

The Collector's Miscellany

*A journal for collectors of Old and Modern Boys'
Books, Bloods, Penny Number Romances, Etc.*

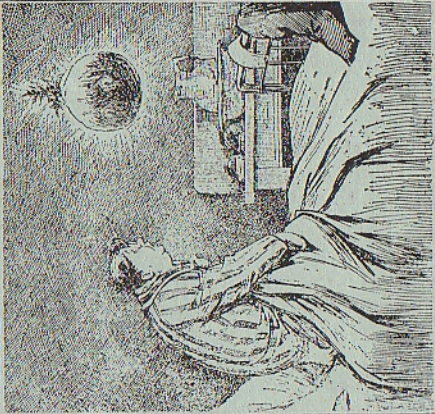
No. 18 (5TH. SERIES). OLD SERIES, No. 104. OCTOBER, 1950

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No. 18 (5TH. SERIES). OLD SERIES, No. 104. OCTOBER, 1950

THE TALE OF THE TOFF

By ROGER M. JENKINS

(continued from page 262)

UP to now, Tom Merry had stood by Talbot loyally, but in Gem No. 375, the 1915 Spring Double Number, Hookey Walker reappeared on the scene, with a wife and child, anxious to emigrate to America. Tom was adamant in his opinion that Talbot should have nothing more to do with his former associates, but the Toff felt that he could not let down Walker and so Tom Merry and Talbot became estranged. After Hookey Walker had departed, Talbot came across traces of a German spy on Wayland Moor, and his nocturnal excursions to ensure the spy's capture were thought by Tom Merry to be further evidence of Talbot's waywardness. Strangely enough Ernest Levison was Talbot's champion in this matter, having for once in his life remembered a kind act. Needless to say it all came right in the end, and Tom from that time onwards never doubted his friend.

Talbot was undoubtedly a popular figure in those days, and the following issue of the Gem began another trio of stories about him. No. 376 entitled "The Path of Dishonour" recounts Gore's fall from grace when he gave Tickey Tapp an I.O.U. for £15 lost at cards, and stole money from the Head's safe (which happened to be open one day) in order to repay the cardsharpener, who had, however, temporarily left the neighbourhood. In Gem No. 377 Gore accepted Talbot's offer of help, and let him take the money to return it to the safe. But Talbot's luck was against him, one again, and the Head caught him redhanded with the safe open and the money in his hand.

Having unwittingly done Talbot an injustice on a previous occasion, Dr. Holmes was reluctant to be severe again, but as Talbot vouchsafed no information the Head naturally accepted the facts at their face value, and Talbot agreed to leave immediately. In Gem No. 378 he joined up with Chungum's Circus* but Gore's conscience weighed heavily with upon himself, and he became delirious, during which Marie Rivers learned the truth, and the Head was told. Talbot returned and Gore was pardoned.

The last, and one of the finest, of the early Talbot stories was in Gem No. 393, the 1915 Double Summer Number entitled "The Housemaster's Homecoming." The title is somewhat deceptive, for although it recounts Mr. Railton's return to St. Jim's after an injury received at the front, the story is essentially about Talbot. Crooke's uncle, Colonel Lyndon, visited the school and stated that he had seen Talbot before—probably when he was brought before him as a boy in the Magistrate's Court! He felt that the junior ought not to be allowed to stay at the school in view of his early record and brought great pressure to bear on the Governors to have Talbot sent away. Owing to the Toff's refusal to state the identity of his father, the governors were unfavourably impressed, being of the opinion that he was concealing something which they ought to know, and even Lord Eastwood felt that he could not speak up for him this time. Accordingly, Talbot was told to leave, but Dr. Holmes refused to be a party to this, and he tendered his resignation. Later Colonel Lyndon knocked down Talbot in his car, and found on him a locket containing the photograph of Talbot's mother, who was also the Colonel's sister. Colonel Lyndon then understood the reason for Talbot's

*It is well not to confuse this with Gem No. 107—"The Swell of the Circus"—which mentions the character Jack Talbot, a lion-tamer at Tomsonio's Circus.

silence, and he had himself appointed guardian of his orphaned nephew.

Crooke did not bear Talbot any gratitude for the loss of expectation of the Colonel's wealth, and the two cousins had little to do with each other. Circumstances brought them very closely together, however, in Gem. No 988—"The Black Sheep of St Jims" when Crooke ran into trouble by getting into debt with Bill Lodgey to the tune of £50. He prevailed upon Talbot to ask Colonel Lyndon for the money, but, doubting whether this vicarious borrowing would succeed, and having found by chance the key to the Housemaster's safe in the quad, Crooke took the necessary cash from Mr. Railton's study, and replaced the key in the pocket of a jacket hanging there. The Colonel did, however, let his nephew have the required amount, and the difficulty now was the replacing of the money in the safe. Crooke took the easiest course of leaving the money where it was under a loose floor-board in a box-room although Talbot had prevailed upon him to replace it. Meanwhile Talbot was suspected as he refused to give his word that he knew nothing of the matter, and though he was cleared when Trimble found the money and was thought to be the thief, he implicated himself once again by stating that he knew Trimble was innocent. At this stage, Talbot left the school rather than betray Crooke, but in Gem No. 991 the Colonel returned to St. Jims to investigate, and the matter was eventually cleared up, the Head deciding to pardon Crooke.

So ends the tale of the Toff. He was undoubtedly one of the finest character studies ever to have come from the pen of Charles Hamilton, and the vicissitudes of his career make splendid reading even after the passing of thirty-five years. The stories are an excellent example of the difference between the Magnet and Gem mode of writing. They touch emotions which one never encounters in a Greyfriars story. The story of life in the slums, the description of a change of heart of the former

young cracksman occasioned by his new environment, his acceptance at the school, his quarrels with Tom Merry and others over points of right and wrong, his trials and tribulations when falsely accused by reason of his past career—these are all episodes one could never find within the pages of the Magnet. But that does not make them one whit the less absorbing to read nor one jot the less important among the writings of their author. For whether one likes emotional stories or not, one cannot but admire the unerring craftsmanship with which these Talbot stories are written, and one cannot refuse to admit that, however much sentiment one can find in the St. Jims stories it never degenerates into mere sentimentality. No, the Toff was undeniably one of the most popular characters in the Gem, and although he was a comparative latecomer he attained an eminence in the St. Jims stories which he never lost. Perhaps the most fitting conclusion is that of J. N. Pentelows—"As for the right sort they think a heap of Talbot. He is not quite like them. His early experiences have left him more serious and thoughtful than most of the fellows among whom his lot is cast. But he is cheerful enough ; and he does everything so well—better than everyone else except Tom Merry, and as well as Tom that one—sometime suspects that he might go ahead of Tom if he cared to. And he never swanks. To Reginald Talbot there is one fellow at St. Jims who will always come first—Tom Merry. Others are his friends ; but none other means to him what Tom means. For Tom he would cheerfully lay down his life."

FINIS



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The Early Jack, Sam and Pete Stories

BY JOHN MEDCRAFT

ON November 15th. 1893, the Harmsworth Brothers launched the first of the many popular story papers for boys that were to follow in increasing numbers with the rise and development of the Amalgamated Press. This was the Halfpenny Marvel 16 pages in a pale green cover printed in red and black, and later dark green and blue, at that early stage innocent of any form of advertising other than notices of new stories that were to follow. The first story "Dead Man's Gold" by S. Clarke Hook, a most prolific writer who gladdened the hearts of boys for more than a quarter of a century and is fondly remembered today for his most famous creations, the world wide adventurers, Jack, Sam and Pete. Throughout the entire run of the Halfpenny Marvel and its companion papers, the halfpenny series of the Union Jack, Pluck and the Boys' Friend, for over 10 years his stories appeared frequently, mainly complete adventure yarns with occasional school stories and serials.

Clarke Hook's penchant for introducing a negro into his various adventurous trios was early in evidence so Pete really appeared in spirit long before he became an established story paper character. It was in Halfpenny Marvel No. 385 entitled "The Eagle of Death" that Jack Owen, a roving Englishman and Sam Grant, an American hunter and trapper first met Pete the negro in a Bolivian mining camp and from then onwards were inseparable comrades. Guided by a message fastened to the pinion of an eagle, an old bird viewed with wholesome dread by the superstitious miners, the three comrades discover a vast treasure and vow eternal friendship.

Between this number and No. 533 when the Halfpenny Marvel ended, there were 24 numbers chronicling the adventurous wanderings of the three comrades throughout the world, from Alaska to Sahara, Yucatan to the Phillipines, in fact,

anywhere remote from ordered civilisation. There is, admitted, a certain crudeness about these early stories but they were thrilling and forceful, never lacking in sustained interest and intensely readable. In later years the growing popularity of Pete induced Clarke Hook to write up to him in much the same way as Frank Richards plugged Billy Bunter but with less success. As a result, Pete stole more and more of the limelight while Jack and Sam degenerated into lay figures.

The second story of Jack, Sam and Pete in No. 387 was a sequel to the first and entitled "The Death Sentence" wherein a band of frustrated miners and bad men, understandably envious at the comrades' sudden good fortune compared with their own puny results from hard toil, endeavour to liquidate them and annex the treasure. Next, a fine story entitled "The Black Horseman" and centred in Venezuela finds the comrades embroiled in a revolution on the side of the rebels who eventually win as might be expected.

Then came "The Leap for Life" with Sam Grant in a position of considerable peril in Mexico. The next two stories were centred in Canada and particularly good. "The Haunted Fort" tells of adventures in an old ruined fort which had been left derelict for years wherein mysterious happenings are further complicated by a band of marauding Indians. In Saskatchewan in 1900 this would seem somewhat of an anachronism. "The Mystery of the Mine" which followed took the comrades further North into the realms of ice and snow. Still in Canada, the scene changes to Newfoundland for "The Man of Mystery" and the comrades meet with peril and adventure at sea and on the rugged coast of Labrador.

In No. 424 the comrades make their first trip to Europe and have a grim adventure in Italy entitled "Lost in the Catacombs." Crossing the Mediterranean to the sandy wastes of

North Africa, they next get caught up in a tribal dispute between Arab chiefs in No. 426 entitled "The Arab Chief's Revenge" but see the trouble through before returning to Canada. Here they join in an attempt to run down a mysterious gang of cattle rustlers who have hitherto defied all efforts at extermination. Sam, a born tracker finally discovers the gang's secret hiding place and the vengeful cattle owners ensure that the "Phantom Raiders" will never trouble them again. Next in No. 430 came "The Red Chief's Vow" which tells of a grim feud between miners and a tribe of Indians on whose ground they have settled. "The Lake of Death" that followed was a particularly good story centring round a subterranean lake of volcanic origin which exuded deadly gases.

The next three stories were all based in Central America and in "Under False Colours" the three comrades arrive at a gold mining settlement plagued with a lurking band of outlaws who unaccountably gain information of the movements of gold consignments and lay successful ambush time and again. Jack Sam and Pete take a hand, the traitor of the camp is revealed and meets with summary miners' justice. In "The Secret of the Haunted Palace" and "The Rebels' Revenge" the comrades are again embroiled in rebellions, in one case siding with the government forces and the other with the rebels. An unusual story followed in No. 443 entitled "The Hermit of the Ice." The Hermit, an old sailor and sole survivor of a whaler who has lost his reason through loneliness and privation, wanders around seeking his lost son whom he eventually finds in tragic circumstances. Back to Morocco in No. 444 for another unusual story entitled "The Deathless Horseman." The mysterious horseman, impervious to spears and bullets although wearing no protection, has the comrades baffled but all is cleared up logically in Clarke Hook's inimitable way.

For the ensuing eight months no stories of Jack, Sam and Pete appeared in the Halfpenny Marvel but they reappeared

again in No. 477 in a Sahara adventure with warring Bedouins, fractious camels, sand storms and all the amenities of that arid region. The story bore the misfit title of "In Haunted Realms." Then came three stories in a row at Nos. 491-2-3 all graphic tales of African adventure. In the first "The Witness from the Grave" an unfortunate miner is convicted of murdering his partner and thrown bound into a crocodiles' pool as a summary form of execution. Fortunately, he is rescued by Sam for the "murdered man" turns up alive and complications ensue. "The Cave of Mystery" and "The Perils of the Jungle" which followed tell of a fugitive from justice who uses his mechanical knowledge to set up as a white medicine man, working upon the superstitions of the natives for nefarious reasons. "Larna's Revenge" which followed found the comrades in Ashanti. There they join forces with Larna, chieftainess of the Amazons in a war against slave traders who have ravaged the country. Finally, in the last number of the Halfpenny Marvel the three comrades solve "The Mystery of the Haunted Mountain." These two last stories were particularly good and together with the first two stories from the penny series which followed, were linked together to form "Jack, Sam and Pete's Adventures in Africa" as No. 1 of the new Jack, Sam and Pete Library. Shortly after this library was renamed the Boys' Friend 3d. Library.

Clarke Hook had a fondness for scattering settlements, often in most unlikely places, throughout his stories of Jack, Sam and Pete's adventures in the wilds. Generally they were miners' settlements varied with ranching and fishing communities or fur trading posts. Each had its store which was the centre of the life of the community, therein Jack would thrash the bully of the camp in a stand up fight, Sam displayed his wonderful marksmanship with rifle and revolver and Pete would fling bad men through the window or over the counter

amongst the bottles to the anguish of the proprietor. It never varied a lot but we lads loved it all.

Another story was No. 422 "The Russian Outlaw" with Jack, Sam and Pete in conflict with the Russian authorities in Alaska. As the Russians had left years previously and the territory was now American this was a bad slip by Clarke Hook but, nevertheless, a good story. Incidentally, Jack, Sam and Pete were responsible for my first major ambition in life at the age of 8 years—to become a gold-miner. Fortunately, I abandoned the idea before any harm was done.

See our next number for the later adventures of Jack, Sam and Pete. In the Provinces, the Steam Man, de Old Hoss and many other incidents that older subscribers will remember.

FINIS

THE "BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY"

1st. SERIES, SEPT. 1905—MAY 1925

COMPILED BY HERBERT LECKENBY

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351	A Perilous Quest	Maxwell Scott
352	The Land of Dread (J. S. & P.)	S. Clarke Hook
353	The Gambler	Andrew Gray
354	The Black Sheep of the School	Henry T. Johnson
355	Secret of the Ring	Maxwell Scott
356	Pride of the Films	Victor Cromwell
357	Dauntless Three	Andrew Gray
358	The Double Six	Maxwell Scott
359	The Boy Millionaire	Ambrose Earle
360	The Shadowed Schoolboy	Harry Huntingdon
361	Adrift in the Pacific	Jules Verne
362	The Boy Shopkeeper	Henry T. Johnson
363	Scrapegrace of the Regiment	Andrew Gray

(continued)-

BOYS v CHUMS

By The Rev. Canon R. H. COCHRANE

IN the autumn of 1892 the Boy's Own Paper then in its 14th. year of publication was at the peak of its popularity. Its weekly numbers of 16 pages for a penny, its monthly parts at sixpence with magnificent coloured plates had a big circulation and its annual volumes were in demand at Christmastime as prizes and presents. It had the full approval, for its healthy yet exciting and interesting contents of parents and schoolmasters.

Its supremacy was challenged on Wednesday, September 14th of that year by TWO new papers then published. One was Boys, the other Chums. Boys also had 16 pages of much the same size as the B.O.P. but bound in a yellow cover whose front was designed on the line of its rival's monthly parts and depicted the various sports and hobbies of its readers. In contents also it was conservative, following established lines and drawing on established writers. It opened with 3 serial stories, "The Black Bar" by George Manville Fenn, "The Golden Canyon" by G. A Henty, "Hod's Holidays" by Ascot R. Hope, authors well known to B.O.P. readers. A series of stories entitled "Lights Out" introduced a new writer Robert Overton and its editor Edward Step, F.L.S., a popular writer on Natural History, wrote on his special subject. Other serials in the first volume were contributed by Owen Laudor, a nom-de-plume of the prolific Harcourt Burrage of "Lambs of Littlecote" fame, Rev. S. Baring Gould and the famous explorer, H. M. Stanley. Its second volume (1893-4) opened with "Fire Island" by G. M. Fenn, and had tales by Henty, A. R. Hope, R. Overton and others but the paper was not a success, and with the publication of No. 104 and part 24 Boys came to an end. The copyright was purchased by the Boy's Own Paper for incorporation in that periodical. Boys suffered

from lack of originality and the freshness that new writers bring to a paper.

On the other hand Chums struck an entirely new note. It was quite different in size, get-up and contents. Published by Cassells, its Editor, Max Pemberton, a public school and university man, had worked for Answers under Alfred Harmsworth and Answers had its effect on the planning of the new venture. So has the Strand Magazine, then publishing virile fiction and Strand artists, notably Paul Hardy and G. Brown illustrated the exciting episodes of the Chums stories. The new paper opened with only one serial "For Glory and Renown" by D. H. Parry and contained a short tale by its Editor, who was, later in the volume, to write "The Iron Pirate" and make his name as an author of distinction. There were articles, comic pictures and jokes and an Editor's Chat, while the prize list was bigger than anything ever before offered in boys' journalism. Later two serials appeared weekly and G. A. Henty, E. Everret Green and Arthur V. Daniels were numbered as contributors.

At the end of the first year Chums altered its shape to a more handy size for its parts and annual volumes— selling well at Christmas. The second volume opened with stories by D. H. Parry and Standish O'Grady—an Irish writer of an Irish story, itself a novelty in boys' fiction. Later Max Pemberton wrote "The Sea Wolves" and Andrew Home, A. J. Daniels and Ascot R. Hope school stories. Short story writers included Lord Mountmorran, E. J. Mansford whose "Shafts from an Eastern Quiver" formed a popular series in The Strand Tom H. Fowler and H. Barrow North. Pemberton and Parry also wrote in their best vein and Chums was well served by its bright and clever writers. A feature was the weekly interview and the celebrities whose experiences and portraits were given included C. B. Fry, then an Oxford student, Lord Charles

Beresford, G. A. Henty and Manville Fenn, as well as the cricket and football heroes of the day and year. The prize list continued to be both generous and popular, bicycles, pocket money, silver watches and other treasures being offered in easy competitions.

The third volume is noted for a curious coincident. The title of each of its six serial stories begins with the letter 'T.' Here is the list taken from the index. "The Queen's Scarlet" by G. M. Fenn, "Through Thick and Thin" by Andrew Home "Tracked by Thugs" by Henry Frith, "Treasure Island" — a reprint by R. L. Stevenson, "Twixt Russian and Turk" by D. H. Parry, and "Two in a Tangle" by A. J. Daniels. Amongst the celebrities interviewed were Sir John Willais, R.A. the artist, Mr. Clarke Russell, the novelist, and Mr. Hiram S. Maxim, the inventor of the famous gun. The short stories continued to be exciting and were well illustrated.

Chums was now well established with a big following amongst boys. Its fourth volume opened with Andrew Home's school story "From Fag to Monitor" illustrated by A. Munro and introduced a new writer, S. Walkey with "In Quest of Shebo's Treasure," a story which was a great success and the forerunner of the many exciting pirate yarns — including "Rogues of the Firey Cross" which its author was to contribute to many further volumes. He, with Andrew Home, A. J. Daniels as school story writers, were the backbone of Chums' fiction for many years and will be remembered with interest and affection by many old boys. Paul Hardy's illustrations to the pirate and French revolution stories also come back to memory.

Chums lasted in one form or another for 49 years. Of its later period, when it altered its contents greatly to compete with its Harmsworth rivals, it is hoped that some one younger than the present writer may have something to tell. "Haec olim meminisse juvabit."

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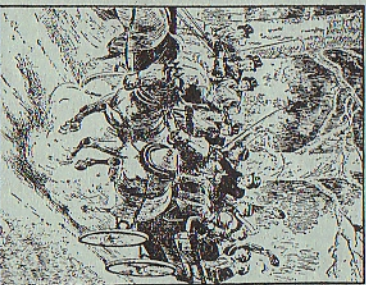
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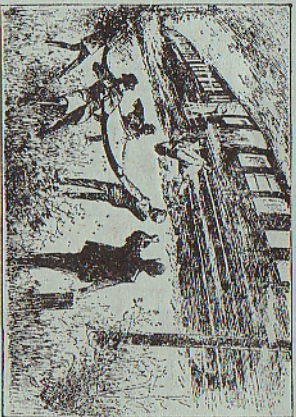
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