# THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

OCTOBER, 1952
No. 48 :: Vol. 2


The Front Cover Page of *The Captain* Number 183, June, 1914

# OUR PAGE*

IT IS LIKELY that most readers realized that the title of Tom Hopperton's article in No. 45—" . . And Tuppence [Highly] Coloured"—was derived from somewhere. Some of them would know the source, but others would not.

In the gas-lit Victorian era a popular indoor amusement was the Toy Theatre. The outfit for this consisted of stage, scenery, and characters, all printed on cardboard; these were cut out and assembled. These outfits came in two styles, printed in black-and-white and in colors. Hence the cry of a street hawker of Toy Theatres: "A penny plain and tuppence coloured!"—"tuppence" meaning, in case you don't know, two pennies.

*The editorial page of the new series *Pluck* had this heading in 1904-5.

IN THE ISSUE of *John o' London's Weekly* for April 18th, 1952, there was a letter from a feminine reader recalling memories of the old *School Friend* and Bessie Bunter and asking for more Bessie Bunter Books. This letter brought a reply in the May 9th issue from another Bessie Bunter fan who had written to Frank Richards making the same request. She gave Mr. Richards' explanation of the dearth of Bessie Bunter Books:

"It is a curious thing," he wrote, "that even girl readers, as a rule, prefer Billy to Bessie: and as we must give readers what they demand, that is the reason why there are eight Billy books to one Bessie, and I am afraid that that proportion will continue—unless a whole host of readers like yourself should require a change."

So it's up to the Bessie Bunter enthusiasts!

ONCE AGAIN there has come, to be read with enjoyment and then added to our lengthening shelf of Frank Richards' books, a new edition of the annual *Tom Merry's Own*. (Mandeville Publications, London: 10/6d.) It's as good as the earlier issues. In fact it's better, for readers were not entirely satisfied with "the mixture as before." What they wanted was nothing but Charles Hamilton in his various roles, and that is what they have been given. The "Contents" is enough to make any Hamiltonian drool! A long Greyfriars story, another of St. Jim's, a South Seas tale featuring King of the Islands, and stories of other favorites, including one of Herlock Sholmes and Dr. Jotson, reviving memories of *The Greyfriars Herald*. But as a Rookwood "old boy" we ask: Where is Rookwood?—W. H. G.

ESTABLISHED IN 1941

The Story Paper Collector

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

No. 48—Vol. 2 OCTOBER, 1952 Priceless

# TRUE EASE IN WRITING:
## *Reflections on the Style of Charles Hamilton*

By ROGER M. JENKINS

IT IS ALMOST impossible to classify all the urges that impel one to collect and read again the books enjoyed in one's youth. Sentiment undoubtedly plays a great part; escapism may also help to account for it; perhaps for some it is just a curiosity to see whether the old magic of childhood can in some degree be re-created. But none of these reasons are in themselves sufficient, for, if they were, *The Rainbow* would be esteemed as highly as *The Magnet*, and *Tiger Tim's Weekly* would share pride of place with *The Gem*. Adult collectors usually require a little more than the comic papers can offer. Some good characterization, thoughtful plot-construction, and a pleasing style of writing are the ingredients of the Elixir of Youth. It would be difficult to discover anyone in this field more adept than Charles Hamilton, anyone with such fecundity of genius, either in quality or quantity.

Much has been written about Charles Hamilton's skill in characterization and in plot-construction, but little seems to have been said concerning his style of writing. Yet this is, after all, the very factor that makes his work so immensely readable for adult collectors. He does not write down to the level of the youngest reader, like the writers for the Thomson press today; nor, on the other hand, is his writing

so scholarly as to become difficult to read. Nevertheless, it contains a number of different elements all of which combine to form an exceptionally attractive style. Let us examine a few issues from the volumes in our collection and see if we can in some measure attempt to pin down this elusive element of good writing.

Humour is undoubtedly the keynote. Consider, for example, this extract from *Magnet* No. 1325:

*Mr. Hinks was one of those born with a natural disinclination to work. Under happier auspices he might have been a Cabinet Minister or an ornament of the Diplomatic Service. But, as a matter of sad fact, he was a tramp.*

This delightful humour is typical of the gentle satire continually poked at the government and all its works. Similarly, in *The Gem*, when Gussy had made some particularly trite and obvious statement, Blake would solemnly remark that his study-mate would soon be ready to take his seat in the House of Lords.

Usually, of course, the humour of the descriptive passages is so closely linked with the humour of the spoken parts that it is not possible to sever one from the other. The most we get are snippets, like this from No. 6 of the *Gold Hawk Books*, for example:

*Baggy Trimble arrived at his wicket and took his stand there with all the ease and grace of a sack of coke.*

From time to time, however, we come across almost a full chapter of descriptive writing, like the somewhat rare account of the monotony of holiday life at Bunter Villa in *Magnet* No. 1332, from which this is a short extract:

*Bessie Bunter, in fact, had a weary dreary way of harping on the subject of a half crown that Billy owed her. Bunter was absolutely sick of the subject; but Bessie never seemed to tire of it.*

*Billy was never likely to hear the end of that half crown—unless he paid it! That resource did not occur to him.*

*Sammy Bunter seemed to regard it as his chief occupation in life to get the last piece of cake before Billy could get it.*

*That was greedy, selfish, and unbrotherly.*

THERE ARE TWO famous authors of the Victorian era by whom Charles Hamilton seems to have been noticeably influenced. The first is Charles Dickens. To expound this theme would need an article all to itself, but by way of illustration

it may be noted here that, besides references in the text to Dickensian characters and incidents, Charles Hamilton seems to be the only author since Dickens who has allowed his characterization to dominate his story-telling.

The other writer in question is Lewis Carroll. *The Magnet* must have done much to immortalize such words from "Jabberwocky" as *burble*, *frabjous*, *chortle*, and *Bandersnatch*. And who can fail to remember the frequent references to the Baker who, on sighting the Boojum, softly and suddenly vanished away?

The most noticeable point about Charles Hamilton's style, however, is his frequent use of Classical allusions. Billy Bunter with his nose pressed to the tuckshop window is a podgy Peri at the gates of Paradise; when the juniors are inattentive in class, lines fall as thick as the leaves in Vallombrosa; when Billy Bunter is being chased by both Coker and Loder, he is between Scylla and Charybdis. There is no need to multiply these examples — they, and countless others, are well known to *Magnet* readers. The youthful readers of that paper probably did not know that Peri was the descendant of the fallen angels, that the monastery village of Vallombrosa is famed for its trees (unfortunately evergreens), and that Scylla was the monster on the rocks and Charybdis the whirlpool between which the mariners of old had to steer their perilous course through the Straits of Messina. But while it did not lessen one whit the enjoyment of those readers who were unable to comprehend the full implications of these metaphors, it added immeasurably to the pleasure of those who did, besides acting as an incentive to learning for the more inquisitive.

PLEASING AS THESE metaphors undoubtedly are, however, there is an element in the style of Charles Hamilton which is even more richly rewarding for the connoisseur of good literature, and that is the occasional parody of a well-known line of verse that is embodied in the text. In *Magnet* No. 1110, for instance, is the sentence,

*Mr. Quelch's indigestion had ceased from troubling and his rheumatism was at rest.*

Most schoolboys would appreciate the humour of the sentiment expressed, but probably few would recognize this as a parody of the last line of Tennyson's poem "The May Queen." Again, in *Magnet* No. 1566 we find Mr. Quelch typing "The History of Greyfriars," but he

had been disturbed and his train of thought was lost. So

*His fingers ceased to wander idly over the noisy keys.*

If, at the same time, it were possible to hear the music of Sullivan's "The Lost Chord," the parody might perhaps be spotted by the younger reader. To an adult reader, however, all these refinements of style bring constant delight; they act as a challenge to his perception, and he is accordingly careful to ensure that he does not miss a word in the descriptive passages. The question of good style has perhaps been summed up most felicitously by Alexander Pope who, in the following couplet, seems to endorse in immaculate phraseology the opinions expressed in this article:

*True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance,*
*As those move easiest who have learned to dance.*

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—by the Merseyside Branch of the Old Boys' Book Club (Secretary: D. B. Webster, Waterloo House, 7 Crosby Road South, Liverpool 22, Lancs., England): S.P.C. Nos. 1 to 21, 25, 28 to 37.

If you have for disposal copies of any of the issues asked for by these readers please send details to them.

# BOYS OF ENGLAND

A Young Gentleman's Journal

OF SPORT, TRAVEL, FUN AND INSTRUCTION

SUBSCRIBED TO BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ARTHUR.

Vol. I.—No. 21 CONDUCTED BY EDWIN J. BRETT [PRICE ONE PENNY


"HALT, FOR DANGER!" STOPPED THE BOLD MAN.

## ALONE IN THE PIRATES' LAIR.

### CHAPTER IV

PLEASANT FOR JACK.

THE mad drew back with a tremor of mortal dread.

The pirate stared.

He slowly passed the long, thin fingers of his left hand, glittering with jewelled rings, through his soft and glossy black curls, for the hand yet clutched a glass, in which luscious tear-like beads of wine still clung.

This Jack did not observe as he crouched down in the dark shadow thrown by the barrel on the moonlit ground.

Once more his eye wandered fearfully round the vast cavern.

On all sides ruthless cut-throats of every colour, but all stained with the same deep dye of infamy, lay scattered, singly, or heaped in strange and motley groupings, in every posture of repose—above, along the ledges of protruding rock, afar in the black recesses, close around in the pale blue glare of the weird moonlight, weapons of all variety gleaming in their belts or in their grasping hands.

Curiously enough, in the moment of awful legend he had read of spell-bound sleepers; of Heinor Danske, who slumbers on his throne in the vaults of Cronenburgh, his red beard growing round the table on which his arm reclines; of Don Roderick, the Goth, and the British King Arthur, surrounded by their mailed, grim warriors, all locked in an enchanted sleep that must endure till broken by some daring adventurer, who shall perform the rite that alone can dissolve the charm.

Breathing stillness—far more impressive than deathly silence—but hush!

Some one without the cave is softly emoaning a low monotonous air.

It is the sentinel, a tall, lank Arab, who, with a long carabine on his shoulder, slowly paces

# *The Boys of England*

REPRODUCED overleaf is the first page of No. 2 of the paper that probably attracted as much attention from the boys of Britain in 1866 as *The Champion* in 1922 and *Lion* in 1952 did from their youthful male descendants: *The Boys of England.* It was subtitled *A Young Gentleman's Journal of Sport, Travel, Fun and Instruction.* Just how well it lived up to all this I cannot say, for although I have had Volume 1 for some years—alas and alack, everything in front of page 3 of No. 1 is missing!—I have never tried to read it. The keen-eyed may discern that the paper was "Subscribed to by His Royal Highness Prince Arthur." *The Boys of England* enjoyed great popularity, so much so that for many years a reprint series was issued week by week alongside the original series. Robert Hamilton Edwards, aided and abetted by the House of Harmsworth, no doubt had something to do with Edwin J. Brett's pride and joy fading out in 1899 at No. 1702—rather more than four years after *The Boys' Friend* was founded—following a goodly run of almost 33 years. But Hamilton Edwards never claimed to number Royalty among his subscribers.

—W. H. G.

# R. S. WARREN BELL: "THE OLD FAG"

By LEONARD M. ALLEN

THE ELDEST SON of the Reverend G. E. Bell, Vicar of Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, was intended for a career in the legal profession, but Robert Stanley Warren Bell's inclinations were literary and he soon forsook reading for the Bar. He was educated at Edward St. John's College, Leatherhead, and later became a master at a private school, finding time to write his first novel, "The Cub in Love." This was published in 1897. Two years later he joined the staff of George Newnes, Limited, as founder and first editor of *The Captain*, quite a distinction for a man only 28 years of age.

Warren Bell had many original ideas, one of the most successful proving to be parading the River Thames during the Boat Race of 1899 in a launch, displaying banners and streamers announcing the introduction in April of his sixpenny monthly magazine. Another feat was to secure the services of C. B. Fry, the all-round sportsman, as Athletic Editor. Mr. Fry, who captained the conquering England Cricket Team in Australia in 1904, was so popular with readers that he later was able to leave the firm to edit his own magazine, being replaced by another celebrity, Warner Pelham. Other *Captain* sub-editors were experts E. J. Nankivell and Edward Step, F.L.S., dealing with stamps and natural history respectively. The *Captain* Club was introduced some time later, with badges, brooches, and special competitions for members, and thousands of readers were enrolled.

The editorial section of *The Captain*, conducted by Warren Bell under the pseudonym of "The Old Fag," was one of the magazine's most attractive features and occupied several pages. The usual policy of offering good advice to enquiring readers was followed and in this respect Mr. Bell was similar to Hamilton Edwards of the Amalgamated Press. He warned of the perils of alcohol, smoking, and gambling, advised early rising to stimulate growth, and on one occasion he urged a girl reader to think twice before eloping with a youth.

Some of Warren Bell's editorial comments would find little favour today, especially his

opposition to professional football. He was sadly at fault, too, in his assessment of Germany and the Kaiser.

He contributed short stories and serials to *The Captain*. The first introduced Greyhouse School, followed by a series, republished later in *The Gem* as a serial, entitled "Sir Billy of Greyhouse." "The Long 'Un," which appeared in 1903, is generally considered, though not a school story, to be his best work. A better picture of the trials of a young doctor seeking to establish a practice in a slum district of the period would be hard to find.

THE OFFICE OF *The Captain* was situated in Burleigh Street, The Strand, London, near busy Covent Garden and opposite the stage door of the Lyceum Theatre, from which Mr. Bell often saw Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry emerge. Contrary to the usual custom he encouraged callers, and he was quite proud of the fact that Sir George Newnes had been the previous occupant of his room when editor of *Tit-Bits*.

Flushed with the success of *The Captain*, Mr. Bell launched a weekly boys' paper in 1907 with himself as "Old Fag," the editor. This was *Boy's Life*, a a penny weekly, but owing to pressure of work he relinquished the editorship to his assistant with No. 8, the editorial becoming known as "The Young Fag's Page" with No. 16. Perhaps this was the reason the paper failed, for it ceased publication some twelve weeks later and Mr. Bell's specially written serial, "Green of Greyhouse," appeared in *The Captain* instead.

Like many authors of the period, Warren Bell was interested in the stage and in his early days occasionally played small parts. His first appearance was in 1893, unknown to his parents, and he was privileged to tread the same boards as Dan Leno, Marie Lloyd, Herbert Campbell, and Little Tich in a pantomime at Drury Lane. Later, dramatic work occupied much of his time and in 1910 he resigned from "The Old Fag" editorship of *The Captain*. The following year saw the production of his comedy, "A Companion for George," at the Kingsway Theatre, London, which was most successful and later was taken on tour through the provinces. Even today the play is a popular one with amateur dramatic societies.

DURING THE FIRST World War Warren Bell joined the R.A.F. In his youth he had served with the Queen's Westminster Rifle Volunteers. On his return to civilian life he took up residence at Westcliffe-on-Sea

and resumed his novel and school-story writing for *The Captain*. The magazine he founded outlived him for he died on September 26th, 1921, his last short story, "A Good Egg," appearing in it two months earlier.

All the Warren Bell stories were re-published in book form and a list of the better-known ones is given here.

| TITLE | YEAR PUBLISHED | DETAILS |
|---|---|---|
| "The Cub in Love" | 1897 | |
| "The Papa Papers" | 1898 | |
| "Bachelorland" | 1899 | |
| "Tales of Greyhouse" | 1901 | School story; first pub'd in *Captain*. |
| "Love of the Laggard" | 1901 | |
| "J. O. Jones" | 1903 | School story; first pub'd in *Captain*. |
| "Jim Mortimer" | 1904 | First published in *The Captain*. |
| "The Duffer" | 1905 | " " " " " |
| "Cox's Cough Drops" | 1906 | School story; first pub'd in *Captain*. |
| "Green at Greyhouse" | 1908 | " " " " " " |
| "Company for George" | 1911 | |
| "Black Evans" | 1912 | School story; first pub'd in *Captain*. |
| "Mystery of Markham" | 1913 | " " " " " " |
| "Dormitory Eight" | 1914 | School story. |
| "Secret Seven" | 1915 | Short school stories; first published in *The Captain*. |
| "Smith's Week" | 1915 | School story. |
| "Young Couples" | 1918 | |
| "Three Prefects" | 1918 | School story; first pub'd in *Captain*. |
| "Greyhouse Days" | 1918 | Short school stories; first published in *The Captain*. |
| "Happy Beginnings" | 1919 | |

# *THE VANGUARD LIBRARY*

By C. W. DANIEL

PUBLISHED BY Trapps, Holmes & Co. of Fleet Lane, London, *The Vanguard Library* made its first appearance on May 4th, 1907. Of the same size page as *The Gem* and *The Magnet*, it had sixteen pages and was priced at a halfpenny. With No. 12 a green cover was added, but this was dropped somewhere between No. 59 and No. 69, when the paper was changed from white to pink.

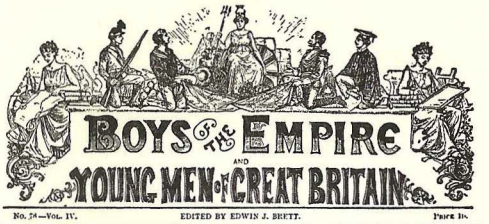
Only in the first issue was any space allotted to the editor. Here he introduced the paper and stated that the future numbers would contain school, detective, sea, and circus stories by the best authors; then he discreetly retired and no more was heard from him. All further announcements were printed in heavy type across the top or bottom of the pages.

With No. 1 was given a coloured plate of a then well-known cricket team and another was presented with a later issue. The contents consisted of one long complete story, and a short one averaging a page and a half in length. Most of the latter were written by S. Clarke Hook. There were no serials, although some of the later stories were linked together in a series. No. 1 contained a school story, "The New Boy at Northcote," by Charles Hamilton, who wrote other stories for later issues under his own name and the pen-name Frank Drake. The editor kept his promise and all types of yarns appeared, though school stories predominated.

In No. 9 we were introduced in "Taffy Llewellyn's School-days" to a character who appeared intermittently throughout the paper's run. Written by H. Philpott Wright, an author with a sense of originality, Taffy and his chums, one of whom was a Billy Bunter, were shown at school, as detectives, and finally as explorers.

My set is not complete, but I have read through these stories several times, and always with a feeling of regret that the paper had such a short run. It deserved a much better fate.

It would be interesting to learn if Trapps, Holmes & Co. issued any publications similar to *The Vanguard*. I have not been able to trace any. But the fact that they produced four comic papers, *The World's Comic*, *Funny Cuts*, *Smiles*, and *Picture Fun*, suggests that the firm was




No. 78.—Vol. IV. EDITED BY EDWIN J. BRETT. Price 1d.

"'YOU'RE THE VERY MAN I WISH TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH!' ROARED THE COLONEL."

## JOLLY JACK; OR, THE SCHOOL BY THE SEA.

CHAPTER XI.—(*continued.*)

"MY BOY," said the colonel, "you are the picture of your father, and I am sure you will grow up to be as brave and manly. Oh! by the way, I heard that poor uncle Anthony has gone to Australia, in search of—never mind which, but he is a bad lot."

"Why is!" our hero demanded.

"Well, there is no need for you to know at present," the colonel rejoined.

*For the week ending* JULY 29, 1889.

**No. 78 of *Boys of the Empire*, dated July 29th, 1889**

[Facing page 304

# *Boys of the Empire*

EDWIN J. BRETT launched many boys' papers following the success of his first, *The Boys of England*, and they were, probably, all cast in the same mold. All but one, that is: *Boys of the Empire*. What made it stand out from the rest were the color-printed illustrations. And what color-printing! Produced for Mr. Brett by Leighton Brothers, famed printers of those days, is is a joy to behold. But, and no doubt it was a big "but" to boys in 1888, to offset the extra cost of color-printing the price was three-halfpence instead of the usual one penny. It was a noble experiment, but by No. 51, which ended Volume 2, Mr. Brett had decided that it was a too expensive one. Commencing with No. 52, Volume 3, color-printing was abandoned and the price was reduced to a penny. Overleaf is reproduced the front page of No. 78, when there was nothing about *Boys of the Empire* to distinguish it from other boys' papers of that time. Another of Brett's papers had been given the axe-treatment and combined with *Boys of the Empire*, hence the double-barrelled name. The paper had a comparatively short run, ending at No. 277, a little more than five years.—W. H. G.

of good standing and probably had other papers to its credit.

¶ According to Tom Hopperton in *The Old Boys' Book Collector* No. 2, *The Vanguard* continued until No. 137 in its original page size. Then there was a change in editors, plus a change in the size of the pages to that of *The Boys' Friend*—eight pages, pink paper. The full title became *The Vanguard Library of Football, Sport, and Adventure*. This suggests that the new editor had an eye on *The Boys' Realm*. How long the paper lasted in its new form remains a mystery.

—W. H. G.

# MY FAVOURITE PAPER: *THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY*

By JOSEPH MEECHAN

IN MY HUMBLE opinion Edwy Searles Brooks, when he was writing for *The Nelson Lee Library*, was the greatest author of boys' stories! I commenced reading this paper in 1920. The title of the first story I read was "The Split in Study D," which featured Handforth, Church, and McClure as enemies. From that time I was a regular reader and would rather have gone without my breakfast than miss my *Nelson Lee*!

Stories that I particularly remember are "The School of Hidden Dread," "The Schoolboy Caravanners," and "The Boxing Unknown," while all the holiday series were very good, with "Lord Dorrimore's Quest" outstanding.

Many seem to regard the stories in the first series of *The Nelson Lee Library* as Mr. Brooks' best, but I beg to differ. To me they were a trifle far-fetched; for example, can you imagine a boy fifteen years of age batting in a Test-match and actually winning the Test for England after being snubbed by his countrymen, the Australians?

The stories in the first new series were, I think, the best that Mr. Brooks or any other boys' author ever produced. They were more feasible, and

William Napoleon Brown, Vivian Travers, Jimmy Potts, the bootboy baronet, and Stanley Waldo, the wonder boy, brought new interest to the yarns.

Many of us had our doubts when Mr. Brooks introduced the Moor House girls in a story titled "A Rod of Iron" (No. 436); but Irene Manners & Co. completely won us over and it was even suggested that the girls should have a paper of their own, so popular did they become.

IT HAS BEEN said that E. S. B. was weak in characterization, but I consider this his strong point. Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, Willy Handforth, Nipper, and of course Nelson Lee all had their own characteristics.

Edward Oswald Handforth, however, was overdone. Where would one find two fellows like Church and McClure who would stand all the abuse, and especially the black eyes, that Handforth dished out? The series in which "Handy" was expelled and came back, disguised in plus-fours, to investigate, caused me to rock with laughter.

Handforth when reinstated went to St. Jim's just to be awkward, but eventually he was unable to stay away from St. Frank's.

I consider Vivian Travers to be the greatest schoolboy character created; he was wicked and lovable.

I prefer *The Nelson Lee Library* because there is always plenty of action, in contrast to *The Magnet* and *The Gem*, where one finds so much dialogue.

Finally, I have been told on good authority that *The Magnet Library* is far more popular among collectors than is *The Nelson Lee*; nevertheless I must admit that there are few more ardent *Lee*-ites than myself.

*THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR*

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