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VANITY FAIR

An Illustrated Amateur Magazine.



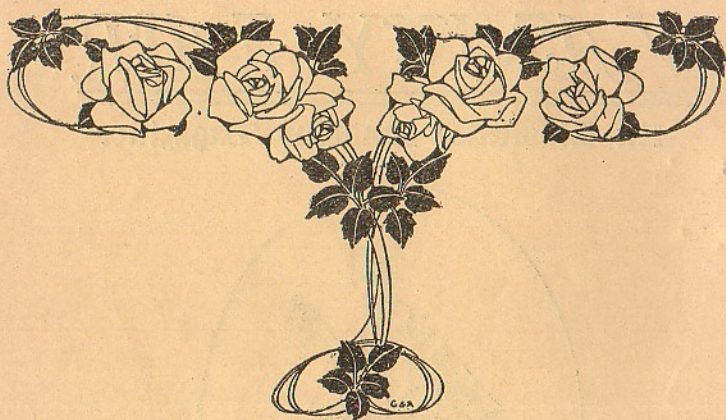
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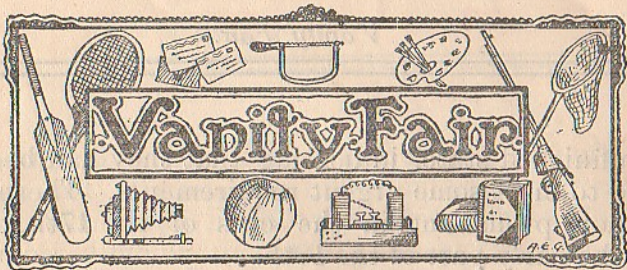
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No. 16, Vol. 2.

November, 1925

OLD WOOD-CUT BLOCKS.

A NEW BRANCH IN COLLECTING.

BY EDWARD F. HERDMAN.

The collector of the rare and curious is always in search for a new field in which to exercise his hunting propensities. In recent years many branches have been added to the art, science, hobby, fad — call it what you will — of collecting. The latest, but by no means the least interesting hobby, is that of collecting the old wood blocks used some generations ago in illustrating Broadsides, Ballads, Chap Books, Songsters, and such-like fugitive publications.

Our collection of this class of literature—the gutter type—covering the 17th, 18th, and early 19th. Centuries, contains many examples of the wood-cuts to which we refer. Some of the blocks are really fine specimens of the wood engraver's art, whilst others are very roughly executed, but, nevertheless containing points of interest. It is apparent that many of the cuts were the work of amateurs, and probably executed by the printers themselves. Here and there can be seen cuts showing considerable merit in one part, and other parts left in

an unfinished state, indicating that they had been prepared to meet some urgent requirements. These points are more prominent in the cuts of the 17th. century and the early part of the 18th. .



FIGURE 1.



FIGURE 3.

The advent of Bewick made a great change in the art of wood-engraving. Instead of the slipshod, haphazard methods which characterised the earlier engravers, Bewick introduced Nature, in its many interesting and varying forms, into his work. He excelled in portraying foliage and landscapes, and his treatment of birds, and animals amounted to perfection. Bewick had many imitators, some of whom turned out really good work, while the work of others was mediocre.



FIGURE 2.

Although all wood blocks may not be works of art, yet the majority of them are full of interest, and each individual piece shows some originality. These blocks are now most difficult to obtain, and as time goes on they will become still more rarer. It is, therefore, only natural that collectors are anxious to secure the original blocks of a class of work which is not likely to again appear in the general literature of the world.

For the purpose of illustrating this paper, we reproduce, from the actual blocks in our own collection, a few of the principal types.



FIGURE 4.

Figure 1 is an interesting wood block, dating back to about 1650, and is probably the oldest in our collection. It represents a gentleman of the period. Notwithstanding the coarseness of the work, there is considerable vigour displayed in the general delineation.

Figure 2 comprises six curious, although crudely executed, little wood-cuts — date about 1690. They were probably cut in the provinces, and used for illustrating children's primers.

Figure 3 is a quaint representation of the execution of Lady Jane Grey. It is probably as early as 1690 or 1700.

Figure 4 is another quaint and very roughly cut block showing a drummer and bugler dressed in the military costume of 1740—1750. The curious pointed grenadier caps is a characteristic mark of the soldiers of the period. In the back-ground is a rough, but not altogether unskillful representation of an army.



FIGURE 5.

Figure 5 is a wood-cut of about the middle of the eighteenth century. It represents an astronomer with telescope and terrestrial globe. The drawing is ill-proportioned and the workmanship coarse.

For the continuation of this interesting series, get our next issue. More quaint illustrations—Editor.

THE PERSONALIA OF THE "PENNY DREADFUL".

BY MATTHEW M. HUNTER.

The present day difficulties attending the forming a collection of "Penny Dreadfuls" has already been the subject of an article in these pages. These difficulties every "Old Boy Collector" who has attempted to acquire a collection of the periodicals that delighted him in the days of his youth, will be able to corroborate from his own hard earned experience; while the references to the "scarce items" will revive memories of carelessly thrown away "Jack Harkaways", "Ching-Chings", etc., and raise a regretful sigh of "what might have been" had he "only known".

The incidental reference to the late E. Harcourt Burrage, and the belated recognition of his genius, suggests another aspect of the subject, one in which every Old Boy Collector is more or less interested, viz :; the Personalialia that lay behind these old journals and stories.

In literature the personality of authors is always an attraction to the interested reader; and the Old Boy Collector, while his literary taste may have improved considerable since his boyhoods day, is yet in no wise different from any other other collector of books whose interest in them extends beyond their being merely rare or "curious". His interest in his collection of "Penny Dreadfuls," lies probably in the fact that they once interested him, perhaps more deeply than any book has ever done since; and while the stories no longer 'hold' as they used to do, the desire to know something of the

personality of the men who wrote them and the artists who illustrated them, remains.

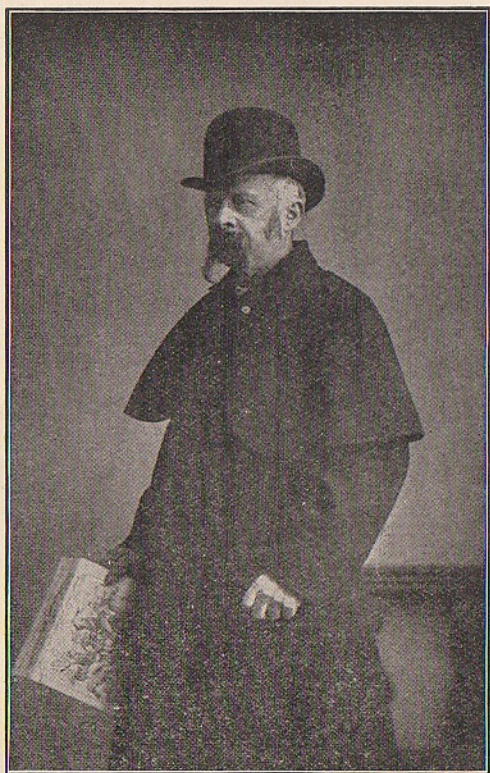
But here the Old Boy Collector, should he attempt to add an interesting addenda to his collection will find himself working an almost barren field. The difficulties are almost as great as the gathering of 'complete' collections; what data there is to be garnered is small, inconsequent and of little value.

Of E. Harcourt Burrage we know a little including that he lived to a ripe old age and died highly respected; of Bracebridge Heyming that he was a bit of a 'dandy'; and of the Emmetts a few trifles of little consequence and from which one gathers the impression that they were often in deep water owing to money difficulties. Of Ralph Rollington—practically nothing. Among the publishers, Brett is, perhaps the only one of whom we can get hold of anything definite; and as for the artists, with the exception of "Phiz", who they were or what they were, the information to be got is practically nil.

Again, there are quite a number of these authors whose names are familiar to the Old Boy Collector but who, alas! to all intents and purposes, remain names to him only, and yet, it would be interesting to know something about him.

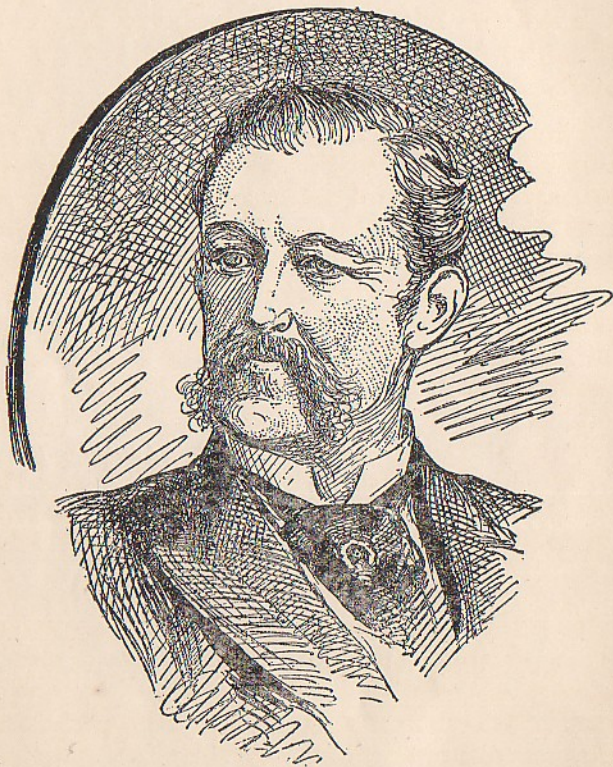
What manner of man, for instance was Cecil Stagg, or Vane St. John? Brenchley Beaumont or A. R. Phillips; Cyril Hathway, or Charles Stevens the first editor of the "Boys of England"? Surely some data regarding the first editor of that celebrated periodical would be interesting. And what of that prolific writer of historical romances which sent the circulation of Bretts journals up by leaps and bounds, but whose identity,

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E. H. Burrage.

Suppliment to No. 16, Vanity Fair.



E. J. Brett.

thanks to Brett's peculiar aversion to publishing either the name of author or artist, was carefully concealed under the non-informative "by the author of 'The Armourer's Son'". We know that his name was Justin Lambe, but beyond that, his personality seems to be of as deep a mystery as some of those he was wont to invest his stories with, and which played no small part in keeping our youthful interest sustained up to the last chapter.

Another name that suggests itself—and one out of the many, is that of S. Dacre Clarke. He was both author and Editor and in the '80's and '90's disputed the field with Brett and Fox. His attempts to do so were many and various and his journals fairly ambitious, being well conducted with good illustrations, but in spite of these excellent qualities none of them seem to attain to the popularity of the Brett or Fox Journals. He was an indefatigable and versatile writer, turning out School, Adventure and Historical serials with equal facility while is "Guy Rayner", if not so widely known yet might receive honourable mention with Jack Harkaway Ching-Ching, Tom Wildrake, and Ralph Rollington. But beyond these few facts nothing seems to be known about him.

It is to be regretted that so little is known or can be ascertained about the personality of these men. After all they "did their bit". They catered for the youth of the nation when that insignificant individual was, from a literary standpoint, mentally starved, and for nearly fifty years, they provided him with a literary fare, which if a trifle robust at times, was, at least, suited to the requirements of his active imagination.

Like so many others their fate would seem to be to play their part and then pass into the silence, "unwritten and unsung". And the pity of it is that it is so.

OLD BOYS PERIODICALS.

AMERICA REPRINTS OLD FAVOURITES.

BY FRANK JAY.

I was interested with the "Cult of the Penny Dreadful" by our old friend Barry Ono, and agree in the main with what he says on the subject. He mentions about the higher prices one has to pay now-a-days for choice items. But is not this owing in a large measure to the extensive advertising which has been going on during recent years? A demand is thus created for them, and high prices naturally and automatically arise; and thus people who possess books of this kind, are impressed with the idea that they hold the Philosopher's Stone, and means of obtaining untold wealth by the sale of their hitherto thought of as rubbish.

"The Boys of the Old Brigade" are still on the scent and the old dogs will continue to bark, growl and snap, at every chance of obtaining some of their favourites.

I would advise intending collectors to be very wary in their dealings with doubtful venders. Quite recently I was offered 21 vols. of exceptionally choice and rare Old Boys Periodicals at 3/6 per vol. Dirt cheap, and some find if it had been a genuine offer; but the vender wanted cash down, without any inspection of the items, or reference given of himself. He preyed upon your feelings by saying he had offered the items elsewhere, and whoever sent the cash first would secure the bargain? Well just to try the dodge, I deposited the cash with a well known paper, but the vender would not recognise this deposit system, and so I did not secure the

bargain. I still, however, have my money. I will leave you readers to form your own conclusions on the matter. Take my advice as a collector of many years, and don't part with any money, or items, until you are sure of those you are dealing with. The demand for old boys papers has created all kinds of dodges and subterfuges in buying and selling these old memories of the past.

Many of the old serials and tales are being reprinted in U.S.A. I have just received (as a gift) the entire set of Jack Harkaway in 16 vols., which is being published "across the pond".

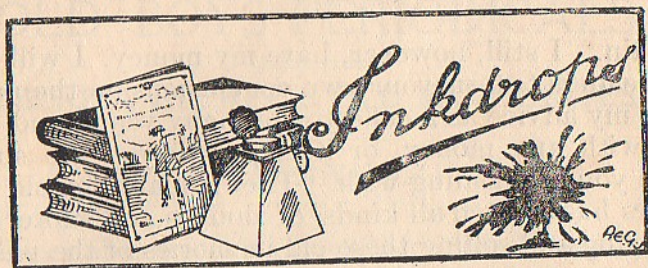
The books are well got up, minus the illustrations, but the text is complete as in the original, and the price is 15 cents ($7\frac{1}{2}$ d.) per vol. So why pay a fancy price when you can obtain them so cheaply; especially as the tales are complete in every other way. "Tom Wildrake" and the other well known tales will doubtless be republished in like manner. Readers will thus be able to enjoy their old favourites without having to pay extravagant prices for a copy.

After all the greater number of the old bloods and Penny Dreadfuls can only be considered as literary curiosities; and in this Age of the Cinema, one can get all the thrills they want in a delightful short time without wading through the chapters of a long drawn-out tale such as "Black Bess", with its 254 numbers and 2028 pages.

MAGAZINES RECEIVED.

(Printed) Cat, No. 83, Orpheus, Vol. 3, No. 3.

(American) Coyote, Vol. 7, Nos. 2, 3.



WHAT IS LACKING?

A FEW WORDS TO THE B.A.L.A.

Three months ago I was invited by Miss Appleyard of Middlesbrough to join the B.A.L.A. As I was then on the point of restarting my magazine, "Vanity Fair" I decided to become a member, and was told to expect a nomination form from Miss Maden in the course of a post or so. I am still awaiting the arrival of the form. Is this a sample of the business methods of the Association? Can one wonder that it is not a success? Something definite could have been done by a government official in less time! I don't care to think that I have been considered "an undesirable".

I must confess to having been inactive during the last four years or so; but little seems to have been done during that period. Where is the glorious revival promised us after the cessation of hostilities?

I was invalided from the Army in 1917, and found A.J. practically dead and buried, with the exception of one or two "old die-hards". With the assistance of Ben Winskill and others I set out to create activity. We started the "Amateur Press Club", and in less than six months enrolled over 100 members. Numerous magazines were produced, in some cases by men serving

with the colours. When we finally amalgamated with the B.A.P.A. we had close on 200 members. All this was done on a yearly subscription of 1/6; and I believe we had a balance in hand of £1-10-0. Might I suggest to the B.A.L.A. officials that a subscription of 2/6, a little judicious advertising, and a considerable amount of "Ginger", would work wonders?

I understand that prominence has been given to the proceedings of the recent Conference, most of those present being under the impression that this was the *first* Conference, the *first* dinner, etc. This of course to an old-timer is all "moonshine"! We have had many of them in the good old days.

Might I also suggest to those of the B.A.L.A. who received number 14 and 15, of this magazine, that an acknowledgement would have been appreciated? I certainly received three letters of thanks, but considering the number of copies sent out, it is very un-amateur like and not in accordance with the best traditions of Amateur Journalism. The old spirit seems to be lacking in the new world of Amateuria.

JOSEPH PARKS.

THE AMATEUR PRESS COMBINE.

(Affiliated with the B.A.L.A.).

President Edward F. Herdman.

Movement for the Revival of Amateur Journalism.

In the interests of Amateur Journalism, with an endeavour to create greater activity in the amateur world it has been decided to start a revival campaign under the above title. All amateur journalists and artists are invited to write for particulars and nomination forms. We hope to give fuller details in our next issue.

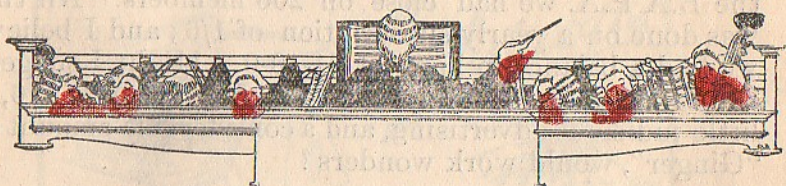
Edw. F. Herdman, 47 Salisbury Place, Bishop Auckland.

Joseph Parks, (Pub. "Vanity Fair"), 2 Irvin Avenue, Saltburn-by-Sea, Yorks.

Ralph L. Breed, (Pub. "South Eastern Amateur"), 4 Coldbath Street, Lewisham S.E., 13.

Edward Herdman, (Pub. "Cat"), 1 Southgate Street, Bishop Auckland.

THE JUVENILE THEATRE



Mr. Edward F. Herdman in his short but interesting article under "The Juvenile Theatre" mentions "March's Theatre", 24 Webber Street, London, S. E.

This is a new name to me and is not mentioned in any of the authorities which I consulted when preparing my series of articles upon the subject which appeared in "Spare Moments" Jan. 29th, Feb. 5th, 12th, and 19th, 1921, and which in my humble opinion, comprises a fairly good and authentic history of the subject.

Fifty or more years ago, when the Juvenile Theatre was very popular, there would be some publishers of less fame than those I enumerated, possibly of the piratè class, that generally springs up when anything becomes popular; and as The Old Vic. Theatre, now so famous for its Shakespearian productions is situated at the New Cut end of Webber Street, and was at that period wholly given to dramas of the blood and thunder, gory kind, March would do a decent trade with his Juvenile Theatres; and it is rather strange that his works are not more widely known.

The only person who might throw some light upon this is Mr. Pollock, the only survivor of Toy Theatre Makers, 73, Hoxton Street, London, N. 1. who still carries on with Juvenile Theatres, and who was quite recently mentioned in the Public Press.

FRANK JAY.

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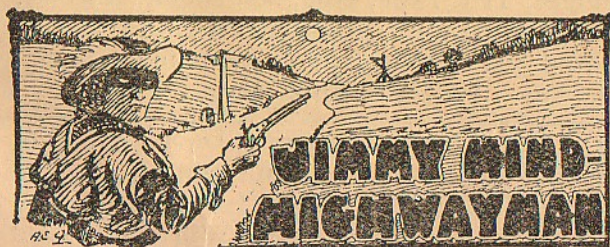
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FOR SALE Ellen Percy, (Reynolds) vols 1 & 3, 2/6, Bretts Bob Blunt, 2 vols 3/-, Jane Shore, (bound), 4/-, Black Eyed Susan, 1/9, Pirates Isle 1/9. History of Old Boys Books, 6/- All post free. Will exchange for boys periodicals issued 1900-12. Joseph Parks, 2 Irvin Avenue, Saltburn-by-Sea, Yorks.