

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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J. N. Pentelow: Boys' Story Writer

BORN AT SOMERSHAM, St. Ives, Huntingdon, on March 26, 1872, John Nix Pentelow was the son of Ebenezer Pentelow, a well-known local tradesman who owned a grocery and drapery shop. The unusual middle name, Nix, was his mother's maiden name.

A great cricket enthusiast, Mr. Pentelow took an avid interest in the British national game from an early age. He wrote for many of the Victorian papers, and then for many of the Harmsworth periodicals (later The Amalgamated Press and now Fleetway Publications). He became Editor of the magazine *Cricket*, wrote several books on the game, and was recognized by the M.C.C. as a foremost authority on cricket. He was a member of three County Clubs at the same time.

J. N. P. became best known to us for taking over the editorship of *The Gem* and *The Magnet* during the 1914-18 War years,



JOHN NIX PENTELOW

and for writing a considerable number of St. Jim's and Greyfriars stories during his period in office. His favourite character was Gordon Gay of Rylcombe Grammar School and *Empire Library* fame. He wrote, apart from under his own name, under the pen-names Jack North,

Harry Huntingdon, Richard Randolph, Randolph Ryle, and John West.

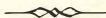
Mr. Pentelow's stories appeared in such papers as *Cheer Boys Cheer*, *Sexton Blake Library*, *Pluck*, *Triumph*, *Champion*, *Boys' Friend Library*, *Football and Sports Library*, *Marvel*, *Sport and Adventure*, *The Boys' Friend*, and *Nugget Library*. He was the first Editor of the new series of *The Boys' Realm*.

John Nix Pentelow died on July 5th, 1931, at Carshalton, Surrey, at the age of 59.

—W. O. G. LOFTS

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[The photograph of Mr. Pentelow is copied from a Chums of the 1900's and printed from a Scan-graver plate.]



S.P.C. Number 78: A Reader's Comments

NUMBER 78 of *The Story Paper Collector* was, as usual, full of good things, and extra thanks are due for the photograph of Charles Hamilton, a photo which shows clearly the kindly features of a man with a delicious sense of humour; complete with skull cap that only partly hides that massive forehead.

This is the man who coloured and influenced so many of our impressionable years through his writings, even though the majority of us knew little or nothing of his identity until about 17 or 18 years ago.

Even now the full story has not been told. In the recent re-issue of his *Autobiography* nothing new was added to Mr. Hamilton's own story. The account of the schooldays of the greatest school-story writer remains, unfortunately, still vague and with remarkable lack of detail. We, who have basked in the sunshine of "Frank Richards" since our own schooldays, naturally want to know more and more of him.

We can only respect the sense of privacy and anonymity with which Mr. Hamilton surrounded himself during his long working life, with the hope that some time in the future some small grain of information, which would not intrude upon that privacy, may be allowed to come to light and be added to what we already know.

Wherever the English tongue is used, Charles Hamilton will continue to delight those of our circle until the end of our days. Which is probably the best—and only—memorial he might have asked.

—MAURICE KUTNER

The Story Paper Collector

No. 80—Vol. 4

Priceless

DIGGING ROUND THE ROOTS

By TOM HOPPERTON

THERE IS A CERTAIN air of naiveté about these early stories which reminds one that the authors were in pretty much the same position as were Mack Sennett, D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Pearl White, Chester Conklin, and the rest in pre-1914 Hollywood. They were innovators in a new medium, and anything they might do would come with delightful freshness to their audience, not yet sophisticated enough to be demanding or even discriminating. The humour tends to be slapstick and the drama is in ungraduated black and white, but they broke the new ground to such purpose that there is hardly a scene, plot, incident, theme, character, or name in Charles Hamilton's work of which the germ cannot

be massively duplicated before 1880 or, at the very latest, 1885. Indeed, as far as the basic ingredients are concerned, all we have to show for 80 years are a little more sophistication and a lot more squeamishness.

Emmett, particularly in his Wildrake stories, set a pattern to which many successful rivals such as *Jack Harkaway's School-days* and *Tom Floremall's School-days* adhered of a high-spirited youngster being sent to school by parents or guardians weary of his mischief, and his pranks therein. With such a recital it is obvious that any muscle in the plotting must be in the subplots. The main narrative must be a long string of japes, jests, wheezes, practical jokes, feuds, and fights—especially fights!

When some present-day yob

kicks in a few ribs with his winkle-pickers, our magistrates almost choke with indignation. Tom Wildrake would certainly wrinkle his nose at this as decadent, effeminate, and un-English, and not because of any admiration of the job, whom he would regard as a mere pale degenerate shadow of those lusty clog-shod warriors of Yorkshire and Lancashire whose favourite Saturday night amusement was reducing each other's faces and shins to a jelly. Tom and his co-evals lived in a perpetual town-and-gown riot: on the few occasions they could not raise a brawl with the local yokels or the rival school they practised on each other.

GEORGE EMMETT frequently waxed satirical about "boy heroes" who thrashed everyone in sight from Sixth-formers to navvies and barge-men. Few others were willing to so cramp themselves and some remarkable deeds were done. *Left-handed Jack, the Terror of the School* had a long run in *Boys of England* and he used to wave his "steam arm" round in a circle three times before launching a lethal punch warranted to snuff out John L. Sullivan himself. It did not seem to occur to the author that while Jack was performing

his portentous preliminaries any normal adversary would have either jabbed his face to ribbons or knocked off his block completely. The ultimate in hokum was reached by (naturally!) Henry T. Johnson, whose Brabazon in *The Black Sheep of the School* not only beat the seniors at running, swimming, and rowing but made hay of a negro prizefighter into the bargain. After this the exploit of Tom Merry (of St. Jim's) in beating a boxing booth pug seems positively mediocre.

My favourite bit of boxing is that entrancing ballet-like sequence in *City Lights* where, dodge about the ring as they may, Charlie Chaplin always succeeds in keeping the referee between him and his opponent, so I am obviously no fan. Even so, these stories leave me feeling cheated. As the authors were so insistent on dragging in these brawls they might at least have made something of them with blow-by-blow reportage. They rarely did, a habit which has descended to Mr. Hamilton. How often have we read "Smack! The next moment they were fighting furiously," only to find that he was never willing to extract the last drop of juice (or blood) from the scene.

No, the accounts were as untidy as the fighting itself. E. S.

Turner in *Boys Will Be Boys* (1871) did not do battle according to the Marquis of Queensberry's rules promulgated some five or six years earlier. There was no need to single out Harkaway. For many years after him the only rule generally observed was the old Prize Ring one that a knock-down ended the round and the man had thirty seconds in which to toe the scratch, but even this was not universal. The more persistent followed their man to earth and continued the battering and in *The King of the School* one second suspended a fight while he sent to a nearby pub for a bottle of brandy to revive his principal. Much later than Harkaway was the chap who ended a fight by butting his opponent in the belly. The indignant spectators promptly formed a jury to try the merits of this action and, after long and heated debate, they had to agree that there was nothing in the rules specifically prohibiting butting and confine themselves to a rider that it hardly seemed the thing. Nor were shins safe, as witness:

"Twice did the gallant Skinner bite the dust, and a third time he came to the charge and, forgetting himself, gave Cramps a 'shinner' which compelled him to stand upon one leg and howl

with pain." Skinner was well clobbered for this, because he had already asked, "You don't play shiners?" and "I should think not," replied Tom [Wildrake] contemptuously, 'fight with your fists like an Englishman.'" The effect of these noble words is rather marred by the fact that when Wildrake's son arrives at school in *Young Tom's Schooldays* he complains that he is unlikely to beat a bigger opponent "unless I'm allowed to shin him."

MICHAEL STORM unwittingly provides the real explanation about thirty years later in the early *Pluck*. His Ravenscar School was sited on the Pennines in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a district that was and is a stronghold of wrestling. Ravenscar's inter-school boxing competitions were held under Queensberry rules: domestic mills, whether formal or impromptu, were settled by a mixture of boxing and wrestling, with cross-buttock throws favoured as a spectacular means of putting paid to the loser. Local tradition, as usual, long outweighed Olympian pronouncements by self-appointed arbiters in London.

Some of the fighting was no doubt inevitable in detailing the hero's climb to be cock of the walk: most of it seems to have

been an easy way of producing exciting copy, and the preoccupation of both writers and readers with it denotes a certain immaturity akin to that displayed in the pathetic belief rampant in American films that a punch on the jaw is the correct and effective answer to everything from adultery to a belief in Communism. Needless fights, or fights for fights' sakes, persisted until well into the 'twenties, when Charles Hamilton arrived at the happy position where we can be sure that a scrap at Greyfriars is not just pitched in as an unrelated incident but arises as a logical and almost inevitable development in the plotting.

EMMETT'S WRITING was at this period confined to the group of journals controlled by his brother. That their great rival, Edwin J. Brett, long remained dubious about the school story is reflected in the pages of his leading paper, *Boys of England*. It was not until Number 35 (20/7/1867) that *The Captain of the School* by W. T. Townsend began, followed by a long hiatus until Number 86 when *Unlucky Bob; or, Our Boys at School*, also by Townsend appeared. *The King of the School*, by James Cecil Stagg, came third, but not until Number 166. Vane St. John

turned in what seems to have been the first foreign travel school yarn for Number 198, *At School; or, Our English Boys in France*, followed by another year's gap until Number 249 when the most popular of Brett's stories started. This was *Jack Harkaway's Schooldays*.

They must all have been well received except for St. John's effort, because Brett re-issued them almost at once in penny numbers and wrappers and they stayed on sale until the firm went broke in 1906, but there could have been no overweening interest. *Boys of England* ran 68 serials from its inception to *Jack Harkaway* and this meagre proportion of five nominal school stories to 63 others seems ample proof that Brett's slogan of "Wild and wonderful but healthy fiction" still held the day.

A WELL-DEVELOPED bump of proportion has always been a doubtful asset to a boys' author. Having one certainly prevented George Emmett from developing the school serial into its classic form even further than he did. Besides deriding "boy heroes," he had a special "down" on that darling of the Victorian novelist, the missing heir, whose exploits were described by Master Wildrake as being "written by putty-heads

for puttyheads." The English, however, have always been suckers for the missing heir, from Jack Cade with his claim to be a mislaid Mortimer and the rightful heir to the English throne down to the most remarkable cock-and-bull story of the nineteenth century, that of Arthur Orton, the Tichborne Claimant, while their appetite for the M. H.'s fictional misfortunes and ultimate triumphs was insatiable. Brett's henchmen proceeded to feed it. They were sharp off the mark, too: the partial school story in *Boys of England* Number 1, *Who Shall Be Leader?*, opened with the mysterious baby being deposited on the benevolent doorstep by the unknown hand in the dead vast and middle of the night.

TOWNSEND'S FIRST TALE did provide a novelty. An eighteenth-century naval officer who was sent on a two-years cruise to investigate the manners and customs of the South Sea Islanders returned and submitted his report in one sentence: "Manners they have none and their customs are beastly." Much the same report must be made on the sports and pastimes of these fictional schoolboys, but *The Captain of the School* surprisingly begins not with one cricket match but two.

The first is a flashback to the previous year. The Captain, Rupert Ingleby, was nobbled by a hired rough on the eve of the annual cricket match with the rival school. He played regardless, and when he fainted at the end of a sparkling innings a doctor revealed that he had batted with a broken arm. This was giving it the old college try with a vengeance, and it goes without saying that this year, with two arms in working order, his side sweeps to victory. There is some detailing of a varied cast, including a volatile French junior, and we move on to a brawl between the rival teams at a celebration ball. The reader has just settled down to what he has been led to believe is a recital of inter-school conflict when the nigger emerges from the woodpile and he is off on all the familiar rigmarole of the missing heir—kidnappings, murderous attempts, clues from mysterious crested jewelry, plus a generous dollop of Gothick. The school becomes a mere resting place between escapades.

The collector of Victorian papers who actually reads his stuff soon develops a nose like a truffle hound and can smell out the whole dreary sequence from the first couple of chapters, provided the author plays the game and sticks to the elementary

principles of construction. Townsend did not in this case, but there is no doubt about where *Unlucky Bob* is heading, and it is a relief to find that he splits his space evenly between the dramatics and an inconsequential string of humorous school incidents. He really gives the impression that he is professionally too old a dog to want to bother with this new-fangled school business: there is an obvious quickening of his interest when he leaves it and buckles down to his dear old permutations of wills and villains and all their trappings.

BOB CHERRY seems to have been in favour at this period as a punning comedy name. *Bob Cherry, Rough and Ready* was a farce staged in 1860, and the title role in *Unlucky Bob* was filled by another of them, this time a Bunterish fat gorgier for whom nothing went right, and a sartorial pioneer. Harman & Co.'s advertisements in the current *Boys of England* offered "Eton Dress Suits" at 30/- and, although such a price induces heartburn in a sufferer from today's school uniform bills, this thirty-bob turn-out then represented the hall-mark of affluence. If the story illustrations are any guide, most parents favoured a

scaled-down version of adult clothing, "The Negligeé Suit," at 25/-, although a few unfortunates were crammed into a braided, embroidered, and knickerbockered ensemble called "The Zouave Suit," still 25/- and almost as exotic in its own way as the late unlamented zoot suit. Miss Fawcett combined artistry with economy in dressing Tom Merry. A replica of Little Lord Fauntleroy's velvet suit was only 18/6d., with no indication of whether the lace collar was included or not. Moses and Son, the famous (or infamous) slop-clothing sweat-shop in Aldgate, slashed even these prices, but Brett apparently retained sufficient of his Radical background to decline their advertisements.

Headgear varied. There was the odd mortar-board and a sprinkling of caps, often leather peaked, and most boys preferred what looked like an inverted sauce boat but was actually a narrow-brimmed and shallow-crowned bowler *a la* George Robey. Bob Cherry I, however, paved the way for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by persistently parading in the top-flight regulation harness of Etons and a plug hat, a shining example which was not to be generally followed for some thirty years.

Part Three Will Appear In Number 81

BEND OVER, BUNTER!

By MAURICE KUTNER

VARIOUS ANSWERS are being given to the problem of juvenile delinquency by so-called experts in the training of the young, ranging from the simple method of permitting the little devils to do as they jolly well please, to the just as simple system of tanning the hides off 'em.

It is said that discipline should begin in the home but, like many another aspect of our modern welfare state, some parents, it seems, prefer to pass the responsibility to other authorities. If this be so, the obvious authority left to guide, teach, and discipline the boy (other than the Juvenile Court) are the teaching staffs at our schools.

Perhaps the modern master has not the same powers of punishing the offender as the schoolmaster of, say, fifty years ago. At the school I attended, each class master had the power to give up to six strokes with the cane on the palm of the hands; a flogging could also be given if the offence warranted it. These floggings were administered with the luckless one bending over the front desk; nothing so intricate, or spectacular, as being hoisted on

to the broad back of the school porter, but most effective nevertheless. Other than the short-lived agony of it all, there was no lasting harm to any boy. If it had any effect upon one's outlook methinks it taught respect for the master's wishes—plus caution for the future!

One can remember the sinking, helpless feeling when called out to the front of the class and ordered to "fetch the Book and Cane!" The Book and Cane lay in state in an alcove at the end of the corridor, and were for the use of the three classes comprising that Form. The Cane spoke (or whistled) for itself, as it were, but the Book was used for the entry and publication for all time of one's name, detail of, and reason for, punishment.

It was the usual practice, and most advisable, to take one's time over the ceremony of "bringing the Book and Cane." Firstly, there was always the faint hope that the master's view of the disagreement between himself and the pupil might evaporate somewhat during the interim and might thereby mean a lessening of punishment in proportion. Secondly, one found

more time to turn over the pages of the Book and obtain the answers to one's curiosity anent the happenings in the other classes along the corridor; also, one could learn the official reason for the commotion in the end class the day before yesterday. A false satisfaction, and even spiritual courage, could be obtained through a perusal of the long list of canings meted out to particular friends and foes. The frequent offender was the best informed as to what was happening in his little world.

THERE WERE MANY WAYS of standing up to a caning, from extending the arm fearlessly level with the shoulder in the best heroic tradition, right down to the craven and much more troublesome attitude where the hand peeped shyly out in the region of one's hip, rotating meanwhile ceaselessly on an axis away from the cane, obeying the instinct (in boxing parlance) of "riding the punch." This necessitated a slow circular promenade by the master to overcome the unco-operation. During the stalking of his prey the master, vigilant of eye and with cane upraised, waited not always patiently the opportunity to get in his whack. This was hard work for the over-fifties!

Whether one howled, cried,

sobbed silently, or remained tight-lipped if white-faced in the best manner, punishments rarely turned out to be as bad as at first feared and were soon forgotten, only to be resuscitated forty or fifty years onward when they might become an adjunct of other reminiscences. By then the youthful whackings are as shadowy and empty as a long-forgotten cold in the nose, or toothache.

Such punishments meted out to the precious darlings in these days have sometimes been known to involve the outraged parents in litigation with the unfortunate master, who has nowadays so often had his only weapon of defence for a quiet life taken away from him by well-meaning souls—great believers in the essential goodness of *homo sapiens*—who, having thoroughly digested their Freudian theories and half-baked catch-phrases and jargon of the abstract, now find themselves opposed to the disarmed schoolmaster and other forms of authority, and are now willy-nilly on the side of the precious little darlings, the juvenile delinquents—and even the criminals!

It has also been known for some parents, with no sense or feeling for litigation, to prefer to pay a visit to the school with cuffs pushed back, ready to

"larn him to hit someone his own size!"

THE BEST EXAMPLES of canings and floggings occur in the stories by Charles Hamilton. The reader usually agrees with and condones them as being right and proper, except when a Mr. Selby or a Mr. Ratcliff allows personal feelings, like indigestion or petty spite, to cloud his sense of elementary justice. Those grandiose scenes in Big Hall on the occasion of a public flogging were most impressive, the calm and imposing figure of the Head giving the assurance to one and all—except perhaps the luckless floggee—that justice was about to prevail.

To instil in the pupil a sense of obedience for the school rules, authority did not always have to depend on corrective treatment. The steely "gimlet eye" and the deep rumble of Mr. Quelch, or the friendly firmness of Mr. Railton or Mr. Dalton, often sufficed.

Comic relief was frequently supplied by Billy Bunter when having to "bend over," or Horace Coker who refused most emphatically to do anything of the kind. But there was little or no comic relief for the readers of the last century in the world of Victorian juvenilia, when the stories (other than those of pure

adventure) frequently gave examples of Victorian authority at home and school.

Sparing the rod was apparently against the principles of any self-respecting school in those days. When Jack Harkaway arrived as a new boy at Pomona House the Principal, Mr. Crowcour, took the earliest opportunity to show him how matters stood between staff and pupil. Instead of a few well-chosen introductory remarks on the great and historic traditions of the school, or some grandiloquent oratory anent the high standard of scholarship to be striven for, the Principal simplified matters by taking Jack into his study and, opening a sort of bookcase, showed him about fifty canes of various sizes placed in holes prepared for them. "Take care, Harkaway," he warned, "That you do not make acquaintance with them. I call them my little persuaders." "I hope I shall not, sir," faltered Jack, who felt a dismal forboding that it would not be long before he did. And Jack, too outspoken for his own good and continually indulging in high-spirited and sometimes stupid pranks which simply asked for trouble, had not very long to wait.

In the story of Joe Wroxhall's schooldays, *A Split in the School*, the very first chapter set the scene:

They had christened it Hoistem School because of the birch being in constant requisition for the slightest offence and, at times, for no offence at all.

Anything that caused the master or ushers annoyance gave the boys pleasure. Not a particle of sympathy was felt by either party for the other. The master, assisted by his subordinates, determined to rule by the influence of fear. And the boys were quite as resolute to oppose, thwart, and annoy him and them by every means in their power!

Such an atmosphere, with such positive policies on both sides, had its results, and in the majority of cases the masters came off second best, presumably to keep on the right side of the reader. This was one of those schools where the pupils were required to perform many menial tasks, even to help cook the school dinners. Being forced to help prepare the school dinners put the pupils on a far higher, and deadlier, plane than even Figgins and his famous fig pudding.

IN MANY SUCH STORIES barring-outs and running away from school took pride of place. The subsequent punishments must have been to the liking of the readers, for they were given in great detail, and it was frequent for a boy to be thrashed

until he fainted, or the master thought momentarily that he had killed the boy. Not very edifying, but perhaps no worse than the horror comics of our day.

There was one man, at least, in Victorian juvenilia, who believed he had found a way to make a fine art of flogging. In *Follow My Leader*, the school tale of Lionel Wilful, a master with "scientific" leanings, Mr. Stiffback, invented a flogging machine, a machine that could deal with more than one victim at a time. It was a wooden apparatus resembling the stocks or pillory used in England a century or so before the time of the story, formed upon a gigantic cotton reel mounted on a stand and bristling all over with long flexible canes. A revolving handle, worked by a strong-armed menial, brought the canes into play, and twelve revolutions was the usual ration. Round went the instrument of torture and down came the canes upon the tightly stretched trousers of the imprisoned unfortunates. The faster the handle revolved, the sharper the sound of the canes.

"You see the advantages which my system possesses," said Mr. Stiffback, explaining its moral virtues and giving a large crumb of consolation to the victims. "The

ordinary way of administering chastisement to a refractory pupil is merely a brutalising exhibition of the superior physical power of a man over a boy. The pupil kicks and struggles not infrequently, and the master consequently becomes red in the face, and disordered in his costume, presenting an unseemly spectacle. By my method all that is avoided and mind triumphs over matter."

The invention, however, did not supply a gag for each of the luckless ones, so what they lost in physical movement they made up for in vocal activity!

This master also invented the Sluggard's Bedstead, warranted to wake the soundest sleeper in five seconds. This was a special mattress with numerous coiled springs worked by clockwork

which shot the sleeper onto the floor almost as soon as the school rising-bell went.

PERSONALLY, I much prefer my sluggards awakened by the gentle, cheerful application of Bob Cherry's wet sponge, and I much prefer my descriptions of canings and floggings via *The Magnet* and *The Gem*. The world of Charles Hamilton had no place for the haunting grisliness of savage scenes.

The victims of the Victorian "persuaders," in comparison to a Harold Skinner or an Aubrey Racke coming away from *Masters' Passage* with woe-begone expression and tingling palms tucked under armpits, are like "moonlight unto sunlight, like water unto wine."

I Wish to Obtain . . .

—S.P.C. Nos. 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39.—L. Vosper, 8 Ashbridge Crescent, Shooter's Hill, London S.E.18, England.

Through the months various short items materialize from here and there which are kept to be used in filling odd spots in The Story Paper Collector. When planning this issue the first intention was to make it 16 pages. But a glance at our copy-file revealed an over-supply of short pieces, so the pages were upped to 20, again, and from here on there will be . . .

A POT-POURRI

. . . which we feel will be of some interest to readers . . . and the items will appear in print before they are too out-dated.

STILL IN THE DARK!

FOLLOWING THE PRINTING of a "poem" from an early Gem St. Jim's story in S.P.C. Number 75 several readers wrote commenting upon it. Some of these comments were presented in Number 76; more of them follow:

What does the poem mean? The answer is that Martin Clifford was surely 50 years before his time. According to modern trends and beliefs, a poem, painting, or piece of music which is readily recognisable or understood is bad art. The more abstract and meaningless, the better! That poem may yet be included in an Anthology of Poems of Our Age—or Times—the 1960s!

—MAURICE KUTNER
Clapton, London, E.5.

That poem you printed in Number 75: it intrigues me, too. I wonder if you have had any letters with explanations as to its origin. . . . It is definitely inspired by the Bard; written in a sonnet sequence form—at least, the first eight lines are obviously Shakespearean sonnet form. . . . As to its meaning, I am as puzzled as you. It does not make

sense. . . . These two lines do not appear to make sense:

In other times, in other happier days,

The past is dead and gone,
nor will return.

The past is obviously dead and gone—it would not be the past if it were otherwise. And the only place in which it could be dead and gone is in other times and days—it cannot be gone in the present, nor in the future! —BERNARD THORNE
West Hill, Ontario.

Certainly its composer, Monty Lowther, declared it to be a sonnet, "so it's bound to be rather vague, you know," Perhaps Martin Clifford's thoughts on the subject were those expressed by Tom Merry: "The rhymes are all right, and so is the metre. If people can't understand it, they'll think it's awfully deep poetry, I suppose, so that will be all right. It can go in."

If a reader unnamed in Gem Number 525 had ever read Lowther's sonnet, he may have had grounds for his complaint that he "could not understand" The Gem's stories. However, he was well and truly put in his place by the Editor who wrote: "I do give my readers

good reading matter each week; I cannot provide them with brains to understand it." —JACK HUGHES
Brisbane, Australia.

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Ernest Levison Colourless As Reformed Character

I HAVE BEEN reading again the double-number *Gem* St. Jim's story, *Nobody's Study*, and it struck me that although Ernest Levison was not a very pleasant character, he did add the necessary spice to the stories, including as they did all the kinds that go to making a world, whether real or fictional. But I do think that after the great "reform" stories —after Levison minor appeared at St. Jim's—he became rather colourless and seemed to fade out of the picture. His place was taken, partly, by the cynical Cardew. —C. WRIGHT
Greenwich, London S.E.10.

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Another reader writes to ask . . .

Where Are My Coloured Magnets Now?

FOR SOME TIME I have been wondering about some *Magnets* of mine. Not the colour-covered *Magnets* of the 1920s and 1930s, but some that belonged in my collection about ten years ago. They were copies that my

brother and I coloured with water-colours. At the time we were interested in art work. About fifty of our collection were coloured in part or even fully, including the *Greyfriars Herald* centre pages. These copies have a stamp on them: *Woestenholme, Grassmere Avenue, Morden*, which will indicate that they were mine.

Does any reader of *S. P. C.* have any of these *Magnets*? I would be interested to hear from him and find out where my "coloured" *Magnets* are today.

—MAURICE HALL

55 Kingsmead Avenue,
Worcester Park, Surrey.

* * *

Charles Hamilton

The "Grand Master" has passed on. Although we knew that Charles Hamilton's age was great, it came as a great shock when his death was announced on the news-cast. He was a great man and no doubt the effect of his writings was great. He was to the schoolboy what Charles Dickens was to the adults of his day, and their characters will live on. I know that "Frank Richards" has given me unnumbered hours of pleasure. Billy Bunter is now fixed among the great characters of fiction as surely as Shakespeare's Falstaff and Dickens' immortal Mr.

Pickwick. As one reporter wrote, whether Charles Hamilton is here or not, Billy Bunter will always be about somewhere.

—C. WRIGHT

* * *

A Lot of Work!

ONE OF OUR READERS, Ray A. Albert of Blacksburg, Virginia, looked at *Story Paper Collector* Number 74 with a calculating eye after he had read it. Then he got busy with pencil and paper, with these results:

I sit in awe each time I receive a copy of S. P. C. and admire your manipulation of Goudy Old Style and italic, paper, ink—and estimate time consumed and wonder how you do it! 61 inches of reading, 10 picas wide. Average of 45 words to an inch. 2745 words! Thanks for my 1/315th part of a whale of a lot of work!

* * *

Archie Dale

THE DEATH OCCURRED on June 18th last of Archie Dale, veteran political cartoonist of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. A native of Aberdeen, Mr. Dale was cartoonist on *The Courier* of that city at the age of 17. From Aberdeen he went to the *Glasgow Weekly News*, and from there to London where he drew humorous cartoons for *Comic Cuts* and

Chips, weekly comic papers of The Amalgamated Press. This job, Mr. Dale is reported to have said, ended when his Editor said, "Dale, you're a failure. I'll give you fare to Canada. I'd rather make it Australia, but I can't afford it."

So Mr. Dale came to Canada, failed as a homesteader, and moved to Winnipeg, where he worked for the *Free Press* and *The Grain Growers' Guide*. He was famous for his political cartoons, and also had produced a cartoon series about the Doo-dads for the *Guide*. The Doo-dads were odd-looking little people. Mr. Dale was 80 years of age.

—Adapted from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 19th, 1962.

* * *

Now, a note from . . .

An Early Old Boys' Books Collector

SUNDAY, 10 JULY, 1763. I went to Bow Church, the true central temple for the bluff citizens. I had many comfortable ideas. And here I must mention that some days ago I went to the old printing-office in Bow Church-yard kept by Dicey, whose family have kept it fourscore years. There are ushered into the world of literature *Jack and the Giants*, *The Seven Wise Men of Gotham*, and other story-books which in

my dawning years amused me as much as *Rasselas* does now. I saw the whole scheme with a kind of pleasing romantic feeling to find myself really where all my old darlings were printed. I bought two dozen of the story-books and had them bound up with this title, *Curious Productions*. I thought myself like old Lord Somerville or some other man of whim, and wished my whims might be all as quiet.

—From *Boswell's London Journal*.

Later, *Boswell* had two similar volumes made up. The three are now in *Harvard College Library*.

"He who pleases children will be remembered with pleasure by men," said *Boswell*.

James Boswell, of renown, was born at *Edinburgh* on *October 29th, 1740*.
—C. F. F. R.
North Vancouver, B.C.

* * *

Sparshott School Stories

WHEN WE TOLD Tom Hopper-ton that we had copies of Numbers 1 to 5 of the *Sparshott Series*, he replied:

As you have the first five of the Sparshott tales, you really ought to have the sixth and last. Ergo—that's Latin, as Jimmy Silver was so fond of assuring us—you will be able to claim that you have one complete Hamilton run, even if you still fall short with The Magnet.

So writing, Mr. Hopper-ton sent us a copy of *Sparshott Series* Number 6, *Pluck Will Tell*, which was the subject of the short item by him on page 49 of *S.P.C. Number 79*. Our thanks go to Tom for so kindly completing one of our sets of *Charles Hamilton's* stories.

We still lack copies of these *Magnets*: Numbers 163, 217, 263, and need better-condition copies of Numbers 90, 100, 110, 207, 308, 668, 942. —W.H.G.

* * *

Adult Readers of Magnet And Gem

It occurs to me that, of all boys' papers, *The Magnet* had the greatest percentage of adult readers. —Peter Hanger in the *1960 Collectors' Digest Annual*.

FOR MANY YEARS we have felt that *The Magnet* must have had an unusually large "hard core" of adult readers, and it is pleasing to find that we are not alone in holding that opinion. It would be interesting, though probably impossible, to know if this really was the case.

It does seem to us that a paper with stories like those of *Greyfriars* that so "grew on" one the more they were read, would hold a larger proportion of its readers after they had passed the usual age range for boys' papers.

The same thing would, no doubt, hold good for *The Gem*.

In neither case is it likely that this "hard core" of adult readers would be sufficient to carry the papers if succeeding waves of boys, and girls, had not joined up. But perhaps more youthful readers could drop from the ranks, or fail to join them, than with most juvenile papers before the continued existence of either *The Gem* or *The Magnet* became endangered.

—W. H. G.

* * *

Radio Fun Ends

A LONG-PUBLISHED "comic" has come to an end. Fleetway Publications' *Radio Fun*, which was started in the 1930s, was merged with the new-comer, *Buster*, following the final issue dated February 18th, 1961. One would think that a more suitable merger would have been with *Film Fun*.

* * *

Rover and Adventure Combined

TWO LONG-ESTABLISHED papers published by D. C. Thomson & Co., Ltd., were combined in January, 1961, under the title *Rover and Adventure*, 36 pages at the advanced price of fivepence. There had been 1855 issues of

Rover and 1878 issues of *Adventure*. The final issues were dated January 14th, while the first issue of the new paper was dated for the next week, January 21st. D. C. Thomson seem to have followed the regrettable example set by Fleetway Publications: there are no serial-numbers on the early issues of the new paper.

[The above two items remained far too long in our copy-file.]

* * *

A Gem of Juvenilia

"TOTAL WRECK, total wreck!" groaned Whisky Pete, dropping down in a chair, his fiery nose gleaming through the tobacco smoke like a star on a foggy night.

—From *The James Boys in No Man's Land*, by "D. W. Stevens," in *The New York Detective Library* Number 438, April 18th, 1891.

* * *

A History of Amateur Journalism

The Hobby of Amateur Journalism, Part 1, by Almon Horton; printed by Ross D. Chamberlin; 120pp., wrappers, 6s. 6d.

If *The Story Paper Collector* had two feet, one could say that it has one foot in each of two camps: Old Boys' Books and Amateur Journalism. Many of those in either one of these two camps, or groups, have little

knowledge of the other. We are now making known to those of our readers who are Old Boys' Books collectors an opportunity to become acquainted with the world of Amateur Journalism. They may be surprised to learn how much there is to it. We quote, with amendments, from *The British Amateur Journalist*, Summer/Autumn, 1961:

Never let it be said that you are one who has not bought a copy of Part 1 of this unique illustrated History, The Hobby of Amateur Journalism. Send 6s.6d. to Almon Horton, 10 Warwick Grove, Audenshaw, Manchester, England, for a copy. (United States, \$1.00.)

We obtained a copy—in fact, two copies—some time ago, and it has long been our intention to provide this admirable work with some publicity in these columns. But somehow when we thought of it there was no space, and when there was space we did not think of it. Now it has been thought of when there is space.

For anyone who is interested in the development of Amateur Journalism through the years—and it goes back farther than the uninitiated may imagine—*The Hobby of Amateur Journalism* will prove to be very instructive. In those who are not particularly interested because they are

not acquainted with the hobby it will create interest. Be sure to send for a copy.

We fully expect that some day a chapter in a future Part will feature *The Story Paper Collector* and . . . —W. H. G.

* * *

Replies to Readers of *The Girl's Own Paper*

In *The Story Paper Collector Number 75* there are some examples of answers to correspondents culled from the pages of *The Boy's Own Paper*. This is how the Editor of *The Girl's Own Paper* dealt with some readers' letters in 1886:

"POMP AND VANITIES": Do not write to us again on blue paper with blue ink, please.

"Isca Wellesley": How could you so far forget yourself as to send flowers to a strange man. Your mother would box your ears if she knew.

"Tumpy": Our answers depend on the questions and style of letter addressed to us. If you write us a ridiculous letter we promise you a suitable reply.

"Old Maid": Get a bandage for your sprained wrist, and take care you don't become mangy yourself.

"A Devonshire Dumpling" says: "I would rather not drink vinegar or raw lemon juice if

you don't mind please." Dear little reader, pray do not feel uneasy on that score, nothing is further from our wishes.

"Sweet-tooth": It is quite true that sweetmeats are greatly adulterated. Even liquorice drops are sometimes made of bad brown sugar, glue, and lamp black.

"Rosina": The young men who so far forget themselves and presumed to speak to you and your friend without an introduction are not suitable acquaintances for respectable girls. But you should not have been rude; you should merely have walked away.

"M. R., Norwood": We pity you. To what a miserable state of deformity you have reduced yourself. We do not open our columns to those who boast of having so far disgraced themselves.

—Quotations supplied by Gerry Allison.

A Sort of Final Warning

THE PUBLISHER of an amateur magazine for which no charge is made has no way of knowing if his "subscribers" still wish to receive copies—unless they acknowledge receipt of one occasionally. Many of ours send letters or cards of acknowledgment regularly. Others write a little

less often, which is fine. But there are some who seem to think that their original request to be placed on the *Story Paper Collector* mailing list constitutes a "lifetime subscription." This is not the case.

The production and mailing of an issue of S.P.C. takes many hours—it is probable that each page represents six or more hours' work when everything is considered. We do not think it is asking too much if we require at least one acknowledgment to each four issues. (See Number 77, page 28.) Before another issue is printed and mailed we intend to check our mailing list against letters and cards that have been received during the past two years.

Those who have not written in two years will be dropped from the list. This will be done, not only to save paper and envelopes and postage, but also to save time and energy. There is now the added factor that we retired from business activity on June 30th last, which makes the matter of costs more important than it was.

—W. H. G.

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