



THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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I KNEW JOSEPH PARKS!

I DISCOVERED the Old Boys' Books hobby when reading E. S. Turner's *Boys Will Be Boys* and was delighted to learn that one Joseph Parks published a magazine, *The Collector's Miscellany*, devoted to the subject from Saltburn, Yorkshire.

I knew this lovely though quiet seaside resort, for it is only thirty miles from my home-town, Darlington, but I only visited it on Saturday afternoons and Sundays when, obviously, a printing establishment would be closed. In 1951, however, when my daughter was a few weeks old, Saltburn became an ideal place for a holiday and we went there for a fortnight.

Needless to say I called on Joe Parks on the first Monday

morning to introduce myself. His printing shop occupied the loft of an old stable and seemed to me, a layman, quite well equipped. He was glad to make up for me a copy of each issue of his little paper still in print and I subscribed for a year ahead.

The next year I renewed acquaintance with Joe and learned more about him. My recollection is that he had been a sailor and a fisherman but had "swallowed the anchor" and set up, without any sort of experience, as a jobbing printer, which explains the poor quality of his early publications.

He seemed to have quite a good connection for he was filling orders from abroad on

my visits to him. That must have been deceptive for he told me that he was selling part of his collection to raise funds for more up-to-date equipment.

Offering to buy any items that suited me, Joe invited me to his home on the outskirts of the town and I spent a pleasant hour or so browsing over his books and papers. Some were accessible from a bookcase but most were wrapped in brown paper and even Joe could not identify a particular parcel.

I remember buying a bundle of *Plucks* very cheaply and found that, as an adult, I disliked that paper as much as I had done in my youth. Joe obligingly swapped them for something he had intended to keep—a pile of *Magnets*. I would gladly have bought more—for my own sake and because Joe was having to act as car-park attendant on the promenade at weekends to bolster his finances—but funds were low in those days.

Next year I booked another holiday at Saltburn and looked forward to meeting the pleasant, gnome-like printer again. In the meanwhile I was offered the chance of a lifetime—a move from my normal occupation of local government to professional journalism in London. I seized it eagerly and had to cancel the visit to Saltburn, hoping

to return and spend a holiday there and in Darlington.

Unfortunately Joe died soon afterwards, and I seem to recollect reading that his collection had been sold. I wish now that I had kept the *Magnets* he had once owned but, as my interest in the hobby concentrated more on books about O. B. B. than on the books themselves, I sold them.

I wonder how many readers of *The Story Paper Collector* actually met Joseph Parks as I did?

—GEORGE MELL

Information Regarding Pseudonyms Required

A SUPPLEMENTARY volume to Halkett & Laing's *Dictionary of Anon-ymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* will be published as soon as enough entries are received. Readers of *The Story Paper Collector* who know of anyone writing under a pseudonym are asked to communicate with the editors, Richard A. Christophers and Michael O'Donoghue at the Department of Printed Books, The British Museum, London, W.C.1, England.

PUBLISHED monthly in Dublin by the Christian Brothers of Ireland, *Our Boys* observed its 50th anniversary in September, 1964.

A Comparison by JACK OVERHILL of . . .

TREASURE ISLAND (Robert Louis Stevenson)

and

PERIL ISLAND (Sidney Drew)

DOBBIE LOKER's "paper" shop was three-quarters of a mile from where I lived, but though there were newsagents in the neighbourhood of my home, his was the place to go to. The shop was stacked from floor to ceiling with weeklies and monthlies of all sorts, and sometimes when I went in he would lug out a pile of old ones, dump them on the counter, and say: "Have a look through them." Eagerly, I would have a look, hoping to find old *Magnets* and *Gems*. I once found a *Magnet* that had come out in 1911—four years ago!—and to me—twelve years old—that seemed farther away than fifty years does now.

Sometimes, Dobbie must have hunted round the shop himself, for among the current issues of *The Magnet*, *The Gem*, *The Boys' Friend*, *The Marvel*, *Union Jack*, *Penny Popular*, and other weeklies displayed in the window, there were strung on a line across it old copies of the *Diamond*, *Robin Hood*, *Dick Turpin*, and *Buffalo Bill* Libraries. *Buffalo Bill* didn't

appeal to me, but I liked reading about *Robin Hood* and *Dick Turpin*; so I did about *Kettle and Co.*, and *Tufty and Co.*—schoolboy heroes in the *Diamond Library*.

Sea tales were favourites, too. I hadn't thought much of *Balantyne's Coral Island*, but *A Son of the Sea*, *Polruan's Millions*, *The Boys of the Bombay Castle*, and *Crusoe Island* in *The Boys' Friend* had whetted my appetite for them and any book in a shop window with a cover picture of palm-fringed beach and lagoon under a blue sky would lure me in to buy it. *Skeleton's Gold*, a *Newnes Library*, was good. Best of the lot was *Bully Hayes—Black-bird*; a *Newnes Library*, I think.

Indeed, Dobbie's shop was the place to go. There was always an element of surprise, the hope of a "find" there. Only once did it bring dismay. On a cold, wet morning in the spring of 1915 I went with a handcart to the gasworks for coke. The way led past Dobbie's and I went in the shop and bought the current number of *The Gem*. The story

was called *For Another's Sake*. The cover picture showed the Head of St. Jim's and Talbot standing on the College steps: it bore the caption *The Midnight Expulsion*. Talbot sacked! The world turned turtle. For Talbot's destiny was bound up with my own. Unhappily I got between the shafts of the handcart, trying as I pulled to read of the harrowing circumstances that had arisen in Talbot's life to bring about his downfall. (If only a story could now stir me as much!)

ONE AFTERNOON, looking in Dobbie's window, I saw clipped to the line across it a *Big Budget Library* called *Peril Island*. I had heard of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, a book I had never read as I thought it was a story for little children, but this looked different and worth buying, as the cover picture showed an old pirate in seaman's dark-red dress, three-cornered hat, cutlass at hip, pistol in belt, climbing a rope ladder. On a lifebuoy was the author's name: Sidney Drew — and that name was a magnet. For Sidney Drew wrote marvelous tales about Ferrers Lord (he had a beautiful ocean-going submarine, *Lord of the Deep*), Ching Lung, a Chinese prince, and Gan Waga, an Eskimo who

was always saying and doing funny things ("Hots Chingy," he would say to the Prince and go and cool off in a bathful of cold water in cold weather).

Sidney Drew also wrote about Fane, Bindley and Co. of Calcroft School. I had once got hold of part of a *Boys' Friend Library* that told how the Co. had found a cave and had held high jinks in it by chucking jam tarts at one another. That had been simply ripping. I went in the shop and bought the book, *Peril Island*.

Now, it must not be supposed by the free-and-easy manner I bought weeklies and monthlies in those days that I had money to burn. I hadn't. My father was a journeyman shoemaker: he only got five shillings for making a pair of boots for high-class bespoke shops and we always lived on the bread-line. So I had to supplement the coppers he gave me by working as an errand-boy out of school hours—thirty-five hours a week for three bob a week. Unknown to my father, or there would have been trouble, I let out on hire, at a ha'penny and a penny a time, a secondhand girl's-bike he had bought me for five shillings.

Gleefully, I would pocket the money as it was handed over; for then I could buy *Comic Cuts*,

Chips, Chuckles, Funny Wonder, Butterfly, Merry and Bright, Jester (I bought comics for the stories in them rather than the comic strips), *The Magnet*, *The Gem*, *The Boys' Friend*, *Penny Popular*, *The Marvel*, *The Dreadnought* (till it packed up), *The Greyfriars Herald* (short-lived), and quite a variety of other books and comics. There were so many of them that even now I dream of going in a newsagent's shop and seeing them all around me as I did in the golden days (for me!) of the first World War. (I did not buy *The Union Jack* and *The Nelson Lee* until I had left school.)

Peril Island was 8½ inches long, 5½ inches wide. It contained 96 two-column pages and about 100,000 words, so, in quantity, it was good value for money.

I started reading the story, found the heroes setting out for the Arctic, and packed it up. I barred cold regions. When I read of foreign parts I wanted sweltering heat—the South Seas, the Amazon, the Congo—not ice and snow.

Well, all that was dormant for nearly fifty years. *Peril Island*, half the cover gone but otherwise intact, I kept in a drawer with a few other favourites of long ago. In the meantime, I had seen the film of *Treasure Island* with no inclination to read the book.

Then I felt I would like to read both books and compare them.

Treasure Island

AN OLD SEA-DOG—one-time first mate to Captain Flint, a notorious pirate now dead—arrives with his sea-chest at the *Admiral Bonbow* inn down in the West Country some time in the 18th century. He often breaks into song:

*Fifteen men on the dead man's
chest—*

*Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for
the rest—*

Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

An old shipmate of his, The Black Dog, turns up and scares him. They fight with cutlasses and The Black Dog flees. The old sea-dog, called "The Captain" by the villagers, has a stroke after the fight and when a blind man visits him he dies from "thundering apoplexy." Jim Hawkins is the innkeeper's son; his father dying about the same time, Jim and his mother rifle the Captain's sea-chest for the money he owes them. While doing so, Jim comes across an oilskin package which he takes.

They flee the inn to avoid strange men that arrive and carry out a search there for the oilskin package. Jim takes the package

to Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesay. The package contains a map of an island where Captain Flint's treasure is buried. This leads to Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesay, and Jim Hawkins setting out in the *Hispaniola* in quest of the treasure on Skeleton Island. There is a mixed crew—honest men and rascals. One of the crew, Long John Silver, whose left leg is cut off at the hip, proves to be an unscrupulous scoundrel, out for the treasure himself. There are adventures during the voyage, and arriving at Skeleton Island honest men and rascals fight it out. Seventeen of them lose their lives.

Helped by Ben Gunn, one of Captain Flint's men who had been marooned on the island, the honest men triumph and come into possession of most of the treasure which, after treacherous Long John Silver has escaped with three or four hundred guineas of it, is faithfully shared according to merit and distinction.

Peril Island

THE PERIOD is round about 1900 and the story opens with Clive Drayton, a handsome young man of twenty-three or four, sitting in the stuffy cabin of a barge on the Thames, brooding about himself and his pros-

pects. The nephew of a baronet, he is shabbily dressed, collarless, and nearly penniless, but he has invented a submarine and feels he is knocking at fortune's door as Fuller Lanwith, a millionaire, has shown interest in his invention and they are to meet the next day. Clive is disturbed by a song being sung in the dark outside, where rain is dismally falling:

*Dead men, live men, drink and
gold,
Yo-heave-ho, and they call it piracy,
With the Roger at the truck, yo-ho,
my comrades bold,
There's lots of gold at sea.
A merry life, a short life, a noose
for you and me,
And Davy Jones must have their
bones, if they call it piracy.*

A horrible dwarf (Monkey Swayne) comes aboard with a companion (the Honourable Santley) to ask the way to Lucknan's wharf. When they leave they maliciously break a window and cut Clive's rowing-boat adrift. Clive tries out his submarine, Nanty, the kitten, acting as captain and crew. An old man with long white hair gives him a lift ashore. On the wharf, the cloak the old man is wearing falls open and reveals buckled shoes, knee breeches, and a coat with wide lapels and laced cuffs. A sword hangs at his hip and he

Robert Louis Stevenson. 1850-1894. Educated at private schools and University of Edinburgh. Wrote *Treasure Island* in 1882, first published in James Henderson's *Young Folks* as *The Sea Cook*. Other stories include *Kidnapped*.

Sidney Drew. Real name Edgar Joyce Murray. b. 1878. Contributed to many boys' papers. Perhaps best known for his stories of Ferrers Lord, Prince Ching Lung, and *Lord of the Deep*. Also wrote the Calcroft School stories.

has two old-fashioned pistols stuck in his belt. He puts on a three-cornered hat and warns Clive to look out for the press-gangs. Clive is "staggered."

"Did ye ever go to sea?" asks the old man.

"Yes, I've been round the world."

"Ah!" The old man grips Clive's hand. "Did ye ever meet Dick Swayne?"

"Never."

"Then ye were in luck. If you meet him, run him through."

And he tells Clive about the deadly five: Monkey Swayne, the Honourable Santley, the Frenchie Guerin, Lake, and Vanderlet, the Dutchman. They are after the old man's blood, for he is none other than Black Juan Gaskara, the notorious pirate of nearly one hundred

years ago (he is one hundred and twelve years old, maybe more). The men dogging his footsteps are the grandsons of five of his crew, whom he had done to death to have their share of booty got by pillage and plunder.

Monkey Swayne and Co. turn up on the wharf. Singing their song, *Dead men, live men, drink and gold*, they attack. They are driven off with sword and pistol by Clive and Black Juan, who takes Clive to his hideout—a room over warehouses, which they reach, not by stairs or ladder, but by ratlines. The five attack several times during the night but are driven off. The old man spills his tale in between fighting and dozing.

The next day, Clive is interviewed by Fuller Lanwith who, after hearing all about the model

submarine, sends two men to the barge to steal it. In the meantime, a faithful negro servant (Ruby) turns up and resolutely refuses to leave Massa Clive though he cannot afford to employ him.

CLIVE RETURNS to Black Juan as promised. Feeling he is dying during the night, Black Juan gives Clive a map of his buried treasure. He puts a "false" map in his pocket for the five to find when he is dead. They attack again, the old pirate rallies and he and Clive put up a sterling fight in which Black Juan is killed and Clive laid out. Clive wakes up in hospital. He decides to keep his tale to himself. (Who will believe it!) He gets his clothes and steals away from the hospital, only to find the barge and his precious model submarine have disappeared.

The shock stuns him back into hospital "muttering and raving wildly." When he comes to himself there is a merry throng around his bed—doctor, pretty nurses, Ruby, and a dozen other patients—and Nanty the cat. And no wonder! His uncle has died, he is now "Sir Clive," the eighth baronet, and he has inherited one of the noblest estates in England and £80,000 a year.

His brougham is outside to

take him home. Overwhelmed, Sir Clive beckons the doctor and says, "Old chap, I appoint you my private physician at once." He then reprimands Ruby for grinning, saying he will frighten the cat. Ruby expresses delight by yo-ho-ho-ing and standing on his head.

Among those waiting to greet Sir Clive at Drayton Hall is his old friend Hector Dane, who is a good shot, a straight bat, a clean oar—"but long-distance running and hurdling had won him his greatest laurels." "Sir Peter" has died and left Hector all his money and the *Silver Star*, a big yacht. Clive tells Hector about Black Juan and shows him the old pirate's roll of parchment. A map and cryptograms tell where the treasure is buried.

Monkey Swayne and Co. turn up at Drayton Hall. Their leader is Vanderlet, the fat, oily Dutchman who talks "Ach, no, der honour would be doo greadt, I Gould nod bermid it." Unlike the Honourable Santley, a dandy who talks like Arthur Augustus D'Arcy one moment and like any Tom, Dick, or Harry the next. Vanderlet has discovered that the map on Black Juan's body is a false one. He is out for vengeance but is thwarted.

Lord Leckburn, V.C., a bearded giant, arrives at Drayton Hall. Sir Clive and Lord Leckburn

were chums at Eton. Leckburn is the kind that coolly strikes matches on a keg of gunpowder. He is contemptuous of all black men—to him they are “niggers.” He loves war, yawns in the face of danger, and is happiest when guns are chattering in grim and deadly earnest. His war-cry is *Vivat Etona*.

After Sir Clive has turned the tables on Lanwith, the millionaire, at a select club by exposing him as a scoundrel, and produced an even better model of his submarine, the opposing forces set out for Peril Island, the three heroes in the *Silver Star*, manned by stouthearted sailors, the five desperadoes in the *Antoinette*, manned by cutthroats and rogues. Monkey Swayne and Co. kidnap Fuller Lanwith and take him with them to ill-use and abuse him. There are sea battles between the rival parties and after a voyage fraught with many dangers, the *Silver Star* arrives at the island which, though in the Arctic, turns out to be a paradise like one in the South Seas. . . .

Slowly the land of mystery began to show itself. A pillar of dull black rose to the east and jutting crags began to make themselves apparent. And then all at once a ball of vivid flame leapt into view, flooding sea and land with silver light, and they

saw Peril Island. She had a sun of her own. The whole extent of her southern shore was visible in the clear atmosphere. To breathe the atmosphere was like drinking wine.

The island was probably between thirty and forty miles long. The great craggy headland was the Hind Hoof and the islands lying near it enclosed the “Cauldron.” The pillar was the dusky smoke of the volcano lying in the extreme east of the island. More to the east still the Hoof jutted out into the sparkling waters, a great brown strip topped with softest green.

They headed for Shrapnel Bay . . . The sandy shore was whiter than carded wool and the bottom loomed white under the yacht's keel. Scents such as no human beings, except the long dead pirates, had ever smelled, poured seaward from the Fairy Isle. Great masses of ferns and flowers grew in wild luxuriance beyond the pearly sand and turtles basked near the water. A streak of shining gold showing over the green of the Hoof marked the sandhills.

Ashes of a fire on the island suggest savages, but a few savages more or less make no difference to the mighty Leckburn, though “around with a rifle he took uneasy glances round him.”

Monkey Swayne and Co. arrive on the island. Some of the

crew of the *Silver Star* change character; they covet the treasure and desert to get it themselves. So there are pitched battles all round.

THEN THE HEROES receive a mysterious message signed *The Unknown*. He turns out to be Graydon Garth, lord of the world, who lives in seclusion on the island paradise with his wife, Vanessa. He is the only man in the world to whom Leckburn pays homage. Leckburn addresses him as "Your Majesty," "My Lord," and later plain Garth—though that may be a slip on the author's part rather than Leckburn's. The first meeting with Graydon Garth is described:

A canoe darted across the stream and a man sprang out. The man stooped and came up the sloping green bank with the carcass of a small deer swinging from his shoulder. It was Graydon Garth. He wore his usual grey tweed suit and a slouch hat with an eagle's feather drooping back over the brim. The grey eyes twinkled as he held out his thin white hand. Hector Dane felt a thrill of disappointment. Was this the conqueror, the saviour of the Empire? Was this Graydon Garth?

But Graydon Garth is a man of iron:

His right arm leapt forward and

struck away the knife. Monkey Swayne had met his match at last. One of those thin white hands had closed upon his throat and the second was clinched round his twisted ankle. His eyes bulged from their sockets, swollen and livid with blood; his blackened tongue lolled from his mouth. In vain he kicked and clawed and writhed. Holding the writhing body above his head, Graydon Garth strode to the brink of the river. He shortened his arms and bent. Then he shot erect, hurling the dwarf headlong into the middle of the stream.

Graydon Garth never walks—he glides. He is always bored and tired. He has an airship, *The Winged Terror*, that brings supplies to him. He acts as his own judge to prisoners, usually marooning them on desert islands.

After much desperate fighting, aided by Graydon Garth, the three heroes triumph and gain the treasure—valued at a little more than £800,000. The last battle is fought during a volcanic eruption. By then all the bad men (including Fuller Lanwith, the scoundrel millionaire), with the exception of Monkey Swayne, are dead—a possible line to another story.

When the *Silver Star* docks at Southampton, each of the crew has a cheque in his pocket and

needs to work no longer. Nanty, the cat, gets a gold collar. Sir Clive, Hector Dane, and Lord Leckburn benefit hospitals with their share of the treasure.



To Compare *Treasure Island* And *Peril Island*

BOTH ARE pirate stories but the resemblance, except for bits and pieces, ends there. Robert Louis Stevenson's story, told by the main character, Jim Hawkins, is a straightforward one: it is never involved, never hard to read, always interesting. The youthful reader is able to identify himself with Jim Hawkins, whose simple narrative makes the incredible credible.

Sidney Drew never pulls it off. From first to last there is a Gothic touch about *Peril Island*: it is make-believe—and reads like it. The main characters often talk like fourth-formers ("Honest Injun," "Like a bird!"), but the story is too heavy-footed for boys and because of such talk and impossible situations it is too juvenile for men—unless men in 1900 were less critical and more easily satisfied than they are now. (Possibly the book was aimed at those a bit older than boys but not old enough to be called men.)

Coincidence, nick of time, just deserts, honour to the brave, are all too much in evidence—and deference to wealth and privilege laid on a bit too thick. The farce might make a boy laugh, but it would make a man wince. Incidents are often jumpy—maybe the type-setter lost the place!—and that makes the story hard to follow. And it is rather bewildering to the reader when he finds Hector answering himself in a conversation with Sir Clive!

The book contains many excellent descriptions of natural phenomena. Sidney Drew wrote with a full pen when describing Nature, and how much at home he was when writing about the sea and ships!

Features of *Peril Island* are three full page pictures in black and white, a detailed map of the island, three cryptograms in hieroglyphics (decyphering these is described at great length), and the rhymes that head some of the chapters:

*To sleep a pauper, to wake a king
Could ever dreams a stranger
picture bring?*

*Gold and death are linked together
Like sunshine and gold and stormy
weather.*

*"Stand and deliver" is my cry,
To merchant, bishop, or king,
A merry knight of the roads am I,*

So tremble all when my hoofbeats
ring
Under the moonlit sky.

There are also extracts from Coleridge and Byron.

FOOTNOTE 1:

Obviously, Graydon Garth and Ferrers Lord were identical twins. Probably Garth, Leckburn, and Vanessa—Queen of

the Hill Country—had played leading roles in another story of Sidney Drew's.

FOOTNOTE 2:

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest. I heard it sung when I was a boy. It took time to dawn on me that it was a wooden chest. I always pictured a mob of pirates on a dead man's diaphragm—and it just wasn't big enough!

Some More Views on Robin Hood

WITH REGARD to the comments of Mr. A. V. Holland on "Robin Hood" (S. P. C. Number 89) I fear there is not the slightest historical evidence that the famous outlaw ever existed. If he did, then he was not one man but quite a number spread over a pretty extensive period of time in the Middle Ages in England. This probably explains the many discrepancies in the "Robin Hood" legend.

According to most writers, Robin lived in the time of Richard I (the Lion Hearted), the 12th Century, and was a wonderful shot with the longbow. The longbow, however, was not invented in the time of Richard I. It was only just beginning, if then, to supersede the rather clumsy arbalest, or cross-

bow. Then there is the character of Friar Tuck. If Robin lived in the time of Richard I, Friar Tuck just does not fit in because friars had not been introduced and did not actually come on the scene until about one hundred years later. With regard to Maid Marion, the term "Maid" in the Middle Ages meant, of course, a virgin. But Maid Marian was supposed to be married to Robin Hood. She can hardly have been "Maid" Marian!

The best "Robin Hood" story is undoubtedly *Ivanhoe*, by Sir Walter Scott, even if it is rather full of historical mistakes. This uses the story of Richard I's return from the Holy Land in disguise and with Robin's help defeating his wicked brother,

Prince John, and winning his kingdom back again, a theme that has been used by more than one Robin Hood writer and in quite a number of films.

Another really first class "Robin Hood" novel is *The Nut Brown Maid*, by the late Philip Lindsay, a very fine historical novelist by any standards. This story, however, shows Robin as not the hero of romance but as a typical Middle Ages outlaw, brave, cruel, and with little or no morals. It is, however, in its grim realism, one of the finest studies of the outlaw in the Middle Ages ever written. Incidentally, Mr. Lindsay has Robin living at about the time of Crecy in the reign of Edward III (*circa* 1350) which enables the author to get over the longbow and Friar Tuck difficulty without any trouble. — W. J. A. HUBBARD
Nyeri, Kenya.

* *

Z THE ALDINE *Robin Hood Library* was first published from about 1902 to 1906. There were 88 numbers in the series; page size $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ "', 32 pages, yellow covers with a picture on the front. My late father had practically the entire set and I read them many times as a boy before the first World War.

Some of the series were re-issued in 1912. They were again

re-issued in the mid-1920s. I do not know if the whole series was re-issued then. The last one I saw was Number 60, but I think Herbert Leckenby once told me the whole 88 were re-issued. The Amalgamated Press series was issued in 1919—only a dozen or twenty numbers. They were very poor stuff.

I hope that Mr. H. A. Puckrin will forgive me but, with respect, I think his "facts"* are based on the Aldine *Robin Hood Library*, and I do not think any historian would regard these as any evidence about the real Robin Hood—if there was one. It certainly is not "accepted without question" that Robin Hood's name was Robert Fitzooth, or that he was the rightful Earl of Huntingdon.

The actual existence of Robin Hood must, in fact, be regarded as non-proven. Certainly Valentine Harris believes he has identified him as living in the reign of Edward the Second. Other historians are much more cautious.

There has been quite a lot of interest in the Robin Hood legend in recent years. See, for example, articles in *Past and Present*, and Keen's *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*. Arthur Bryant also refers to the legend in

* *Robin Hood and His Band of Outlaws*, in S.P.C. Number 86, pp.212-5. Also see Part 3 overleaf.

The Age of Chivalry. Of kings associated with Robin Hood we have not only Richard I but also Edward I, Edward II, and Henry VIII. Maid Marian is, of course, a late addition, and certainly Friar Tuck is out of date as set in *Ivanhoe*, fifty years before the birth of St. Francis.

Equally, the marvelous archery of Robin Hood is far in advance of the heyday of English archery if set in the reign of Lionheart. It was the Welsh archers who taught Edward I the value of the longbow, and the great days of the English bowman were from Edward III to Henry V. Certainly Richard I used archers in the Holy Land, but I think it will be found that they were mainly crossbowmen.

There may well have been a Robert (or Robin) Hood who lived in the 13th or 14th century and who was an outlaw and an archer. Probably we shall never know. But why try to find out the "facts" about him, any more than the "facts" about Sexton Blake?

The archery and Friar Tuck we probably owe to *Ivanhoe*, the "Earl of Huntingdon" legend probably to Thomas Peacock's *Maid Marian*. Much more to Ritson and the Ballads. But let us leave this to the historians, and in the "Aldines," and in other tales, follow "The thrice

blown shrill summons of Bold Robin Hood."

Apart from those "Aldines," good Robin Hood tales are: Morton Pike's *Guy of the Greenwood* in *The Boys' Friend Library*; the "Puffin" *Robin Hood* by Roger Lancellyn Green; Howard Pyle's *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*; Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*; Peacock's *Maid Marian*; G. P. R. James's *Forest Days*; Pierce Egan's *Robin Hood*; and two modern novels, Philip Lindsay's *The Nut Brown Maid* and Jay Williams' *Good Yoeman*, both of them unconventional portraits of "Robin Hood." —W. T. THURBON

Cambridge, England.

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MR. H. A. PUCKRIN has written to us regarding his "Robin Hood" article and we paraphrase briefly:

WHILE MY interest in Robin Hood was started by the Aldine series, I queried every source of information available to me. I am pleased that interest has been aroused. Reference to Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* will disclose more Robin Hood anecdotes. . . And I will say with Goethe:

*Such a reproach not in the least
offends,
A man who some result intends
Must use the tools that best are
fitting,*

Reflect, soft wood is given you for splitting.

* *

4 IN *The Boys' Friend* Number 379, September 12th, 1908, in which commenced one of Morton Pike's "Robin Hood" serials, *King of the Woodland*; or, *Robin Hood to the Rescue*, there also began a series of short articles, *The Romance of Robin Hood*. In these Mr. Pike (real name: David Harold Parry) told of the "Robin Hood" legend.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

SAYS MARK TWAIN, "When in doubt, tell the truth." This example of a twisted aphorism does contain a great deal of truth, for authors searching their minds for new ideas have often penned incidents astonishingly like real life. This has happened in all kinds of literature. Whether the writing of such stories is due to a sixth sense or prescience is a matter that does not concern us, but this writer will try to justify his statement.

In the year 1898 Benjamin Franklin (Frank) Norris, a young American author, wrote

a story inspired by a feeling of resentment in all parts of the U. S. A. at the tyrannical and unjust government of Spain in the West Indies. The chief incident in this story was the destruction of an American warship which had been sent to look after American lives and property. The story was published and caused little comment, but shortly afterwards the entire country was surprised to learn that the U. S. battleship *Maine*, lying in Havana harbour, had sunk following an explosion.

Indignation ran high and Spain was blamed, but responsibility was denied by the Spanish government, which sent divers to examine the wreck and claimed that an internal explosion was the cause. Things had gone beyond a peaceful settlement and the superior strength of the U. S. A. resulted in total defeat for Spain.

It is only fair to add that when the wreck was raised and examined in 1912 the broken keel and twisted and torn plating all suggested that an explosion in the ship's magazine was the cause.

Another example of apparent fore-knowledge, this time on the part of an English writer, occurred at about the same period. In this story a huge liner on her maiden voyage, crowded with a

happy and opulent list of passengers satisfied with everything in general ("God is in His heaven, all's well with the world"), crashed at full speed into an iceberg and sank with great loss of life.

This story did not rouse any special interest until the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 set the whole world talking. The rights and wrongs of the case are now matters of history, but it resulted in drastic safety measures being taken to prevent a recurrence of this kind of disaster.

It has become a practice in recent years to send school children from selected areas on holiday cruises. This striking idea occurred to Frank Richards many years ago in some early issues of *The Gem*. In these tales he sent all of St. Jim's on such an adventure.

The reason was an outbreak of an infection at the school, and the voyage was held to be a striking example of educational initiative. Though subject to ship discipline, the cruise gave the boys full scope for japes of many kinds, the moping and miserable Mr. Ratcliff being the chief target.

After a long voyage the author used his writer's privilege to end it by causing the ship to be destroyed without loss of life by an explosion in the boiler

room. The epidemic at St. Jim's having subsided, the boys returned and life at the school resumed its usual course.

Fortunately no such wreck incident has occurred, but the idea of school-cruises has taken root and grown.

THE WRITER feels that these few examples of authors' glimpses into the future are sufficient justification for closing this article by repeating the title, for truth is indeed "stranger than fiction."

—HENRY ADAMS PUCKRIN

THE CORNER CUPBOARD 9

Edwin L. Arnold

I WAS MOST interested in some of the comments in Mr. Henry Adams Puckrin's article *Still More Memories* (S.P.C. Number 89). Mr. Puckrin may like to know that a lesser work by Edwin L. Arnold now entitled *Gulliver of Mars* is said to have been the source of Edgar Rice Burroughs' famous "Martian" series. And *Phra the Phoenician* is believed to be the inspiration from where Mr. Burroughs obtained the hero of his "Martian" series, the famous character John Carter.

Why Edwin L. Arnold is so neglected today is a little puzzling as he wrote some very fine stories. He made a good deal of money out of his work and was a prominent yachtsman, owning a fine schooner on which he made numerous cruises. A much liked man, he had a Japanese wife.

—W. J. A. HUBBARD

* * *

Brenda Girvin: A Reply

THE QUERY by Tom Armitage in S. P. C. Number 87 regarding Brenda Girvin, the author of *The Harum-Scarum Karls*, that most delightful and re-readable story in *Chatterbox* for 1914, had me stumped. (Iffy was my favourite heroine, after Cousin Ethel, in any "old boys' book.")

But, browsing around one of the few remaining secondhand bookshops in Leeds has given me information for which Mr. Armitage asks. I picked up another children's book, published, as was *Chatterbox*, by Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co. The title reads: "Round Fairyland With Alice and the White Rabbit," by Brenda Girvin, author of "Four Harum Scarums," etc., etc.

And in a copy of *Authors' Who's Who* for 1948-49, is the following: Brenda Girvin. b. London; educ. Wycombe Abbey School. Plays produced (in collab. with Miss

Monica Cousens): "*The Red Umbrella*," "*Miss Black's Son*," "*Wee Men*." Cir.—All principal London newspapers and periodicals. *Recreations: Gardening, swimming, photography*.

—GERRY ALLISON
Menston, Yorks.

* * *

Splendid Reading!

THE ARTICLE on Joseph Parks and his *Vanity Fair* in S. P. C. Number 89 was most interesting. It sent me looking through the twenty-two numbers of his 5th series, *The Collector's Miscellany*. The reproductions of illustrations, from *Ally Sloper to The Champion*, and from the *Aldine Dick Turpin to The Magnet*, besides numerous Victorian "bloods," are delightful. The imposing list of contributors, among whom were John Medcraft, R. A. H. Goodyear, Herbert Leckenby, Roger Jenkins,* made for splendid reading by the immaculate literary style and deep knowledge of the various aspects and subjects of our hobby.

These subjects ranged from the gloomy, Gothic atmosphere of Victorian penny dreadfuls to the bubbling fun of the then-modern comic papers, and from *Sweeney Todd* to *Billy Bunter*.

* Here, Maurice Kutner adds: and not forgetting your own esteemed self—but our modesty forbids its inclusion.—Editor.

The contributors were products of their own particular generation and were intensely moved by the reading matter of their youth. Each had his own sphere of interest, his likes and dislikes, and toleration forbade the suggestion that his own sphere of interest was the only worthwhile one. The heat engendered in more recent days by opposing schools of thought would not have fitted comfortably into the pages of *The Collector's Miscellany* of the 1940s.

To the average boy who was not smart enough to smell the work of a "substitute" writer even if it were pushed under his nostrils, no one author was more of a literary giant than another. We just enjoyed one type of story, or set of situations, more than another.

One would have thought that the danger to the illusions of the adult, re-reading his youthful loves, lies in the possible realization that very few story-tellers to the young were, or needed to be, literary giants. When this strikes home, the adult can then find it so easy to pick faults, if not in his own favourite boyhood author, then that of someone else.

Perhaps a return to the atmosphere of the early days of Joseph Parks' *Collector's Miscellany* (5th series) might bring

with it a return to a sense of proportion and values. Ah, those early days when contributors, digging happily for the truth of the past in their own little field, were too busy to notice the weeds and tares being dug up by the chap in the next field!

—MAURICE KUTNER

* * *

The Wrong Man

WE OPENED the wrong mental drawer and out popped the the name "S. Dacre Clarke" (S.P.C. Number 90, page 292, foot of column 1), which is not correct. "Ralph Rollington" was H. J. Allingham.

* * *

A Puzzle Picture

IN NUMBER 733 of *The Gem*, dated February 25th, 1922, the St. Jim's story is called *Taking Down Audrey Racke*, but it could be that readers, turning to the last page of that issue, were being "taken down," too.

There, in the "*Gem*" *Portrait Gallery*, was a picture of "Martin Clifford, the famous author of the stories of St. Jim's."

The young man pictured would pass for 25 to 30 years of age. Charles Hamilton would have been considerably older at that time, and portraits of the famous author taken in later years bear no resemblance to the

young fellow pictured by the Gem artist. Maybe keen Gemites in England kept an eye open for the "Martin Clifford" their favourite paper had revealed to them. If they did, the Old Master could have rested assured they would never spot him.

—O. W. WADHAM

* * *

Rookwood's Fifty Years!

HERE I AM, an admirer of Owen Conquest's Rookwood stories in *The Boys' Friend*, and I over-looked referring in the January or the April S.P.C. to Rookwood's Fifty Years! Not until I received my copy of the February *Collectors' Digest* was the anniversary in that month recalled to me. I shall in imagination stand briefly in a corner wearing a pointed cap. Now there is not much left to write on the subject; or, if that is not quite correct, there is not much space in which I may print it.

My liking for *The Boys' Friend* is not confined to its Rookwood years. I have a special fondness for the paper from its original Number 1, first or halfpenny series, back in 1895, to the issue in 1926 with the final Rookwood story in it. I can at any time lose myself for an hour in its pages; and it was made the subject of the first article in S.P.C. Number 1. And even after Rookwood,

on to the last issue in the last week of 1927, if for no other reason than that it is still the good old "Green 'un"—fallen on lean years.

"Reconstructed for the modern boy." But the modern boy in increasing numbers did not want it and soon the "new look" was toned down and the paper was more like its old self, but with reprinted comics and stories.

So we look back fifty years to the beginning of Rookwood in *The Boys' Friend* in February, 1915. The series provided still another outlet for the genius of Charles Hamilton—possibly somewhat to the detriment of St. Jim's and Greyfriars—and without doubt gave a good story paper a boost at a time when one was needed.

Assuming that *The Boys' Friend* was faltering at the end of 1914 (and no double number for Christmas suggests that it was), then the changes made by Editor H. A. Hinton—the Rookwood stories, a new title design on the front page, four colour-printed-cover "bumper numbers" with free plates, and a slight typographical modernization—made this one of the very few occasions when an attempt to infuse new life into an ailing boys' paper was successful.

Though it had for twenty years gone in heavily for adventure stories, there had been

many school stories, complete and serial, in *The Boys' Friend*. This was the first time, however, that a school series was introduced which was to go on and on after the manner of those of St. Jim's and Greyfriars in *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. That the experiment was a success is proved by the fact that they ran every week for eleven years—and eleven years equals one-third of the paper's total publishing life.

It survived for less than two years after the finish of the Rookwood stories, which may or may not have been a case of effect and cause. The trend was away from the large-size papers anyway, and the end might have come just the same even if Rookwood had been continued.

ROOKWOOD!—Where, if I may borrow and adapt a phrase, it is always 1915—or is it 1919?—or perhaps 1924? —W. H. G.

* * *

Sexton Blake Returns

THE PRINTING of S. P. C. is now done far ahead of the month for which it is dated. Thus it is that as this page is being prepared we have only the initial numbers of the new *Sexton Blake Library*—Fifth Series it is called—which went on sale in February of this year:

No. 1—*Murderer at Large*,
by W. A. Ballinger.

No. 2—*Let My People Be*,
by Desmond Reid.

To be followed in March by:

No. 3—*Laird of Evil*,
by Martin Thomas.

No. 4—*The Break Out*,
by Wilfred McNeilly.

The Editor is W. Howard Baker, who was the last Editor of the previous *Sexton Blake Library* series. In paperback format (Mayflower-Dell Paperbacks), there will be two books a month at 2/6d each. Publisher: Mayflower Books, Limited, 319 High Holborn, London W.C.1, England.

I WISH . . .

—to obtain *Boy's Own Paper* Volumes 21, 52, 61.—W. Hall, 46 Walder Road, Hammondville, via Liverpool, N.S.W., Australia.

—to contact people who can supply me with used postage stamps in bulk from their mail. Will buy, or exchange for Australian.—P. C. Neville, P. O. Box 304, Crow's Nest, N.S.W., Australia.

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