

1911 and 1931—A Tale of Two Papers—

“Fun and Fiction” and “The Bullseye”

By W. H. G.

THE boys' weekly story papers published in Britain during the past four decades usually fall into a few groups as to contents—that is, as to style of stories. They might be adventure in foreign lands or at home, mystery-detective, school, sport—sometimes two or more kinds in the same paper. But on a few occasions there were published papers that seem to fall into a category different from that of any others.

Going back to one of which I am thinking takes us to the year 1911. In October of that year there was issued No. 1 of “Fun and Fiction,” which was started as a 20-page halfpenny story paper of the usual page-size, about 7½x11 inches. The cover-pages were blue, and the illustrations were always unsigned.

Several pages in each issue

were devoted to comics—in the nature of comic strips with captions under each square.

The story program of No. 1 included the following, to quote from an advertisement in another weekly paper of those days: A Grand Serial, “His Convict Bride”—if my memory fails not, this serial ran for about a year; a Magnificent Series, “Adam Daunt, the Millionaire Detective,” and a Great Mystery Story, “The Woman With the Black Heart.” It wasn't her very own heart, just a symbol on her forehead, a glimpse of which filled an evil-doer with terror.

These stories were all anonymous, no authors' names being given. This practice was adhered to, with perhaps one exception, until the end, which came early in 1914, after a run of about

two and a half years. What set "Fun and Fiction" apart from the other papers of that time was the style in which the stories were written; perhaps it was the same style as that in which the stories in the "comic papers" such as "Butterfly" and "Comic Cuts" were written.

Many of them dealt with the activities of folks who were a kind of up-to-date species of Robin Hoods, going around upsetting the plans of grasping, hard-hearted landlords and dishonest storekeepers — doing good under cover of darkness and by methods not strictly legal.

Almost all of the stories had as the villain sinister-looking fellows — occasionally bloated profiteers—who always wore a dress suit, starched shirt and spats, among other things, judging by the illustrations. From the way the ladies were dressed, it appeared that they moved in circles where money was of no consequence. Dress suit and spats were also worn by the hero, unless he happened to be, for

instance, a policeman or fireman in uniform.

One series of stories that ran in "Fun and Fiction" was written around an imagined invention which, if actually invented and perfected today, would doubtless be used to restore law and order in various places. It was a lamp which emitted a ray that caused blindness in all within a certain radius of it as long as it was alight, penetrating any obstacle. Special goggles, however, could be worn to neutralize the effect of the secret ray—they also being a secret known only to the inventor. These stories must have had something in common with some of the "science-fiction" stories of the present day.

After about three months the new paper was increased in size to 36 pages and in price to one penny (2c.) A few months later a companion paper, the "Dreadnought," planned along similar lines, was produced. This new paper, after a while, broke away from "F. & F." and became more like the general run of boys' weeklies. It was then a "com-

panion" of the "Boys' Friend" ("S.P.C." No. 1). In January of 1915 the "Dreadnought" joined the "Magnet"- "Gem" group and had stories of Greyfriars School, and a "Sexton Blake" detective serial, among other features. In June, 1915, it was combined with the "Boys' Friend," which had joined the same group—the last issue being No. 159.

"Fun and Fiction" ran for about 2½ years, being replaced early in 1914 by a halfpenny, 20-page paper, along similar lines, and named "The Firefly." The detective featured in the new paper was Abel Daunt, nephew of Adam Daunt of "F. & F." Also a "millionaire detective," he lived, like Adam before him, in a luxurious palace hidden behind some tumbledown building in a slummy section of London.

"Firefly" continued for about a year and was then changed into a large-page "comic paper."

Due perhaps to its comparatively short run, plus, maybe, the kind of stories, "Fun and Fiction" does not seem to be collected at

all, though there is some demand for "Dreadnought," probably because of its being associated with the "Gem"- "Magnet" group.

With the passing from the scene of these papers, nothing like them appeared, as far as I am aware, for many years. Then, in 1931, the same publishers began issuing the paper which is the second subject of this sketch—the "Bullseye," which doubtless became familiar to some American readers and collectors.

This paper, in style of stories, illustrations with characters in dress suits and spats, and blue cover pages, was "Fun and Fiction" all over again—minus the fun: there were no comic features in "Bullseye." In the first few numbers were illustrations identical with some that appeared in either "F. & F." or "Firefly" years before—as far as could be told from memory—but the stories illustrated were different.

Like "Fun and Fiction" in its day, "Bullseye" soon had a running-mate planned along similar lines, the "Surprise." As with the earlier paper, the stories in

both of these new weeklies were anonymous and the illustrations unsigned. They seemed to go over well for a while, but neither enjoyed very long runs. "Bullseye" closed down in the summer of 1934, after about three and a half years, surviving "Surprise" by a few months.

Some idea of the type of tales in these papers may be given by a brief description of three of the illustrations in No. 1 of "Bullseye." On the front cover is a picture showing an incident in the story, "The House of Thrills."

It shows a kind of furnace, with two partly-clothed natives of some sort busy shoveling on fuel. Rising out of and above the furnace is a large glass bubble, inside which staggers the victim, clothed in the inevitable dress suit. To one side cowers a beautiful damsel—they're all beautiful, unless they are old hags, when they are hideous—who, apparently fascinated by the scene, has her eyes fixed on the man in the bubble. In the foreground is an old chap, wearing spats, by the way, rubbing his

hands together in unholy glee.

An inside picture shows the famous Tower Bridge in London with the spans partly raised and a Royal Mail truck falling over the end of one of them.

In another picture a man, blindfolded, stands at one side of a room. Across the room the villain dares our hero to walk to where he is, taking his chance on missing numerous large holes in the floor. Below is the River Thames. But—you've guessed it—it is the villain who finds a watery grave.

Perhaps ten years from now "Fun and Fiction" and "Dreadnought" will return to enjoy further incarnations under still different names!

Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel

Round-Up. A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers of the days when you were a youngster; 8 pages full of fine articles and write-ups. Price 10c per copy or \$1.00 per year. Ad. rates, 1c per word.—Ralph F. Cummings, Dept. S.P.C., Fishersville, Mass.

The MAGNET Artist—

C. H. CHAPMAN

——
By C. F. F. R.

IT often seems that the artists who have illustrated the favorite papers of our youth have received from readers little or no recognition of their talents.

One reason for this is the fact that illustrators of the weekly story press have seldom had their names plugged by the publishers in the same way as authors have. Authors' names, of course, in the Amalgamated Press group of Great Britain with which I am here concerned, have actually in many cases been mere cover-names for more, sometimes many more, than one writer. But the illustrator or artist has necessarily to be treated differently, inasmuch as a man's original drawing is more, in a way, his signature than a story revolving about a given setting or set of characters would be an author's.

Another reason, possibly, for the seeming lack of interest in illustration is the fact that the drawings are for the most part palpably of little or no artistic merit and acquire a certain halo of interest only when they become quaint and curious with antiquity, e.g. the illustrations in

many nineteenth century United States boys' papers. Further, with the Amalgamated Press papers little of the work done by their artists has been signed work; and judging from the quality of much of it, perhaps from the artists' view it is as well. There are exceptions, it is true; J. Abney Cummings, the Jack, Sam and Pete artist, signed many pictures, H. M. Lewis an odd one or two, Briscoe, Wakefield, Hayward and others occasionally.

However over the years there have been one or two artists who should be better known for their work than they are. One especially, C. H. Chapman; not perhaps so much for the quality of his drawings, which were certainly better than most in the A. P. class, but more for his long association with the Frank Richards famous Greyfriars School stories and his tremendous output.

He created nearly all the drawings for the school story in the "Magnet" Library during the entire life of that paper—after the first few years—with the exception of a period in the 1930's

when Shields did the covers and inside illustrations and later the covers only with Chapman doing the inside. Surely a record, this, for one artist! His earliest work that I know, however, was for the school story in a few of the halfpenny series of the "Gem" Library, a paper almost a year older than the "Magnet." The only other time that Chapman appeared in the "Gem" was when he illustrated the reprinted Greyfriars stories during its last few years. Curiously enough, apart from the $\frac{1}{2}$ d "Gems" I don't think Chapman ever illustrated another St. Jim's school story in the "Gem."

In addition during this long period he illustrated the Courtfield County Council School stories of Frank Richards that appeared for a time in the comic paper "Chuckles," and practically every reprinted and original Greyfriars story that appeared in "Dreadnought," the "Penny Popular," the "Popular," the "Boys' Friend Library," the "Schoolboys' Own Library," and the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual." He has also done school story drawings for the first series of the "Empire" Library, thousands of small sketches for the "Greyfriars Herald" and the supplements bearing that name printed in the "Magnet," a series of war pictures in the "Penny Popular," and illus-

trated many a serial. On top of all this he has probably done work that I am unaware of for other papers; but I have never seen or heard of his sketches in a paper not published by the Amalgamated Press, and little if any of his work was reprinted in later years for the reprinted stories. It is possible he has done as many as four sets of original drawings, then, for one story.

With rare exceptions he never signed his work. His name has once or twice appeared on a "Magnet" cover and he has occasionally been referred to by the various Editors in their "Chat Columns." His name was also on the list of half a dozen or so artists whose drawings were being given away to readers of the "Penny Popular" and its companion papers in return for getting new readers or some similar scheme to boost circulation. I, for one, certainly wish I had taken advantage of this, one of many lost opportunities in by-gone years.

His work is distinguishable by a definite angularity in his human subjects. He has worked methodically from early days to much the same pattern, improving in his form and line and his sense of values. But he was never able to achieve complete naturalness or that much-abused measure in art, rhythm; not so

much, in fact, as R. J. Macdonald, another prolific Amalgamated Press artist, could; even so, in my opinion, if Chapman's work is second-class, Macdonald's is third-class.

Chapman's earlier sketches are mainly two-tone with a good deal of cross-hatch. His later output tends to the more varied and interesting three-value drawing with more emphasis on blacks and less on the middle-grey values. He is clever at landscapes and rugged seascapes and approaches the brilliant with his treatment of all kinds of animals where expression counts for less, perhaps—e.g. "Magnet" No. 441, a farm story, and the 1936 circus series in the same paper. His better drawings in the "Magnet" range from the year 1922 to the end, during which period he attempts more detail, accented lines and heavier shade, turning out a rounder smoother sketch with more natural stances, positions and action. Compare, say, the almost haggard look of the average face, Billy Bunter's almost expressionless countenance, and the slim, lanky, bent-leg attitudes of the Greyfriars boys in the earlier stories with the lively, boyish, sparkling creations of later days. Note, too, how his Cliff House girls graduate from ungainly frumps (perhaps to the modern eye—let us be fair—

the clothes have something to do with it) to almost comely creatures.

His drawings of inanimate objects throughout, such as school buildings, have always seemed to me to have lacked character, a sort of filler-in—especially in indoor sketches. Compare Warwick Reynolds' work in the "Gem" Library. This lack of character, coupled with his apparent inability to convey sunshine or light well, or because of it, has tended to make Greyfriars in picture form a rather gloomy place; and it is certainly anything but that. Take the railway trains he presented us with, some of the most extraordinary ancient box affairs you ever set your eyes on.

But his portraits of Germans were great studies in beefy courseness and seldom varied much; compare the Prussian being lanced by a British cavalryman in one of his war pictures in the early "Penny Populars" with the Teuton going through the ice on the cover of "Magnet" No. 367. And, by the way, Mr. Chapman, speaking of things military, why, oh, why does your peaked cap always appear so infernally flat?

But he could never get very far from Greyfriars even with his military or naval drawings. In "Penny Popular" No. 145 there

is a very Chapmanish navy picture of "jolly Jack Tars" reading the "Gem," the "Magnet" and the "Penny Popular" in their hammocks aboard a British warship, and the sailors look for all the world like the Famous Five minus Piuree Singh.

Nevertheless the boys of Greyfriars did, to some degree, eventually reach the stage in pictures where the reader could, in certain cases, apart from the caricatured characters like the Bunter brothers or Todd cousins, distinguish one from another; which is more, far more than the boys of St. James' College ever did under the pen of Macdonald. Take Vernon-Smith's lean, well-dressed figure and hard almost cadaverous features; blustering heavy-set Johnny Bull with his dark mop of hair; the cheery, curly-headed Bob Cherry; sober, serious Wharton; the skinny Skinner; Coker's indescribable rubber-cum-pudding face; to mention but a few that come to mind.

On the whole one may fairly say that Chapman's work seldom attained brilliancy but I would rate him as easily one of the best in his line. And his name and work, whatever its quality, will always be associated with and loved by the lovers of Greyfriars yarns.

NOTE—If any reader of this

rather inadequate sketch of the work of a unique artist can give corrections and perhaps more details concerning Mr. Chapman's life and career, writing in care of this paper, the writer will be grateful.

BRITISH BOYS' BOOKS AND PAPERS WANTED

By C. F. F. RICKARD,
1512 First Street West, Calgary,
Alberta, Canada.

Chuckles, Popular, Dreadnought, Greyfriars Herald
—any issues.

Gem Library—1st Series— Nos. 1-25, year 1907.
New Series,— Nos. 1-300;
442-777; 1588-1611.

Magnet Library— Nos. 1-777.

Penny Popular— 1st Series:
Nos. 1-25; 222-286; any issues of 2nd Series.

Nelson Lee Library— Nos. 24 and 25 of the final series.

Schoolboys' Own Library—
Any numbers written by
Martin Clifford and Owen
Conquest up to No. 200.

Triumph— Nos. 812 and 814.

Some Former Boy's Writers

(Concluded from last issue)

ST. John Cooper's stuff was mainly school stories, and very popular. But they had one great weakness. The dear fellow, who knew much of many things, was deaf, dumb, and blind as to sport. His boys never played footer or cricket; they only played the fool! In that, however, they closely resembled the Ralph Rollingtons and the Tom Wildrakes of earlier stories. It was much later that the sports stuff came into its own.

I can remember a front page illustration to a cricket serial—"Kingrose is stumped!"—the caption. But the batsman was running hard to reach the crease while the bails flew! A most popular school-story writer constantly spoke of a batsman "carrying out his

bat" after being dismissed.

I will conclude with something that may be of interest to many. "Tommy" Burke—the great Thomas Burke of "Twinkletoes" fame—once edited a boys' paper!

Only for a few weeks; then it ceased publication. That was not Mr. Burke's fault. It was practically doomed when he was given charge of it;

those were the war days of stringency. But a less fit person, despite all his genius, for such a job, it would be hard to imagine, for I don't think there was ever much of the real boy in him.

Correction—S. Clarke Hook's "Dan, Bob & Darkey" stories ran in the "Boys' Friend" in 1915-6, not 1914-5, as stated in a footnote in some copies of Issue No. 3.

This article—"by a former Amalgamated Press Editor"—is condensed from "The Collector's Miscellany," Issue No. 11, for May-June, 1931.

: : NOTES : :

Mr. J. A. Birkbeck, of Dundee, Scotland, who is publishing the new "Collector's Miscellany," in a recent letter stated: "I am pleased to say response to No. 1 of 'C.M.' was very encouraging indeed. I have more than will fill No. 2, and many offers of support." This will be good news to all old friends of "The Collector's Miscellany."



In the concluding part of the article "Some Former Boys' Writers," in this issue, reference is made to "Tommy" Burke, of "Twinkletoes" fame. In spite of his fame, however, I must admit that I have never seen any mention of Mr. Burke other than this. Can anyone enlighten me regarding him and the boys' paper of which he was in charge for a brief period during the last war?



Mention was made in a previous issue of a suggestion that a list of British boys' papers of the last forty years, with the dates of the first and last issues, would be of interest. However, no-one has offered as yet to supply the necessary information. The fate of this suggestion seems likely to be similar to that of one made by Edward F. Herdman in Joseph Parks' "Vanity Fair," No.

17, December, 1925, along the same lines: "Wanted—a Check List of Old Boys' Periodicals." Nothing further can be found of this in "Vanity Fair."



The following is from a "column" conducted by "Old Thornton Heathen" in the Croydon, England, "Advertiser": "Collecting is a mania that catches all sorts and conditions of persons, and many and strange are the much prized collections I have seen. One man whom I used to know . . . had spent a lifetime in collecting matchbox labels, and his collection numbered some thousands. Then another friend . . . boasts a collection of railway luggage labels, some of which date back to the earliest days of railways. And there used to live at Upper Norwood a man who hoarded all the first copies of new papers he could get hold of and who in consequence had a perfectly marvellous batch of 'No. 1's', including the first copy of every paper published in London for over a century."



That's all for now.—W.H.G.

FOR SALE—"Back Numbers" of "Champion Library"—dated from 1931 to 1938—and "Sexton Blake Library." Price 2 for 15c., plus postage.—Wm. H. Gander, Transcona, Manitoba.

WANTED : FOR SALE : EXCHANGE :

Wanted—Nelson Lee Library; early issues, loose copies or bound. H. R. Cox, 73 Chelston Road, Ruislip, Middx., England.

Wanted—English Comics, years 1892-1906. Harris, Caynton, Llanrhos Road, Penrhyn Bay, Llandudno.

Wanted—Magnets and Gems, 1907-33; also Boys' Friend Libraries with stories by Frank Richards and Martin Clifford. Shaw, 6 Colney Hatch Lane, London, N. 10, England.

"The Collector's Miscellany"—The paper for anyone interested in Old Boys' Books, Type Specimens, Juvenile Theatre, etc. Write J. A. Birkbeck, 52 Craigie Avenue, Dundee, Scotland.

Science-Fiction Magazines—**"Railroad Magazines"**—and most others; write us your Back-Number wants. The School Book Shop, 530 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Geographical Magazine—**Wanted**: 3 copies of February, 1942, issue. This is the Geographical published in London, not the National Geographic. W. H. Gander, Transcona, Canada.

Magnets—pre-1930, wanted. any numbers. Corbett, 49 Glyn Farm Road, Quinton, Birmingham, England.

Wanted—1d. Boys' Friend, Realm, Big Budget, Boys' Leaders, ½d. Sports Library, early 1d. Nelson Lee Library.—H. Dowler, 86 Hamilton Road, Manchester, 13, England.

Wanted—Nelson Lee Lib'ys, year 1917, Nos. 112 to 118; year 1921, Nos. 305 to 311. F. Keeling, 93 Aldridge Avenue, Stanmore, Middlesex, England.

"The Collector's Guide"—Canada's Own Journal. \$1 a year, 25c a copy. Established on Vancouver Island in 1929. Cleeve Sculthorpe, 82 Lichfield Road, Coleshill, Warwickshire, England.

Wanted—Aldine 1d. Dick Turpins, early issues of Magnet, Gem, Penny Popular, and Comic Papers, particularly Chuckles. Also interested in old volumes containing coloured plates of wildflowers, butterflies, birds or fishes. Alfred Horsey, 60 Salcombe Rd., Walthamstow, London, E. 17, England.