

# THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

APRIL 1955  
No. 54 :: Vol. 3



No. 1.—Vol. I.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1879.

Price One Penny.  
Laid every Sunday.

## MY FIRST FOOTBALL MATCH.

By an Old Boy.



It was a proud moment in my existence when Wright, captain of our football club, came up to me in school one Friday and said, "Alumn, your name is down to play in the match against Owen to-morrow."

I could have lighted him on the spot. To be one of the picked "fifteen," whose glory it was to fight the battles of their school in the Great Close, had been the leading ambition of my life—I suppose I ought to be ashamed to confess it—ever since, as a little chap of ten, I entered Parkhurst six years ago. Not a winter Saturday but had seen me either looking on at some big match, or otherwise still entertaining about with a score or so of other juniors in a scratch game. But for a long time, do what I would, I always

reverted as far as ever from the coveted goal, and was half-dejected of ever rising to win my "first fifteen cap." Lastly, however, I had noticed Wright and a few others of our best players more than once lounging about in the Little Close where we juniors used to play, evidently taking observations with an eye to school. Under the awful gaze of these heroes, need I say I exerted myself as I had never done before? What cared I for backs or forwards, so only that I could distinguish myself in their eyes? And ever was music sweeter



## READERS WRITE

### *Half Holiday Libraries Used As "Copy"*

**Y**OUR remarks relative to the two copies of *The Magnet* being used as "copy" for *The Schoolboys' Own Library* (S. P. C. No. 53) interests me from the fact that I have found a somewhat similar practice on the part of The Aldine Publishing Company. I have 28 volumes of their *Half Holiday Library*, which were their file copies. Many of these are marked for republishing in *The Cheerful Library*. Labels with new titles are pasted in, and numerous paragraphs—sometimes whole columns—are marked for deletion, probably to make room for advertisements, for both papers carried the same number of pages.

I am afraid the Editor(s) of these papers had little consideration for the readers, for they republished some of the stories as many as three, or more, times under different titles.

Nonetheless I do think they deserve credit for the get-up of their productions. The covers of the *Claude Duvals*, *Dick Turpins*, and others, were really fine. The only pictures comparable with them, that I know, were the coloured plates given with

the monthly issues of *The Boy's Own Paper* . . .

I have often thought that the person responsible for naming the company must have been a lover of fine printing, possibly a collector of the Aldus Manutius Aldines. In any case they carried on the fine tradition in this respect. —CHARLES W. DANIEL  
Bradenton, Florida, U. S. A.

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### A Relic of the Past

**W**HILE rummaging through some ancient papers I came across my St. Frank's League Membership Certificate No. 4337, dated 1/9/26. A feeling of nostalgia came over me as I thought of those far-off halcyon days of the school story which are gone for ever.

My S. F. L. Certificate is still like new and I wonder if any other reader of *The Story Paper Collector* can go me one better by producing an older one.

So many readers have written me asking how it came about that I launched *St. Gerald's Herald* that I decided to disclose the facts in No. 10 of the magazine, the story in which is entitled "Trevor's Television Triumph." The article is called "The Birth of *St. Gerald's Herald*."

—JOSEPH MEECHAN

The Mount, Kylesyth, nr. Glasgow,  
Scotland

# The Story Paper Collector

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No. 54—Vol. 3

Priceless

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## THE ST. FRANK'S FILM ACTORS

By BERNARD THORNE

**M**OST boys and girls between the ages of nine and ninety have had, at some time or other, acting aspirations—and particularly film acting. Who cannot recall, with mild nostalgic pleasure, those youthful days when, in the old barn or disused quarry, one emulated the dare-devil antics of Douglas Fairbanks, or the adventures of Bulldog Drummond as portrayed by Ronald Colman? We, in our early youth, spent many exciting hours re-writing and re-acting "The Black Pirate," "The Mark of Zorro," "Robin Hood," and "Ben Hur." And it was, we remember, in 1928, when the fever was raging at its height, that we collected from our newsagent Number 110, First New Series of *The Nelson Lee Library*.

That issue was entitled "The St. Frank's Film Actors" and was actually the first of a series relating how the Bo'sun—Tom Burton of the West House Remove—swam the English Channel. But with the rest of the series we are not concerned. Sufficient is to say that Edwy Searles Brooks had again worked the oracle.

The story opened with Vivian Travers and his newly acquired movie camera, which arrived at a time when pocket-money among the juniors was almost non-existent and tea in Hall a grim reality. Here we would digress from our theme and enthuse over another of E. S. B.'s characters.

Vivian Travers came to St. Frank's in No. 90, First New Series, and we have always felt

that he should have featured in those "Old Series" days when Nipper, Handy, and Reggie Pitt held the centre of the stage. It has often been said, and admitted by E.S.B. himself we believe, that many of his characters were based on Greyfriars Removites. In Vivian Travers' case we find this hard to believe. Although, in his peculiar mixture of good and bad, in his love of sport and weakness for gambling and smoking, Travers is not unlike Herbert Vernon-Smith. But there the resemblance ends. The Bounder of the Greyfriars Remove never possessed that calm, unassailable savoir-faire, that easy-going bantering exterior, so far removed from his own reckless and bad-tempered personality. In Mr. Brooks' own words Travers was "cool, calm, and yet, in some indefinable way, not in the least supercilious. Without any question, this new boy was very, very likeable."

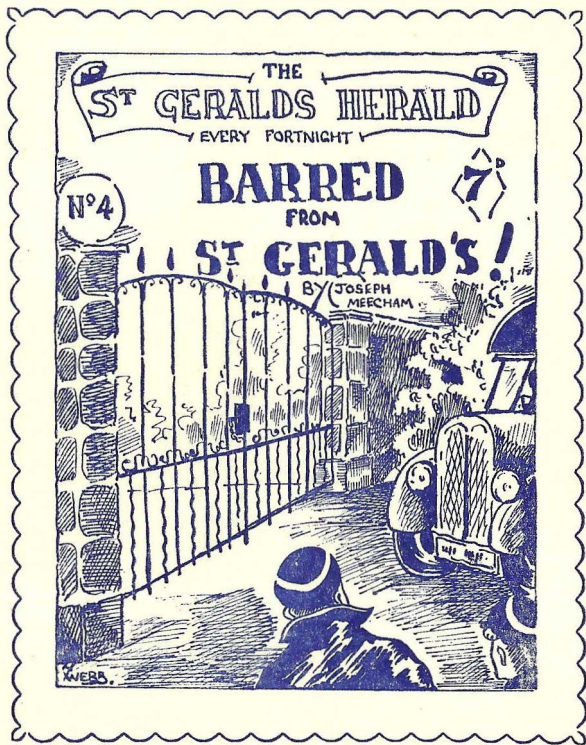
**B**UT to our theme: Vivian Travers had received from his father a movie camera and a projector, complete with all accessories. It was not a popular gift with his fellow Removites, who were hoping for a hamper of tuck. But when Travers had stood treat all round, and saved them from that worst of all schoolboy fates,

tea in Hall, the camera became the centre of attention. Leaving Travers somewhat in the background, Nipper and the Remove decided to form a film company. After much discussion, a pirate film was decided on as their first production, and Gull Sands, off Caistowe Bay, their first "location."

With typical schoolboy enthusiasm, the plot and scenario were completed in a matter of minutes, and the cast selected. It consisted of Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, Archie Glen-thorne, Fullwood, Reggie Pitt, Jack Grey, and the Bo'sun, Tom Burton. For feminine parts came Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, and Marjorie Temple of Moor View School. Vivian Travers was camera man. Handforth, Church, and McClure were conspicuous by their absence. Handy was at that time at St. Jim's, and as a result his benchmen were mere shadows of their former selves.

And so the following afternoon, it being a half-holiday, the company embarked on the Bo'sun's motor-boat for Gull Sands. A long stretch of smooth yellow sand only visible at low tide, Gull Sands was admirable for the purpose, particularly as the battered hulk of an old sailing ship lay there. In high spirits the party landed and,





Number 4 of *The St. Gerald's Herald*

See overleaf]

[Facing page 44



## The St. Gerald's Herald

THE REPRODUCTION of the cover page of *The St. Gerald's Herald* No. 4 is printed with a "cut" made from the artist's original drawing. The drawing was supplied by Joseph Meechan, publisher of the magazine and author of the school stories therein. As we go to press with this page, the last to be printed, we are aware of the titles of the stories in these numbers:

- No. 1—"Rebellion at St. Gerald's."
- No. 2—"Rivals of St. Gerald's."
- No. 3—"The Outcast of St. Gerald's."
- No. 4—"Barred From St. Gerald's."
- No. 5—"Craig's Castle Commandoes."
- No. 6—"The Desmond Scholarship."
- No. 7—"The Flood-lit Match Mystery."
- No. 8—"The Chancer' at St. Gerald's."
- No. 9—"Trevor's Television Triumph."
- No. 10—"The Schoolboy Professional."
- No. 12—"The Curse of Zenda."
- No. 13—"The Blackmailed Schoolboy."
- No. 14—"The Lads at Loch Lomond."

Copies may be obtained from Joseph Meechan, "The Mount," Kylesyth, nr. Glasgow, Scotland, at sevenpence each mailed as printed matter. If mailing in sealed envelope is wished, extra postage should be allowed for. Mr. Meechan informs us that he will try, as far as possible, to enclose a letter with such copies, giving the latest "gen" about St. Gerald's.



pulling the motor-boat up under the seaweed-covered side of the wreck, proceeded to unload the camera, costumes, and a hamper of food. It did not take them long to don their costumes, and soon the sands were alive with a desperate-looking bunch of pirates, and three girls looking charming in their old-world costumes.

HERE, then, were all the ingredients necessary to whet a schoolboy's appetite: an island of golden sand five miles out in the English Channel; a brand-new movie camera; costumes comprising leather belts, seaboots, cutlasses, pistols, eyeshades, and kerchiefs; and the derelict hulk of an old sailing ship. Great stuff, Mr. Brooks! Great stuff!

Archie Glenthorne, exhausted by his efforts to don piratical uniform, stretched full-length in the shadow of the wreck. The remainder of the party, at Marjory Temple's suggestion, climbed on to the deck of the hulk for a preliminary "shot" of the cast.

Then came disaster! The huge wreck, balanced precariously on the sands, shuddered under the weight of the girls and boys, then slowly heeled over on to its side, crushing the motor-boat to matchwood. Archie, seeing

the massive hull descending on him, leapt to his feet, but he was too late. Caught in the very act of rising, he was thrown to the sand and pinned by the legs.

Frantically the boys rushed to where he was trapped. Desperately they strained and tugged at the splintered beams. It was hopeless. The hulk, weighing many tons, lay over Archie, and it was impossible to free him or ascertain exactly the extent of his injuries. But he assured the juniors that he was only bruised, and as the minutes passed and the numbness disappeared from his limbs, it became obvious from the absence of severe pain that he was only slightly hurt. Crawling under the hulk, Nipper found that Archie's legs were trapped between two beams, and any attempt to remove them, or even to scoop away the sand under Archie, might have fatal results.

They crowded around, frantic with anxiety, at a loss as to what action to take. Then a further terrible thought came to them. The tide! At high tide the sands and the wreck were covered by the sea—and the tide was already on the turn. Archie would be drowned like a caged rat. Indeed, their own predicament was little better, for their only means of escape, or of getting assistance, lay smashed

to driftwood under the hulk.

For a time they almost gave way to panic. No shipping came near that spot. There was no hope of rescue, and to swim was out of the question; the sea was choppy under a freshening wind, and the coast lay five miles away. In any case Archie seemed doomed, and they could not leave him to his fate.

IT WAS then that the Bo'sun made his decision. He was a strong swimmer—the best at St. Frank's. There was just a chance that he could swim those five miles to Caistowe and get help before the sands were engulfed. He tore off his costume and shoes and plunged into the sea. Strongly he struck out and, as time passed and he drew nearer and nearer to Caistowe Bay, he knew that he would succeed.

At Gull Sands the tide rose with frightening rapidity. Two-thirds of the sands had disappeared, and now the sea was swirling round the derelict. Desperately Nipper & Co. tugged at Archie's arms, but he was held as in a vice. Time passed until huge waves were breaking over the sand and thudding with terrific force against the derelict. Within mere moments Archie Glenthorne would be drowned. In a last throw the boys braced

their backs against the hulk as the next enormous wave curled in. It broke with tremendous force. The youngsters were swept off their feet and hurled into the sea. The hulk groaned, creaked, and rolled slowly over on its side. From the spume a hand rose. Archie was being carried helplessly away by the very wave that had freed him. Swiftly Nipper and Travers plunged into the sea and grabbed him. Miraculously, he was not seriously hurt—his legs were badly bruised and his foot slightly crushed, but he was free and alive.

So began that last hopeless hour as the tide rose—an hour that, to the boys and girls, could only end one way. Gradually the sands were swallowed until the waves no longer broke in a shower of spray, but rolled on, unimpeded, to Caistowe Bay. Clinging desperately to the deck of the hulk, Nipper, Irene & Co. waited for the end.

Meanwhile the Bo'sun, swimming strongly with the tide, had reached Caistowe Bay. Inside the sheltered waters of the harbour he was seen by Mr. Fielding, a Caistowe sportsman who was testing a new motor-launch. Within minutes they were speeding to the rescue, and they were only just in time for the St. Frank's boys and the three girls



were now trying to keep afloat. The wreck had been their last hope. When that disappeared they could only swim for a short time and then . . .

**H**ERE we quote Edwy Searles Brooks' excellent description of those terrible moments before Tom Burton arrived; and particularly because one gets an insight into the character of Vivian Travers—always unruffled, almost cynical, reviewing life with a detached amusement:

*"Pity about the camera," remarked Vivian Travers, as he trod water. "In the excitement I forgot all about it. Brand-new, too!"*

*"How can you speak of the camera now?" asked Fullwood gruffly.*

*"Why not, dear old fellow?" said Travers coolly. "We might as well have something to talk about. Rather rough on our film, too, eh? Just as we were going to start the shooting. Well, well! It only proves how uncertain everything is in life! You never know how the cat's going to spring!"*

*"Don't," said Marjorie. "It sounds so—so callous!"*

*"But why?" asked Travers. "We're in no danger—yet! We're good for a full half-hour—or perhaps an hour with luck. And anything might happen in that time!"*

And happen it did, of course. For Nipper had already seen the approaching motor-boat, and it was only a matter of minutes before the exhausted boys and girls were hauled on board, and on their way back to Caistowe.

With the end of the story we are not really concerned. Everyone was amazed at Tom Burton's fine swim, and Mr. Fielding decided to finance an attempt on the English Channel.

Those interested in reading how Tom Burton did, in fact, swim the Channel can find the story in No. 111. We are not impressed. We are still waving a cutlass and mouthing terrible oaths as we stalk the weed-encrusted deck of the old hulk on Gull Sands!

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**I WISH**--- to obtain *Vanity Fair* (Joseph Parks) Nos. 1 and 6; *19th Century Peepshow* (Fred Singleton) No. 4; *The Collectors' Digest* (Herbert Leckenby) No. 3.—Leon Stone, 28 Elgin Street, Gordon, New South Wales, Australia.

## R. J. MACDONALD

READERS of the boys' papers issued by The Amalgamated Press in years gone by, and of the post-war Greyfriars and St. Jim's books, learned with regret of the death, early in January of this year, of R. J. Macdonald.

While his work as an illustrator was appearing in various papers in the early years of the century, Mr. Macdonald has long been noted for his illustrations for the St. Jim's school stories in *The Gem* and elsewhere. The first St. Jim's story that he illustrated was, writes Herbert Leckenby in *Collectors'*

*Digest* for February, that in *Gem* No. 91, dated in November of 1909, the title being "Tom Merry & Co. Abroad."

From that time, except for his term of service during the 1914-1918 war, he was the St. Jim's artist, and, as already stated, he was chosen to illustrate the Greyfriars and St. Jim's books in later years.

"And so," to quote Mr. Leckenby, "he joins Leonard Shields, A. H. Clarke, J. N. Pentelow, H. A. Hinton, and Warwick Reynolds, five of the little band associated with the never-to-be-forgotten *Magnet* and *Gem*."

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## NOTES ON CHUMS

WITH many of the periodicals for boys in which readers of and contributors to *The Story Paper Collector* are interested, there is no uncertainty as to vital dates. *Chums* is one paper about which there has been uncertainty, because of its having had weekly, monthly, and annual editions.

Two of our readers, Bill Lofts and Anthony Baker, have done some research concerning *Chums* and the following information

is from their letters:

*Chums* was acquired from Cassell's by The Amalgamated Press in January, 1927.

The last weekly issue was No. 2077, July 2nd, 1932.

The final monthly number was dated July, 1934.

The "Annual" for 1934-1935 was the last one that was comprised of twelve monthly parts.

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*Chums* No. 1—Sept. 14, 1892.  
Final volume—1941.

# WHO WAS SPRING-HEELED JACK?

By CHARLES W. DANIEL

IN HIS valuable work "London in the Nineteenth Century," Sir Walter Besant makes the following statement: 1838, *London was terrorised by Spring-Heeled Jack, who specially selected women for attack.*

It must have stirred the imagination of many readers, but the book fails to give any further information relative to this matter. Brief though the statement is, it is a fact that the people of London were thrown into a state of consternation by the doings of this mysterious person. Not until the time of "Jack the Ripper," exactly fifty years later, did such excitement prevail.

In the latter months of 1837, rumours had spread that an incredible being, possessing miraculous powers, had been seen in various parts of the city. Wild stories were told of his appearance, but he was commonly reported to be of gigantic proportions, to have wings of a bat, the horns of a goat, and a long tail. Perhaps the most alarming features were that he breathed coloured flames, and leapt high

walls with ease. It was from this latter fact that he was christened Spring-Heeled Jack.

Numerous reports of attacks upon women by this creature had reached the ears of the authorities but were discredited. The re-organized police force, at that time some eight years old, was comparatively small, and its members found their hands too full keeping ordinary crime in check to trouble their heads about supernormal beings.

However, in February, 1838, they were stirred to activity by the visit of a man and a young woman to the Lambeth Street Office. The man stated that he and his three daughters resided in Bearbind Lane, at that time a lonely spot between the villages of Bow and Old Ford, on the outskirts of London.

At a quarter to nine on the previous night, one of his daughters had heard a ringing at the gate. Upon opening it she saw a man who said he was a police officer, and that he had just caught Spring-Heeled Jack. "Would she, for God's sake, bring a light."

She hastened in, and returned with a candle which she gave to the man, who was enveloped in a large cloak. This he threw off, and presenting the light to his breast, exhibited a hideous and frightful appearance. He vomited blue and white flame, and his eyes resembled balls of fire. He wore a large helmet, and she noted that his dress fitted him tightly, looking like white oilskin. He then attacked her with his claws, which she was sure were of a metallic substance, and tore her gown. Her screams brought help, upon which he disappeared into the darkness.

THE MATTER was at once taken up by the police. People living in the locality were interviewed, but although a number had arrived after the event, there were no witnesses of the attack. Search was made in the neighbourhood without any satisfactory result. One of the victim's sisters stated that she had seen the assailant's cloak lying upon the ground, but that while she was rendering help it must have been taken away, for it was not found.

So the matter rested; the police could do nothing beyond keeping a sharp lookout, and putting extra men to patrol the district. Then, before the excitement could die down, it was

again roused to fever-pitch. This was brought about by the visit of a Mr. Sales and his sister to the Lambeth Street Office, early in March of the same year.

Mr. Sales stated that he lived with his two sisters at Narrow Street, Limehouse, and carried on the business of a butcher. On Wednesday, at half-past eight in the evening, Miss Sales, aged eighteen, and her sister were passing along Green Dragon Lane—a most appropriate name—when they saw a man standing in an angle of the passage. One girl was in front, and as she came up with him he squirted a quantity of blue flame into her face. She was so shocked that she fell to the ground, and was seized with violent fits that recurred at intervals throughout the night.

Her companion described the person as tall, thin, and of gentlemanly appearance, and added that he was enveloped in a cloak. He also carried a bullseye lamp similar to that used by the police. Once again the authorities were put on their mettle, but they failed to obtain any clue to the culprit's identity.

It is true that rumour is a lying jade, and stories grow by repetition, but much that was told of Spring-Heeled Jack must have had a foundation of fact, for a reign of terror was created

which was remembered with a degree of fear some thirty years afterwards. Following the cases quoted above, numerous complaints from people who had either seen or been molested by this person came to the notice of the police. Public officials and the Lord Mayor of London were deluged with letters demanding protection.

ONE STORY current at the time and said to be supported by many witnesses, related that a creature of fearsome appearance had been observed climbing up the face of a church in the vicinity of Bow. Having mounted the spire he seated himself cross-legged and calmly surveyed the onlookers. After a while he rose and taking a flying leap landed on the roof of the building and disappeared from view. A search of both the interior and the roof of the church was instituted, but he had vanished. He also gained credit for having climbed the walls of the Tower of London.

By now so many demands were made upon the police that the Lord Mayor opened a public fund, and a number of special constables were sworn in. In addition to this vigilance committees were formed and armed citizens paraded the streets.

Reports that Spring-Heeled

Jack had been seen came from widely scattered places. Besides London and Bow, he appeared in Aldershot, Chichester, Colchester, the Midlands, and a lonely district in Warwickshire. There can be no doubt that his activities stirred others to imitation. This is proved by the fact that the masquerader was run to earth in Warwickshire, and was found to be a youth of low intellect who, by the aid of springs attached to his boots together with a sheet and mask, had been frightening the villagers.

An hitherto unrecorded scare came to my notice many years ago. In the late 'sixties, Bow was once more put into a state of consternation by the report that Spring-Heeled Jack had returned. Children were not allowed to play in the lanes, and women were afraid to leave their homes after dark. Eventually he was cornered, but succeeded in making his escape by leaping a hedge and crossing a field at a great pace. This was told to me by my father, who remembered the occasion quite well, as he—then a child, living in the district—had been forbidden to leave the house without protection.

The last appearance of Spring-Heeled Jack was in the year 1878, when he caused excitement in the town of Aldershot.



An army officer was suspected, but the evidence obtained failed to prove that he was responsible.

IN THE BOOK written by O. Crawford, "The Revelations of Inspector Morgan," dated 1905, London, there is given particulars of a strange occurrence that well might have been attributed to Jack. That he did not get the credit may have been occasioned by the fact that knowledge of his escapades had not reached the district at the time.

I do not have the book with me, and cannot call to mind the name of the place where it happened, but I believe it was an isolated part of one of the southern counties.

Following a heavy fall of snow which only ceased at nightfall, a farmer on the following morning noticed widely spaced footprints across a field, and he informed some people of standing living in the neighbourhood. They took the matter up and eventually discovered that the tracks continued in a straight line for over a hundred miles. But the most amazing thing was that whoever made them had not troubled to go around anything that stood in his way, but had passed right over it. This being proved by the footprints showing

clearly in the snow on the roofs of buildings. On one occasion they ceased on the bank of a river, to reappear on the opposite side carrying on in the same direction. It was also proved that the whole track must have been made in one night.

The matter is well authenticated, but although considerable speculation was aroused the mystery was never solved.

AFTER the Aldershot incident the scare died down, but there were plenty ready to make capital out of it. In 1863 a four act drama, "Spring-Heeled Jack; or, The Felon's Wrongs," was produced in London. Two other plays followed, bearing much the same titles, the last being in 1879, at the Grecian Theatre. Publishers of Penny Dreadfuls took advantage of Spring-Heeled Jack's notoriety and profited thereby. In 1867 the Newsagents' Publishing Company produced "Spring-Heeled Jack" in 40 penny numbers. The woodcuts with which these numbers are adorned are extremely interesting, depicting with much detail the many escapades in which the hero was engaged. Another well-known publisher of the same period, Charles Fox, issued a similar story in 48 numbers, of which it is said that only four complete

sets exist; whilst the Aldine Publishing Company published his adventures in twelve penny numbers in 1904. The latter papers are admired for their coloured wrappers, being excellent specimens of the lithographer's art.

LIKE Jack the Ripper, Spring-Heeled Jack was never caught, for although there is a rare tract entitled

*The Apprehension and Examination of Spring-Heeled Jack. Who Appeared as a Ghost, Bear, Baboon, Demon, Etc.*

the statement is open to suspicion. It was published in London, about 1838, and may be an highly imaginative account of the Warwickshire case, or as is more likely, a pure fabrication written to catch the public eye, a practice not at all uncommon in those days.

C. Brewer, in his "Reader's Handbook," observes that early in the nineteenth century the eccentric Marquis of Waterford amused himself by springing on travellers and terrifying them; but he does not give his authority. Nor was further information forthcoming when inquiries were made in later years relative to this matter.

Thus we are left completely in the dark as to who this

mysterious personage was. Well over one hundred years have elapsed since he first came upon the scene, and it is highly improbable that the mystery will ever be solved.

WHAT is one to make of the actions of this person? No instance in which he inflicted physical harm, or attempted robbery, can be found. His sole object was to terrify unprotected women, and he must have taken great risks to do so. Only a person with a strangely disordered mind could have been responsible, although there were others with an equally low order of intellect ready to copy him.

As to his general appearance, and the tricks with which he is credited, there is nothing improbable in the accounts that have come down to us, providing that we allow for some embellishment on the part of the narrators.

A man wearing a grotesque helmet, dressed in skin-tight garments covered by a long cloak, is not a sight to inspire confidence in a nervous woman when encountered in a dark lane. If to this we add the coloured fire, produced by blowing the necessary powder into the flame of a candle, one can understand the consternation

that he created. His alleged power of jumping over high obstacles with the aid of springs attached to his boots may be open to doubt. It seems more probable that a mechanical device of this nature would impede rather than aid this mode of progress.

**R**EGARDING the source from which the culprit took his inspiration to perform such reprehensible tricks, it may not be necessary to seek far. In the well-known novel "Mr. Midshipman Easy," written by Captain Marryat, there is an incident that may throw some light upon the matter. The hero, returning one night from a masquerade, sees an open window. Being still in the guise of Mephistopheles, a costume he had adopted for

the late occasion, he springs through and frightens the occupants of the room into the belief that he is the Devil. The story was originally published in 1836, about two years before the first appearance of Jack.

One can only conjecture in such matters as these, but it does not seem to be stretching the probabilities too far to associate this piece of imaginative fiction with actual fact. Be that as it may, if by such means the author of these pranks hoped to spread the belief that His Satanic Majesty was abroad, he must have been disappointed. But he may have gained some satisfaction in the knowledge that he had created a new type of monster in the shape of Spring-Heeled Jack.

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## SO NEAR & YET---

**I**T WAS in 1937, more than eighteen years ago, that I commenced to pile up current Magnets and collect earlier numbers. Good progress was made and inside two or three years I had in my possession copies of a great majority of the 1683 issues. Then, quite naturally, progress slowed down. Today I need only 18 numbers

to complete my set, while there are a further 12 numbers that I would like to replace with better copies. Here is my Magnets Wanted list; "x" indicates those that I have in poor condition:

Nos. 1x to 6x, 90, 100x, 110x, 163, 207, 217, 263, 273, 283x, 288x, 312, 334, 413x, 417, 664, 668x, 775, 880, 941, 942, 948, 973, 974, 992.

Any assistance will be greatly appreciated.—THE EDITOR.

# WHY THE BOY'S OWN PAPER OUTLIVES THEM ALL!

By ANTHONY P. BAKER

OF ALL the nearly three hundred boys' papers that have ever been issued, it has fallen the lot of *The Boy's Own Paper* to be, not only the oldest now surviving, but the longest running of them all. It has now been published for seventy-six years and shows no signs of flagging. It is a staggering state of affairs: *B. O. P.* lives on, while *The Magnet*, *The Gem*, *The Boys' Friend*, and *The Union Jack* are all dead—papers which must have enjoyed far larger circulations in their day.

What is the explanation of this? *The Boy's Own Paper* has always set the highest possible standard in all its serials, stories, and articles. Writers have included Talbot Baines Reed, Paul Blake, Gordon Stables, Jules Verne, Gunby Hadath, Michael Poole, Percy Waterman, Captain W. E. Johns—one could go on almost for ever with such a list. And yet, in one way, this only increases the mystery, for other papers had equally famous contributors, notably, of course, *The Magnet* and *The Gem* with Charles Hamilton. But *The Boys'*

*Friend* and *The Union Jack* were not far behind.

The key to the mystery which only *B. O. P.* has really managed to find is that of adaptability. If one looks at the volumes through the years, one is conscious of the completeness of the change. The only thing they all have in common is the same good tone. Otherwise, absolutely everything has changed. Today, school stories are out of favour, so there are now no school stories in the paper that was the paradise of Reed and Hadath. Serials have lost popularity, so there is now only one, with very short instalments, as against five in the earliest days, and one or two, which filled half the paper, in the middle years. In 1953 there was no serial at all, and only two out of half a million readers complained. I was one of them!

In fact, readers' whole attitude to fiction has changed, and there is now usually only one serial instalment and one very short story. The rest of the paper is taken up with articles. Imagine this in a periodical which used

to be 80% to 90% fiction! And yet it is the key to B.O.P.'s survival. These articles, too, are what one might almost describe as specialized.

It is a great mistake to think that all boys have turned from story papers to comics. Many of those of thirteen years or over now read, in Britain at any rate, periodicals like *Motoring* or *Practical Mechanics*. It is, I think, to combat this rivalry that B.O.P. has assumed its present form. *Chums* failed largely because it continued to make the British Empire its centrepiece; *The Captain* went because it stood firm for Public schools and pure snobbery. Only B.O.P. changed with the times.

**H**OW DID *The Boy's Own Paper* learn this secret of being able to adapt itself? Most important, it had an almost continuous succession of first-class editors. George Andrew Hutchinson, the founder, was Editor from 1879 until his death in 1912. It is said he died while actually preparing yet another issue for the press. He guided his child brilliantly through the Victorian and Edwardian days, and his successor, A. L. Haydon (1912-1924) performed miracles in transforming B.O.P. into a twentieth century boys' paper. As a start, he dropped the weekly

edition, and concentrated on making a successful monthly. A pity *Chums* did not take a lesson from the older paper; it was not until nineteen years later that *Chums* dropped its weekly issue.

Mr. Haydon was succeeded by Geoffrey Pocklington (1924-1933), who ably carried on the work and steered the paper through the difficult days of the General Strike period. However, Mr. Pocklington did not really have enough of the inventive genius that is necessary if an editor is to keep abreast of the times. In turn, he was succeeded by George Northcroft, who was the only Editor in 76 years who really had no idea how to edit.

It was an unsatisfactory two years for B.O.P. until, in 1935, the paper found a rejuvenator in Robert Harding. The price was reduced from one shilling to sixpence, a daring and highly successful venture, and under him B.O.P. celebrated a happy Diamond Jubilee in 1939. When almost every other boys' paper ceased publication in 1940, he remained at the helm.

After Robert Harding came the present Editor, Jack Cox, in 1946. He has all the qualities of his predecessors, and in some ways has had the most difficult task of all in making B.O.P. fit into the present-day world.



When we remember how the stupidity of a new Editor brought about the end of *The Boys' Friend* in 1927, B. O. P. has cause to be thankful for Hutchinson & Co.

A PERIODICAL published by a large firm, like The Amalgamated Press, has the advantage of large capital, good publicity, and efficiency. On the other hand, smaller though substantial publishers can give more personal attention, as it were, to their publications. There was always a danger with the A. P. that they would lose interest in a paper and, if not directly kill it, actually set up a rival to it, as in the case of *The Union Jack* and *The Thriller*.

The Religious Tract Society, however — Lutterworth is another name for the same firm — is one of the smaller substantial publishers. B. O. P. was their first and only boys' publication, except for a disastrous attempt called *Rovering* in the 1920's. They were not, and are not, likely to let it fail in a hurry, and at the same time are a large enough firm to give it effective backing.

Being a smaller firm than the A. P. was, too, an advantage for the publishers in the critical paper shortage of 1940. As a monthly B. O. P. was in a better

position anyway, and having only one boys' paper they were able to secure enough paper for it, though the number of pages was cut from 48 to 24 in September, 1940. In April, 1942, they were forced to cut the page size by half, but even when their London offices were bombed, R. T. S. held to their B. O. P. There was an element of luck here, for a pocket-size monthly is passable, but can anyone imagine a 12-page pocket-size *Magnet*?

After the War, when the question was raised about increasing the page size, readers decided that they did not want a return to the pre-war size. So, at present, B. O. P. is somewhere between the war-time size and the original one. But *The Boys' Friend* refused to change its outmoded format, and *Modern Boy* hurried itself on to its fate by introducing a large cumbersome format. Only B. O. P., it seems, can make itself adaptable to readers' wishes.

Having learnt the secret of adaptability, through the aid of its editors and publishers, B. O. P. is likely to continue for a very long time. It has built up a circulation of half a million in over fifty countries. And while many of us will sadly lament the lack of stories, we must pay homage to *The Boy's Own Paper* for the fact that it continues to exist at all.



# ONE HUNDRED ISSUES OF THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST!

**E**VEN as a man or a woman who arrives at one hundred years has achieved something that few do, so it is a noteworthy event when a non-commercial magazine arrives at the 100th issue. All too many such magazines fail to pass the tenth issue!

Further, to have arrived at Number 100 in one hundred and one months is in itself a real accomplishment.

*The Collectors' Digest* has, with the April, 1955, issue, arrived at Number 100, and congratulations are in order both to Editor Herbert Leckenby and to the magazine's loyal readers and contributors—but more especially to Herbert, for it is on the Editor/Publisher of a non-commercial magazine that a heavy burden falls.

Away back in 1917 John Nix Pentelow, writing in *The Magnet* No. 504 as *pro tem* Editor, referred to upcoming *Magnet* and

*Gem* and *Boys' Friend* Christmas Numbers and wrote of *The Boys' Friend* as a paper "which I do not control, but which I regard with friendly eyes . . ."

There is of course no reason for other than friendly feelings between the editors of amateur, or non-commercial, magazines. But I regard *The Collectors' Digest* with particularly friendly eyes. It was launched at a time when I could no longer carry on with *The Story Paper Collector*, and its beginning at that time was a direct outcome of this magazine's suspension.

*The Collectors' Digest* did more, however, than fill the vacant spot. With more frequent publication, and being produced nearer the scenes of the greatest collecting activity, it has made a place for itself that *The Story Paper Collector* never could fill.

Congrats, Herb! May there be many more C.D.'s!

—W. H. G.

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## THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Edited, printed, and published quarterly, maybe less often, by William Gander, Box 60, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada

PRINTED AT THE ROOKWOOD PRESS THIS ISSUE 301 COPIES