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WIZARD JOINS ROVER

SINCE I WROTE *Pictures or Prose?* (S. P. C. Number 85) *The Wizard* has been merged with *Rover* as *Rover and Wizard*, both titles being given equal prominence. The first thought was that the "new" publication had been submerged by a welter of picture periodicals, but such is not the case: it is an all-reading story paper and, being practically the only one left of that nature, it will be interesting to note whether, in the near future, "picture-strips" begin to seep into the pages of "real writing."

We adults would perhaps prefer the young 'uns to read the type of weekly that we did in our youth, but times have changed and such weeklies are no more. School tales no longer seem to have the same appeal to the youngsters as do stories or pictures of astronauts and infinite space beyond our immediate horizons.

Whether the old *Wizard* was suffering from a poor circulation

and was amalgamated with *Rover* to save expenses is beyond our ken and difficult to discover even if inquiries were made at the Editorial holy of holies. History has proved Editors to be a peculiar and chosen people, taciturn (except in their Editorial chats) and almost misleading when in office—but garrulous, perhaps with their memories suspect, when out of office.

The practice of subordinating the literary man to the artist was much in vogue in the earlier years of the Victorian era, and in these Edwardian days we have seen it revived . . . the literary matter was of secondary importance to the engravings, and indeed was often written around these illustrations, [and they] have their counterparts today in so-called "beautiful books" of coloured pictures, in which the artist's name takes precedence of the author's.

So wrote J. A. Hammerton in 1912, in an introduction to *The*

Pickwick Papers. We are left with the feeling that all this has happened before, and perhaps we have forgotten that in our own youth there was a substantial period when we ourselves preferred pictures to prose.

—MAURICE KUTNER

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¶ THE FINAL ISSUE of *The Wizard* was Number 1970, dated November 16th, 1963: a run of, probably, over forty years because publication was less often than once a week during the time of paper shortage.

Robin Hood Stories

JACK OVERHILL was correct in his assessment [S.P.C. Number 84] of the characters in the 1919 *Robin Hood* series. Far from being the Earl of Huntingdon in disguise, that Robin Hood was as uncouth and graceless a boor as could well be imagined. His language was coarse and his leadership nil.

Thom Cure All was a weird sort of hedge-doctor, but he finally charmed a lady of high degree, I believe.

If Horace Phillips was the author of these tales he had nothing to be proud of. Yet I bought them every week. Robin Hood and his Merry Men were "Our Gang," and we spent

many happy hours in thick woodlands near where I then lived, re-enacting their adventures. Happy days!

—GERRY ALLISON

Menston, Ilkley, Yorkshire.

BRIEF NOTES

¶ To the many senders of cards, letters, pictorial calendars, gifts, and cash contributions to the good cause (meaning S.P.C.), in December, our grateful thanks.

¶ The death occurred on November 6th, 1963, of Mrs. Una Harrison, who was the sister of Charles Hamilton and mother of Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright.

¶ Bernard Thorne informs us that he is still perambulating, but being kept busy with this & that, both collecting and letter-writing are in a sadly neglected state.

¶ Running short of the regular paper for this issue, about one-third of the copies will have the outside four pages printed on different paper, some of it white, some coloured.

¶ To complete our set of *The Magnet* we need a copy of Number 217. Also required: Numbers 163, 263 with covers to replace coverless copies; Numbers 90, 100, 110, 207, 308, 668, to replace poor copies.

—W.H.G.

THE LOWER BRANCHES

By TOM HOPPERTON

WE LEFT THE SUBJECT of John Nix Pentelow on an indecisive note. To clarify it a little, if a thirteen-year-old boy were given three Pentelow *Magnets* and three of similar vintage by Richards, asked to study them carefully and to write his order of merit and his impressions, I feel that his findings would run like this:

- 1) He would not detect that two writers were concerned;
- 2) His order of preference would be fortuitous, not based on authorship but on how the particular type of story appealed to the individual boy;
- 3) His remarks on style would be useless, or at all events irrelevant to the point we have in mind.

Even if he were given information that the 1916-1919 reader did not possess—that there were two hands involved—I can not see it making much difference. This is not to say that Pentelow's work was as good as Richards'. It was not, although the margin

is not as wide as has sometimes been suggested. It is pointless to compare Pentelow's stories with *The Magnet* of the 1930's: the only fair basis of comparison for the 1919 Pentelow is the 1919 Richards.

We know that eventually the almost unrelieved string of substitute stories reduced *The Gem's* circulation to danger point, but this was long after Pentelow's departure. There is no evidence that I know of to show that it dropped during Pentelow's editorship, and war-time paper shortages would restrict the chance of expansion.

The clearest indication of how the readers felt centres on the much-disputed *A Very Gallant Gentleman*. *The Collectors' Digest Annual* for 1962 reproduced the cover of this *Magnet* (Number 520) with comment which included: *Roger Jenkins has never wavered from his condemnation of Pentelow's action in killing off a well-loved, long-established character for the sake of a bit of melodrama. . . Eric*

Fayne has described it as "a dreary tale which has received attention far beyond its merits on account of its controversial theme."

This may be clear enough now, but what was its effect then? George R. Samways said that no story had stimulated more favourable correspondence. The editorial in *Magnet* Number 804 nearly six years later said: *Long ago I published a tale in The Magnet called A Very Gallant Gentleman! and over and over again readers have written to me respecting it. It continues that the next week's story would reach an even higher standard than in that long-ago triumph I have referred to.*

The then-editor, C. M. Down, was in no way concerned with the printing of the story—he was not even in England at the time—and he had no particular reason to roll Pentelow's log. It is the more remarkable that when he was looking for a superlative story for comparison he should ignore every "genuine" story in 800 *Magnets* and fasten on Pentelow's most controversial contribution. That he should be so impressed seems ample corroboration of Mr. Samways' statement.

THESE BATTLES of long ago have little effect on one's present reactions, and I find that I can read Haygarth and

Wycliffe with much less discomfort than I can the substitute stories. Some of the efforts by Richards' deputies are so amazingly crude as to be breathtaking, but Pentelow was too experienced and too able a writer to incur this charge. When he was provided with the unequalled scaffolding of the St. Jim's and Greyfriars casts, he hardly could go wrong. He did avoid any gross offence, but his personal quirks subject the reader steeped in Richards to a series of minor irritations.

He was a great hand at jamming as many nationalities into his schools as possible, all of whom spoke the venerable, stereotyped jargon associated with his country. I have heard several Irishmen who said "Be Jasus!" but not one who used "Bejabers!" and I suspect that this is on a par with that ridiculous expletive "Judas Priest!" in Mulford's *Bar-20* books. It is unlikely that a public school boy would talk like a bogtrotter fresh from Connemara but Pentelow's Irish specimens dripped "Bejabers!" and "Begorra!" all over the page, and his Welshmen backed them up with "Look you, whateffer!"

He was at one with Frank Richards in spreading colonial goodwill, and in commenting on the crowd of overseas juniors

at Wycliffe he dropped the significant remark that the mixing probably did the Wycliffites no harm and it certainly did the Colonials a lot of good!

Richards' swarm of outlanders was pie for him, and Micky Desmond, David Morgan, Buck Finn, Fishy, Ogilvy, and the rest immediately became more violently nationalistic in their speech. Even then he was not satisfied with such an army and he compensated for the loss of Courtney by importing Piet Delarey, the South African "Rebel." Delarey was quite a good character who maintained a precarious foothold in *The Magnet* until after 1925 and even appears in stories by the real MacKie. Whether Richards bowed to editorial pressure until such times as he could quietly dump the unwelcome intruder or whether the references to Pentelow's creation were written in by other hands is anybody's guess.

PENTELOW's sense of humour had little in common with that of Richards. He was much more facetious. Lowther suffered the most, as his stock-in-trade was reduced to talking like an exceptionally pompous and polysyllabic Victorian statesman. Frank Richards has often been compared with Charles

Dickens, but there was one Dickensian trick he did not employ — the breathless heaping of detail to work up to a comic climax. He was spacious enough in his humorous passages, but he ambled discursively to his summit, spreading his typical atmosphere as he went. Pentelow followed the Victorian. In *Fishy's Latest* (*Magnet* Number 454) Fish subjects the Famous Five and Mr. Quelch to a dose of electric snuff and three-quarters of a page is devoted to descriptions of every possible sort of sneeze which have to be read to be believed.

This is easily outdone in *Raid and Rescue* (*Gem* Number 556). Merry and Blake in organizing a midnight squad of bounds-breakers to rescue the kidnapped Skimpole and Trimble are embarrassed and annoyed by a flood of unwanted volunteers. Pentelow flogs the situation for two full pages, until the expeditionary force is swelled to 56 named juniors. It is remarked of the Charge of the Light Brigade: "It is magnificent but it isn't war!" and it can be said of this sort of thing: "It may be magnificent, but it isn't Richards!"

Pentelow, in common with most of the substitute writers, seemed shy of concentrating on the central cast and resorted much more to the freaks than did their originator. It was

perhaps an easier way of getting through the weekly grind, although when he worked Grundy, Wibley, Fish, Alonzo Todd, Dutton, and the other curios for all and more than they were worth it rather shifted the centre of gravity of the schools. In 1919 he took a party of ten Removites on a tour of Flanders. He could not very well leave out the Famous Five, but in the ballot for the remaining places the finger of Providence—and of Pentelow—ordained that they should be filled by Alonzo, Fish, Tom Dutton, Mauleverer, and Bunter, the five oddities of the form.

THE MAIN SOURCE of trouble is the inconsistent and unorthodox handling of the cast. Cherry is notoriously the most boisterous member of the Remove but according to *Magnet* Number 658, "Bob rather prided himself upon an aristocratic calm of manner." Ponsonby was a potential gangster always willing to pile four to one on a victim but "Ponsonby, whatever his faults, was no coward when it came to a hand-to-hand fight." A few weeks later: "If only the other three could have been relied on to back him up, he [Pon] would have hurled himself upon Wharton." The summit of Skinner's

nose-punching ambition would be Bunter's snub button, but Pentelow had him coolly rattling Bull's head in the course of an argument and "Skinner was fighting tooth and nail but in Johnny Bull in his present mood he had more than his match"!! Sir Jimmy Vivian could not quite make up his mind whether he spoke normal English or aspirate-dropping Cockney.

The puritan moralising was inevitable. Wharton and Co. found a new topic of conversation in earnest discussions on the impossibility of their acting like cads, and in the lightweight St. Jim's Parliament series he still had the Terrible Three holding up their consciences for each other's inspection.

Even when it was not done wilfully Pentelow's peculiarities persistently blurred the outlines, but only too often he knew that he was singing off key, and he knew that he was making the boys act out of character. Frank Richards drew his cast consistently: if anything had to be modified he bent the story to suit the character. Pentelow recklessly distorted the characters to work in some chance gap or situation. This was securing a momentary advantage by bad workmanship and possible long-term danger. The thing that carried all the weaknesses and

absurdities of the substitute writers on its back was the established strength of the characters. Their defined traits were the last thing that should have been tampered with, and if every writer had mucked them about to suit his own whims the only cement preserving consistency and unity would have disintegrated.

THE CRUCIAL TEST came in the handling of Billy Bunter. The Owl had not yet become the dominating key figure of later years, and it was fortunate for Pentelow that he did not have to imitate the more subtle and sympathetic Bunter of the 'thirties. He was far from happy when following the crude prototype of his own day. What baffled him in particular was the fatuity that was supposed to mitigate Bunter's crimes and turn them into mere peccadilloes. Frank Richards himself was still groping his way to the ameliorating transformation: Pentelow gives every indication that he would never have reached it. The blue-print for Bunter's stammering, self-contradictory confusion when cornered by vengeful authority was plain enough, yet no matter how many times Pentelow tried it he could never master the knack and ended with a couple of silly

and obvious lies as his version of the rather funny despairing gabble of the real thing.

Richards' Bunter in his more unscrupulous moments was not then far removed from being a young scoundrel. Pentelow turned him into a sort of juvenile Leon Kestrel for morals. In *Loder's Luck* (Magnet Number 658) Loder had had to give Joe Banks I.O.U.'s for £25, and when Banks threatens to take them to Dr. Locke, Loder steals some documents which prove that the bookie is a blackmailer. Before he can effect an exchange, Bunter gets his hands on the papers and blackmails Banks into surrendering the I.O.U.'s. Bunter now has both sets and proposes to sell the I.O.U.'s to Loder for £5 and to raise another five from Banks in exchange for the incriminating proofs. This blackmailing chaffering is carried on in grim earnest. There is no nonsense about Bunter being too big a fool to know what he is doing, and Pentelow's Owl would obviously be more at home on a treadmill than in a public school. It may be noted that the scheme fails, not because of Bunter relenting, but because Peter Todd accidentally destroys all the papers. Rum stuff!

These sins of Pentelow's may seem comparatively trivial when

viewed singly, but they happen on every page, they keep the seasoned reader in a continual state of resentful uneasiness, and the cumulative effect is out of all proportion to the weight of the individual factors.

Pentelow probably ended his editorship feeling with President Ulysses S. Grant, "I seen my duty and I done it!" No matter how we disturb the bones of that ancient controversy, the only two men who knew the truth of the matter are dead and anything which now emerges will at best be hearsay and at worst will be mere speculation. With that, we can leave Pentelow the editor to ride slowly into the setting sun.

The stories themselves remain for every reader to make the necessary decisions for himself on Pentelow's status as an original writer and his place in the somewhat melancholy hierarchy of the substitutes. For my own part, I have never been able to obtain three or four of the Haygarth and Wycliffe stories, and these I still hope to read. Against this, I have read nearly half of his *Gem* and *Magnet* tales, and I have no great ambition to swell the total. *Story Paper Collector*, unlike the Congress of the United States of America, does not award medals for devotion and bravery beyond the call of duty.

Part Five Will Appear In Number 87

THRILLER No. 5

I HAVE BEEN renewing acquaintance with *The Thriller*. What amazing value it was for two-pence! Such stories in paperbacks would cost three shillings today. This is quoted from No. 5, *All the Best—The Editor Greet's You*, which is the Editor's Chat:

I have received a big budget of letters approving Story of a Dead Man. My best thanks to all readers who have written me about this and other stories week by week. I was

perfectly sure last week's story would score a success. As I told you, the Dead Man was very lively. In view of my own opinion, backed by yours, I have arranged to retain this author, Mr. Leslie Charteris, as a regular contributor to our popular journal. Another amazing story from his pen is now in my hands, and will be fitted into our programme as soon as possible. So keep watch for an equally excellent yarn by Mr. Charteris, who by the way, wishes me to convey—with blushes—his appreciation to all readers for their expressions of approval. As

he enthusiastically remarked, "It is wonderfully encouraging to write for such an appreciative public."

Quite an interesting start for an author who became world-famous. — ALBERT WATKIN

JOHN NIX PENTELOW AND AMATEUR JOURNALISM

Fifty Years Ago

In December, 1903, *Sonnet and Song*, edited by John P. Nix, appeared. Containing poems by the editor, it also contained his photo. — From *Interesting Items*, Number 803, December, 1953, published by Arthur Harris, Penrhyn Bay, Llandudno, Wales.

THE NAME, Nix, not being a common one either as a surname or as a given name, I was interested in this paragraph and wrote to Arthur Harris concerning it. (In the Metro Winnipeg Telephone Directory there are just seven people named Nix. There are almost 500,000 people living in Metro Winnipeg.) Mr. Harris returned to the subject with this:

Amateur Became "Magnet" Editor

In my "Looking Backwards," covering 50 years ago last December [i.e., December, 1953: back to 1903—W.H.G.], I gave an amateur magazine *Sonnet and Song*, by John P. Nix, as the sole arrival

in Britain . . . its contents . . . included his photo. The name John P. Nix drew W. H. Gander's attention and he wondered whether this John P. Nix made use of a play on his name and . . . might have been John Nix Pentelow, who edited the professional boys' paper, *Magnet*, during the first World War. [Comparing] his photo in his magazine with that from a copy of *Chums*—the high collar and hair parted in the middle—undoubtedly tells us that this member of ours [i.e., of the British Amateur Press Association] was indeed the same as the man who eventually became the *Magnet's* Editor. — From *Interesting Items*, Number 809, June, 1954.

(Mr. Harris got behind with the printing of his magazine during the second World War and has not yet caught up. This is the reason I am discussing, in 1964, items in 1953 and 1954 issues of Mr. Harris's magazine.)

That paragraph by Arthur Harris provided the impulse I needed to start me looking

through the editorial columns in *Magnets* of 1916-1919, to see what Mr. Pentelow had to say about Amateur Journalism. I remembered that there were several references to A.J. during those years, and I regret that I do not have any *Gems* of the same period for further research.

Although I had been struck by the similarity of the names, I thought that John P. Nix could hardly be John Nix Pentelow writing and publishing an amateur magazine in 1903, because J.N.P. was writing professionally as much as fifteen years earlier. But that is no proof that he was not producing an amateur paper in 1903: amateur journalists have continued their connection with A.J. long after they went into professional journalism.

THE FIRST REFERENCE to Amateur Journalism that is to be found in *The Magnet* is in Number 467, January 20th, 1917. I am not sure just when Mr. Pentelow assumed control of the paper, but it is probable that it was before this date. I have a note stating that he took over at Number 421, March 4th, 1916.

In the *My Readers' Page* of Number 467 there is an item headed *Amateur Magazines*. It begins:

This is a subject on which I have been thinking of writing for some little time. There has been quite an epidemic of attempts at running amateur magazines lately, and in several cases I have seen headstrong youngsters who would not take advice embarking upon projects that were simply bound to turn out failures.

It might be well to point out that the A.J. attempts which had come to Mr. Pentelow's attention appear to have been those of boys who had visions of starting a *Magnet Club* or a correspondence club and issuing a club magazine which would earn a profit.

Mr. Pentelow stated that the cost of printing made it impossible for a small magazine to show a profit, granted the very small circulation which it would command. *The hectograph is the easiest way, and the cheapest.* But glycerine was needed for a hectograph and it was impossible to obtain glycerine in war-time.

It is in the next issue, Number 468, that there is a paragraph in the Editor's page which is of interest from the viewpoint of Mr. Pentelow's possible activity in Amateur Journalism:

My experience of these things goes farther back than the lives of most of you. In the days when I first began to write for publication there

were several of them [i.e., amateur magazines] in existence . . . I recall one such paper which I helped to finance in the youthful fervour of seventeen or so. It had twelve or sixteen pages . . . It was well printed, and it contained some good stuff, as well as other stuff which was not so good. Among the contributors were Robert L. Jefferson, who later became a prominent cycling journalist, and Clive Holland, the present-day novelist. It ran for a couple of years or so in connection with an amateur literary league, which was enough established to hold meetings and entertainment in London. There was a subscription to the league, and a number of the members—of whom I was one—formed a syndicate to supply some capital for the paper. We lost our money—that was the result, briefly told. When no more capital could be raised, then—exit the magazine!

From this it is apparent that Mr. Pentelow actually was in Amateur Journalism in his youth, though whether he was a member of the British Amateur Press Association or some other group cannot be discerned from what he wrote.

IN Magnet Number 472 there is more about amateur magazines: a reader had sent in a balance sheet showing that he made a small profit on his printed magazine—but this was

accounted for by the fact that his father, a printer, produced the magazine at a low cost.

Number 473: Another reader submitted figures to show that he earned a small profit on a magazine "printed" on a duplicator. J.N.P., acknowledging that a profit had been made, writes: *I am not going to say, "Go thou and do likewise!"*

Number 476: The reader who had earlier written about his printed-by-his-father magazine states that when he had the magazine printed by a printer in the ordinary way, it showed a loss of about five shillings a week, but expenses were cleared when his father took over the printing of it. Says Mr. Pentelow: *Good! But all my friends who want to run magazines are not in the lucky position of having printers as fathers.*

In following numbers there are more references to Amateur Journalism which are not, perhaps, of sufficient interest now to be quoted at any length:

Number 512: Cecil J. Price asks for a notice concerning his little paper, *The Scout's Own*. Mr. Pentelow makes this the occasion for another warning: *I do not recommend The Scout's Own to those who grumble because The Magnet has only 16 pages.*

Numbers 554 and 555: Messages to would-be contributors

to the *Greyfriars Herald* and *Tom Merry's Weekly* sections at the back of the papers.

Number 557: *Straight Talk to Would-be Story-Writers*, occupying one column.

Number 561: *There is no harm in this amateur magazine business; there may be good in it. But there is most certainly no money in it.*

So far, it will be seen—as I stated—the only “amateur journalists” who had written seem to have been those who were hoping to earn a profit on their ventures. They did not have the true amateur spirit.

HOWEVER, in *Magnet* Number 567, December 21st, 1918, Mr. Pentelow prints part of a letter from John W. Hoare, ex-President of the British Amateur Press Association. At last a real amateur journalist had felt the urge to write on the subject.

What Mr. Hoare wrote is too long to be reprinted, but here are two sentences referring to “But there is most certainly no money in it”: *You are right on the last point. But who wants to make money out of an amateur magazine, anyway?*

Who does? Why, those who had previously written to the Editor about amateur magazines—that is who! Mr. Pentelow's comment: *I can only say that most of the youngsters who write*

to me on the matter of amateur journals do appear to be on the money-making tack.

Number 568: In the second part of his letter, Mr. Hoare writes about the beginnings of A.J., tells of what is now the Fossil Library* (of amateur journals) in the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and mentions Cecil H. Bullivant as an amateur journalist of earlier days—presumably the Cecil H. Bullivant who was, later, an Amalgamated Press editor and contributor. (See S. P. C. Number 9, page 96.)

Number 573: A letter had been received from B. Winskill, of Buxted, Surrey—a well-known amateur journalist who was also a professional printer—and is printed, along with the titles of a small selection of amateur magazines which he had sent in: several copies of *Rosemary*, two of *The Fairy*, and one of *Vanity Fair*, “a rather more ambitious production.” (Joseph Parks' magazine, *The Collector's Miscellany*, with which some of our readers are familiar, was in its early years this *Vanity Fair*.)

This brings us to the end of the A.J. references in *The Magnet* during those years. There are others in later issues, after Mr.

*The Fossils is a group, each member of which was an amateur journalist at least 15 years before joining it.

Pentelow had left the paper, which need not concern us. No definite conclusions can be arrived at, other than that Mr. Pentelow actually was associated with an Amateur Journalism group in his young days.

DURING THE PERIOD under consideration there does seem to have been an upsurge of interest in the printing of small papers: in *Magnet* Numbers 504-542 I find just one reader's notice that has to do with it, but in Numbers 543-581 there are 38 such notices. They requested contributors to, additional members of staff for, and readers (meaning no doubt subscribers) for amateur magazines, and small printing presses on which to print them.

If any of these lads, in their youthful enthusiasm and desire to earn a few shillings, acquired type and press without having previous experience with them and tried to print their small magazines, I am inclined think that the tedious work soon discouraged them.

For it is work, and tedious, too, setting type by hand for a small magazine and printing it on a hand-press, if one does it to earn money. If it is done purely as a hobby, that can be different—though even then operating a hand-press is tedious by the

time a hundred impressions have been run off—as I know.

Looking through these *Magnets* recalled to me two short pieces by J. N. P.: *Boys' Tastes in Stories* in Number 557, and *Old Boys' Papers* in Numbers 574 and 575. In these, Mr. Pentelow told about stories of many years before, when he was a boy, and the papers in which they appeared.

The first boys' papers for which I ever wrote—I did serials while still at school—were published by one S. Dacre Clarke

—alias Guy Rayner, who, as an amateur journalist, was—I have been informed—Samuel Clarke of Oldbury, near Birmingham.

ALL THIS IN *The Magnet* is now very much ancient history: from 45 to 47 years ago. In spite of that, I hope this account of a search for Amateur Journalism references will prove to be of some interest to both "old boys' books" collectors and amateur journalists. —W. H. G.

AN EARLIER GREYFRIARS

EVIDENCE OF AN earlier Greyfriars of some kind is to be found in *Girl's Own Paper* Number 692, April 1st, 1893: *Next-Door Neighbours*, a serial, written by Evelyn Everett Green, "author of *Greyfriars*, etc.," started in that issue.

Some Facts About . . .

ROBIN HOOD AND HIS BAND OF OUTLAWS

By HENRY ADAMS PUCKRIN

*Kind Gentlemen and Yoemen good,
Come in and drink with Robin Hood.
If Robin Hood be not at home,
Step in and drink with Little John.*

SO RUNS THE WORDING of the sign on the Robin Hood Hotel in the picturesque village of Castleton, set in the heart of the North Yorkshire moorlands. Many other signs of a similar nature are to be found up and down the land, and they are a tribute to Robin Hood's name and fame. How much of his story is legendary is difficult to say, and to try to present some facts is the task of the present writer.

It is not an easy task, as such a mass of legend and folklore exists. It is a subject, however, that does not lessen in interest with the passing of time, so in this writer's opinion it is worth an article which, it is hoped, will interest and entertain readers of *The Story Paper Collector*.

Robin Hood's name is forever linked with the pretty little

village of Robin Hood's Bay, some ten miles from Whitby, and from where, to quote the ballad-mongers, he fired an arrow to Whitby Abbey. This is "drawing the long bow" with a vengeance, but it is another example of the way his name and that of his band live on.

Curiously enough, there does not seem to be another like Robin Hood for courage and chivalry in recorded history unless one thinks of that hero of German folk ballad, Goetz von Berlichingen, who was the subject of a drama by Goethe. Perhaps they were, to use a common metaphor, "tarred with the same brush."

Let us now consider some facts about the merry band of outlaws whose deeds, set against the background of the Crusades and the wanderings of Richard Coeur de Lion, have entranced, and will continue so to do, readers of all ages. Most historians dwell on Robin Hood's exploits and more or less ignore

his followers. To try to sketch his leading men will be the task of the writer.

IT SEEMS TO BE accepted without question that Robin Hood's name was Robert Fitzooth and that he was the rightful Earl of Huntingdon. The ban of outlawry imposed on him, after the murder of his father, for resisting the tyrannical Oswald de Burgh, started him off on his career.

Very soon he was joined by kindred spirits hating the tyranny of the Norman overlords and burning for revenge for the many acts of cruelty and torture which always roused them to fury and made them with few exceptions implacable foes, haters of tyranny, and the friends of the poor and oppressed.

There is no need to go into detail about them, as it has all been told times out of number in all kinds of writing and song and in all manner of ways, from the hundreds of ballads and sagas to Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, leading up to the stately *Ivanhoe* of Sir Walter Scott, the racy and rip-roaring "penny dreadfuls" (not so very dreadful after all), the films (silent and sound), the radio, and now the T.V.

The theme of King Richard

wandering amongst his subjects in disguise in order to discover his true followers has entranced many. His fame as a warrior, his skill as a minstrel, his upright and manly bearing, and his condoning (within limits) of the poaching of his deer, provided a background for his excuses for going amongst Robin Hood's band and taking part in their numerous adventures.

Nothing pleased the jovial outlaws more than to have "Jack Fletcher," as he called himself, sharing their lives and exploits under the Greenwood Tree.

Although the ban of outlawry was never lifted, the foresters regarded themselves, and were regarded by others, as the King's unofficial rangers and right well they fulfilled their task, helping all manner of people along and amongst the intricate forest paths.

ROBIN HOOD was ably assisted by his doughty lieutenants, of whom "Little John"—John Little—was outstanding. A man of gigantic strength and stature, his witty comrades soon reversed his name, and he and his trusty battleaxe were ever to the fore. He was a native of Derbyshire, where it is said that his grave is still to be seen.

His companion, the jovial

Friar Tuck of Copmanshurst, was the Father Confessor and priest of the band. Always ready with song or joke, he did not take shelter behind his cassock and was never happier than when in the thick of the fight; his burly figure could be seen everywhere. He was no less courageous than the others in the face of danger, and emphasized his statement that he was a "man of peace" by skilful use of an oaken quarter-staff—a terrible weapon in his hands.

Will Scarlett, so named from the colour of his hose, could be described as Robin Hood's aide-de-camp in planning to march against, and destroy, the fortress of some odious tyrant who had set his mind on defeating the outlaw band and hanging their leader.

Allan-a-Dale was the minstrel of the band and his lays and songs cheered and heartened his comrades after many a hard-fought fray. None of his poetry is in existence today, but readers who care to refer to Sir Walter Scott's *Rokely* (Canto 3) verse 30, will find what might well have been an example of his skill with the harp. He was of a more gentle and refined nature than his robust companions, but that was no reflection on his courage, which was as redoubtable as theirs.

Dick Driver, Ned Carter, Much the Miller's son, Osmund the Smith, and Sir Richard of the Lees, the Grey Knight, were others of Robin Hood's faithful followers who, to use an old naval expression, "would have followed him to hell."

WITH SUCH A BAND and such a leader it is no wonder that Robin Hood's name is something more than a legend. He came to be regarded as the reincarnation of Hereward the Wake, and people hoped that he would live for ever.

But as with all mortals, the passing of the years and his adventurous life took their toll of his health and strength and forced him to seek medical help from his treacherous half-sister, the Abbess of Kirkley's Nunnery. Hating Robin Hood for some fancied wrong, she allowed him to bleed to death.

Realizing that his end was near, he summoned Little John with his horn and asked for his bow and shafts. Supported by Little John, Robin Hood fired his last arrow, asking to be buried where it fell. This was duly done, and his earthly career was ended.

But though his career was finished, his fame was not. It is world wide and will likely endure as long as civilization does.

The final word on this interesting subject may be said to have been uttered by a character in one of the first series *Robin Hood Library*: Old Malachi, a Jew, having been cruelly tortured and maltreated, had managed to retain life and liberty. Overhearing an animated discussion on the merits and demerits of Robin Hood, he clinched the argument by exclaiming:

"Robin Hood? His name shall be known where there is a hand to write it, or a tongue to utter it!"

* * *

ROBIN HOOD.—Central character in romantic stories told in old English ballads and songs of a robber outlaw, head of a band which dwelt in Sherwood Forest. He was a famous bowman, and robbed the rich that he might give to the poor, and is variously said to have been a goodly yeoman and a certain Robert who claimed to be earl of Huntingdon. The ballads and poems concerning Robin Hood were collected by Joseph Ritson in 1795.

—*The Concise Universal Encyclopedia.*



THE FIRST NUMBER of *The Girl's Own Paper* made its appearance on January 3rd, 1880—so an enquiring reader was told in the 1892-93 volume. +

A MIXED LOT: 5 . . .

Recollections of Early Champion Authors

I KNEW Henry St. John Cooper very well and was his guest one week-end at his home in Sunbury-on-Thames. A strange, eccentric man, very kind-hearted, his house was a sort of "Liberty Hall," open to all and sundry.

His method of preparing typescripts of his serials was to set out each instalment on foolscap paper, heading it "Chapter . . ." and leaving the number blank, with no indication of what had gone before so that, when he sent in several instalments at once — as he often did — the Editor had to sort them out to get them in proper sequence.

He ended each instalment consequently, omitted page numbers, and sometimes even forgot to put the title of the story on the first page. The total effect created was that of a kind of machine that turned the stuff out indifferently, chopping it off when it totalled the required number of words and carrying on from there with another page to which the word "Chapter" was added.

Another author who gave this

Editor many a headache was Sidney Drew, who invariably wrote all his stories in a microscopic handwriting, remarkably clear but so compact that he was able to crowd an enormous number of words on to a single page. I never met him personally, but his contributions always arrived dead on time with no covering letter.

Most of my authors and artists were dependable, business-like men, but there were a few eccentrics, e.g., one writer, on being told that his story was not quite up to standard, refused to revise it and tore it up, flinging the pieces angrily on my desk and marching out of the office.

Another temperamental chap wanted me to accept an invitation to lunch and when I regretted that I had a prior appointment he promptly took it as a personal insult that he was refused, and stormed at me until I was forced to order him out of the office.

Both these writers were so well-known that it is only fair that I should not name them!

I knew, of course, J. N. Pentelow, Hedley O'Mant, Clive Fenn, and many of the others sometimes referred to in *The Story Paper Collector*, as well as Draycott Dell, one of the nicest and most cultured men I have had the pleasure of meeting.

I never met Frank Richards during my term of office with the Amalgamated Press, but I had the pleasure of calling on him at his home in Kingsgate a few years before he died.

Arthur Budge and Story Papers

THE REFERENCE [in S. P. C. Number 83] to Arthur Budge interested me. Very many years ago, I wrote to him inquiring about copies of the old *Big Budget* and *Boys' Leader*. He replied by sending me a lorry-load of volumes with a note of the price! At that time—I was little more than a youth—I was in no position to afford more than one or two volumes and was compelled to send the lot back to him. I remember that this made him very angry.

I was never able, later, to get those volumes of *Big Budget*, but I have seen them in Frank Pettingell's collection:

— F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS
 Founder and Former Chief Editor,
 The *Champion* Group of Periodicals.
 London, England.

* * *

~~~~~

*We now pause for something unusual in these pages, a Ballade, and then go on to other things . . .*

~~~~~

A Ballade of Yesterday

The poems and songs of yesterday
Are known and heard in every land,
From blithe to sad, from grave to gay,
They go together, hand in hand.
Wherever peoples chance to meet,
Or where the lone adventurers stray,
Are heard in palace, home, and street
The poems and songs of yesterday.

From Cape Horn to Point Leeuwin,
From London Town to 'Frisco Bay,
Like classic theme from Wagner's "Ring,"
The same leitmotifen holds sway.
Let those who wish make nations' laws,
The ballad singers will obey,
If they do leave them, with good cause,
The poems and songs of yesterday.

What matchless deeds of derring-do,
What rousing strains of martial lay,
What tales of love, and light, and life,
In these fine verses have their say?
The minnesingers of the Rhine,
The robber barons bold and gay,
Whose tales were told, 'midst mirth and
wine,
In poems and songs of yesterday.

l'envoi

The timeless ages roll along,
But go who will, and come what may,
Still will be heard amidst the throng,
The poems and songs of yesterday.

—HENRY ADAMS PUCKRIN

Similar to Earlier Paper

"I THINK THAT the first 50 or 60 numbers of *The Champion* were run by old-timers, as the get-up was similar in editorial arrangement to a famous old-timer, *Big Budget*."—So George Barton, a resident of the Boston, Mass., area, wrote in *Dime Novel Round-up* for January, 1943. Being far from the scene, it is surprising how close he came to the truth of the matter with, presumably, nothing more than *The Champion* itself upon which to base his opinion.

* * *

Cheer Boys Cheer-ful Yesterdays

IF THAT LONG-DEAD brownish-covered publication *Cheer Boys Cheer* did not have a long and lusty life it was surely no fault of the paper's Editor.

Through the kindness of a young New Zealand collector I have been privileged to peruse a copy of this paper dated February 1st, 1913. What a great pennyworth it was! Well illustrated, 36 pages of varied reading, even £5 in cash prizes—and £5 was a lot of "crinkle" in those days.

In the *Your Editor's Chat* the Editor impressed me as almost frantically keen to encourage

readers to boost the paper to their pals. In three separate items he implores his readers to "do a good turn by making the news known amongst your schoolfellows, and also amongst your schoolmasters." The "news" was a "new" serial by Robert Louis Stevenson entitled *The Forest Outlaws*.

The Editor's aim, so he wrote in a final paragraph, was "to see *Cheer Boys Cheer* selling its quarter of a million copies weekly." As it ran for only about sixteen months it probably never did reach that figure.

There is, however, one thing quite certain about C. B. C.: the Editor did not think it would ever become a "collectors' item," for he advised readers, when giving hints on boosting sales, to "construct a kite out of C. B. C. covers, and fly it in some public park." I wonder just how many copies were mutilated and lost to potential collectors by following that idea!

Cheer Boys Cheer ran a weekly series of complete detective stories featuring Lester Griffith. Lester, I fear, has been lost to literature for a long time, and if the opening paragraph of the story in the February 1st, 1913, issue is anything to go on I am not surprised. It reads:

Lester Griffith threw out the clutch

and jammed on the brake, skidding into the curb recklessly, but, as usual, managing to avoid catastrophe by what the caretaker's boy called "the skin of his teeth."

And that was more than fifty years ago!

Authors featured in this issue were Henry T. Johnson, Horace Phillips, Gordon Wallace, Geoffrey Murray, Reginald Wray, and R. L. Stevenson.

An advertiser's announcement that amused me reads:

MOUSTACHE! A Smart Manly Moustache grows very quickly at any age by using "Mousta," a guaranteed forcer. Boys become Men! Acts like Magic. Send 7d.

—O. W. WADHAM

John Nix Pentelow & John P. Nix: Were They the Same?

When the pages carrying the article John Nix Pentelow and Amateur Journalism had been run off a set of them was airmailed to Arthur Harris. After reading the article and doing some research he wrote:

THANKS FOR YOUR airmail letter with the John Nix Pentelow article. What he wrote in *The Magnet* about his early days, recalling the names of Robert L. Jefferson and Clive

Holland (I "unearthed" Clive a few years back, as perhaps you remember in *Interesting Items*) made me feel sure that Mr. Pentelow had indeed been an amateur journalist. I was really thrilled and it sent me delving into my collection which, as you know, contains amateur journals from 1872.

The first amateur association of which we have any knowledge was The Amateur Literary Association. This was formed by Howard Feeny (I met him: see I.I.) and Clive Holland in March of 1888, with Feeny's *Monthly Magazine* as its official organ. At this period R. L. Jefferson wrote several serial stories for the amateur magazines, including this one.

Jefferson became a member of this literary association in April, 1888. John Nix Pentelow joined in June, 1888, giving his address as Cowper's House School, Huntingdon. In August he wrote from St. Ives that "the *Monthly Magazine* was by far the best amateur journal I have seen." The *Monthly Magazine* announced a portrait gallery of well-known members of the association and J. N. Pentelow is among them in the December issue. His first story, *The Priest of Diana's Grove*, also appeared in this issue. He remained a member for a year or two. What

happened from this time is unknown until . . .

JOHN P. NIX appears as a member of The British Amateur Literary Association in June of 1901. (The British Amateur Press Association had changed its name then.) In the March issue of the official organ a poem by him appeared, and another was in the July issue. He was made Councillor in September, 1901, with an address at Birmingham. In November, 1901, Miss M. G. Nix, Ascham College, Clacton-on-Sea, became a member and was introduced by John P. Nix.

Did they for some reason change their name for the amateur magazines? The mystery deepens! Did J. N. Pentelow have a sister?

John P. Nix had another poem in the March, 1902, official organ, and in the May issue he changed his address to Medora Road, Brixton Hill, London. Muriel G. Nix had a poem in the July, 1902, issue. John P. Nix wrote magazine reviews in several of the issues from November, 1902. In November, 1903, Miss M. G. Nix changed her address to The High School, Tewkesbury. John P. Nix was assistant editor of the official organ in September, 1903, and he issued his *Song and Sonnet* in that month.

Now, was John Nix Pentelow John P. Nix? Mr. Pentelow certainly wrote under other names, as you know.

It took me some time, delving in my collection, but it seems extremely interesting. I do not suppose there are any other copies of these amateur magazines in existence.

I shall be anxious to know what you think of my research.

—ARTHUR HARRIS

Penrhyn Bay, Llandudno, Wales.

¶ I think that Arthur Harris has done a grand job of research, but I feel that the verdict at this time must be the Scottish one: NOT PROVEN—unless Mr. Harris feels so certain that the photo in Chums and the one in Song and Sonnet are of the same person that there is no doubt. Or—"Nix" having been Mr. Pentelow's mother's name, was Mr. Nix a cousin or a nephew who resembled him? It is interesting to know that Mr. Pentelow was at Cowper's School, Huntingdon: interesting, because one of his pen-names was Harry Huntingdon!

—W. H. G.

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