

: : OUR BIG COLOURFUL FIFTIETH NUMBER! : :

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

APRIL, 1953
No. 50 :: Vol. 2



King Edward VII Coronation Issue, Number 53, June 14, 1902

MAKE IT AU REVOIR, NOT GOOD-BYE!

DEAR BILL: More than once you have told me that Number 50 of *The Story Paper Collector* might have to be the last. I am hoping that it will not, but if it has to be I should very much like to pay a tribute to a splendid little magazine.

One day, away back in the early days of the War, Harry Dowler sent me several of the early numbers. I remember as though it were yesterday opening that little parcel and as soon as I had examined the contents exclaiming: "My word! Just what I have been waiting for, for years!"

Before that day was out an air-letter was on its way to you, and not very long after that I had the thrill of seeing an article of my own in the pages of *S. P. C.*, the first article of mine on the subject I loved I had seen in print.

From then on throughout the dark days of the War we wrote to each other at least once a week and I believe that it is correct to say that there was not one single letter (or parcel) either way that did not reach its destination. It was marvellous

really, considering the hazards, how *The Story Paper Collector* used to get through dead on time four times a year with an extra number for Christmas. How eagerly I looked forward to it in those gloomy days; the moment I had read it I was impatiently awaiting the coming of the next number.

As one with some knowledge of the printer's craft, knowing some of the problems and tribulations of working in a small "shop," I used to picture you at your "case" busily "setting" a page, maybe running short of "sorts" and having to "diss" a page already run off to enable you to carry on. Time and time again I have looked at a copy and thought what a splendid example of the printer's art it was, one any commercial firm would have the right to be proud of.

I have often wondered, too, if those all over the world to whom you sent it realized what you were doing: the hundreds of hours you sacrificed, the paper you used, the sum you spent on postage, not for monetary gain but all for love of a hobby. I

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THE BIG BUDGET

ONE OF THE leading competitors of Hamilton Edwards' boys' serial papers was *The Big Budget*, launched four years before the House of Harmsworth ventured into the field of boys' penny weeklies with No. 1 of *The Boys' Friend* new series. Published by C. Arthur Pearson Limited, *The Big Budget* commenced its run on June 19th, 1897. It was a mixture of comics and reading, thus being more like *The Jester* than *The Boys' Friend*. In No. 466 (pictured overleaf) there are $3\frac{1}{2}$ pages of comics and $12\frac{1}{2}$ pages of reading matter and illustrations. Like the other part-comic papers of those days, the comics were juvenile, but the stories were not so juvenile as are those of today's comic/story paper periodicals. The authors of the stories in No. 466 are Rupert Chesterton, Herbert Wentworth, Donovan Mart, Fenton Ash, and one who is unnamed; among the artists are J. H. Yates, Fred Holmes, C. H. Chapman, and G. M. Dodshon. The last issue of *The Big Budget* was No. 611, dated March 3rd, 1909, after a run of almost twelve years. (Start/stop data from the list in "One Hundred Years of Boys' Weeklies," *The Collectors' Digest Annual* for 1947.)



The Big Budget.

IT'S A
SPLENDID
PAGE!!



THRILLING STORIES • FUNNY PICTURES

Vol. XVIII, No. 466 WEEK ENDING SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1906. Price One Penny.

THE ADVENTUROUS VOYAGE OF AIRY ALF AND BOUNCING BILLY AND THEIR NEPHEWS



Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy had quite a hard time to leave their little cabin, but they had the most delicious steak lunch in the jolly boat.



An jolly well they've earned a day's wages, THREE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY AND NO MORE.



Now, when Alf and Bill were captives of a ferocious crew of buccannars, and possessing a wonderful luck with the cards, they were the most-cherished boys with that tag, so to please a First World's Sea-borne Army of Air's above the landing of William the Conqueror—of the B. B. Boys, and perhaps their meeting with the Duke's party.



THESE, MY FRIEND, IN THESE, MY FRIEND, UNLESS YOU'RE HUNTING FOR CLEAN LINE OF CLOATHS AND SCALING.



Then, naturally, the set was out of the ground. The delicate pink leather and those Pattern's trousers turned quite neat about it. But it shows the last of the old-fashioned way of Alf and Bill before we meet in person. Better luck next week, perhaps.



HEY, TELL THE BOSS TO COME DOWN TO THE BUNGLE AND BRING US OUT AN' TELL HIM TO LOCK THE FLOOD IN THE ICE CASES. TELL WELCOME BACK!

Number 466 of The Big Budget, May 19th, 1906

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The Story Paper Collector

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

No. 50—Vol. 2

APRIL, 1953

Priceless

J. N. PENTELOW AND THE COMPANION PAPERS

By ROGER M. JENKINS

THE PROLONGED fiction about the dual identity of Frank Richards and Martin Clifford, which the Amalgamated Press were pleased to sustain for the thirty odd years during which *The Magnet* and *The Gem* were being published, succeeded in cutting off Charles Hamilton from all personal contact with the readers—a deprivation from which Edwy Searles Brooks luckily never suffered. As the author of the companion papers was kept at arm's length from the readers, the editor's column was of increased importance, and collectors have assiduously divided up the issues of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* according to the tenure of office of the particular editors. Certainly none of them was so remarkable as Pentelow.

John Nix Pentelow took over the editorship of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* whilst H. A. Hinton was in the forces during the first World War. Pentelow's regime lasted from March 1916 to March 1919—No. 421 to 579 of both papers. He was deeply interested in the history of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and he had taken the trouble to read most of the stories which had been printed before he became editor. On the basis of the knowledge so obtained, he published in *The Magnet* and *The Gem* respectively the unique Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries. The Greyfriars Gallery ran to 102 numbers in *The Magnet*, while the St. Jim's one in *The Gem* comprised 41 numbers; both were at the time the last word on the characters represented therein. Had he

been contented with this, all would have been well. But Pentelow, as well as being an editor, was an author in his own right—he had written several tales of school life—and his interest in the stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's proved too much for him.

MEMBERS of the staff at Fleetway House who were not authors liked Pentelow. C. H. Chapman, the *Magnet* artist, states that Pentelow—whose outstanding characteristic appeared to be his deafness—always treated him with courtesy. (Pentelow apparently had no aspirations in the artistic line.) The author of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* was not so fortunate. Charles Hamilton was one day greeted by the editor at Fleetway House with the casual remark that he (Pentelow) was going to write all the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories from then on, and that the originator of these schools could find something else to write about. Edwy Searles Brooks has told us of the difficulties he experienced with the editor of *The Nelson Lee*, but fortunately he was never confronted with an impasse such as this. Ironically enough, whilst the last editor of *The Nelson Lee* appeared to be indifferent about the St. Frank's stories, it was in Pentelow's case excessive

interest in Greyfriars and St. Jim's which was the cause of the trouble. It says much for the goodwill built up by Charles Hamilton that *The Magnet* and *The Gem* managed to survive their difficulties at this time.

In fairness to Pentelow it must be stated that stories by substitute writers had appeared in the companion papers before he took over, and stories by himself and other imitators were published even when he had ceased to be editor. But whereas the imitations had previously been few and far between, in his era they appeared regularly as a matter of course, and most of the substitute stories came from his pen. His own stories were quite unmistakable; having read one, a collector cannot fail to identify any others he might come across. Unlike that ineffable substitute writer who used to list a mammoth series of sporting events and think he had written a story, Pentelow was never stumped for plots. But his Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories were never in the least like those of Charles Hamilton, and he cannot be considered the most successful substitute writer.

Pentelow created a few characters at the Hamilton schools, the most famous of whom are Clifton Dane in the St. Jim's Fourth (later adopted by the

genuine Martin Clifford) and Piet Delarey in the Greyfriars Remove (whom the real Frank Richards never recognized). On one celebrated occasion, Pentelow killed off one of Charles Hamilton's characters—Courtney of the Sixth—in *Magnet* No. 520 entitled "A Very Gallant Gentleman." In the editorial column a few weeks later, Pentelow modestly announced that this story had brought him more letters of praise than any other *Magnet* story for years (a claim which can be taken with a pinch of salt) and he added that many readers had confessed to crying over the last chapter. Whatever may have been thought about it then, collectors are today divided in their opinions regarding this story: some consider it a very noble tale about the way in which a Sixth-former laid down his life for another, whilst other collectors consider it a piece of thoughtless stupidity on the part of Pentelow to have deprived *The Magnet* of a fine character from that time onwards.

There is no doubt that, taken by itself, the story is a good one, but looked at as one story among many, it is evident that it is all wrong from the point of view of the Greyfriars tradition. One can imagine even more affecting tales concerning the death say of Harry Wharton or

Bob Cherry, but it would have been disastrous to have ruined the future pattern of the stories for the sake of providing a soul-stirring epic in a single issue. Moreover it was in this case a substitute writer and not the originator of the tales who was guilty of an irrevocable error of judgement. Taking everything into consideration, it is not surprising that Charles Hamilton found Pentelow an intolerable nuisance.

ONE ASPECT of Pentelow's writing was the excessive enthusiasm and zeal which he made the characters display. A more striking contrast between Charles Hamilton's writing and his cannot be imagined than in *Schoolboys' Own Library* No. 148 entitled "The St. Jim's Showmen." The first half of the book is a reprint of *Gem* No. 210 by Charles Hamilton. It relates how the juniors set up a Music Hall in order to raise cash for the cricket club funds. It is a typically good-humoured Hamilton story, with everything going wrong, and Wally D'Arcy triumphant in the end. Pentelow eschewed this type of light good-humour, and it offended his sense of the fitness of things if there was not a successful end to the enterprise. Accordingly, to fill the other half of *The Schoolboys' Own*, he

wrote a grimly purposeful sequel in which everything did go right. The following brief extracts from this sequel may perhaps serve as a guide to collectors who have not yet identified his somewhat extravagantly enthusiastic style:

"Give me that tracing, you hound!" roared Glyn, seizing the wretched fourth-former by the scruff of the neck, and shaking him as a terrier does a rat. "Give me the paper before I thrash you within an inch of your miserable life."

The six Shell fellows became the heroes of the hour at St. Jim's. Dr. Holmes himself, the revered headmaster, informed them in public before the whole school that he was proud of them, and St. Jim's cheered the words to the echo. Kildare shook hands with them, remarking that they were plucky young beggars, and many of the masters and sixth-formers acted similarly.

The climax came to their glory when six illuminated addresses, together with six magnificent bicycles, with free wheels and three speed gears, and every possible luxury of

fitment arrived for the six heroes of the Shell from the Mayor and Council of Wayland, to replace the machines which had been destroyed in the blaze.

Mr. Railton, in the front row, turned to Kildare with a smile.

"It really is splendid, is it not, Kildare? I have never seen a better cinematograph show."

"It's wonderful, sir!" said Kildare enthusiastically.

Pentelow was not very conversant with the Rookwood stories, but that did not prevent him from writing at least one tale under the pseudonym of Owen Conquest. The following extracts from *Schoolboys' Own Library* No. 112 entitled "For the Honour of Rookwood" strike a typically enthusiastic un-Hamiltonian note rather similar to the one previously quoted:

"So you've wangled it, Babington!" said Jimmy Silver enthusiastically. "Good man! Good man indeed!"

"My hat, he's got the trophy as well!" said Jimmy Silver staring.

A limited supply of Title Page/Contents/Index for Volume 2, which is completed with this issue, will be available later on request. If you desire one let us know - a postcard will do.

"Blest if I ever knew anything like that chap Babbington! He's a real knock-out!"

If Babbington was a knock-out, Jimmy Silver (of the Remove!) was only the cheer-leader, a mere also ran in this story.

Pentelow loved to draw the moral in his tales; he was never content, like Charles Hamilton, to let the story speak for itself. In *Magnet* No. 573, for example, we read:

Somehow Wally understood that Snoop was groping for the light, trying to be decent, and finding it a desperately hard task.

And later on there is this Freudian soul-searching on the part of Snoop:

"I'm not saying what I'd do. I dare say I'd do the wrong thing. But I know this. Wharton, or any of his set—Peter Todd, or the Bounder, or Field—they wouldn't let any of you fellows down like this."

This anxiety continually to be pointing out the moral and underlining it explains why Pentelow was such a poor substitute author but such a good compiler of the Galleries. Incidentally, collectors may care to note that the dual Wally Bunter series in *The Magnet* and *The Gem* was written by Charles Hamilton, but a few substitute stories were interpolated into the series in

both papers—the only occasion on which this was done. *Magnet* No. 573 mentioned above is one of the stories interpolated by Pentelow.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* during Pentelow's time must remain extremely suspect. He would fill the columns with critical letters, ostensibly from anonymous correspondents, but obviously concocted by himself, and then he would give a firm reply to the rebellious readers. Sometimes the letters would be absolutely illiterate and vituperative, at other times they would strike a milder note, but they always allowed him to devote several paragraphs of praise about the moral tone of the companion papers. Pentelow never hesitated to rebuke a correspondent, genuine or otherwise. In *Magnet* No. 458 he printed a letter and began his comments by saying *This is about as rude and impudent a letter as I have read for sometime.* A ten paragraph letter in No. 496 earned the remark *simply pompous and pretentious rubbish.* The same sort of thing went on in *The Gem*. In No. 458 Pentelow said *My correspondent is one of those who mistake shrieking for argument* and in No. 468 he called another correspondent *an anonymous slanderer with absurd and*

unfounded suspicions. Times without number he printed abusive letters of his own concoction, just for the pleasure of knocking down the Aunt Sallies he had himself set up. It is not surprising that genuine correspondents hesitated to write to Fleetway House during his tenure of office.

As an author in his own right—for example as the Jack North of the Wycliffe stories—Pentelow was undoubtedly a successful writer of more than moderate calibre. But wherever

his activities impinged upon those of Charles Hamilton the result was (with one exception) invariably regrettable. Let us therefore remember John Nix Pentelow's connexion with the companion papers by that one fortunate exception, the painstaking and careful analysis of the history and personality of the principal characters of the two schools in his Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries. This was an achievement of which any editor might justly be proud.

AROUND THE SEASONS AT ST. FRANK'S

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS when writing for *The Nelson Lee Library* was topical and seasonal. With the approach of Spring he could impart new life to his readers, making it feel good to be alive. "The School-boy Caravanners" brought freshness and charm; many of us went in imagination with the St. Frank's juniors as they jogged along the highway, so vividly were the scenes and adventures portrayed.

In Summer we could hear the clack of bat meeting ball as "old Handy" with a mighty

swipe tried to smash the pavilion clock. There were the exquisite picnics on the River Stowe and the Island Camp on Willard's Island. It was during a spell of camping on the island that Archie Glenthorpe, the genial ass, was introduced.

During the Summer vacation the St. Frank's juniors, and later Irene Manners and Co. as well, travelled to the far corners of the earth as guests of Lord Dorrimore, the millionaire peer. Many times I breathed a sigh of relief when the party set out for home once more—not that

I was tired of their adventures, but because their lives had been in danger so often that the suspense was beginning to tell.

Amongst a grand selection of holiday series I give pride of place to "Lord Dorrimore's Quest," which appeared shortly after Colonel Fawcett disappeared while exploring the Amazon. This series caused a bit of a sensation and boosted the *Nelson Lee* sales considerably. On one occasion Mr. Brooks actually travelled to America to obtain local colour for a stunning series featuring Nipper and Co. in the U.S. A.

The Northestrian series were not up to the usual high standard of holiday stories. Mr. Brooks could not obtain local colour, for Northestria was one of his imaginary countries which have caused such controversy.

Before leaving the holiday stories I must acclaim the Indian series. One of the stories was entitled "The Tyrant of Rhishmere," and this series was a close second to "Lord Dorrimore's Quest."

IN AUTUMN King Football always took pride of place. Who can describe sport like E. S. B., whether it be football, boxing, or cricket? The Greyfriars juniors were introduced to *The Nelson Lee*, the title of

the story being "The Dorrimore Cup." After a hectic game St. Frank's triumphed by the odd goal in three, but they had ground advantage.

As the dark Winter nights approached Mr. Brooks could be depended upon to create a suitable atmosphere. Ezra Quirke, the schoolboy magician, and his owl, brought a spell of mystery and wizardry to St. Frank's. Dr. Karnack and many others thrilled and mystified us. The way that Mr. Brooks could create and then explain such mysteries was uncanny.

No boys' writer could excel Mr. Brooks at producing a true Christmas atmosphere—a snow storm raging, a haunted castle or manor, mysterious tapping on the walls, moans and wails, with a ghost or two thrown in to complete the setting for a bumper Yuletide. I remember on one occasion "Handy" disguised himself as a ghost and actually met another ghost!

I could go on for ever singing the praises of Edwy Searles Brooks. However I must point out what I consider his only weakness: too many of his plots depended upon secret panels or passages. But as boys we delighted in "exploring" these passages behind secret panels and caves containing pirate treasure.

—JOSEPH MEECHAN

PONDERING UPON PLUCK LIB'Y

QUOTED FROM the "Readers' Bargains" column in *The Pluck Library* No. 560, July 24th, 1915, is the following advertisement:

WANTED—[by] W. H. Gander, Box 503, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada. 529-534 *Pluck*. Will pay 1s. and postage.

Reading that once again, I am amazed at the generous nature of my offer. Double face value! Plus postage! If my memory is playing fair with me, I obtained those desired numbers from a reader living in Montreal or Quebec.

Looking over my copies of *The Pluck Library* for 1913-16—most of them obtained recently from Bill Martin—I've decided that it was a very good paper, and an echo of the regret I felt at the time of its suspension in March of 1916 returns to me.

While *Pluck* probably had a smaller circulation than either of its companions, *The Marvel* and *The Union Jack Library*, it seems likely part of the reason it was chosen to be sacrificed to the growing paper shortage was the fact that its one permanent character, Detective Will

Spearing, was not as firmly established as were Sexton Blake and Tom Sayers and Jack, Sam, & Pete in the other two papers.

It is surprising, however, that the Amalgamated Press did not see fit to revive the title in 1919, when they brought back several of their suspended papers and started many new ones. Surely the name and fame of *Pluck* were good enough to have made it worth a trial? (*Pluck* of 1922 was, of course, a different paper.)

One thing about *Pluck* which may not be widely known today is this: in it was started the policy followed successfully between 1919 and 1940 by *Boy's Cinema*, the use of complete stories based on motion-pictures. The first appeared in No. 474, dated November 29th, 1913, and from that time on at least one such story was in every or almost every issue.

The Charlie Chaplin two-reel comedies were written up in this way (by Sidney Drew, I believe) and plates of scenes from the movies were presented with the paper. All the film-stories, after the first few, were illustrated by reproductions of "stills" from the movies.

One thing I like about *The Pluck Library* of 1913-16 is that the artist who illustrated a story was often given a "by-line" as well as the author, which in my opinion is exactly the way it should be.

That is how it started, but it developed into—

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF AN UNREPENTANT COLLECTOR

By GUESS.WHO

BITTEN EARLY by the collecting bug, Bill Gander fell for the charms of Gordon Gay and Co. of Rylcombe Grammar School in *The Empire Library*, in 1910. Bill first saw the light of day on September 29th, 1898, at South Norwood, and so considers himself a Croydonian, not a Londoner. Like most of his contemporaries, he attended a Board school, which is different from a boarding school. The nearest he ever got to a St. Jim's or a Greyfriars was outside the gates of Whitgift Grammar School in Croydon and, during summer vacations when visiting with relatives, Christ's Hospital, West Horsham.

Bill started reading *The Empire* at about No. 15 of the first series, and every spare halfpenny was spent acquiring copies of earlier issues. He never did get all of them and the new series had a few weeks to run when he sailed for Canada, taking his parents,

two sisters, and brother with him, in March of 1911. He now has a complete run of the new series but his set of the first series is incomplete. These are not his original copies; they were left behind, given away.

Arriving at Portage la Prairie in Manitoba, Bill found that many of the popular British boys' weeklies were on sale in the two bookstores, but *The Empire* was not among them. So he read *The Gem* and *The Magnet*, at an inflated cost of five cents each—not regularly, he admits with some embarrassment.

Later in 1911 a mixture of somewhat horrific stories and "comics" called *Fun and Fiction* was launched by The Amalgamated Press. This weekly Bill read from the first to the last issue, and continued faithful to its successor, *The Firefly*, until it became a comic paper. This may be an indication of poor

literary judgment at that time, he now thinks. However that may be, he would like to have once again some copies of *Fun and Fiction*.

In 1912 The Amalgamated Press dropped *The Boys' Herald*, replacing it with a new title to enter the fight against the penny dreadful: *Cheer Boys Cheer*. This new paper immediately earned Bill's allegiance—starting with any new paper at No. 1 always was a weakness of his, he says—and he stayed with it when it became *The Boy's Journal*, switching to *The Pluck Library* when *The B. J.* folded in January, 1915. All these papers were carefully hoarded, but later they were all either given away or, when he began really to collect, exchanged with that well-known supplier of back-numbers, Arthur Budge of Almondbury, in Yorkshire.

Bill had been acquainted with *The Boys' Friend* for some years—he bought copies of the four colored-cover "bumper" numbers of early 1915—but it was not until *Pluck* was suspended in March of 1916 that he began to read it regularly, when he should have considered himself too old for such childish pleasures. He has now one half-year volume of *The Boys' Friend* of that period which consists of copies he purchased week by

week and bound during a spell of amateur bookbinding enthusiasm. That volume, and some odd copies of the same paper, are all that he has of the many papers, new and old, that he had in those days. To *The Boys' Friend* were added *The Gem* and *The Magnet* Libraries as regular reading. These two were dropped in 1919, but he stayed with *The B. F.* until 1921 or 1922.

AFTER leaving school Bill accepted a position in the printing department of a small daily newspaper in Portage la Prairie. This proved to be the doorway to practice in typesetting, both hand and machine, newspaper make-up, press-operating, and the various other activities of a small-town printshop, experience that paved the way for *The Story Paper Collector*. Later, printing as a vocation was abandoned, and in 1928 Bill acquired the newsagency business in Transcona which he still operates.

His collection of boys' papers was given away in 1922, and it was in 1940 that he retrieved, with two one-year volumes, the half-year volume of *The Boys' Friend* which has already been mentioned. It was in 1937 that he again began collecting, although he found in 1929 in a Winnipeg bookshop about fifty of the last hundred issues of

The Boys' Friend, which he still has. That beginning again was brought about through a long-time acquaintance with Joseph Parks and his *The Collector's Miscellany*. Bill enjoyed reading John Medcraft's contributions to Joe's magazine and there came a day when he wrote to John. The immediate result was the purchase of a 5½-year run of *The Boys' Friend*, 1917-1922, which was all that was needed to start him again.

But already, at the beginning of 1937, he had commenced to pile up current *Magnets* and *Gems*; now he answered advertisements in *The Exchange and Mart* and in this way obtained many copies of earlier issues of both papers. In 1939 there occurred something that does not usually happen more than once in the life of most collectors: he was offered a huge collection! It was owned by George Barton, of Boston, Massachusetts, who was the founder and first editor of *Boy's Life*, the U. S. Boy Scouts magazine. Mr. Barton had been quite a collector, for acquired from him was an almost complete run of *Magnet* Nos. 1 to 400, a complete bound set of the halfpenny or first series *The Boys' Friend*, and Volumes 5 to 9 and many loose copies of the new series of the same paper, plus some lesser items. Being

still rather new to collecting after so many years, Bill did not take other papers which now he would take; they went to John Medcraft.

SUCH GOOD progress was made with his *Magnets* that Bill lacked probably less than three hundred issues of having a complete set when the paper ceased publication in 1940. To make up for no *Magnet* each week he commenced reading through his set from No. 1. It took him about five years; the result was a card file containing much information about Greyfriars stories, Greyfriars people, and Greyfriars countryside.

Thinking that a want-list or an advertisement for papers required might bring better results if included in a small magazine rather than printed as a leaflet, Bill issued No. 1 of *The Story Paper Collector* early in 1941, never dreaming that in 1953 he would be printing the fiftieth number. The type from which the magazine is printed is handset and the pages are printed one at each impression on a Pilot hand-operated press.

In his collecting Bill now concentrates on *The Boys' Friend* and *The Magnet Library*, but not to the total exclusion of all others. He goes book-hunting in Winnipeg during the milder months, occasionally returning

home with a volume of *Chums*, but never, any more, with *Gems* or *Magnets* or even *Holiday Annuals*. The choicest of his "finds" was a *Chums* for 1905 in very good condition.

BESIDES the two main items, *The Boys' Friend* and *The Magnet*, Bill has the already-mentioned incomplete first and complete new series *The Empire Library*, complete first series *The Greyfriars Herald* and Nos. 1 to 30, 36 to 51 of the new series, Nos. 1 to 34 and some later numbers of first series *The Boys' Realm*, odd early numbers of *The Boys' Herald*, Volumes 1 and 2 (the color-printed issues) of *Boys of the Empire*, Volume 1 of *The Boys of England*, No. 1 of *The Firefly* and *Cheer Boys Cheer*, Nos. 1 to 21 and some later issues of *The Pluck Library* new series, a few later volumes, bound, of *The Gem Library*, 11 *Holiday Annuals*, and odd numbers of many papers. He also has—naturally—copies of all of Charles Hamilton's post-war books.

Outside the field of "old boys' books" he has: Volumes 1 to 6 of *The Harmsworth Magazine*, No. 1 of *The Overseas Daily Mail*, Volume 24 of *The London Journal*, Volume 1 of *Forget-Me-Not* (Harmsworth), Volumes 1 and 2 of the first series and Volume 1 of the new series of John Cassell's *The Working Man's*

Friend, Volume 11 of *Golden Days* (a U. S. juvenile weekly paper), and complete sets to date of *Vanity Fair/The Collector's Miscellany*, *The Collectors' Digest*, *The Baker Street Journal*, and *The London Mystery Magazine*. Of *The Boys' Friend* he has the halfpenny series complete and Volumes 2, 5 to 13, 16 to 22 of the new series, almost all bound, plus many numbers in the remaining volumes.

Perhaps it should be recorded that Bill is unmarried. This very probably accounts for the fact that his Pilot press can be seen on a table in his living-room. He is a member of various amateur press groups, including The National Amateur Press Association and The Fossils (U.S.A.), and The British Amateur Press Association, but he is unable to find time to produce any further issues of his general-interest amateur magazine, *The Red River Rambler*, of which there were six numbers during as many years.

Together with Herbert Lecckenby Bill was voted an honorary vice president of the Old Boys' Book Club, London, an action which he much appreciates. He also appreciates the fact that the position does not call for any extra activities on his part. Record should have been made earlier in this article

of another fact: that his replying to adverts. in *Exchange and Mart* and sending out copies of *The Story Paper Collector* put him in touch with a lot of fine people whom he regards as close friends, even though, with two exceptions, he has never met any of them.

Bill has no other real hobbies apart from old boys' books and amateur journalism, with an interest in the Sherlock Holmes saga that makes him a keen

reader of *The Baker Street Journal* and *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*. Typesetting and printing are done to the accompaniment of music from his radio, supplemented by records on an automatic record player. Long a philatelist, he is one no more. He has been heard of late mumbling something about suspending S. P. C. at No. 50, but perhaps he will find this easier to talk about than to do.

THE EXCELSIOR LIBRARY

IN NUMBER 48 of *The Story Paper Collector* (page 304), C. W. Daniel wrote: "It would be interesting to learn if Trapps, Holmes & Co. issued any publications similar to *The Vanguard*." I have since come upon a reference to one other paper of this firm which was not a "comic."

It is *The Excelsior Library*. Walter Dexter stated in his article "Boys' Periodicals of the 'Nineties," in the December, 1943, issue of *Chambers's Journal*, that

it was launched by Trapps, Holmes on October 2nd, 1894, 32 pages, price one penny, each number a complete story.

Mr. Dexter also referred to *The Halfpenny Monarch*, 16 pages, No. I dated March 6th, 1894, but the name of the publisher was not given.

Neither of these papers is included in the "One Hundred Years of Boys' Weeklies" list of titles in *The Collectors' Digest Annual* for 1947. —W. H. G.



FURTHER VIEWS ON THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

IN THE January, 1953, issue of *S. P. C.* there appeared an article by Joseph Meechan giving his views on what he terms "the decline and fall of *The Nelson Lee Library*." It is with some hesitation that I put pen to paper on this rather delicate subject, but I feel that Mr. Meechan's arguments should not be allowed to pass unchallenged.

Mr. Meechan stated quite clearly that there were two main reasons for this decline, firstly the "Night Hawk" series and secondly the "Silver Dwarf" story, the latter in his opinion being a first-class story, although not new. This argument I consider erroneous, for under no circumstances could the introduction of one new character and the re-introduction of a favourite story be held responsible for the termination of *The Nelson Lee* in 1933.

For an understanding of these three most peculiar years in the history of the paper, we must look farther afield and place these years against the background of the changing times. We must remember that the period of the early 'thirties was

vastly different from the heyday years of *The Nelson Lee*, which could be said to be between 1918 and 1921. Things were on the move in Europe—American ideas were creeping into our books and comics, but above all, we had reached an age of speed and change. *The Nelson Lee*, like other similar boys' books, was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the competition of such enterprising periodicals as *The Wizard* and *Adventure*. We know the extent of this through figures printed in *The Story Paper Collector* of a survey made of the reading tastes of several hundred boys. It was obvious that *The Nelson Lee* would have to make preparation to meet this challenge, and in 1930 it did.

Readers will remember that the school stories ceased and we had in their place a return to detective stories, opening with the Zingrave, and Dacca the Devil Dwarf series. These were first-class yarns and well up to the standard of Edwy Searles Brooks. But here is where *The Amalgamated Press* stands condemned. Having decided on a

policy, they failed to stick to it. They immediately introduced various series of short and childish stories which completely counteracted the advantage of the new type detective story.

BUT WORSE was to come, for within fifteen weeks we were back at St. Frank's again, although in a modified way. These stories we noted were illustrated by Kenneth Brookes, who could not, I fear, compare with the artist who gave us those remarkable illustrations in the first new series. However, the past was done with and Kenneth Brookes had come to stay, but his drawings led without doubt to one more nail in the coffin of *The Nelson Lee*.

It was only a matter of weeks before further changes were made. We had reached the stage of "as you were" at St. Franks, in theory if not in fact, for the school stories were still shortened by the continual presence of the series of short stories. Reading between the lines it was not difficult to see that further changes were coming, and in 1931 *The Nelson Lee* reverted completely to the style of the first series, even to re-introducing "Between Ourselves." It is interesting to look back on Mr. Brooks' words again after a period of twenty years, for it is

not difficult to understand how he must have felt.

So we were taken back to "Northestria" again, but here Mr. Brooks himself is not blameless, for the series was only a shadow of the original that first appeared in 1927, and which in the opinion of many was the finest he ever wrote. However, all need not have been lost had they decided on a policy of "as you were" and kept to it. But it was not to be, for we were soon dithering again with all sorts of queer stories creeping in, some by Maxwell Scott and others by Heaven knows who.

I think it was in the middle of 1932 that the real damage was done. Readers were sick of these continual changes. They never knew from one week to another what type of story was to come next. This was not to say that Mr. Brooks did not write some first-class stories. To mention a few, there were the Professor Nerki series, the Sargasso Sea, and the Fellowship of Fear—all Brooks at his best.

Inevitably, I think the publishers saw the error of their ways, and announced the introduction of the third new series which, while it lasted, was to be in the main reprints of old successes. I remember at the time thinking that this was the *Nelson Lee's* last chance. They were

going to turn the clock back in a final effort to keep the Old Paper afloat. Had they made a real job of it, then it could have gone on for a number of years, but we still had the wretched illustrations by Kenneth Brookes and the footling drivel given us each week by an editor who was treating us as babes in arms.

TWO WEEKS before the end I wrote to the Editor pleading with him to do something to keep our paper going, for I felt the finish was at hand as we had already been warned in *The Nelson Lee* to look out for a special announcement and I was certainly experienced enough to know what that meant. The reply told me what

I already knew, that *The Nelson Lee* had failed to adapt itself to the changing years and the tastes of its readers. Thus ended *The Nelson Lee*, fizzling out without any glory, to be swallowed up by *The Gem Library*—a hard fate.

Finally, on a more personal note I would state that I have never written to nor have I met Edwy Searles Brooks, Kenneth Brookes, or Joseph Meechan, and apart from one letter from the Editor of *The Nelson Lee Library* I have no inside knowledge of what went on behind the scenes. What I have written is my own interpretation of the last years of *The Nelson Lee*.

—NORMAN PRAGNELL

MAKE IT AU REVOIR, NOT GOOD-BYE! [From page 322]

hope they did, and that in due time they told you so.

All of them are indebted to you, but perhaps I owe you more than anyone else, for if it had not been for you there may never have been a *Collectors' Digest*, and if that had been so the last six and a half years of my life would have been vastly different and I am sure less happy. More, I should have had far fewer staunch friends.

Not one of us has ever seen you, Bill. You have done your good deeds from afar. But if the

little S.P.C. no longer crosses the seas we shall often be thinking of you. Ofttimes we shall turn over the pages of the copies we possess and say, "God bless Bill Gander, one of the best."

My heartfelt wish is, though, that if it is impossible to send it out as regularly as of yore, you can do so just now and again, and so make it "Au Revoir, S.P.C., but not Good-bye."

Yours very sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

York, England May 15, 1953

Manfully trying to conjure up a blush of embarrassed modesty after reading Herb's letter—dated May 15th but printed in this April issue because we are still woefully behind schedule—the Editor replies—

AU REVOIR IT IS---WE HOPE!

WITH THIS ISSUE we arrive at the end of Volume 2 of *The Story Paper Collector* and for the few pages still to be filled we will drop the editorial "we" and revert to the perpendicular personal pronoun. The road to Number 50 has been a somewhat rocky one, and I have at times wondered if the magazine would ever get there. But it has, though it took 7½ years to make the journey, as against five years for the first 25 issues. It just shows that I should have made the volumes consist not of 25 issues but of twelve, or better still six.

The question now is, will it stop with this issue, or go on into the unforeseeable future? There have been rumors—begun by myself, to be sure—that this was to be the end of the road. True it is that the task of printing the magazine is not, for me at least, an easy one, and it seems to grow more arduous with the passing years. I could have it printed professionally—which would be rather expensive. But, hard work or easy printing it myself is the only

way I could get much "kick" out of running the mag. (A power-operated Gordon press, which I have long promised myself, would help a lot.)

For your reassurance I will state that I intend if at all possible to continue publication. But after this issue there will be a period of rest for me, and any further issues will be on an if, as, and when (I am able to do them) basis. A word here to posterity: if the sets of *The Story Paper Collector* preserved in various University Libraries, Libraries of Amateur Journalism, and private collections stop at Number 50 it may be assumed that there never was a Number 51.

I wish to thank those who write from time to time acknowledging receipt of their copies—and those who write more often—for their encouragement. To all who have helped fill our pages with articles on the subject in which we are so interested I say: "It was grand of you to help, and to wait so patiently for your contributions to appear in print. Thanks a lot!" At this writing the "copy box" is empty

except for short items of my own, saved for filling the odd half page, and one article which would have been used but for the fact that it did not deal with our favorite topic and was held back to provide space for others that did. So I can send these last pages to press with an easy conscience.

How LONG, I wonder, has the hobby of collecting boys' papers existed? Much longer, probably, than some of us suspect, though it is now on a more organized basis than ever before. In Number 3 of his excellent, but now among those missing, *The Old Boys' Book Collector* Tom Hopper-ton makes his apologies to the publisher, unknown to him, of a paper of similar name issued in 1919. I believe reference to this paper, mainly or entirely advertisements by a dealer in

old boys' books, may be found somewhere in the file of *The Collector's Miscellany*, but as there is no index to Joe Parks' magazine (which also, I fear and regret, seems to have come to the end of its run), searching for it might take a long time. Anyway, Tom need not have apologized for using the title, seeing that no-one else was using it. (In the mid-1920's Joe Parks published several issues of a single-sheet *Old Boys Book Club List*.)

But long before 1919 people were busy collecting old boys' books. Names familiar in those long-ago years include those of John James Wilson, Frank Jay, John Jeffrey, and Barry Ono (Fred Harrison), all busy buying, collecting, and selling old boys' books. Then there was Arthur Budge, of Almondbury, Huddersfield, in Yorkshire. One

"BLOODS" FOR SALE!

Original bound volumes, Lloyd's "Bloods," Dick Turpins, Jack Sheppards, Buffalo Bills, Claude Duvals, "Broad Arrow Jack," "Black Bess." Original (U.S.A.) Jesse James Boys. *Wild West Libraries*, Deadwood Dick, Legends of Terror, etc.

Stamped addressed envelope for details

W. Martin, 93 Hillside, Stonebridge Park, London, N.W.10

never heard of him collecting, but he was a great source of supply. The earliest and latest advertisements of his that I have seen are in *The Boys' Herald*, 1908, and *The Boys' Friend*, 1920, but no doubt they were appearing before 1908 if not after 1920.

Going back much earlier, consider this: a column-and-a-quarter list of "bloods" and weekly papers offered in Number 33 of *The Boys' Weekly Novelette* dated February 11th, 1893, by C. A. Ransom, "Dealer in Secondhand Boys' Books and Journals, 21, Bath Street, City Road, London, E. C." The list of papers and books is much too long to quote in full, and in any case might make uninteresting reading for most present-day collectors. But among them may be noted "Broad Arrow Jack," priced at 1/4d. (I have this, through the kindness of Arget Harris); Nos. 1 to 430 *The Boy's Standard*, cloth bound, £1; "Sweeny Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street," four volumes, 2/8d; Vols. 1 to 11 *Boy's Comic Journal*, cloth bound, gilt, 15/6d; Vol. 14 *Boy's Own Paper*, cloth, gilt, 5/-.

Mr. Ransom ends the "for sale" portion of his advertisement: "Don't forget, Boys," [were boys the only collectors then?] "I am the old original Boys' Book Dealer. Established ten years in the *Boy's Standard*."

In the concluding portion of the advertisement, where he offers to purchase books, he says, after listing the titles of some that he wants: ". . . in fact I buy any kind of Boys' Books and give a good price—any quantity bought or exchanged for others—call here or send for my list of books for sale. Business hours 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.—C. A. Ransom, . . . Established 1875. Don't throw your old books away, but send them to C. A. Ransom, and receive a P.O.O. by return. N.B.—Trade supplied."

That "Established 1875" suggests that old boys' books were in demand at least that long ago. Will someone please call at 21 Bath Street, City Road, and see if a successor to Mr. Ransom has some for sale?

SOME PAGES of some copies of this number will appear as if they had been printed off-square. The printer is not to blame for this: some of the paper was supplied cut off-square.

A SOMBRE ASPECT of old boys' books collecting, one to be pondered over, is the way in which the period of peak interest travels along through the years. There was a time when such papers as those published by

Brett and Hogarth House and the penny-part "bloods" were the centre of attraction. How many are there now among us who place such items first in their affections? It is likely that they could be counted on the fingers of one hand, or of two at the most.

Interest in papers of the 1900's is, I feel sure, on the wane—apart, for obvious reasons, from early *Gems* and *Magnets*. Who wants *Boys' Friends* or *Boys' Heralds* or *Boys' Realms* or *Boys' Leaders* now? Not many of us—though I still want copies of *The Boys' Friend*. But my interest in the earlier numbers is a projection backward, so to speak, of my interest in the paper's Rookwood era. One of the few items still unsold (when this was written) in Joe Parks' list of papers

for sale—apart from some Victorians—is an almost complete run of *The Boys' Leader*, 1903-05, although that paper was the equal of any published at that time or, possibly, at any time.

All of which leads to the reflection that, if you would like your collection of old boys' books to be of some monetary value to you, don't keep it too long! To a real collector, however, the monetary value of his collection is of secondary importance.

BEING SO LATE with this number I abandoned any idea that I might have had of producing a Coronation issue. I hope, however, to have on the front page a reproduction of the 1902 *Boys' Friend* Coronation Number.

AND NOW—Au Revoir!—W.H.G.



The End of Volume Two

— OF —

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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