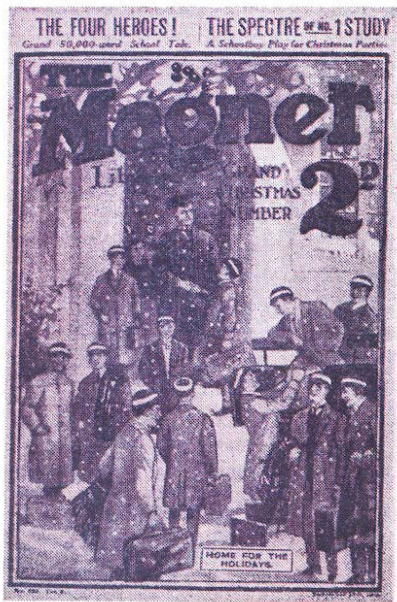


THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

JANUARY 1954
No. 51 :: Vol. 3



6th Christmas Issue, *The Magnet*, No. 305, December 13, 1913

From the Editor's NOTEBOOK

I HAVE Volume 1, the first 26 issues, of the early Harmsworth weekly paper for women, *Forget-Me-Not*, which was founded, I judge—for the cover-pages are missing—late in 1891. In No. 12, issued probably in January 1892, there is mention of a letter from a member of The *Forget-Me-Not* Club. In the words of the Editress (as she calls herself):

A member of the Club writes to inform me that she inserted an advertisement in Exchange and Mart, offering Rider Haggard's "Jess" and Longfellow's poems for a copy of No. 1 of Forget-Me-Not, but she did not receive an offer. This speaks volumes for the value of the early numbers of Forget-Me-Not. I should advise all those who are fortunate enough to possess the early numbers to keep them, as they will in all probability be very valuable ere long.

There can be very little demand for copies of *Forget-Me-Not* today, and I wonder just how much my Volume 1 would be worth. To find out, I invite offers.

IN THE Sale and Exchange column of *The Boys of the Empire* No. 40, July 9th, 1901 (a different paper from that of the same

name pictured in *The Story Paper Collector* No. 48, but the same publisher, Brett), a "large number" of *Surprises*, *Plucks*, *Union Jacks*, *Marvels*, and *True Blues* were offered at one shilling for 48, post free to any address. Unlike *Forget-Me-Nots* in 1892, these papers must have been considered of little value in 1901. What a difference today!

If The Amalgamated Press had issued our favorite papers in volumes, after the manner of *Chums* in its earlier years, there would doubtless be a more plentiful supply of *Magnets* and *Gems* and the rest today. They did not even make any great practice of providing covers for readers who wanted to have their copies bound. But such covers were available, for a time at least, to readers of *The Pluck Library*. I have found reference to them in No. 506, July 11th, 1914, with another paragraph on the same subject a few weeks later. The covers for six-month volumes were offered at one shilling and ninepence each. Were many purchased and used? And has anyone collecting today ever come upon volumes of *The Pluck Library* that had been bound in these publishers' covers?

The Story Paper Collector

No. 51 - Vol. 3

Priceless

With a sentimental sigh the Editor says——

GOOD-BYE, MR. CHIPS!

YES, I KNOW full well that title is not original with me! It was used by James Hilton for a story which stays in one's memory, both as a hook and as a movie. (I would like to see it again!) And Herbert Leckenby used it in the October, 1953, issue of *The Collectors' Digest* for the same reason that it appears here: to bid farewell to the Amalgamated Press's long-established comic papers, *Chips*, *Comic Cuts*, and *Wonder*.

But it is so appropriate that I just had to use it. The Editor of *Chips* for many years signed his editorials "Cornelius Chips," though I doubt very much if that really was his name.

The comics have received comparatively little attention in these pages, mainly, I suppose, because they are not much collected. But *Comic Cuts*, *Chips*—which used to be *Illustrated Chips*—and *Wonder*—which had

various changes in its name and a more varied career than the others—have been given a little space. In Volume One (p. 250) Walter Dexter gave an account of the different names and series of *Wonder* and there were other references to it. In Volume Two (pp. 255, 274) Charlie Daniel and Arthur Harris had a few words for *Chips*. Come to think about it, *Comic Cuts* seems to have been completely neglected, except perhaps for brief references that failed to find a place in the Indexes.

The killing-off of the three comics in September of 1953 created sufficient interest for the occurrence to be commented upon in various newspapers in Britain. *News-Chronicle* devoted a "leader" to it on September 2nd which began:

A fugitive sigh, a single sentimental tear, may be permissible

today over the news that *Comic Cuts*, *Chips*, and *Wonder* (or *Funny Wonder*, as it once was) are to cease publication next week.

Bransby Williams, the famous actor, wrote a nostalgic piece for *News of the World* of September 6th which commenced:

"Death from natural causes," states the foreman of the jury. Yes, but what cause? That was the question I pondered when I read that never again will a schoolboy be seen reading a copy of *Comic Cuts* or *Chips and Wonder*. Those three publications—surely as celebrated as any in the English-speaking world—will be seen no more, except as collectors' curios.

The *London Recorder* (I quote from *The Collectors' Digest* for October)

commenting on *Comic Cuts* makes the surprising statement that its success was so phenomenal that it brought in almost immediately a profit of £25,000 a year.

If that was so, it is not surprising that the publishers soon followed it with *Chips* and *Funny Wonder*, or that others jumped in with comics of their own.

MY RECOLLECTIONS of *Comic Cuts* and *Chips* go back only to about 1910. Comics were not considered a necessary part of everyday living in my

home, but luckily a friend of the family bought copies each week and they were passed on to me. The time seemed to pass so slowly while I was waiting for them!

I have little recollection now of what I read in them, but I do remember—of course!—Weary Willie and Tired Tim, the Casey Court Kids, and Homeless Hector in *Chips* and the Mulberry Flat-ites in *Comic Cuts*. Those *Chips* characters were still in the paper at the last issue, but the inhabitants of Mulberry Flats had long disappeared from *Comic Cuts*.

My chief memory of *Chips* in those, for me, early days is a serial, or a series, "The Red Inn." The proprietor of the inn had a Sweeny Todd-like chair which was very useful for dropping into the cellar with a dull thud anyone who annoyed him, or who appeared worth robbing, and who was so careless as to sit in the chair. (I do not know if the stories in *The Bullseye* of the early 1930s, featuring an innkeeper, a lonely inn, and a revolving chair were reprints from *Chips* or new stories with a similar theme.)

I did not become acquainted with *Wonder*, then known as *The Jester*, or perhaps it was *The Jester and Wonder*, at that time. The others were sent to us each

The Editor Has Important News For You Inside!

DANE
the DOG
DETECTIVE!

CHIPS

3 EVERY WEDNESDAY
September 12th, 1953

No. 2997

PAGE 2

WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM



1. I'M SURE YOU KNOW THE BEST PLACE TO GET A BUNNY OF ANY PLANT! THE POLICE STATION, BECAUSE THE POLICE ARE ALWAYS BUYING BUNNIES TO EAT!

2. I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE!



3. YOU'RE RIGHT, WILLIE! I SHOULD THINK HE'S NEARBY!

4. I'VE BEEN THINKING OF THAT SINCE I SAW YOU AND YOUR PONY!



5. WELL, IT'S NO GREAT FEAT! YOU'RE OF THE MIND, WERE YOU?

6. THE BEST POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP TO BE WORD!



7. I HAVEN'T SHIPPED THEM IN FOR A LONG TIME, AND I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE!

8. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



9. WELL, IT'S NO GREAT FEAT! YOU'RE OF THE MIND, WERE YOU?

10. THE BEST POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP TO BE WORD!



11. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

12. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

13. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

14. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

15. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



16. HOW CAN YOU GET A BUNNY OF ANY PLANT?

17. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



18. BECAUSE OF THAT CHIMP, WHO DON'T YOU GET THE BUNNY?

19. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



20. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

21. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

22. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

23. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

24. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



25. HOW CAN YOU GET A BUNNY OF ANY PLANT?

26. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



27. BECAUSE OF THAT CHIMP, WHO DON'T YOU GET THE BUNNY?

28. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!



29. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

30. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

31. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

32. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

33. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM HERE EITHER!

The Last Issue of Chips: No. 2997, Sept. 12th, 1953
See overleaf

[Facing page 4

Comic Cuts

No. 1, May 17th, 1890—No. 3006, September 12th, 1953.
Combined with *Knockout*.

Chips

1st Series, No. 1, July 26th, 1890—No. 6, August 30th, 1890.
New Series, No. 1, September 6th, 1890—No. 2997, September 12th, 1953. Combined with *Film Fun*.

Wonder

1st Series, No. 1, July 30th, 1892—Final Series, No. 1760,
September 12th, 1953. Combined with *Radio Fun*.

week, for several years, after we crossed the Atlantic. Later they were seen but not read, until the day came when I was engaged, among other things, in selling them myself to another generation of youngsters.

During the papers' first two decades their stories were of a more adult type than was the case later—but let me quote again from the *October Collectors' Digest*:

But it was not only the comic sections which made these papers so successful in more restful days; there were the serials. Until the outbreak of the First World War these were written mainly for the elder members of the family. I don't mean they were not fit for children to read, in the manner of "Adults Only" signs outside the cinema, just that their plots were more suitable for grown-ups. Even as adult stories they were unique, in a class to themselves somehow, different to those that appeared in other A. P. papers . . .

Later on the serials became more juvenile . . .

I HAVE copies of the last issues of *Comic Cuts*, *Chips*, and *Wonder* before me as I write, and one can see that *Chips* appears to be the least changed. On the front page there are, where they have been since May 16th, 1895, *Weary Willie* and

Tired Tim who, it is said, so got on the nerves of one of their artists, the noted Tom Browne, that he gave up the job because he dreamed of them.

Chips had, however, made a concession to modern times, in that there are two serial picture-stories, these being unknown in "the good old days." *Comic Cuts* and *Wonder* were also carrying picture-stories.

The final issues, dated September 12th, 1953, were: *Comic Cuts*, No. 3006; *Chips*, No. 2997; *Wonder*, No. 1760. Because it started a new series at No. 1 several times *Wonder* finished at a much lower serial-number than the others, but actually it was much the same age.

The last picture of the *Weary Willie* and *Tired Tim* adventure in *Chips* No. 2997 had this under it:

"You're the funniest customers I've ever seen," he [Murgatroyd Mump, millionaire] roars. "You can stay here for just as long as you like, and the very best of luck to you both." Which is what we all say, isn't it?

It certainly is, and as *Weary Willie* says, "This looks like a job for life!" Surely a happy landing for the famed tramps after almost sixty years of wanderings and misadventures in the pages of *Illustrated Chips*.

THE LAST PAGE*

INSTEAD of being satisfied with arriving at Number 50, as I should have been, I have made a start toward Number —but us not anticipate! I am not setting my sights on any far-distant goal: instead, each issue while in production will be my immediate objective, and no attempt will be made to keep to a regular schedule.

Comments appeared here and there, in particular in Alf Babcock's *Alf's Cat* and Herbert Leckenby's *Collectors' Digest*, on *The Story Paper Collector* having attained its first half-century—of issues, that is—which are duly appreciated, as are numerous letters, some of which, I regret to say, remain unanswered. At one time I was able to state in these pages that every letter was answered; now I wonder how I did it.

THE cover of *Magnet* No. 305, a small reproduction of which appears on page 1, is printed in blue and red. The purplish look of the reproduction is the result of some experimenting, and I now feel that I should have stayed with black on red, as with earlier *Magnet* Christmas Number reproductions, instead of changing to red on blue.

LOOKING through the pages of Volumes One and Two of *S.P.C.*

I find them plentifully dotted with w.h.c.'s. In future this condition will be remedied and they will rare. But it may be assumed that the owner of those initials wrote 'most everything which is unsigned.

WITH my now uncertain publishing schedule I may find a shortage of *miss.* Writers like to see their efforts in print without waiting for months. It may be necessary to make up for this possible shortage by using other suitable material, probably reprinted, such as one of the articles in this number.

★THE last page to be printed, that is.

"WIDOW LINES" are, I know, things to be avoided if at all possible. In the pages of this issue I was overcome by no fewer than three. Printers will wince at the sight of them; non-printers who do not know a widow line when they see one will not be troubled.

BEGUN in December, placed on the shelf until February, completed by mid-April, and dated January: that's the story of Number 51. If progress had been maintained, the article about the vanishing of the three comic papers would not be so much like ancient history!

April 13, 1954

—W. H. G.

THE FOOL OF THE FIFTH

By ROGER M. JENKINS

HORACE JAMES COKER was one of the few really famous characters at Greyfriars who never arrived as a new boy; this honour can be claimed by Billy Bunter, Frank Nugent, and Bulstrode, but not by many others. Again, like Billy Bunter, Coker changed with the passing of the years, and after an initial tryout he was allowed to sink back into obscurity for a while, to re-emerge a slightly different and more successful piece of characterization.

Coker began his life in the Shell, so far as *The Magnet* was concerned. He faded into the stories, as it were, the first description we have of him being in No. 143 dated the 5th of November, 1910:

Bunter rolled down the passage. A Shell fellow, who was coming down from the box-room, paused to look on, with a shout of laughter. It was Coker, a fellow much given to ragging and to cuffing the juniors, and the sight of any rough usage was always amusing to him.

Coker was a big, well-grown fellow, and ought, as a matter of fact, to have been in the Fifth Form. Idleness and slacking had kept him back. But he was bigger than a good

many Fifth-Form fellows, and that fact made him a bully in the Shell, and in the lower forms he was greatly feared. . . . Coker was a slacker, and he was not over-gifted with intelligence, but he had a very great idea of his own importance.

Coker was much too old for the Shell, but his scholastic attainments were such that he found the work of that form too difficult for him:

The spectacle of a chap in a tail-coat still in the Shell, among the juniors, afforded great delight to the lower forms.

Relief from this indignity was at hand, for in No. 145 his famous Aunt Judy made her first appearance at Greyfriars, dressed in Victorian attire with a poke bonnet and an ancient umbrella. Aunt Judy exercised the full force of her eloquence to plead for Horace's removal into the Fifth Form. She even quoted Uncle James's opinion of her nephew:

"His Uncle James said he was the most brilliant Latinist he had ever spoken to. I remember the incident perfectly, for it was on the day that Uncle James had an execution on the house, and came to us to borrow £70."

In the end Dr. Locke gave way. Billy Bunter subsequently averred that the Head was terrified of being struck by Aunt Judy's umbrella, but this is an apocryphal version. The truth was that the Head came to the conclusion that Coker might just as well be a fool in the Fifth as a fool in the Shell.

COKER was extremely elated by his remove, and snubbed his bosom pal Hobson immediately. The Fifth were attracted by Coker's wealth, and even let him captain the team—once. In this tale, it is interesting to note that Coker was depicted as bland and rather boring, but not too stupid to realize that it was his money that made people tolerate him. He later became far less perspicacious.

In *Magnet* No. 241, Coker's younger brother Reggie arrived at the school. It would be difficult to imagine a more complete antithesis; whereas Horace was burly, aggressive, and stupid, Reggie was slight, timid, and very intelligent. To everyone's amazement, Reggie was placed in the Sixth, and Horace suffered the mortification of having a minor in a form above him. To Horace's credit, let it be said that he soon got over his annoyance. Reggie then faded away quietly into the background.

Coker starred regularly in *The Magnet* after this. In No. 325 he sent the Remove eleven a challenge to a match, purporting to come from a famous cricket team, the Trojans—but the joke went wrong, because the Trojans took pity on the hoaxed Removites, and actually played them. In No. 327 Coker went looking for an escaped convict, an old Greyfriars boy, whom Coker was certain was innocent, because the convict had been the fag of his Uncle George, who firmly believed in whopping fags, and no-one could go to the dogs after such a sound upbringing. Poor Coker was soon disillusioned. But it is No. 342 which is the star number in this period; Coker wished to further cultivate the acquaintance of his cousin Amy, who was living nearby, but there was a dragon in the path in the person of Aunt Sophonisba, who had quarrelled with Aunt Judy and her side of the family. At Bunter's suggestion, Coker advertised discreetly for the pretty girl with grey eyes who was down on the river on Wednesday to come to tea in his study. Cousin Amy never arrived, but Coker had quite a job getting rid of the succession of middle-aged spinsters who accepted his invitation.

The Fifth Form had a Stage

Club which was largely an imitation of the Remove Dramatic Society, and Coker was one of its leading lights. In No. 374, a double number, he was hoaxed by Ponsonby into taking his cast to Eastwood House to play his own drama of the war entitled *Red Ruin*. Lord Eastwood was greatly surprised, but he agreed to let the Fifth Formers perform, and it was not long before the whole audience was in fits of laughter.

COKER fell victim to the charms of another young lady in No. 419—Phyllis Howell of Cliff House. Wibley disguised himself as a lady of uncertain years and, armed with Coker's letter to Phyllis, introduced himself at Greyfriars as Coker's fiancée, Miss Phyllis Montmuncery. It was some time before Coker was allowed to forget the episode of his engagement.

The war obtruded into the stories quite often. In No. 458 Coker decided he had discovered a spy, and even managed to enlist the support of Mr. Prout (who bitterly regretted he was too old to join up). With the aid of his famous rifle, the Fifth Form master did succeed in catching someone, who turned out to be merely a local fisherman in hiding, who was wanted for being drunk and disorderly. Again, in No. 528 Coker decided

that people needed to be cheered up, and he went around perpetrating outrageous puns in a patriotic effort to keep the home front from collapsing. The margarine queue at Courtfield, however, was not amused by his quips, and he was duly deposited in the horse trough.

Coker had always considered himself fit to be captain of Greyfriars, and in No. 551 he instituted a disobedience campaign against Wingate to prepare the way for his own candidature; needless to say, it came to nothing. In No. 597 he had so far given up hope of getting a place in the First Eleven that he advertised his services as a first class cricketer in the local paper; unfortunately Bob Cherry changed the wording of the advertisement, and Coker was quite perplexed over the surprising outcome of the affair.

The year 1926 saw Coker elevated to a position of greater importance with the publication of a series in Nos. 981-984. Aunt Judy was at this time living with Uncle Henry, her brother, at Holly House, and Coker normally spent his Christmas with them instead of going to his parents. On this occasion, however, Uncle Henry's secretary, Poynings, attempted to persuade him not to go to Holly House for the holidays, and, when

Coker refused to be dissuaded, more drastic methods were employed and he was kidnapped. The Head agreed that anyone who would like to spend the holidays searching for Coker could remain at the school. Potter and Greene declined this kind invitation without thanks. So did Reggie Coker, who realized that he wouldn't have been any use anyway. (Incidentally, this seems to have been his last appearance in *The Magnet*.) Accordingly it was left to the Famous Five, who duly rescued Coker, and went to Holly House with him. The situation there was rather alarming. The secretary was blackmailing Uncle Henry, and also (as it later transpired) drugging him. Fortunately, after Billy Bunter had done some poking and prying, the incriminating evidence was procured, and Poynings was promptly ejected.

THE YEARS 1928 and 1929 saw some first class tales about Coker written in Charles Hamilton's best vein. No. 1042 — "The Fellow Who Wouldn't be Caned" — related how Coker retired from the Fifth Form classroom to avoid this indignity. He and Mr. Prout then spent some time waiting for the other to come to his senses, until eventually Mr. Prout was attacked by gipsies whilst searching for

Coker on Courtfield Common, and all was forgiven when Coker rescued him. In Nos. 1084-5 Coker recklessly threatened to punch his form master. He was not unnaturally blamed when someone else committed this dire offence, but he refused to be expelled, and had to be ejected several times before the truth came to light. In No. 1129 Coker entered Mr. Prout's study in disguise and told him to bend over, but his revenge on his form master was thwarted. In No. 1133-4 Mr. Prout was being blackmailed by a Mr. Tighe who possessed a cheque forged by Mr. Prout's nephew Eustace. Coker knew Mr. Tighe, since he had once been secretary to Aunt Judy (who was now apparently living on her own at Coker Lodge), and by fool's luck Coker was able to retrieve the cheque for Mr. Prout.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to say a word here about Coker's two bosom pals, Potter and Greene. They were really nothing but hangers-on, and their regard for Coker went no deeper than the bottom of Aunt Judy's hampers. In short, Coker stood the spreads and they stood Coker. Times without number Coker found that they had stupidly gone the wrong way when he was leading them on a mission of vengeance

to the Remove passage, though they never seemed to disappear when Coker was taking them to tea in the Pagoda at Lantham in a hired car. Having said all this, it is pleasant to note that on one occasion, at least, they did stand by him in an emergency—in the year 1930 when Coker was defying Mr. Brander. They saved Coker from being forcibly ejected, and the three of them joined the Remove rebellion.

A NUMBER of stories about Coker appeared throughout the years: in 1931 he had the dubious honour of being starred in the last *Magnet* story to be written by a substitute writer—No. 1220 entitled "Speedway Coker." In No. 1270 a snapshot taken by Coker was the means of solving the mystery of who had dropped a cricket ball on Carne's head. And in that memorable issue No. 1324 entitled "Aunt Judy at Greyfriars" is related how her visit to the school (to discuss with the stupid "Mr. Snout" the reason for his unfair reports) saved her nephew from being expelled for something he never did.

But if we wish to examine in detail all the foibles and fancies of Horace Coker, it is to the volume for the year 1935 that we must turn to read the famous Caffyn series in Nos. 1404-1412. Edgar Caffyn (who

was christened *The Snipe* by the Removites) was Coker's cousin, and the ward of Mr. Sarle, Aunt Judy's unscrupulous solicitor. Caffyn's task was to discredit Coker who would then be disinherited in favour of Caffyn. But no matter how many tricks Caffyn played, they always seemed to recoil upon himself, until eventually he came to realize that honesty was, after all, the best policy. The series came to a magnificent conclusion with Caffyn repenting and Aunt Judy (still dressed in Victorian attire) chasing Mr. Sarle out of Greyfriars with her umbrella.

Typical of Coker was the way in which he befriended Skip the pickpocket and got Aunt Judy to talk Dr. Locke into allowing Skip to enter "the Removal" form under "Mr. Squelch" in *Magnets* Nos. 1545-1554. Coker's protégé turned out to be none other than the young brother of Miss Bullivant, the Cliff House games mistress. Equally typical of Coker was the last series of all in Nos. 1656-8 when he was expelled for Price's misdeeds. First of all, he took the job that Bunter coveted—errand boy for Uncle Clegg—and later he returned to Greyfriars as a stowaway. Fortunately the Famous Five sorted things out for Coker, who then promptly

told them they were cheeky.

Although there were not perhaps so many stories in *The Magnet* centring around Horace Coker, he nevertheless appeared in scores of other Greyfriars tales as a minor character, and, like Billy Bunter, was often used to further the plot when he was not playing a star part. And of course few St. Jim's and Rookwood juniors on holiday excursions failed to bump into Coker hiking or caravanning, with Potter and Greene both in varying moods of exasperation.

Coker had the advantage over

Bunter in that he was not an impossible character; moreover, he was not brought into every story, but used only on occasions. He is still playing his part in the Bunter books, as rugged, obstinate, over-confident, and incompetent as ever, but withal honest and good-natured in a rather over-bearing sort of way, not ashamed to kiss Aunt Judy in public with real affection and without thought of ingratiating and deceit. One thing at least is certain—we have not heard the last of Horace James Coker, the fool of the Fifth.

I WISH...

To obtain *The Story Paper Collector* Nos. 1 to 8, 10, 13, 15, 16.

—Derek Adley, 19 Braithwaite Gardens, Stanmore, Middlesex, England.

To obtain *The Fossil* Nos. 3, 4, 17, 18.—James W. Marrin, 222 "C" Street, South San Francisco, California, U. S. A.

To obtain *Vanity Fair* Nos. 1 and 6; *The Collector's Miscellany* No. 21, year 1938 (both Joseph Parks publications); *19th Century Peep-Show* (originally *Peeps into the Past*; published by Fred T. Singleton) No. 1 to 18.—Leon

Stone, Elgin Street, Gordon, N. S. W., Australia.

To sell my *National Geographic Magazines*, years 1905-1953, de luxe half leather maroon cowhide bindings.—Manager, Winnipeg Book Bindery, Ltd., 95 Gertie Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

I knew—I do wish I knew—just who among the silent ones on S. P. C.'s mailing list are still interested enough to want to remain on it! If you, not being an amateur journalist, have not acknowledged one of the last three issues, please ackn. rec't of this number, thus making sure of future issues.—The Editor.

The article commencing on this page is reprinted from Sunshine Magazine for November, 1950, with the introductory note that accompanied it.

WHAT KILLED THE YOUTH'S COMPANION?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Youth's Companion was one of the pillars of American journalism. It was the leading and most beloved young folks' journal of its day, making its weekly visits into many thousands of homes with its uniformly wholesome character and inspiration. It made a significant impress upon the young minds of this country. Its passing was a deplorable loss to American literature. The author of this story was one of the editors of The Youth's Companion.

MY OWN years on the staff of *The Youth's Companion* were from 1919 to 1925. "Final Editor," I was called.

The story of the end of *The Youth's Companion* is a tragic one, for it never should have happened, and, with a little wisdom, could have been prevented. The magazine was not old-fashioned in the sense of being dull; it was conservative, of course, but very much in touch with the times. We were not living in the past. Its circulation was good, and its reputation very, very good! What killed it—and "killed" is the proper word—was too much overhead. We had a big building, all to ourselves, and a huge

personnel—many white-haired men and women, survivors of the lavish days of Mr. Ford, who had made the magazine nationally important. The personnel had numerous small and rather unimportant tasks to do, and although their pay was low, it all added up to a financial burden *The Companion* was not able to bear.

When I first went there, we had our own compositors, and our own presses—running only three days a week. Then came a printers' strike, in which our own printers joined. Thereupon we introduced linotype machines, and soon afterward we sent all our copy to the Rumford Press, in New Hampshire. Still the big building and

the overhead remained.

The year 1925, after about one hundred years of continuous publication, came the crisis. No one had the heart to cut costs and discharge the old employeas, some of whom had been with the magazine over fifty years. We needed a loan at a time just before the bulk of the subscriptions came in, as we had needed in previous years. But in 1925 the banks considered us a poor risk.

SO THE *Atlantic Monthly* took over *The Youth's Companion*. Then came drastic cutting and firing—much too drastic—together with an ill-advised attempt at "streamlining," which was perhaps the worst thing that could have happened to a publication with the integrity and dignity of *The Youth's Companion*. Some of the editors went

back and tried to co-operate, but their pride was shattered to see superficiality where hitherto depth and honesty had prevailed. Old subscribers dropped out, being shocked and grieved by the changes.

After three years under the new management, during which the editorial policy veered like a weathervane, the magazine was sold to the *American Boy*—merged with it, and submerged. Now both are gone.

It is a tragic story, and those of us who were a part of the spirit of *The Companion* still find it painful to contemplate. There was a strong need for *The Companion* in the twenties, and there is a definite need for that kind of magazine now—in the middle of a perverse era.

—RUSSELL GORDON CARTER

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