091 of *The Gem Library*, January 12th, 1929.

restraining his acquisitive instincts when in the presence of any of the boys' papers of long ago, even if they are not numbered among those he used to read. So it was that, one day in April, we made our way home from Winnipeg laden with four annual volumes of *Chums*, one each for 1925 and 1927-8, and two for 1926.

Previously, volumes of other years have come our way and we have developed quite a liking for it. There is no denying the fact that *Chums* was a grand paper, with many contributors whose work appeared in other, and today more collected, boys' weeklies. Among the writers in the volumes we "picked up" are Arthur S. Hardy, Michael Poole, John Hunter, Morton Pike (D.H. Parry), Edmund Burton, and Eric W. Townsend, all of them contributors at some time to Amalgamated Press papers. In addition there are such stalwarts as Derwent Miall, Richard Bird, S. Walkey, Gunby Hadath, Hylton Cleaver, and Max Pemberton.

What loyalty the paper must have inspired in its contributors! In reference to this a correspondent writes: "An interesting point about *Chums* is the way it retained many of its top-notch contributors steadily down the years. D. H. Parry (Morton Pike) wrote *Chums'* first serial story in 1892, and it was illustrated by Paul Hardy. Both Parry and Hardy were represented in the final *Chums* volume half a century later. Likewise, the work of Gordon Browne, who drew *Chums'* first cover, also appeared in the final volume. Great records, those!"

It seems to us that anyone who finds the going tough in his hunt for copies of his boyhood favorites would be well advised to give some attention to *Chums*. The publication of the yearly volumes means that it has been preserved in many homes from which loose copies of weekly papers have long been discarded, with the result that there should still be a fairly plentiful supply around.

— W. H. G.

The Story Paper Collector is edited, printed, and published quarterly by Wm. H. Gander, P. O. Box Sixty, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

Member: National A. P. A., The Fossils, United A. P. A., U. A. P. A. Alumni, British A. P. A., International Small Printers' Assoc'n, L. I. F., & Happy Hours Brotherhood.

Printed by the Publisher at The Rookwood Press, 202 Yale Avenue West, Transcona.