

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

APRIL 1965
No. 90 :: Vol. 4

The Story Paper Writer And His Pen-Name

WE HAVE BEEN reading again a quite fascinating book, published by The Macmillan Company, New York, in 1954. It is *Villains Galore: The Heyday of the Popular Story Weekly*, by Mary Noel. It tells about the publishers of and writers for the weekly story papers of the U.S.A. during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

On page 119 there is an account of how a writer who had been working for *Saturday Night* left that paper when its part-owner, Robert S. Davis, sold his interest to his partner, James Elverson. The writer was A. R. Calhoun, and when he left *Saturday Night* he applied to Robert Bonner of *The New York Ledger* for the position of author on that story paper. In doing so he felt it necessary to explain to Mr. Bonner why he had left *Saturday Night*:

When Davis sold all his interest to Elverson, Elverson wanted to run in other stories under my nom de plume. I enjoined him, and beat him

in court, and left him.

From this it will be seen that Charles Hamilton was not the first author to encounter this sort of problem.

Mary Noel adds:

It should be borne in mind that Mr. Elverson never permitted anything unclean or unethical to sully the pages of "Saturday Night."

It is not clear, but the implication seems to be that James Elverson's regard for ethics did not extend to the matter of one author's pen-name being placed over another author's work.

Later, Mr. Elverson was to publish the weekly *Golden Days*, a paper for boys and girls which is considered to be of the "goody-goody" type.

Villains Galore is an intriguing account of the rise to great popularity, and subsequent fall into obscurity, of the many

newspaper-style story papers in the U.S.A., starting before 1850.

An interesting piece of information is gleaned from this book which explains the difference in appearance between the early story papers of the United States and those of the United Kingdom:

The object of an American story paper was to look as much like a newspaper as possible in order to have cheap postage; it was the

object of a London story paper to look as little like a newspaper as possible in order to avoid the stamp tax.

That is why the American story papers were of newspaper-size pages, at the start four very large ones, while the English story papers such as *The Family Herald* and *The London Journal* were of sixteen much smaller pages which made them look more like magazines.

News-Men 'Mindful Of Billy Bunter

BILLY BUNTER has had a look-in in the Brisbane press recently, albeit the reference was to tooth decay and the "Billy Bunter" goodies that are blamed for the same. One paper, under a large banner which read *A Bunter May Still Find a Way*, said:

Billy Bunter tuck shop goodies that hasten decay in children's teeth were still being sold in school canteens, the Australian Dental Association president claimed . . .

Another newspaper reported from Victoria that

The sweet-toothed existence of Victoria's Billy Bunters is threatened by a common sense menu proposed

for school tuckshops. In The Fourth Form at St. Dominic's, by Frank Richards, an English school series popular in the 'twenties Billy Bunter was a fat boy whose one thought was food.

Which doesn't say much for the research library of Victoria's press.

As an Easter treat, our morning paper published in serial form Len Deighton's thriller, *Horse Under Water*. The hero has just fallen into the hands of the villain:

"Get on your feet," Fernie said, like something out of a Greyfriars school story. "I don't want to fight you, Fernie," I said.

A well-read author, no doubt.

— JACK HUGHES

Brisbane, Queensland.
August 9th, 1964.

THE GREYFRIARS ROLL OF DISHONOUR!

By W. O. G. LOFTS

Charles Hamilton was expelled for gambling at Charterhouse.

"Frank Richards" as a boy played the "giddy ox," kicked over the traces a great deal, was in general a "bounder," and was expelled regularly from schools he attended.

THE ABOVE are only two of the wild rumours that I have heard in our hobby during the last ten years, mainly during the lifetime of the late Charles Hamilton. It could be argued that these rumours were in circulation largely due to the reticence of the author himself, who could have revealed the real facts of the case and killed these absurd rumours once and for all. Undoubtedly the world's greatest writer of school stories could have told a great deal about his own school, with personal recollections of his own schooldays.

As revealed by the late Mrs. Una Harrison, sister of Charles Hamilton, he did not go to a Public School, but to a Private

School for Young Gentlemen, this being confirmed by myself in a recent issue of *The Story Paper Collector*.

Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright, Mrs. Harrison's daughter, has also revealed that far from being a beastly type of boy, or high spirited, Charles Hamilton was a quiet, studious, and courteous boy, obviously a carbon copy of Frank Nugent of Greyfriars, plus the brilliant and studious nature of Mark Linley.

Equally absurd was another rumour, that in his early days of writing Greyfriars stories for *The Magnet*, "Frank Richards" had the theme and thought of expulsion so strongly on his mind, from his own personal experiences, he expelled boys almost every other week.

Not only is this not true, as shown by a perusal of the tales themselves, but also according to my own research, apart from the statements of the relatives of "Frank Richards." Mr. Hamilton had written a great many

school stories for the Trapps, Holmes & Co. papers before *The Magnet* appeared and to my own recollection boys were not frequently, to use popular expressions, given "the chopper" or "the sack" in *Vanguard* and other Trapps, Holmes papers.

IT CANNOT be denied that boys were expelled more often in the early years of *The Magnet*. From 1916 until 1938, however, there is no record of any established Greyfriars boy being permanently expelled from the school. Maybe "Frank Richards" had realised that to expel a boy meant losing the use of the character in future stories and so there were disadvantages in this respect.

Expulsions, on the other hand, were part and parcel of Public School life, though I have often wondered how many boys actually are expelled from such schools for misdemeanors like gambling, visiting public houses, hitting prefects or masters, stealing, breaking bounds, or other offences which can result in the guilty party going before the "beak" for the "chopper."

At a joint meeting of the Midland and Northern Clubs that I was privileged to attend at Chesterfield in June of 1964 a Midland member asked me one of the most intriguing questions I

have heard in a long time. He asked me the names of all the boys who had been expelled from Greyfriars. Not, of course, the numerous well-known characters such as Bob Cherry, Vernon-Smith, Coker, Bunter, and others who were soon reinstated, but those who were fated never to return to Greyfriars.

Collectors of *The Magnet*, perhaps mainly those who are not fortunate enough to possess the copies in question, have varied ideas as to which boys were expelled from Greyfriars. Probably the most inaccurate impression concerns Heracles Ionides, the evil Greek Sixth-form dandy with the somewhat feminine habit of using scent. Many believe that he must have been expelled in some story, but a personal check brings the authentic information that he just faded out of the stories.

Confusion was caused by the Editor, H. A. Hinton, stating in *Magnet* Number 342 that Ionides had left Greyfriars, and J. N. Pentelow, the war-time Editor, stating in his *Greyfriars Gallery* feature in Number 555 that he had probably left the school quietly, while G. R. Samways in a "substitute" story in Number 436, and in a supplement in Number 409 (Christmas, 1915) stated that Ionides was still at the school. One could add that

he was included as if still at Greyfriars in the rhyming foot-lines, also written by Mr. Samways, in *The Greyfriars Herald* Number 1.

The editors and sub-editors cannot be blamed for being confused as to whether Ionides was still at Greyfriars. Charles Hamilton did create some good characters and then dropped them without any explanation. Cyril Vane, cousin of Bob Cherry, Arthur Carlton, the laziest boy in the Remove, and Dick Rodney, chum of Jack Drake, are three that come to mind who to all intents and purposes were at Greyfriars till the end, though they vanished from the stories.

HERE ARE the boys who have the doubtful fame of being on

The Greyfriars Roll Of Dishonour

1—Ernest Levison, the Remove; for breaking bounds and visiting the Red Cow Public House. *Magnet* Number 46, 1909.

2—George Joseph Carberry, of the Sixth form; for breaking bounds and visiting the Wayside Inn. *Magnet* Number 174, 1910.

3—Esau Heath, the Remove; for conspiracy, causing Bob Cherry to be expelled. *Magnet* Number 174, 1911.

4—Cecil Gadsby, the Shell; for

stealing a stamp from Mr. Capper's collection. *Magnet* Number 233, 1912.

5—Theophilus Flippis, the Remove; for being dangerous to the staff at Greyfriars by "doctoring" the water. *Magnet* Number 246, 1912.

6—Sir Harry Beauclerc, the Remove; for forging a letter in Percy Bolsover's handwriting. *Magnet* Number 330, 1914.

7—Cecil Snaith, the Shell; for stealing money from the school dormitories. *Magnet* Number 403, 1915.

8—Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein, the Remove; for forging a letter in Harry Wharton's handwriting. *Magnet* Number 433, 1916.

9—Arthur Carter, the Remove; for stealing money from Mr. Quelch's study in a plot against Billy Bunter. *Magnet* Number 1572, 1938.

General Notes

1—What was the *Magnet* readers' loss could be called the *Gem* readers' gain in the case of Ernest Levison: expelled from Greyfriars, he went to St. Jim's, returning at times to his old school in some brilliant stories featuring his young brother.

2—Cecil Gadsby, a cousin of Reginald Gadsby of Highcliffe,

actually ran away from school and was expelled in his absence.

3—Harold Skinner was expelled in *Magnet* Number 196, 1911, for "hacking" Gerald Loder of the Sixth in the dark. What is unique in his expulsion is that he was absent from the school for nearly two years before he "wangled" his way back.

4—Theophilus Flippo was the son of a naturalist and faddist. It might be contended that he was not actually expelled. My view, and that of the Editor of *S.P.C.*, is this: with Mr. Quelch stating that the boy could not possibly stay at the school and Dr. Locke agreeing, he was expelled quietly without being taken into Big Hall to be sentenced. Flippo left the next morning, so there was hardly time for Dr. Locke to contact the boy's parents and ask for him to be taken away.

5—Cecil Snaith returned in *Magnet* Number 418 and again in Number 817, the latter story being most interesting: Snaith is described in it as being much older than when he was in the Remove. This story is a curious mixture of genuine Hamilton and "substitute" writing. I have been told that it was an old

Hamilton story re-written by F. Gordon Cook, and the strange circumstances surrounding this seem now to be lost in the mists of time. Mr. Cook, whom I have met, was in bad health with poor memory and did not recall the story at all, though records say he had some hand in its final presentation.

6—Bob Cherry (*Magnet* Number 173), Herbert Vernon-Smith (Number 180), Dicky Nugent (Number 183), Rupert Valence (Number 221), William George Bunter (Number 874), and Horace Coker (Number 1084) are some of the regular characters who were expelled in various stories and soon reinstated.

7—One could also include Philip Blagden (Numbers 854-855) and Randolph Crocker (Numbers 1615-1624), both formerly of the Sixth, who must have been at Greyfriars before the first *Magnet* appeared.

8—Probably the most amusing "temporary" expulsion was in *Magnet* Number 874 when Billy Bunter, trying to avoid other punishment, begged Dr. Locke to let him be expelled so that he could have several weeks at home before going to another school better than Greyfriars!



LOOKING AT THE BOY'S FRIEND OF 1865

More Especially at Replies to Readers

INCLUDED among the prized books on my bookshelves is a bound Volume 2 of *The Boy's Friend* for the year 1865. This is, understandably, not the weekly paper called *The Boys' Friend* which was published by Harmsworth Brothers and The Amalgamated Press from 1895 to 1927, the volumes of which I prize even more highly. It is a monthly magazine, published for part of its run—said to have been 39 issues—by Houlston and Wright, Paternoster Row, London. On the title page is "1866" but the twelve issues in the volume are for 1865.

Like many papers and magazines for boys of those days and for years after, there is a department at the end of each issue in which the Editor replied to some of the readers who had written to him. Reading these replies reveals that many of them could be replies to readers of present-day boys' papers. This may indicate something, but I am not sure what.

Looking through them, there were some that seemed worth

quoting, with comments provided to space them out. I was somewhat surprised to find that one of the first I noticed read:

JACK SHEPPARD, a gentleman we are somewhat surprised to find ourselves in correspondence with, wants an old map of London . . .

Perhaps he was considering doing a little footpadding? Though a modern map would have been more useful for that.

Then there is

H. KAYE [who] is puzzled, like ourselves and many others, how to account for the mania for collecting old postage stamps. We cannot guess at any useful purpose to which they can be applied.

We know now: to help provide stamp dealers earn an income! (No brickbats, please: I am an inactive philatelist and still have my collection!)

An early amateur journalist,

ALFRED BURKETT, Wigan, proposes commencing a monthly manuscript magazine, and will send a prospectus to anyone desirous of assisting him, on receipt of a directed and

stamped envelope, addressed to 18 Standish-gate.

The next reply to be quoted is in a more serious vein, being directed to a dissatisfied reader: W. FULHAM has a charge to make against us. When the Magazine changed hands it was said that the numerous complaints would be attended to, and the magazine better conducted. "But," he asks, "Have you kept your word?"—and he answers "No! the print is bad, the paper bad; and, worst of all, the tales are bad, and there are no short ones, as in other magazines;" and he winds up with a P.S. as follows:—"I require an answer in your next, which, if not given, you may count me as a subscriber no longer."

This is a very serious threat, and in reply we ask W. Fulham what he would have? Here are forty-eight large pages [not so very large— $7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ " for the printed area] of small print, printed on reasonably-fair paper. Looking at any number of it, there seems to be a considerable quantity of well-written matter, suited for boys, and some engravings, which, if not the best specimens of art, are at least respectable; and for all this he pays threepence! Really we think our friend is unreasonable, or perhaps something has disagreed with him. . . .

No doubt the Editor was pleased to quote, later, from the letters

of readers who differed with W. Fulham.

This is part of the reply given to a reader called

YOUNG BOB: *We may tell him also one day how to make a clock, but not here.*

I cannot think why, but somehow this reminds me of a reply to a reader in Volume 11 of *Golden Days (For Boys and Girls)*, published at Philadelphia, U.S.A., 1889-90. It runs something like this: "We are sorry, but we cannot tell you how to strengthen the muscles of your nose."

ONE READER, referred to as An Anonymous Correspondent, wrote to point out a discrepancy between the text of a serial, *The White Chief*, in a previous issue, and the illustration. If readers of certain later boys' papers had written every time they found a similar discrepancy, editors' postbags would have been much larger than they were.

We now read of the Editor's worries over an author:

MAROON JACK is informed that the author of "Cannibal Crusoe" has been on holiday; he resumes this month.

What, no "substitute" authors? Back now to A.J.:

W.D. ADAMS "intends establishing a M.S. Magazine, on improved

principles," whatever that may mean, and will send intended subscribers a prospectus on hearing from them, addressed to Berlak Cottage, Helensburg.

Wherever that is, or was.

An enquiring reader,

G. B. H. NASH . . . asks which we recommend, our own or Beeton's "Boys' Magazine." Would he believe us if we said our own?

Believe him or not, what else could the Editor say?

Another reader must have been hoping to gain a little pocket money:

C. W. CLARIDGE: *We do not pay for puzzles.* [There is a puzzle department.] *Why should we?*

On one occasion the Editor burst into terse verse:

FUNNY LITTLE FANNY writes a nice hand,

But what the question means we don't quite understand,

and explains something to an early story paper collector:

CLAUDE GERARD thinks he has the right to ask some questions, and he asks whether he can have last year's numbers? Yes, and he will have to pay the same price for them, although they are back numbers.

At the end of Volume 2 there are these fateful words:

P. HORROCK: *With the present number the Editor resigns his office.*

This is in the December, 1865, issue. There were seven issues in the first volume, twelve in this one, the second, and there had already been one change in ownership and presumably also in editors. (Incidentally, the Editor couldn't make up his mind whether his magazine was *The Boy's Friend* or *The Boys' Friend*.)

The Editor's final words are:

We now take leave of numerous correspondents; for after the present number others will have to cater for their amusements.

And though he little dreamed of it, here we are one hundred years later, reviewing what that unidentified Editor was saying to his readers in 1865.

*

FRANK JAY, writing in Volume 1 of *Vanity Fair* in 1918, stated that *The Boy's Friend* ran to four volumes, from 1864 to 1868, with eight numbers in the fourth volume. There being seven in the first volume and twelve in each of the other two, we have a total of 39 issues.

It seems to have been a magazine that compared favourably with others of that period and its short life was no doubt due to there having been too many boys' magazines and papers for the comparatively limited number of potential readers, the 1860s being before the advent

of compulsory education. It is likely that from the beginning of boys' papers there has always been more of them than the de-

mand warranted, except during times of paper shortage brought about by the wars.

— W. H. G.

ROBERT PROWSE: A TRIBUTE

By HENRY ADAMS PUCKRIN

One picture is better than a thousand words.—Chinese proverb.

THIS SAYING becomes more meaningful to contributors to and readers of *The Story Paper Collector*. Many of the illustrations in the old boys' papers told their own story, and this applies particularly to the work of Robert Prowse.

The writer has no intention of going over ground which was covered so ably by John Medcraft in *S. P. C. Number 14 (Artists of the Golden Era)*, but Prowse's cover-illustrations for the various Aldine publications, his portrayal of incidents in the first *Robin Hood* series (1901-07), his masterly grasp of line, detail, colour, and historical accuracy (a most important point), mark him as one who stands far above his fellow artists and entitle him to an article dealing almost wholly with his work.

Having some skill in painting and sketching, the writer of this

article makes no apology for penning this Tribute, which he hopes will give pleasure, especially to older readers.

It is only fair to say that the work of another artist, F. W. Boyington, was seen at intervals. Perhaps this was to give Robert Prowse a rest, for not even a genius can go on without a break. Boyington's work entitles him to be mentioned with Prowse, but the subtle touches which distinguish the one from the other can readily be seen by close study.

Prowse's work was of Academic excellence and deserved showing, but had this been done the art galleries would have been busy all year round. He never aspired to this, but his work was seen and admired by thousands whom the fashionable salons would not bother to know.

The passage of time has somewhat dimmed the writer's

memory, but various scenes come to mind as he goes along so he will not trouble too much about chronological order.

STARTING with *The Fighting Friar of Sherwood Forest*, Friar Tuck is shown dispersing a band of "scurvy Normans" who, intent on plunder, have ventured too far into the outlaws' domains. The mail-clad Normans and the bold outlaws are well portrayed against a background of dense foliage. From then on the work of Prowse and Boyington appeared at regular intervals, the one balancing the other.

The Witch of Epping Forest comes next to mind. Robin Hood is shown sheltering in the cave of Merlina, a creature in the pay of the local baron, who is her son. Robin's set features and his contemptuous refusal to be afraid are all the more striking because in the background, unknown to him, a band of Norman soldiers are waiting for a chance to slay him. However, a terrific flash of lightning wrecks the cave and kills the soldiers.

Also illustrated by a good portrayal of Robin Hood is *The Grey Wolf of Windsor*. He is shown seated on the crupper of a horse and carrying a horrible hooded figure capped by a

hideous wolf-mask. Needless to say this ruffian, a Norman of lower rank, meets a well-deserved end after a career of robbery and murder.

Still with Prowse, *Outlaw and King* strikes a humorous note, humour and tragedy being closely allied. Little John and Friar Tuck are shown carrying a Norman baron suspended from Friar Tuck's quarterstaff whilst in the background a band of outlaws are enjoying the sight. The baron's scowling face betrays his feelings at his loss of dignity, mingled with contempt for the Saxons.

Another excellent story, *The Black Cross Knight*, shows Robin Hood and the head jailer of Dreadnought Castle at death-grips on the edge of the parapet up to which the outlaws are climbing. The postures of the two men, one courageous and the other desperate with fear, are shown by the light of a flaring beacon. This story shows that no fortress, however strong, can withstand determined and fearless men.

Going on, we come to *A Mighty Foe*. Robin Hood and Will Scarlett, running for their lives after being discovered in the castle, have just cleared the falling portcullis which, descending on the pursuing baron, pins him like a beetle on a card.

It is now time to give F. W. Boyington some attention, so we will look at *The Lord of the Wolves*. Alicor the miller, and master of a pack of howling wolves which he has under his control, is shown leering at the terrified Prince John, who has come to ask for help in getting rid of his brother. Needless to say Alicor is "hoist on his own petard" and King Richard lives to fight another day.

A *Life for a Ransom* shows Abbot Boniface, grasping and greedy, being made to dance on a table which Little John and Friar Tuck are beating with knotted cords. The Abbot's look of fear and rage at his ridiculous and undignified position has been well caught by the artist.

NOW WE WILL look at a story called *The Sea Rovers*. Having heard that a band of Vikings are about to descend on an undefended stretch of coast, Robin and his followers go to meet them. These bloodthirsty and murderous ruffians, the Vikings, whose magnificent seamanship (e.g., their discovery of America) was their only redeeming feature, are fittingly portrayed by their leader, shouting defiance and singing his own praises far and wide. All this is lost on Robin Hood who, armed and ready, engages him in mortal

combat and after a short and fierce struggle sends him to the joys of his Valhalla. This picture is a really excellent rendering by Prowse of the muscular, wing-helmeted leader.

One could continue for a long time, but we will deal with just one more cover illustration, that to *The Dragon Worshipers*. This picture, in the writer's opinion, is one of Prowse's best. This time the scene is laid in Ireland and shows Friar Tuck in grave danger of being trampled to death by a huge elk.

This gigantic animal, twice as large as the present-day elk, once roamed the whole of Ireland but has been extinct for hundreds of years. Robin Hood and Will Scarlett are engaging the beast at close quarters. The huge bulk of the animal and its enormous antlers are shown with great skill and the whole scene makes a picture of Academic excellence.

THOUGH this article has not dealt with all the *Robin Hood Library* cover illustrations, perhaps sufficient has been written to stir fresh interest in Robert Prowse, an artist too good to be forgotten. The writer feels that he has dealt fairly with a subject of absorbing interest and hopes that the reader agrees, for

Where none admire, 'tis useless to excel.

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Instead of A Mixed Lot Number 8 this department,
using that same number, becomes . . .

THE CORNER CUPBOARD

THIS IS THE third and final form of the title for the feature which began as *A Pot-Pourrie* and continued as *A Mixed Lot*. It should have been used from the first. *The Corner Cupboard* was the heading for a series of articles on many topics written by an Editor of *The Winnipeg Tribune* for that newspaper. Having left journalism he does not use it now.

Long ago I had the use of an actual corner cupboard. It was situated at a turn in a stairway and in it I stored copies of *The Empire Library* after they were read each week. That indicates how long ago it was.

Here in this *Corner Cupboard* will be stored—as under the former headings—shorter items that come my way or that I put together myself.

* * *

Impressions From *The Magnet's* Golden Years

THERE IS NO doubt in my mind that from 1915 to 1925 *The Magnet* was in its most progressive and interesting decade. Here are a few impressions

gained from perusing issues of that period.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, may have been "Inky" to the Greyfriars juniors, but it was very rarely that artists illustrating the stories remembered to draw him the colour his nickname suggested.

Paper supplies must have been plentiful longer during the first World War than the second. Easter, mid-summer, and Christmas of 1915 were observed with double numbers of *The Magnet*. The star item in the Easter number is *The Fall of the Fifth*, a 50,000-word Greyfriars yarn. In that issue there is a plan of Greyfriars School and surrounding district, while the cover is of white paper with attractive colour-printing.

Some of the advertisers did not change their "copy" very frequently. For instance, in July of 1925 the Edwd. O'Brien cycle firm in Coventry offers bicycles at two shillings weekly, and in March of 1933, eight years later, the same advertisement can be seen. (In 1915 they were offering bicycles at even lower rates, five

shillings a month—"I will trust you!")

In *The Magnet* of October 6th, 1923, the Editor declared:

The magic-lantern never palls. It pleases old and young, and I am dead certain there will be joy in the hearts of all readers of the Greyfriars stories when they learn that a splendid series of magic-lantern slides, featuring Greyfriars, Bunter, and the other celebrities of the great school has been put on the market . . . The set of Greyfriars slides can be obtained from Mr. A. Crisp, 51, Stourbridge Road, Kidderminster, Worcs, for 2s. 6d., post free.

It would be interesting to learn if Mr. Crisp sold all his slides and just what scenes and characters were featured. We may be certain he never dreamed that Bunter and the others would "come to life" on a new magic lantern, TV, many years later.

Charlie Chaplin was a popular character with strip-cartoonists in various juvenile publications for many years. Even *The Magnet* featured him for a time in a weekly set of six pictures, starting with the issue dated October 2nd, 1920, the artist being J. McWilson.

In *The Magnet* of April 30th, 1921, the Editor informed "Dimples" (East Hampshire):

I do not think that either Harry

Wharton or Tom Merry has really been in love.

No doubt "Dimples" would be disappointed, and boys of today would surely wonder why these teenagers were not touched by the so-called "tender passion."

Like the other A. P. boys' papers of the period, *The Magnet* carried small advertisements for *Answers*. Eventually *Answers* disappeared, but a similar kind of weekly, *Tit-Bits*, is still flourishing. One would imagine that the reverse would have been the case.

Enlightenment as to how far back Rookwood School dates came to me when reading *Magnet* Number 880, the Christmas, 1924, issue. In it reference is made to an item in *The Holiday Annual* for 1925 which describes "the Great Rebellion at Rookwood School in the year 1789."

—O. W. WADHAM

* * *

It Gives a Warm Glow!

I HAVE JUST received S. P. C. and have read it already. What a warm glow it gives me. The day is a lot brighter for it. Somehow, this feeling is like that the new issues of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* and the other old papers used to give me nearly fifty years ago. Every copy I receive from

you makes me feel like that. All your labour and the labour of those who pen the articles for *The Story Paper Collector* is deeply appreciated. It means something to go back fifty years and to enjoy a little of life again when it was fresh and new.

— JACK OVERHILL

* * *

Fumbled Type

THAT awkward-sounding sentence in column 2, page 281, read better in MS. form and must have been changed unintentionally in the type-setting and was not noticed until too late.

* * *

Full of Good Fare

AS USUAL, S. P. C. Number 88 is full of good fare, the most important item being Part Six of Tom Hopperton's *The Lower Branches*. This has been an excellent series on different authors and schools. Happy indeed is the editor who is fortunate enough to have a contributor with the expanse of reading, the knowledge, and the first-rate ability of Tom Hopperton!

Another contributor who always amazes me with his knowledge of old boys' books is Bill Lofts, whom I have met on a number of occasions. The enquiring and probing of such as

he have done our hobby a power of good by expanding our knowledge not only of the old stories and their authors, but also of the background and conditions under which the stories were produced.

Even if our Olympian heroes are sometimes cut down to mortal size and if we do not always see them clearly in glorious technicolour, at least we observe them in greish three-dimension.

For my own part, I have no head for facts and figures—nor the enquiring mind. My interest in the old boys' books is mainly emotional and nostalgic, and the illustrations sometimes meant more to me than the story. I am obviously a sad and hopeless case.

If that attitude were more general it could only lead our hobby along the short road to stagnation and it would never have become the live, vibrant thing that it is. We are deeply indebted to those of our circle who have a passion for facts, data, and figures of the past.

— MAURICE KUTNER

* * *

The Old Jokes Section (Continued)

IN S. P. C. Number 87 we gave two versions, culled from papers published in 1921 and 1964, of

a joke concerning the word "weather." An old joke never dies, it seems. Here it is again, this time from *Children's Newspaper* for October 17th of last year: "That's the worst spell of weather we've had for ages!" under a cartoon showing two girls standing at a blackboard with WEVER lettered on it.

* * *

An India-rubber Man?

IN THE STORY *Harry Wharton and Co. in Texas* (Magnet Number 1575, page 20, column 3) Herbert Vernon-Smith has Two-Gun Sanders at gun-point, his hands raised over his head. Smithy tells Billy Bunter to tie Two-Gun's wrists together and then tells Bunter to

"Pull his paws down behind him, and tie them to the back of his belt."

This would indeed be a remarkable trick. By the time Two-Gun's "paws" were in a position to be tied to the back of his belt his arms would, no doubt, be just about detached from the rest of him. Unless he was a circus india-rubber man.

* * *

ONE OF OUR readers, Tom Langley, of Hall Green, Birmingham, England, had this poem printed in the magazine of his school, Waverley Grammar School:

The Prefect

*He is leaving adolescence,
He's doing all he can
To proclaim aloud his presence
In the rear ranks of MAN.*

*His legs are lank, his locks are long,
He's mostly hands and feet.
His voice no longer sweet in song
Seems boastfully off beat.*

*Like the leaves in Vallambrosa
His threats at first fell fast
But I'm pleased to say—Sub Rosa,
Like leaves wind blown they passed.*

*He's trod his track of shifting sand,
He's found the firmer way.
For he who would at last command
Must first learn to obey.*

*He has no sighs for sparkling eyes
Or coiffured curls at play.
Fixed are his eyes upon a prize—
A pass at levels "A."*

—T. LANGLEY

* * *

Treasure Trove!

ONE OF THE interesting things about collecting story papers is, one never knows when the mailman will bring a little surprise. One day last November I had such a surprise. It came about when I received a letter from my cousin who lives in Kent—some distance from Greyfriars, I think. Enclosed with the letter was a copy of *The Union Jack Library* Number 112,

New Series, dated December 2nd, 1905. It had been found by her husband when he was moving some fixtures in a school.

"He is sorry it isn't in better condition," she wrote. There was no reason to be sorry, for no-one but Father Time was responsible for the condition which—let us face it—is really deplorable. But its condition has nothing to do with the case. What intrigues is the fact that in 1964 there should come to light, accidentally, a copy of a 1905 *Union Jack* that had lain hidden, no doubt, for nearly sixty years!

One wonders, how did it get into its hiding place? Did some schoolboy back in 1905, fearful of being caught with a *Union Jack* in his possession, drop it behind a fixture, hiding the paper so thoroughly that it was not found until 1964?

The title of the Sexton Blake story—for it is a Blake story—is *Sexton Blake in Africa*, illustrated by Fred Bennett. It runs to 28 pages, followed by three pages of a serial, *Trooper and Bush-ranger*, by Cecil Hayter, and one page of *The Skipper's Weekly Chat*. Under the name of the paper on page 1 is the phrase *A Weekly Story-Book For All*.

A reminder of the years that are gone, before even I had begun to read the Amalgamated

Press weekly papers. Thanks, Jessie and Jim!

* * *

Treasure, But Not Trove!

ANOTHER DAY in November of 1964 brought me three copies of *The Pluck Library* from Frank Knott in New Zealand. They were hardly a surprise, however, for I knew they were on the way. *Pluck* is a paper I have long had a liking for, have a goodly collection of in the penny series and a few of in the halfpenny series, and of which I should have been more active in acquiring copies.

The earliest of these three is Number 454 of the halfpenny series, dated August 8th, 1903. Under the title on the front cover are the words *A Healthy Complete Story Book*. (That word *BOOK* persists in turning up in connection with story papers!) Complete? Well, there are two serial instalments and two complete stories. This copy looks very healthy, seeing it is more than 60 years old.

Thanks to you, too, Frank!

* * *

Inquiries Answered

SOMETIMES inquiries are made as to how contributions to the cost of producing and mailing *S.P.C.* may be made. (Some readers

indeed, unasked, have been kind enough to devise a method of doing so directly.) The answer is: Commonwealth Reply Coupons help with the mailing costs.

* * *

Noted by the Way

NOT SO LONG ago we had a few words of welcome for *Boys' World*. It did not last very long, ending with Number 40 of Volume 2, October 3rd, 1964. It was combined with *Eagle*, another Odham (formerly Hulton) boy's paper of longer standing.

DATED the 17th, Fleetway Publications last October launched a new comic, *The Big One*, with double size pages. Some of the features are very familiar.

IT CAN be reported that in his *My Autobiography*, serialised in *The Sunday Times* commencing in September, 1964, Charles Chaplin did not mention having been a student at Calcroft School as related by Sidney Drew in *The Boys' Realm* in 1915-16.

OUR THANKS for Christmas messages received last December!

IN S. P. C. Number 89, page 267, it is indicated that H. Simpson "wrote and published a history of old boys' journals." We had forgotten that H. Simpson published in 1913 a *History of Old Boys' Books* written by "Ralph Rollington" (S. Dacre Clarke).

H. Simpson was the publisher of the book, not the author of it. Reader Tom Langley has a copy.

* * *

S.P.C. Goes to The B.M.

IT HAS taken a long time, but at last the British Museum has learned of *The Story Paper Collector* and asked for copies. We have supplied Numbers 10 (reprint), 53 to 65, and 67 to date. Should any reader feel like providing the B. M. with copies of the other issues, please write to: M. J. O'Donoghue, State Paper Room, The British Museum, London, W.C.1, England.

..... I Wish to Obtain . . .

—Pre-war and post-war comics: *Chips*, *Film Fun*, *Knockout*, etc.; and comic Annuals: *Crackers*, etc.—Geoffrey Harrison, 20 Howard Road, Taradale, Hawke Bay, New Zealand.

—S. P. C. Number 29. — L. S. Elliott, 17 Langdon Crescent, East Ham, London E.6, England.

—S. P. C. Numbers 1 to 52. — P. J. Creighan, 25 Belgium Square, Monaghan, Ireland.

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THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Established 1941

Edited, printed, and published by
Wm. H. Gander, 202 Yale Ave. West,
Transcona 25, Manitoba, Canada.

This Issue 256 Copies.