

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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MORE ABOUT THOSE BUNTER BEDS

When page 120 of S.P.C. Number 82 was printed we sent the part of that page with the short Bunter Beds item on it to Tom Hopperton. This is what Mr. Hopperton wrote in return:

THE "PULL" of the Bunter Beds item really interested me. In that article on Hamilton's nomenclature in *The Collectors' Digest Annual* I said that "Bunter" did not seem to be a real name, and did not figure in any dictionary of surnames or in any directory.

Since then I have come across a couple of 1868 advertisements for "Bunter's Nervine," a specific for toothache, which indicates that I was wrong. . .

It appeared that Bunter Beds were perhaps named after some old-time geologist who first

described them, so the local reference library had a customer. Such books as *The Handbook of the Geology of Great Britain* had lots to say about Bunter Beds and Bunter Series, but not a squeak about who or what Bunter was.

At last I found that "the new Red Sandstone Series . . . has received the name of Trias from the fact that when fully developed, as in Germany, it consists of the three great divisions of Keuper, Muschelkalk, and Bunter."

I could see that the imagined personal name was down the drain and, sure enough, on looking up Bunter in a German dictionary I find that it simply means "brightly coloured or variegated."

— TOM HOPPERTON

Greyfriars Stories In The Dreadnought

SCHOOL STORIES by Charles Hamilton were, as we all know, printed or reprinted in various papers besides *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. His stories were used to help establish such papers as *The Penny Popular* (1912 and again in 1919), and the new series *Greyfriars Herald* (1919, the *Benbow* stories). The *Rookwood* stories in *The Boys' Friend* had a lot to do with that paper staying with us from 1915 to 1927. It lasted for less than two years after they were discontinued in early 1926.

A much less successful transfusion of Hamilton literary blood to an ailing paper was that given to *The Dreadnought* in 1915, for it enabled that weekly to survive for less than six months after the treatment—reprints of Greyfriars stories—was started.

On one or two occasions we have seen it stated that the Greyfriars reprints began in *The Dreadnought* in 1913. This was not the case. In 1913 the paper was a stablemate of *The Boys' Friend* when the latter was still being run according to its Hamilton Edwards tradition, the story-makeup of *The Dreadnought* being similar to that of *The B. F.*

In September of 1914 *The Dreadnought* adopted a war sub-title and began to carry war features, and the numbering was started again at Number 1. All this continued until the end of the year. Then, in January of 1915, the war sub-title vanished, the green cover was discontinued, a return was made to the old numbering system, and the reprinting of the Greyfriars stories was begun.

These changes were brought about by the paper having been placed under the control of H. A. Hinton, Editor of *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. Charles Hamilton's school stories being so popular with his readers, it was natural that Mr. Hinton should use them to infuse new life into *The Dreadnought*, just as it was natural for him to have Mr. Hamilton create *Rookwood* and a new set of characters for *The Boys' Friend* when that paper was given to him to look after a few weeks later.

But *The Dreadnought* must have been too far gone for even the Hamilton magic to be effective. In June of 1915 it was combined with *The Boys' Friend*. When a reader asked why the paper had been stopped he was told in *The B. F.*, in effect, that it had lacked sufficient support.

In 1913 Mr. Hamilton's Cliveden School stories, probably reprinted from *The Boys' Herald*, appeared in *The Dreadnought*. +

THE LOWER BRANCHES

By TOM HOPPERTON

THE SUREST WAY to bring Frank Richards out of his corner fighting was to call him old-fashioned. *Intent Upon Reading: A Critical Appraisal of Modern Fiction for Children*, published in 1961 by Mrs. Margery Fisher, headed its chapter on school stories with the critically ominous title of *Fossils and Formulas*. As a Latinist Richards must have disliked the form of the second plural, and there is no doubt at all about how he regarded the author's remarks on Greyfriars—"But now we must come to the arch-fossil, the original fly in the ointment—Billy Bunter . . . Nostalgia, alone, can carry you through this sort of this thing." He addressed the lady more in anger than in sorrow.

He understandably resented being regarded as a sort of literary Flint Jack and, as always, his argument was that as he treated of "the eternal boy" he could not be old-fashioned. Certainly, as long as boys go to school there will be someone

to write of their exploits, but Frank Richards had every reason to be aware that the people who matter most in these things—the publishers—do regard the genus as fossilised. The Bunter Books were his sole post-war venture to meet with success, and he was not alone in his misfortunes. As popular and skilled a practitioner as Hylton Cleaver was eventually unable to sell a school story, even to his publishers of many years standing.

Books are not too reliable a guide. In the main they are bought by adults for boys, and a much more reliable test comes with the papers for which the lads fork out their own cash each week. Notwithstanding the diagnosis of "nostalgia" by Mrs. Fisher and a swarm of similar amateur psychologists, it seems probable that the present depreciation of school stories originates with the adults of the printing business and not with the cash customers. For nearly half a century the Amalgamated Press had the school story as the founda-

tion stone of their boys' weeklies, and many of the nine or ten thousand tales were reprinted three, four, and even five times. Basic interests do not change as rapidly as fashions may suggest. There may be still a kick in the "fossil." Incidentally, Mrs. Fisher does not define the formula of her airy heading: it must have been a singularly flexible one to permit of such numbers.

WE HAVE BEEN so long accustomed to the pre-eminence of Frank Richards that in thinking back over these A. P. tales it needs a positive effort to recall that when *The Gem* was founded in 1907 he was not only not a school-story specialist, for the very good reason that the A. P. did not as yet permit themselves such luxuries, but he was not even the favourite school man of the Carmelite House fiction factory. That distinction went to Henry St. John, with David Goodwin a good second and eventually to outstrip his rival.

When the firm began to reprint their more popular serials in the small books of *The Boys' Friend Library* in 1905, there were 31 school tales in the first hundred volumes, ten coming from St. John, two from Goodwin, and four from Richards. Two of these, *Tom Merry and Co.* and

Tom Merry's Conquest, were not even reprints but new stories written to boost *The Gem*. The next hundred had 28 school titles with St. John and Goodwin reversing their 10-2 scores and Richards dropping out altogether.

At this stage the two seniors were still in advance and showed no signs of flagging. Nor did they fall behind Richards in prolificity. St. John's *The School Against Him* ran for 51 weeks in *The Boys' Friend*, so there was a straightaway serial equal in length to five ordinary novels or a ten-issue series of *The Magnet*. Where they did eventually lag behind was in the wealth of characterisation.

When the ruthless Percy Griffith was given the job of starting *The Gem* he would no doubt have been delighted to pirate either of these shining stars to add lustre to his paper, but they were the main props of the *Boys' Friend/Boys' Realm/Boys' Herald* group and Hamilton Edwards was too powerful and too autocratic for a fledgling editor to risk any unwelcome poaching. But if Griffith could have harnessed either St. John or Goodwin to a school-story treadmill as he did Richards, instead of leaving them to flit about every type of fiction from historical romance to women's serials, they

would perforce have had to stabilise their changing characters and elaborate them beyond the sometimes sketchy outlines which sufficed for a single serial.

Such elaboration would not have been a self-contained ornament, or an end in itself. As done by Frank Richards at St. Jim's and particularly at Greyfriars it profoundly affected first the plotting and secondly the entire effectiveness of his work. If St. John or Goodwin had been subjected to such modification there could have been only one result: we should now be mourning the passing of Greyminster or St. Simeon's as loudly as we do that of Greyfriars.

HENRY ST. JOHN was born in 1869 and as he was quite as precocious as the Richards who was seven years his junior he was already a top-liner by the time of the birth of the A. P. weeklies. He made his appearance in Volume 1 of *The Boys' Friend* and unlike most of his wide-ranging rivals he afterwards wrote little boys' fiction for other publishers. *The Boys of St. Basil's*, also in *The Boys' Friend* in 1899-1900, saw the birth of his favourite school. Editors, too, held the place in high esteem. *The Seventh House at St. Basil's* was commissioned to launch *The Boys' Herald* in 1903 and the

school was still boosting first issues in 1919 and 1922 with *Henry St. John's Schooldays* in the revived *Boys' Realm* and *The Out-cast of St. Basil's* in *The Champion*.

This *Realm* story is a particular testimonial to the drawing power of St. Basil's. The editor concerned was J. N. Pentelow, long famous for his Wycliffe and Haygarth stories. He stood down in favour of St. John, and not even Pentelow's most fervent supporter would claim that he was bashful about printing his own stories.

The school existed, then, for nearly a quarter of a century, but the continuity was largely spurious. St. John frequently commented that the place looked like a barracks and twice let "jail" slip out: judging by the number of people passing through it also had something in common with a railway station. St. Basil's had at least four headmasters in its time and there was a heavy wastage of junior staff. The boys aged, sometimes with disconcerting rapidity. A rather gormless Third-former in one serial had by the next blossomed into a most potent, grave, and reverend signior of the Sixth and a model of what a prefect should be. The names afforded a tenuous connection, but the character obviously had little in common

with its previous incarnation.

St. John is an author who improves with study. Much of his stuff, and particularly that in lighter vein, has a headlong, almost careless air about it and it takes time to grasp that there is a good more craft in it than sometimes shows on the surface.

ST. BASIL'S was divided into seven houses of about 25 boys and at first appears to be a ramshackle collection of loosely-linked and unnecessarily-small units. But no weekly serialist retailing his yarns in 6,000-word dollops could manipulate casts as large as those Frank Richards found necessary with St. Jim's and Greyfriars. He would have bogged himself down—and his readers with him—in a morass of names without recognisable characteristics or discernible functions. St. John, by concentrating on one small house at a time, had only to deal with a handful of boys in a story and could give them adequate treatment.

The next point involves a sort of "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" consideration. St. John was fond of using a mean, spiteful, and vindictive master as a key character. Such a man would have limited scope in his persecution of the hero in an undivided school: as the

Housemaster of one of St. Basil's small divisions he held autocratic sway over a virtually isolated community and could pursue his nefarious schemes untroubled by checks and controls—until he became so outrageous that the Head stepped in and sacked him in the last chapter. It seems significant that this pattern was set in the very first story, but whether the character necessitated the division or the division brought out the character is now past solving.

Boys of England was only three years old when St. John was born. He, even moreso than Richards, was nourished on the school stories of the Brett, Emmett, and Fox tradition, and he was much less successful in shaking off their influence. Even in his most light-hearted stories his schools were grimy, dingy, and slightly forbidding. *Who's Who* says that he was educated privately in England and France, and if his schools are founded on his actual experience he did well to keep quiet about the details. One always has a feeling of uncertainty about his headmasters, too. With Richards, one knows. Doctors Locke and Holmes have an Olympian detachment. Dr. Chisholm would like to have it, but people keep trampling on the corns of his

prestige, when he mounts his high horse with alacrity, not to say gusto.

This label of "Doctor" is generally the indication of majesty. David Goodwin was a bit more specific than most. His premier Head was the Right Reverend Canon Leveson of St. Simeon's. Frank Richards presumably knew what his Headmasters were doctors of but I cannot recall that he ever took his readers into his confidence. By tradition, it should have been Divinity, and even if some of his readers had the idea that Dr. Locke went round with a stethoscope in the tail-pocket of his frock coat it did no harm.

Dr. Lynn (or Saxon), St. Basil's first headmaster, was conceived along stately Lockian lines, but he lacked the iron firmness of character of Richards' Heads. He pleaded old age and retired to make way for a passing inventive freak, while a later Head tamely submitted to being sacked through the machinations of a subordinate who aspired to his place—and he stayed sacked. This could never happen in Richardsland. The requirements of the authors, of course, were rather different. Richards had to preserve his characters and slanted his plotting accordingly. St. John felt no such necessity: as long as any of

his cast played the appropriate part in the particular story in progress he had no compunction in dumping even a Headmaster. They came and went. Some were likeable, some were unremarkable, but St. John was not concerned enough to make any of them grippingly impressive.

ST. JOHN devised many schools in his various papers, the second in importance being Greyminster. This opened in what were nominally two stories, *The Fourth Form at Greyminster* and *Chums of Greyminster* but was really one immensely long serial. Herbert Haviland, wanting to go to sea and consigned to Greyminster, changes places with a ship's boy, Tom Andrews. Andrews naturally has a rough time at the school. This is a highly improbable basis for a story, which did not deter others from following in its track. Henry T. Johnson imitated it shortly afterwards in *The Black Sheep of the School*, where young Brabazon, an escapee from a reformatory (he was innocent, of course!) saves the life of another youth creeping like snail unwillingly to school and substitutes for him at St. Bridget's. Frank Richards picked the idea up and had Tom Redwing arriving at Greyfriars *vice* Leonard Clavering, who showed his

originality in wanting to join the Army as a change from his sea-struck forerunners.

This sharing of ideas is difficult to assess with accuracy. Roger Jenkins was privileged to inspect the library at Rose Lawn after Frank Richards' death, and he commented in an article in *The Collectors' Digest* :

[It contained] *school stories by other authors in editions published between the two wars. Here can be seen Alec Waugh, P. G. Wodehouse, Desmond Coke, Rudyard Kipling, H. A. Vachell, Hugh Walpole, Talbot Baines Reed, and G. F. Bradley, to name a few. All have been read and the parts which particularly interested Charles Hamilton were marked in pencil. It is clear that his stories owe nothing to these authors (except perhaps in Mr. Quelch's refusal to leave Greyfriars when dismissed by Mr. Brander, which bears a close resemblance to a similar incident in Bradley's Lanchester Tradition) but it is also interesting to note that he was not unaware of what his rivals had to offer.*

This gives support to the point I stressed in *Digging Round the Roots* that the writers for the weeklies operated in an almost percolation-proof world of their own. Their borrowings were from each other, and not the hard-cover authors, and those

borrowings, like the language of Truthful James's partner, were painful and frequent and free.

THERE IS NO NEED to hold up one's hands in horror about this. These men were not striving to create deathless literature: they were rushing out weekly instalments for boys, fully aware that not one reader in a thousand would recall a word of it a month after printing. The demands on them were excessive. The rate of pay was low—it had only reached £1/1/0 a thousand by 1939—and to make even a modest living the writer needed two serials every week and to produce over half a million words a year. The demands increased with their popularity, the peak being when Frank Richards accepted commitments which entailed his turning out 80,000 words a week to keep up with schedule. They must frequently have been at their wits' end for variation and grasped at any straw. Even Richards' well of ideas ran dry occasionally and, as Mr. Lofts has related, members of the office staff were called on to prime his pump with suggestions on what the next series should be about.

In any case, as he embarked on the long run of extended series he became progressively

more self-contained. Once he had the theme, his plots more or less automatically developed themselves in accordance with the well-defined characteristics of the cast. It was in his earlier days, with more single-issue tales to produce, that he leaned on externals to a marked

extent. The puzzling point is whether some of his repetitions were from sub-conscious recollection or whether he just didn't care. It must be either one or the other, otherwise the fact would not be so obvious and in such a peculiar way.

Part Two Will Appear In Number 84

HOW I MET THE MAGNET

THE ARTICLE by Jack Overhill in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 81, *Magnets and Gems*, reminds me of how I first came to know *The Magnet*. I became acquainted with it and its companion papers rather late, at an age when many stopped reading them.

I was feeling bored on Boxing Day, 1924, and went out to buy something to read. I think that it was the cover of *The Magnet* that made me choose it. I had thought that I was too old to read boys' papers, because I had already given up the girls' papers,

School Friend, *Schoolgirls' Weekly*, *Schoolgirls' Own Library*, and the others, but I was so "taken" with the *Magnet* story, one in the Wharton/Quelch series, that I bought the rest in the series.

I had never read anything so good, but I stopped reading at the end of the series, but started again in September or October of 1925, at the beginning of the Wingate/Loder series. These stories were very good, too.

I continued to read *The Magnet* until the end in 1940, also reading *The Schoolboys' Own Library* and buying any back numbers I could find on the bookstalls.

I think the Wingate/Loder series would make a good movie, as would the High Oaks series.

—E.M.

Correction—(We are beginning to dislike that word!)—
p.135, col. 1, 11th line up, should read: "this sort of thing."

About Catalogues And Lists

RECEIVED TOO LATE for comment in S. P. C. Number 82 — and perhaps just as well in view of what happened to the *Charles Hamilton Catalogue* — was a copy of *The Nelson Lee Library: A Complete Guide and Bibliography to the Writings of Edwy Searles Brooks*, a title to arouse the admiration of titlers of books two hundred years ago.

The book itself aroused our admiration to great heights. What a tremendous amount of time, research, energy must have gone into the making of it! In the 60 pages plus cover it will surely be impossible for any collector of Edwy Searles Brooks' writings to look for a story by him and not find it. Also included are all the stories that appeared in *The Nelson Lee Library*, whether or not written by Mr. Brooks.

The Nelson Lee Library: A Complete Guide may be regarded as the definitive work in its field and is a reflection of the zeal of Bob Blythe and his collaborators, Jack Wood, Bill Lofts, and Jim Sutcliffe — not overlooking M. F., who, says Mr. Blythe, "so untiringly translated my hieroglyphics into type."

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This is the fourth Catalogue or List produced under the auspices of the (London) O. B. B. C.

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SOME TYPOGRAPHICAL errors creep up and take us unawares. Others are committed, it almost appears, deliberately. It was the latter case with the error on page 132 of *The Story Paper Collector Number 82*, where we referred to *The Charles Hamilton Catalogue of the (London) Old Boys' Book Club Charles Hamilton Library as The Greyfriars List*.

We had received a copy from Roger Jenkins, the Librarian, admired it, and then placed it on one side where it could be referred to when the time came to make a note of it for S. P. C. When the time came, the *Catalogue* could not be seen. Actually, a paper-cover novel had been placed on it, partially hiding it. So we went ahead in a carefree manner and called it *The Greyfriars List*. That indicates just how good our memory is for recently-acquired information.

The irony of it is that, had we waited only 24 hours before printing the page, we would have had a letter from Bette Pate in Australia to put us back on the right track. All we can do now is express our regrets.

— W. H. G.

COLLECTING OLD BOYS' BOOKS: NOT "A NEW CRAZE"

IN THE LONDON Sunday newspaper *The People* last January there was a story about the hobby of collecting of old boys' "books" or, as I tend to think of them, story papers.* The writer of the article referred to the hobby as "a new craze." This demonstrated his lack of knowledge of his subject, for the hobby is not only not new, but on the contrary is very old.

The only reason that this fact is not well known is, probably, that until comparatively recent years there has been no sustained organization among collectors and before the mid-1920s (as far as I know) no hobby periodical more than very slightly concerned with their activities.

Indeed, until the beginning of *The Story Paper Collector* in 1941 there seems to have been no magazine devoted entirely to the subject of old story papers. (In the United States *Dime Novel Roundup* has served collectors of dime and nickel novels since 1931, and even earlier than that

there were *Happy Hours Magazine* and in addition some short-lived titles.)

Actually, the collecting of story papers—penny dreadfuls, penny bloods, dime novels, however they might be referred to in different times and different places—must have begun very soon after publication of such papers or "books" was started.

The first collectors would be readers who stacked up copies of each week's or each month's issues of the earliest story periodicals as they came along and then started looking for back numbers to build up and complete their sets. This was the way I started, with *The Empire Library*, in 1910.

(Among my family heirlooms there are two bound volumes of John Cassell's *The Working Man's Friend, and Family Instructor*: Volumes 1 and 2 of the old series, 1850, bound together, and Volume 1 of the new series, 1851-2. Both books are in bookbinder-made covers, not in publisher's cases.)

It would take a lot of research, not possible for me to do, to find the first occasion on which an editor inserted in his paper the

* Such publications as *The Boys' Friend Library* and *The Sexton Blake Library* admittedly are more like books than papers.

request of a reader for back numbers. The earliest advertisement of a dealer in old boys' books that I have seen is in *The Boys' Weekly Novelette* Number 33, dated February 11th, 1893. There being a dealer, there must have been either collectors or else people who wished to read the papers he offered, even if they didn't wish to keep them after they were read.

THE DEALER whose advertisement I found in *The Boys' Weekly Novelette* was C. A. Ransom. The advertisement runs to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ columns and many titles of "penny bloods" and "penny dreadfuls" are listed, including *Handsome Harry*, *Tom Tartar's Schooldays*, and *The Boys' World*. I quote:

BOOKS! BOOKS! BOOKS!

All readers of the *Boys' Novelette* should visit my bookstores. I have the largest stock of *Boys' Books* in London . . . Any kind of *Books* bought in any quantity. Don't forget, *Boys*, I am THE OLD ORIGINAL *Boys' Book Dealer*. Established 10 years in the *Boys' Standard*. Note the address: C. A. Ransom, 21 Bath Street, City Road, London E.C.

Mr. Ransom also stated that he gave a good price for any kind of *Boys' Books*. Any quantity bought or exchanged for others. Established 1875. Don't throw your

old books away, but send them to C. A. Ransom, and receive a P.O.O. by return. N.B. — Trade supplied.

The words *Trade supplied* indicates that there were others who dealt in old boys' books.

Mr. Ransom can be read about in later years. Writing under the heading of *Post-War Reflections in The Collector's Miscellany* Number 1, 5th Series, October 1945, John Medcraft had this to say:

Many well known figures have passed on and we shall miss such stalwarts as Barry Ono, Arthur E. Waite, James Madison, R. R. Scales, F. W. Strickland, and J. R. Rhodhouse, to mention just a few. Auction sales carried on almost as usual and several well known collections were disposed of including those of the late C. A. Ransome (sic), the late W. Roberts, formerly Art Sales correspondent to *The Times*, Dr. Hubert Norman, and the late Sir Hugh Walpole. When the first part of the Ransome collection came up a few days before the outbreak of war the sale was but sparsely attended and prices ruled low. . . . but it was another story when the second part was sold at Sotheby's in November.

As Mr. Ransom stated in *The Boys' Weekly Novelette* in 1893 that he was "Established 1875," it would appear that collecting may have existed before that

year. There would need to be a demand before someone would set out to supply it. From this, the beginning of old boys' books collecting may be dated back to almost 90 years ago.

EVIDENCE must be gathered wherever it can be found, so I now turn to Number 16 of *The Dime Novel Roundup*, dated April, 1932. This magazine was established by Ralph Cummings of South Grafton, Massachusetts, in January, 1931, as the official organ of The Happy Hours Brotherhood, a group of dime novel collectors.* In Number 16 can be found:

Mr. G. Meredith, our Folkestone, England, correspondent, informs us that Mr. J. J. Wilson, the Liverpool collector and dealer, died February 21st. We had been in touch with Mr. Wilson for several months, and had been favored with notes for several interesting articles on *Old Boys' Books and Penny Dreadfuls*.

One of Mr. Wilson's great favorites was the famous *Penny Dreadful*, *Sweeny Todd*, the *Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, and we are greatly indebted to him for much information regarding this lurid work. . . .

* *The Roundup* is still published monthly, since 1952 by Edward T. LeBlanc, 87 School St., Fall River, Mass., U.S.A.: \$3.00 per year.

As the power behind the Old Boys' Book Club, Mr. Wilson was perhaps best known. This organization was established in 1880, to assist collectors to buy, sell, and exchange Old Boys' Books and Penny Dreadfuls. At one time, Mr. Wilson stated, the club had as many as three hundred subscribers, but as the old-timers died out the membership fell to less than a hundred. Thousands of the old English classics changed hands through this medium.

Some of Mr. Wilson's letters to us were written on the stationery of the Old Boys' Book Agency which was established, according to the printed heading, in 1860, but we have little information about this enterprise, probably conducted, in later years at least, by Mr. Wilson himself.

The final paragraph suggests that the buying and selling of old boys' books—and the collecting of them—was going on as long ago as 1860. If this actually was the case we may date our hobby back 103 years. That is as far as I can go with the available evidence, but it is too far for the collecting of old boys' books to be regarded as "a new craze."

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Originally it was my intention to stop here, having proven (I hoped) my case. But I must

Old Boys Book Club List.

Publisher : Joseph Parks, 2 Irvin Avenue, Saltburn-by-Sea.

NO. 7—12.

JULY—DEC., 1926.

FOR SALE.

Young England, pub's cases, 1882, 6, 7, 8, 1880, 1. 2, Routledges, Boys Annual, 1864, 5, 7, 1870, 7, 1881, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8.
Jack Harkaway, complete series, 16 vols. £1, Burrage's Tom Torment, bound, 7/6, Hardiboy James, 6/6, Boys Halfpenny, Journal, Vols 1 & 2, all pub'd, rare, £3. What offers. 140 specimen copies some 1st issues & rare, P.D.'s, Bloods, etc. bound in 4 vols. Reynolds Mysteries of London and Court of London, 1st issues 12 vols. Vol 1 Court of London, Reynolds Miscellany, vols 1—8, Dantes Inferno, Dore plates, stamp for list. F. Jay, 179 Ribblesdale Rd Streatham, London, S. W. 2.

SALE OR EXCHANGE

Marvel, various duplicates between No's 50 & 160. John Medcraft, 40 Windsor Rd, Ilford, Essex.

Young Men of Gt Britain, Vols 12, 13, 22, 23.

Our Boys Journal, Vols 1, 6, 8, 9.

Boys of England, Vols 9, 10, 11 & 15—19.

Good price for clean copies. C. Lawrence, 287 Acton Lane, Chiswick, W. 4.

Daring Ching-Ching, Wonderful Ching-Ching, Best for Boys Library, 3d 6d series Tom Wildrakes Schooldays Vol's 1 & 2 Fox's 3d. 6d & 1/- Publications, Boys of Bircham School. Lists and prices to E. C. Wells, 60 Stopford Road, Upton Manor, London, E. 13.

Nugget Library 1—120 (with few exceptions) Marvel 1d Nos 1—280 (various)

Young Folks Tales. Good condition. Any reasonable price given. John Medcraft, 40 Windsor Rd, Ilford, Essex.

The Wandering Apprentice, Bravos of Alsatia, Aldine Coy's Publications.

Boys of the Empire, (Brett's coloured) Vol

at times be of the wordy type, for I went on and wrote two more pages and then decided to reprint a part of Joseph Parks' Old Boys Book Club List. So, on we go . . .

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THE COLLECTORS and dealers—some of them at least were both—whose names can be found in *Vanity Fair* (Joseph Parks, 1917-27) were in the main not interested in the then latter-day papers, but in the Victorians: Frank Jay, Patrick Mulhall (Ireland), Barry Ono (his stage name—his real name was Fred Harrison), John James Wilson, J. P. Quaine (Australia), Edward F. Herdman, Henry Steele, J. J. Darby, and Matthew Hunter. Arthur Budge is among those who contributed articles, but he wrote about papers of 1900-12—the only one to do so.

There are only three old boys' books articles in Volume 1 of *Vanity Fair* (Numbers 1 to 12, 1917-19), all by Frank Jay. In Number 11, October, 1918, there are two poetical efforts: *The Old Boys Book Brigade*, signed by

Frank Jay and Fred Harrison (Barry Ono), and *An Ode to Ye Penny Dreadful*, by Barry Ono.

Still another Old Boys' Book Club was functioning in the 1920s, though only briefly. I have a copy of the final issue, "No. 7-12"—which is a good way of covering six issues—of the Club List, published by Joseph Parks and dated July-December, 1926. It consists of a single sheet, size about $5\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ ", printed on both sides, half the reverse side being blank.

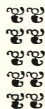
Most of the advertisements refer to Victorian papers, and apart from these there is nothing, except for a short notice:

We regret that after this issue, owing to lack of support, the Old Boys Book Club will cease to exist.

John Medcraft had an advertisement offering *Marvels* for sale or exchange, and Arthur Harris, of Dowlais, Glam., requested information as to the name of the author of the *Ned Nimble* series. I wonder if he obtained it.

This Old Boys' Book Club and that conducted by Mr. Wilson

OPPOSITE PAGE—A reproduction, actual size, not facsimile but re-set as nearly like the original as is possible with Rookwood Press types, of the upper section, front side, of combined Numbers 7-12, Joseph Parks' *Old Boys Book Club List*. With this issue, that O. B. B. Club ceased to exist.



appear to have been commercial ventures.

RESIDING AT Almondbury, Huddersfield, Arthur Budge was successful in getting his advertisements into the *Our Exchange and Mart* columns of *The Boys' Herald* in the later 1900s, in spite of the fact that these columns were forbidden ground for dealers. Eventually, it has been stated, Hamilton Edwards ruled that Mr. Budge's advertisements were not to be accepted.

The earliest of his advertisements that I have seen was in *The Boys' Herald* in 1908. In addition to handling old boys' books Mr. Budge was offering to bind for other readers *Boys' Friend Libraries*, six in a volume, or 26 copies of *The Boys' Herald* or other weekly papers, for 1/1d. a volume, guaranteeing satisfaction. He stated that he would pay return postage on three volumes sent at one time. A little later the price was up to 1/6d. a volume and could be paid in instalments.

It is not easy to see how anyone who charged such very low rates could be regarded as being in business. He could have bound books for a lifetime and never have become rich.

Another reader asked 9d. for 50 sheets of notepaper printed

with name and address, 8d. for 50 envelopes, both for 1/4d., post free. Neither Mr. Budge nor this other advertiser could have been doing it for anything but fun, surely, even in those days of prices that seem to us to be incredibly low.

One of Arthur Budge's advertisements informed readers that he was running a lending library.

Perhaps the ban was still being enforced in 1915. In *Pluck* Number 548, dated May 1st of that year, there is a small paid advertisement:

LOOK BOYS! I exchange good stamps for clean Cigarette Cards, Boys' Papers, etc. Stamp for details. Approval Sheets, Cameras, Cycles, Scout Goods, Bound Novels cheap. Arthur Budge, Almondbury, Yorks.

This advertisement indicates that he was operating not only a "business" in old boys' books but was also dealing in stamps and general merchandise.

At that time *Pluck* was running free advertisements for readers, having inherited this service from *The Boys' Herald* through that paper's successors, *Cheer Boys Cheer* and *The Boys' Journal*.

The latest of Mr. Budge's advertisements that have come to my attention were in *The Boys' Friend* in 1920, in Number 1002,

August 21st, and Number 1010, October 23rd. They were paid ads., and he offered pre-war "Friends, Realms, Populars, etc." and "Gems" at 1/4d. a dozen, 50 for 5/6d., and "Beautiful Pigeons" at 5/6d., "Pigeons" at 4/6d.

IT WAS IN 1916 that I first contacted Arthur Budge, after seeing his advertisements in *Cheer Boys Cheer* (1912-13) or *The Boys' Journal* (1913-15). I ordered several lots of papers from him, mainly *Pluck* and *The Boys' Friend* of the 1900s. Mr. Budge had a peculiar method: supplied with a list of the papers I wished to buy, and a remittance, he sent me copies that came to more than I had paid. This procedure was repeated later.

He appeared to be willing to take a chance on my being honest, in order to keep me writing to him and sending further payments. I have since

wished that I had kept his letters, invariably included in the parcels of papers. They were written on small pieces of paper a few inches square, every portion covered with tiny writing.

Herbert Leckenby also bought papers from Arthur Budge and related in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 17 how, after loss of contact for several years he—Herbert—wrote to him, only to learn that he was no longer handling old boys' books but did have many thousands of cigarette cards for disposal. That would have been about 14 years after those two advertisements appeared in *The Boys' Friend*.

I STARTED OUT to prove that the collecting of old books is not something new and I seem to have wandered rather more than was necessary. I think, however, that my objective has been accomplished, insofar as the evidence available to me will allow.

—W.H.G.

I Wish to Purchase . . .

—*Collectors' Digest Annual* for 1947 & 1948, 20/- each offered; *Collectors' Digest*, January, 1959, 6/- offered; 1922 *Holiday Annual*, 45/- offered.—C. F. F. Rickard, 415 East 10th St., North Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

—*Boys Will Be Boys*, by E. S.

Turner.—Leon Stone, 131 Pretoria Parade, Hornsby, N. S. W., Australia.

[Since fire destroyed his home Mr. Stone has replaced some of his lost books, incl. all SPCs, but still lacks—as of last March—*Collectors' Digest* # 1, 24, 29-31, & *C.D. Annual* for 1947-8-9 & 1955.]

The Birth of The Short Story

“WHICH CAME FIRST, the hen or the egg?” This humorous rendering of an early metaphysical problem has intrigued and interested many where literature is concerned. It goes right back to the dawn of civilisation and is as strong and potent an influence on life and character as ever.

To search thoroughly into this matter would require countless years and vast endeavour, but, fortunately perhaps, “art is long and life is short.” One could pore over hundreds and perhaps thousands of volumes of ancient lore and still be as far off as ever.

But everything has to start from something or somewhere, and I will try to pen a short and, I hope, informative article on this absorbing subject.

Leaving for the present the early folk tales of nations and peoples, one could trace the beginnings of the short story to the Jewish *Talmud*. This wonderful work, which combines ancient folklore and belief with the elaborate ceremonial of the Hebrews, contains sufficient matter to fill many volumes. The scholar Whiston discovered this when he wrote his *Josephus and the Early Wars*.

The *Apocrypha* of the Christian Scriptures come a good second with such stories as *Susanna and the Elders* and *Bel and the Dragon*. (This last could be called the world's first detective story.)

A passing reference to the folklore of the North American Indians as recorded by H. W. Longfellow would not be out of place, but this can be studied in his *Song of Hiawatha*.

Turning to ancient Greece, justly regarded by many as “the fountain of all classical knowledge,” the works of Herodotus, “the father of history,” stand out. How many of them have survived it is impossible to say, but *King Rhampsinetus and the Thief* will doubtless be familiar to some. Certain incidents in this story would perhaps not pass the censor, but like Shakespeare he took “all knowledge for his province.”

Ancient Egypt is a subject by itself, and one can say right away that the whole body of Egyptian literature can be traced to Hermes Trismegistus (three times greatest). His various writings on every subject ran into thousands of volumes, none of which have survived. But perhaps fragments of them remain in the folklore of other nations.

Saxon England from the time of Alfred the Great, and its stories and song, can be summed up in the story of Beowulf in

the Mere, and the myth of King Arthur and his knights will suffice for pagan Britain.

It would not be fair to neglect Wales and its remarkable and very beautiful poetry, as written—still preserved—by its bards Taliassin, Modred, Uwain Glyndever and, later, Owen Rhoscomyill.

The sagas of the Norsemen, long preserved in the minstrelsy of the different Nordic tribes, bring us down to the Middle Ages, regarded by many as the most richly endowed of all.

France with its wonderful *Song Cycle of Roland*, *The Romance of the Four Brothers Aymon*, and England with William Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, can fittingly be described as the beginning of popular folklore in Europe.

Following the invention of printing, the popular short story may be regarded as having secured a firm hold on all classes. With the vast and incomparable literature which followed, the rest of the subject is common knowledge and will, it is hoped, long survive.

—HENRY ADAMS PUCKRIN



¶ FIDDLE-DE-DEE.—Blood-poisoning can certainly be produced by bad smells.—*Reply to a reader of The Girl's Own Paper*, 1892-3 volume. +

In view of the kind reception accorded the previous two servings, we present another helping . . .

STILL MORE POT-POURRI

Bookshop Browsing

I WAS VERY interested to see the picture of J. N. Pentelow in S.P.C. Number 80. This is the first one of him that I have seen. He was a great author. . . .

In Brighton, browsing around in a well-known bookshop, I came across some dusty volumes of *The Girl's Own Paper*. I looked through the pages but they seemed very "dry" and even the illustrations were uninteresting. I rather fancy that they will be adorning those shelves for years to come, unless some elderly lady buys them for sentimental reasons.

I can remember when Foyle's famous bookshop had piles of juvenilia on the floor. It was surprising, the number of elderly ladies in search of ancient *Chattebox Annuals*, probably reminders of their youth. . . .

I used to scour the markets, with a few coppers in my pockets, and pick up the old books at two for a penny: red Magnets, green Gems, and the rest. Now

one can go all round London with a wallet full of Gussy's fivers and find nothing except on very rare occasions. . .

Thank you for S.P.C. and rest assured that your voluntary work on this delightful publication is appreciated by . . .

—CHARLIE WRIGHT
Greenwich, London S.E.10.

* * *

Letters Written to J.N.P.

I CERTAINLY was not disappointed because my article did not appear in Number 79! Over the years that I have known S.P.C. the quality of its contents has been of such a high standard that I sometimes wonder how I ever managed to squeeze into the picture at all.

An article and two extracts from letters, all in one issue—Number 80 certainly did me proud! This does two things: it injects back into the bloodstream some of the confidence and ego which the years have slowly drained away, and it makes one's family and friends begin to wonder whether the occasional doubts they have been entertaining were really justified. So, on those two counts alone, I offer my sincere thanks.

My thanks are also due to Bill Lofts for his contribution on J. N. Pentelow. Any fresh facts concerning this man are always

welcome. During the period of Mr. Pentelow's editorship of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* I wrote him a few letters—for "wrote" read "pestered him with"—making suggestions for future stories which, because I was a child, were childish.

For instance, if I read a *Magnet* story concerning the deviations of Vernon-Smith, I would suggest the same type of story for Cardew of St. Jim's, or I would ask for some sumptuous sarcasms of Mornington in a Rookwood story to be put into the mouth of the Caterpillar of Highcliffe, and so on, *ad nauseum*.

Despite the fact that I never enclosed a penny stamp and an addressed envelope—how did *The Amalgamated Press* pay its way?—I always received a prompt and courteous, if short, reply, signed *Your Editor*. This, being shown to my classmates made me, from my insignificant place in the lower half of the class, momentarily a figure of some importance.

—MAURICE KUTNER
Clapton, London E.5.

* * *

Philip Swinnerton

THE LONDON *Evening News* of last January 31st published on the front page a report of the death of Mr. [Philip] Swinnerton, the famous old boys' books

artist. The report mentioned his drawing of Weary Willie and Tired Tim for *Chips* and the drawing of *Chick's Own* front page feature. Another link with our boyhood days severed.

—From the February, 1963, *Newsletter* of the Old Boys' Book Club, London.

Philip Swinnerton's work can be found in many issues of such early-20th century Amalgamated Press papers as *The Boys' Friend*, *The Boys' Realm*, *The Boys' Herald*, and *Pluck Library*. He illustrated stories based on the Chaplin comedies that appeared in *Pluck* in 1915 and 1916.

* * *

Knockout is Knocked Out!

THE COMIC STRIP and sometime part-reading-story paper, *Knockout*, was merged with the new-comer *Valiant* in February last. The first issue was dated March 4th, 1939, and the last one February 16th, 1963, a run of almost 24 years. While there were no serial-numbers on the paper in recent years, Derek Adley and Bill Lofts have calculated that there were 1251 issues. (They figure that *Film Fun*, discontinued last September, had 2225 issues.)

If *Knockout* was famous for anything, it was for the humorous picture-stories of Billy Bunter

at an unrecognizable—to Magnetites—Greyfriars with unrecognizable school-mates and schoolmasters. These were featured from beginning to end—though we understand that the early strips were by Magnet artist C. H. Chapman and not so “comic.” There were also picture-stories of Sexton Blake and Tinker during the greater part of the paper's run.

During recent years *Knockout* attracted the attention of older readers by reprinting pre-war stories, including the Jasper Todd/*Red Fox Inn* series from *The Bullseye* and a Dick Turpin series, *The Nightriders*, from a source that eludes us. There were also Rookwood School stories from *The Boys' Friend*.

* * *

On “Magnets and Gems”

I ENJOYED READING Jack Overhill's “Magnets and Gems” in Number 81. When I listened to the radio broadcast I remember seizing upon those sentences which deal with his first introduction to the Companion Papers. I always find the story of one's “first awakening” most interesting. Such stories probably fall in the same category as a man's passing reference to the first occasion he met the girl who later became his wife.

In my own case I suppose, like Topsy, I just grewed. It was no sudden discovery: perhaps evolution would be a better word. I used to look at the pictures of comics that came my way, rarely read at any length and never bought. Later, an elder brother used to clutter up our home with red *Magnets*, blue *Gems*, yellow *Plucks*, and pink *Union Jacks*, but they were beyond me and contained too many long, hard words for me to make much progress in any story, and I contented myself with the illustration captions.

The teaching staff at my old school were very tolerant towards their scholars' juvenile reading matter and not only allowed them, without comment, to stuff their pockets full to capacity with anything from *The Boys' Friend* to *Nick Carter* (thereby cruelly creasing and crushing many a beloved periodical in the process), but they permitted a special corner of the playgrounds, near the tuckshop, to be used as a market-place for "sale or exchange."

As a new scholar, aged nine, I took little interest in this miniature Petticoat Lane; but by my tenth birthday I was among those who made their meagre spending-money go as far as possible in the pursuit of beloved reading matter.

We were like Topsies, just growing into a life-long love of all these numerous periodicals and comics, aided and abetted, it seems, by a most understanding headmaster and staff. Bless 'em all! — MAURICE KUTNER

* * *

Penny Dreadfuls: Picture-Papers?

FROM A picture-feature in Number 1 of *Boys' World*, dated January 26th, 1963—a new weekly from Longacre Press—comes this:

The first Boys' picture-papers, called "Penny Dreadfuls," were based on these melodramas. Nowadays, we'd think them very dull.

Picture-papers? Called "Penny Dreadfuls"? It appears that no-one outside the ranks of old boys' books collectors now remembers that boys' papers were not always picture-papers—or "comics."

Boys' World is a brightly-printed picture and text paper and has a name that is old: it has been used twice before—1879-86 and 1905-6.

* * *

Swift Slows Down, Stops

SOON AFTER *Boys' World* began publication (see above) a long-established Longacre Press boys'

weekly, *Swift*, was discontinued in its ninth or tenth year. The final issue was Volume 10, Number 9, dated March 2nd. If we remember correctly, Longacre Press used to be Hulton Press.

* * *

Bunter = Variegated

IN REFERENCE to "Bunter" meaning "Brightly coloured and variegated"—see *More About Those Bunter Beds* on page 133—while Billy Bunter himself is scarcely that, perhaps the "stories" he tries to get away with could be so regarded, in a figurative sort of way!

* * *

Source of Wonder

IT IS A never-ending source of wonder to me how you manage to publish *The Story Paper Collector* so often! . . . I look forward to it tremendously and have kept all of them since Number 24. (I wasn't a Club member prior to that.)

As you say, an acknowledgment occasionally isn't asking too much—you may be sending copies to those who are no longer interested.

I do hope you will be happy in your retirement; you will be able to catch up with your reading at last! . . . How pleasant it would be if you could pay a

visit here in London—and how you would be received!

Long may your little journal flourish. My one regret is that you do not charge a nominal sum for it. Something that is free is not appreciated as it should be. —DON WEBSTER
Kew Gardens, Surrey.

Thanks for your kind remarks, Don. Letter-writing and S. P. C. appear to benefit more from our retirement than does reading!—W. H. G.

* * *

Capt. A. Donnelly Aitken

WE HAVE BEEN informed by Bill Lofts of the death of Captain A. Donnelly Aitken, who was Editor of *Fun and Fiction* (1911-1914). We have no details.

* * *

"Comics" Remembered

IN DUBLIN'S *Sunday Review* for February 17th last a reader who signs himself "Desperate Dan" recalls, in a letter to the Editor, the endless hours of entertainment that he derived from the "comics" when he was a youngster. He wonders "where I could purchase some of the old ones of about 15 years ago," and lists some of them: *Film Fun*, *Radio Fun*, *The Champion*, *Wizard*, and others. He continues: "Perhaps some of your readers could help; I'd like to have them for

younger brothers of mine." The moral is, of course, keep them as you buy them—don't throw them away. If you don't keep them, there will come a day when you will wish you had. But in giving that advice in these pages we are "preaching to the converted"!

* * *

A Keen Young Collector

IT SURELY should be interesting to learn just who is the youngest collector of such story papers as *The Magnet* and *The Gem* and the comic papers contemporary with them.

Young collectors are, I fear, all too rare and those that are active today should be given every encouragement.

Recently I was pleased to receive letters from 16-year-old Geoffrey Harrison, a pupil of Wairoa College, Wairoa, New Zealand. If Geoff is not the youngest story paper collector he is surely one of the keenest.

His "first love" in that long lost land of schoolboy adventure is Greyfriars. He writes: "I just can't read enough about it," and states that he is also interested in old school photographs.

When he leaves school Geoff hopes to become a cartoonist. The pages of his bright and interesting letters are headed with

drawings of characters from the Greyfriars stories, that "fat Owl" predominating.

Let us hope that there are more young collectors of Geoff Harrison's kind around. If there are, Greyfriars lore will last for a long time. —O. W. WADHAM

* * *

More Footnotes to O.B.B. Collecting Article

THE SECOND LINE of the final paragraph on page 149 should read: *collecting of old boys' books is not . . .*

WRITING IN *Collector's Miscellany* Number 14, December, 1935, Barry Ono referred to J. J. Wilson's Old Boys' Book Club as "entirely mythical."

THE RE-SET PRINTING of the *Old Boys Book Club List* on page 146 includes all the typographical errors in the original printing—and none of our own.

* * *

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY 1915-1963

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