

# STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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The Second Christmas Double Number of *The Magnet Library*,  
No. 95, dated December 4th, 1909

# The Story Paper Collector

## WHO'S WHO

### No. 11: LEONARD M. ALLEN

**A** NATIVE of Sheffield, where he was born on July 10th, 1906, Leonard Mottram Allen is a Civil Servant, married. His wife is a Sexton Blake enthusiast, but she has no time for school yarns. His earliest recollections are of Chips with Weary Willie and Tired Tim, Comic Cuts with Dan, the Ticket of Leave Man, The Jester with Constable Cuddlecook and Rackety Row, and another comic that featured Lazy Leonard and Lively Lawrence.

He was first introduced to the adventure and school story papers through sneaking his elder brother's copies of *Gem* and *Magnet*, which had been carefully hidden from his parents. Greatest satisfaction of early days was being able to read openly the first issues of *The Holiday Annual*, his parents little realizing that they were actually stories from *Gem* and *Magnet* in book form. Birthday present of a bound volume of *The Captain* opened a new field of pleasure and this magazine is still his favorite.

Len conducted, when in his middle 'teens, swapping sessions

of (so-called) "bloods" at Grammar School. Unfortunately this took so much time that it interfered with lessons and he remembers as many as forty papers being confiscated by a master.

He read *The Nelson Lee Library* from the first number to the last, but did not save his copies. Interest was revived with *School-boys' Own Library* Lee stories.

Other interests are the Music Hall, having a collection of several hundred programs of shows seen all over England, gramophone records, of which he has over fifteen hundred, and autobiographies of people such as Buchanan Taylor, C. B. Cochran, Seymour Hicks, and Phillip Alingham.

Len's tastes are, he says, definitely low-brow, and he claims to be an indifferent pianist, book-binder, and gardener. He has been a member of the B. B. C. Listener Research Panel for many years; is a keen radio listener, again lowbrow. Favorite book, juvenile, "Sparrow in Search of Expulsion," by Gunby Hadath; adult, "20,000 Streets Under the Sky," by Patrick Hamilton.

—W. H. G.

# The Story Paper Collector

Articles of Interest to Collectors of British Boys' Periodicals of the Past

No. 37

JANUARY, 1950

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## THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS

By ROGER M. JENKINS

"**P**oor ALONZO," writes J. N. Pentelow in Number 15 of The Greyfriars Gallery, in Magnet No. 479. "Was ever another fellow made the butt of so many japes as he? He was a destined victim from the first."

Poor Alonzo, indeed. From the day he arrived at Greyfriars in Magnet No. 125, dated July 2nd, 1910, there seemed to be hardly a moment's respite for him. He committed the unpardonable offence of arriving at the school with his belongings tied together in a brown-paper parcel which burst open whilst Mr. Quelch was interrogating him. Nor did he improve matters by taking Skinner's advice and asking Mr. Quelch whether his father was out of prison yet. After a while the Remove grew accustomed to him, and indeed he won general respect by saving Marjorie Hazeldene from drowning in the River Sark. In spite of this Alonzo's second week at Greyfriars was

no quieter than his first, and he succeeded in setting the study chimney on fire while making toffee. In Magnet No. 129 he made an even greater mess by gratuitously sweeping his Form-master's study chimney for him. Needless to say, Mr. Quelch's gratitude took on a somewhat different aspect from that which Alonzo had been led to believe it would.

Alonzo was a very credulous fellow. Bulstrode and Skinner told him in confidence how great a passion Mr. Quelch and Miss Primrose nurtured for each other in silence and he set to in Magnet No. 132 and effected a meeting between them by means of judiciously-worded telegrams. When Miss Primrose learned the horrible truth of the affair she swooned in Mr. Quelch's arms, much to his embarrassment (especially as Dr. Locke appeared at that moment), and Alonzo was taught not to be quite so trusting

in the future. It was unfortunate that Alonzo seldom remembered to beware of such people as Skinner, but so guileless was his nature that he implicitly believed that glib youth when he told Alonzo that Mr. Quelch had laid Alonzo's lunch for him specially in the Head's study, and in Magnet No. 137 he cheerfully consumed a meal laid for the reverend Dr. Locke.

**A**LONZO suffered from the all too prevalent delusion of Removeites that he could play football, but the performance that he put up in Magnet No. 137 was so ludicrous that he was immediately discounted in this respect. Alonzo was by no means convinced of his inability, however, and when in No. 161 his Uncle Benjamin sent him some soccer kit and also wrote to the Head expressing his hope that his nephew would play a prominent part in school sport, Harry Wharton was prevailed upon to give Alonzo a place in the team, with the usual dire results.

Alonzo placed great faith in the precepts of his Uncle Benjamin. On his first day at Greyfriars, he was bearing in mind such instructions in remarking to Mr. Quelch (when questioned about the identity of the person who had suggested his making inquiries about Mr. Quelch's

father), "I am afraid that it would be impossible for me to do so, sir, without becoming a tale-bearer, a character I abhor." Mr. Quelch was good enough to forbear to press the point, whereupon Skinner offered Todd lifelong friendship. But Uncle Benjamin had given advice for every occasion, and Alonzo said to Skinner, "My Uncle Benjamin warned me never to associate with untruthful boys. I shall not speak to you any more." Uncle Benjamin was like the Koran: he could supply a reading for every occasion.

When Billy Bunter dived into the empty swimming-bath and lost his memory in Magnet No. 160, Alonzo proffered beef tea (accidentally adulterated with ink) and suggested the remedy of knocking Bunter on the head again to bring back his memory—all of which being avuncular advice of long standing. The fame of Uncle Benjamin was not restricted to the narrow confines of the Remove by any means. Even Bolsover minor of the Second Form enjoyed the privilege in Magnet No. 201 of hearing Alonzo read to him his uncle's famous treatise entitled "The Story of a Potato." It must have been small comfort to have known that Alonzo was sitting in a small pool of glue which was affixing him to the seat as

he read. No doubt his Uncle Benjamin would have been shocked, nay disgusted, at this, as he would have been at many of the events that took place at Greyfriars.

ONE never-to-be-forgotten occasion Uncle Benjamin put in an appearance at Greyfriars. In *Magnet* No. 169 he came to see his nephew, and remarked to the Removites, "I have no doubt that Alonzo is a bold daring young rascal, always getting into scrapes, but, bless my soul, I don't think any the worse of him — not a whit!" Uncle Benjamin's other views were similarly exaggerated. He inclined to the opinion that boys had been boys in his day, but had not been since. He was doleful about the state of boxing at the present day, though he was easily outpointed by Wharton; he was convinced that running was an art long since forgotten, although he found it difficult to keep up with the juniors; and he meant to take the Remove for a Latin lesson, but when it came to the point he realized that he had forgotten every word of that dead language and left hastily to pack his bag. There was, however, a rather sombre ending to this story, for Bulstrode, in a fit of anger, knocked down Todd, who fell against a bannister and seriously

injured himself. Alonzo had to leave the school to recuperate and did not return until *Magnet* No. 201.

Alonzo shared a study with Skinner, Snoop, and Stott for a while, but owing to the fact that he burned some impositions of theirs whilst kindly cleaning the place up for them one afternoon, he lived on somewhat constrained terms with them, and matters weren't improved by dropping their chops on the study fire in the course of cooking for them. Thus it was in *Magnet* No. 141 that Todd moved into a new study, No. 14, together with Wun Lung and Bunter, the latter having just been ejected from study No. 1 after some years of disharmony. Billy Bunter assumed the headship of the new study, but what with the Chinese junior's slyness and Alonzo's simplicity they were not exactly a satisfactory trio, and when Peter Todd came to Greyfriars to stay, in *Magnet* No. 271, the two Todds shared study No. 7 with Bunter and Dutton.

Alonzo's famous cousin, Peter Todd, first arrived at Greyfriars in *Magnet* No. 205, when he persuaded Alonzo to change places with him for two days and surprised the Removires considerably. For although Peter and Alonzo were identical in appearance they were far from similar

in character, Peter being a redoubtable fighting man. When Peter came to Greyfriars for good he tried very hard to make Alonzo equally aggressive in outlook, but Alonzo was certain that Uncle Benjamin would not want him to indulge in bouts of fisticuffs incessantly and he remained a striking contrast to his cousin Peter.

**A**LONZO gave up permanent residence at Greyfriars in 1916, though in somewhat mysterious circumstances, for he just dropped out of the stories without a word of explanation at the time. The last reference to him appears to be in *Magnet* No. 442, and as he was definitely absent when the new term began in the autumn it would seem that he left at the end of the summer term. It was given out later that he had left Greyfriars for health reasons, but it is often considered that the real reason was that he appeared to be growing more and more of an anachronism as time went by. "As for poor old Alonzo," says Mr. Hamilton, "I had an idea that the readers had had enough of him, and so let him fade out, though he re-appeared several times when specially asked for."

Yes, Alonzo did turn up again at Greyfriars and his final two appearances were probably his greatest. The first of these was

in *Magnets* No. 1344-1348. Owing to a chance encounter with a Professor Sparkinson, whom he had attempted to defend from the catapults of Ponsonby & Co., he was given a mysterious Elixir which increased his strength tenfold, and it was an exceedingly altered Alonzo who returned to Greyfriars in that autumn of 1933.

Unfortunately, Alonzo began to consider it his duty to reform the *Remove* in accordance with Uncle Benjamin's high moral principles, and it was not until Vernon-Smith managed to handcuff him and pelt him with cream buns that he was induced to forego his reforming activities as a condition of his release. Later, Bunter obtained the Elixir from Alonzo, and a thoroughly unpleasant Samson he turned out to be. Mercifully, the supply of the Elixir was soon exhausted, Professor Sparkinson vanished, and Alonzo departed at the end of term as frail and ineffectual as ever. This series is noteworthy as being the only one with a fantastic basis, yet so smoothly does it read and so true to type do all the characters remain that we cannot but admit it to be one of the most engrossing and amusing of all.

*Magnets* No. 1434-1439 constitute Alonzo's swan-song, but they were by no means a dirge.



Fisher T. Fish's father had taken an option on Portercliffe Hall with the notion of finding the sovereigns that were reputed to be buried there, and "Fishy" was instructed to bring along a number of friends to look for them. Alonzo went along (taking with him, of course, his box of Dr. Porter's Purple Pills for Pecky Persons), and apart from the Fishes—who didn't count, anyway—an enjoyable holiday was had by all, especially Bunter, who happened to find some gold coin and began passing sovereigns in Margate. What with phantoms, gun-play, and Alonzo's good advice, it all added up to a memorable vacation, though Mr. Fish, needless to say, did not achieve his somewhat nefarious object.

AND SO Alonzo made his final bow and left the Greyfriars scene. But it is sometimes questioned whether he really deserved his quiet ejection from the Remove. For instance, his counterpart at St. Jim's, Herbert Skimpole, remained there right to the end, in spite of the fact that he was merely an interesting character, whereas Alonzo was also a likable one. Were the

readers really tiring of Alonzo, or was it only a vociferous minority who succeeded in banishing him?

The Alonzo who came back to Greyfriars in 1933 and 1935 was a slightly changed Alonzo from the one who disappeared in 1916, just as the Bunter of the nineteen-thirties was a different Bunter from the earlier one who used to say "I'm sincerely sorry" and not "I say, you fellows!" Could not Alonzo have changed gradually with the years as did Bunter?

Moreover, there seems little evidence of Alonzo's alleged unpopularity, for he formed the subject of no less than seven reprints in *The Schoolboys' Own Library* (Nos. 11, 45, 77, 97, 111, 385, and 388), whilst stories of his exploits were also reprinted in *Holiday Annuals* and elsewhere. And who is not familiar with his weekly contributions to *The Greyfriars Herald* under the title of "'Lonzy's Little Letters" ? No, it appears that he was far from being an unpopular character, and one cannot help regretting the ignominious end of Alonzo Theophilus Todd, the Duffer of Greyfriars.



## PERT PARS

**W**HEN acknowledging the source of Almon Horton's article in *S. P. C.* No. 36 ("The Career of a Popular Boys' Story Writer") we omitted to mention that it appeared originally, with the exception of the final paragraph, in No. 12, current series, of *The Collector's Miscellany* (May, 1948). Our apologies to Joseph Parks for this oversight.

FROM the instalment of Arthur S. Hardy's serial story, "The Sports of St. Clive's," in *The Boys' Friend* No. 966, December 13th, 1919: "Some copies of the *Banford Evening News* were smuggled into the school and handed round. Those who could not get a peep at the paper copied the reports from its columns." A nice job, if you can do it: copying the reports without having a peep at the paper they are in.

FLUCTUATING AGE—"His age was about thirty, possibly a couple of years less when he was normal . . ." So wrote Cecil Hayter in "Blackmail," a "Bulldog" Holdfast story in *The Boys' Friend* No. 1079, dated February 11th, 1922.

PENETRATING LOOK?—"Come in!" Nina's face came musically through the panels when a minute later he tapped on her door."

—From *The Sexton Blake Library* No. 193, 3rd series (page 6, column 1), titled "The Case of the Missing Surgeon."

"ASKED whether they would republish the *Gem and Magnet*, Amalgamated Press, London, declared: 'We get lots of letters asking when they will appear again, but while paper rationing lasts it is difficult to say.'"—From an article on the [London] Old Boys' Book Club in the October 23rd, 1949, issue of *The Sunday Sun and Guardian*, Sydney, Australia.

TO HENTY enthusiasts: Stanley A. Pachon, 627 Hayes Street, Bethlehem, Pa., U.S.A., would like to contact anyone who can help him obtain data on certain of George A. Henty's short stories, and names of stories by him in certain books containing collections of short stories.

EDITOR'S ERROR—"There is a First Form—more commonly known as the 'babes'—at Greyfriars, although little is heard of them."—Editor's Chat, *Magnet* No. 1624, April 1st, 1939. Any long-time reader of the paper could have put the Editor right on that point:

HOUSEHOLD WORD—Quoted from a story by Maurice Richardson in the March, 1948, *Lilliput*: "He looked like some vast overgrown Billy Bunter."

—W. H. G.



NEW PAPER! NEW SCHOOL TALE! NEW DETECTIVE STORY!

# THE BOYS' FRIEND

EVERY WEDNESDAY

The object of the BOYS' FRIEND is to Amuse, to Instruct, and to Advise Boys.

ONE PENNY.



## "BIRDS OF PREY!"

The Adventures of Nelson Lee, Scoutmaster  
By MAXWELL SCOTT

Small columns of text, likely the beginning of the story "Birds of Prey!"

No. 1, New Series, *The Boys' Friend*, June 15, 1901

[Facing page 166.]



# The Boys' Friend

Number 1, Volume 1, of the New Series

WITH THE ISSUE dated June 15th, 1901, *The Boys' Friend* was increased from eight to sixteen pages and the price was raised from a halfpenny to one penny. In this number the editor, Robert Hamilton Edwards, revealed his identity, but commencing with No. 5 his name was removed from the front and editorial pages and he retired into anonymity again for several more years. Serials that commenced in No. 1 were: "Birds of Prey," a Nelson Lee story by Maxwell Scott, and "Through Thick and Thin," a school story by Allen Blair. Four other serials were carried on from the halfpenny series. The long complete story was "The Boy Jockey," by A. S. Hardy. One of the short features was a half-page "History of *The Boys' Friend*." In appearance the new series was similar to the old, printed on green paper, five columns to the page.



# THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY

Reviewed by WM. H. GANDER :: Part Seven

**I**N *Magnet* No. 510, November 17th, 1917, we find that Piet Delary is featured in Number 46 of the Gallery. As the writer of the Gallery created this character for the Greyfriars yarns that he wrote, he was very conversant with his subject. Piet arrived at the school from South Africa to find himself the object of contempt as the son of a supposed "rebel," but he eventually gained the general esteem of his school-fellows. The stories in which he appeared were usually those written by J. N. Pentelow, and when the latter no longer wrote about Greyfriars Piet vanished, although his name was retained in Remove Form lists that appeared time to time.

The "maths" master at Greyfriars is Number 47. Probably the most popular master there, Lawrence Lascelles was away on military service at the time he was "written up" for the Gallery, but we are told that "he will return when the war is over," and so he did.

*Magnet* No. 512 brings us to Clara Trevlyn (Number 48), of Cliff House School. Clara, close friend of Marjorie Hazeldene, is very pleasant to know, quite

tomboyish and given to the use of harmless slang at times. The artist depicts her as a good-looking girl. "Miss Clara is a good sort—one of the best!" is the verdict.

No. 513 of *The Magnet* is the Christmas Number for 1917, and the last double number, 32 pages for twopence (the size of ordinary pre-war issues), with the front page printed in blue and red. In addition to the regular fare there is a "Magnet Who's Who," giving details of fellows (or girls in the case of Cliff House) and staff of Greyfriars, Highcliffe, and Cliff House, all of which must have been greatly appreciated by readers. In Number 49 of the Gallery are Micky Desmond from Ireland and David Morgan from Wales, neither of whom has played an important part in the stories. Both were at Greyfriars from the first issue of *The Magnet*, both are good fellows, and there is little more that needs to be said of them—though a page was filled, apart from the two portraits, in saying it!

The next week (*Magnet* No. 514) we come to No. 50 of the Gallery, almost the half-way

mark, and meet Arthur Carne, of the Greyfriars Sixth Form, who is "a pretty complete rotter." Being such, it follows that he is a pal of Gerald Loder—but not quite so black a sheep as Loder. Unlike some of the black

sheep Carne is good at games, when he cares to keep in practice, which is not often. "Arthur Carne is not a prefect. He held that dignity once, but lost it most deservedly."

[More next time, we hope!]

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## THE BOOKSHELF

ONE OF THE special treats of the 1949 Christmas season was the appearance of (one might say) the old *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* in a new guise: *Tom Merry's Annual* (Mandeville Publications, London, England: 7s.6d.) One's first impression was a feeling of pleasant surprise at the attractive appearance of the book. This was followed by one of gratification as its contents were sampled. The long stories were really fine entertainment and it was good to once again be able to read of Rookwood School's Jimmy Silver & Co. after 10, these many years of having to be satisfied with re-reading our *Boys' Friends*. *Tom Merry's Annual* will occupy

an honored place in the bookshelf of many a lover of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood.

ALSO ADDED to the Rookwood Press's own bookshelf recently were "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party," by Frank Richards, and "Beaie Bunter of Cliff House School," by Hilda Richards, both published by Charles Skilton Limited, London (7s.6d.). We were particularly pleased to meet again the girls of Cliff House. "Hilda" does not disappoint the fans one bit in this story, which tells about Peter Hazeldene being suspected of theft, and the efforts of his sister Marjorie (assisted by Bob Cherry of Greyfriars) to clear him.

—W.H.G.

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Member: National A.P.A., The Fossils, United A.P.A., U.A.P.A. Alumni, B.A.P.A.

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