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STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

OCTOBER
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Number 40
Volume 2

THE FIVE CENT

WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY

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TRUE LIFE
OF
BILLY THE KID

The Five Cent Wide Awake Library, No. 451, August 29, 1881—
549 More Before the End of Volume I. See Article on Page 196

The Story Paper Collector
WHO'S WHO

No. 13: JOHN R. COOK

NOT ONLY DOES Jack Cook collect story papers, but he also writes stories, thus being rather unusual in story paper collector circles. He has written about eight hundred short school and fairy tales, all of which were accepted, as was also one book for children. Now he is busy on something a little more ambitious.

His collection, which is his second, amounts to some 2500 papers. The first, begun when he was a schoolboy, was lost while he was, as a youth, hospitalized. He had, when this was written, 107 St. Jim's, 50 Rookwood, and 60 Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Libraries, some 600 numbers of *The Nelson Lee Library*, and copies

of No. 1 of *The Greyfriars Herald*, *Schoolboys' Own Library*, *Detective Weekly*, and the less well-known *Jacks' Own*, *Pals*, and *Buzzer*.

Though he has written occasionally for *The Collectors' Digest*, Jack feels that he is not very good at writing articles. Living at Newcastle-on-Tyne, he was the founder of the Novocastrian Story Paper Collectors' Club, but confesses that too few enthusiasts in north-east England makes it difficult to carry on.

Jack Cook is proud to possess letters from Frank Richards and Edwy Searles Brooks. He has helped many collectors in their efforts to fill gaps in their sets and welcomes letters from enthusiasts. Len Packman gave him the nickname of the Novocastrian Wizard; since then others have written of him in the same way. He wonders why. Jack still reads the old papers, he says, and asks, how many do? — w.h.g.

221B BAKER STREET

MENTION WAS MADE in our last issue (page 186) of the passing of *The Strand Magazine*; since that writing a copy of the last issue, No. 711, March, 1950, has come our way. In it, a link with the Sherlock Holmes stories that appeared in the magazine's pages many years ago, is a floor plan of Holmes'—

and Dr. Watson's—residence at 221B Baker Street, London. One finds, upon comparing it with another plan of 221B reproduced in No. 3 of *The Baker Street Journal*, official organ of the Baker Street Irregulars, that they are quite dissimilar. Were there two 221B's, one wonders, or was that famous edifice remodelled?

The Story Paper Collector

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

No. 40

OCTOBER, 1950

Vol. 2

A SHORT FLIGHT FOR THE ROCKET

By LEONARD M. ALLEN

ONE OF THE four papers under the supervision of F. Addington Symonds was *The Rocket*. A "companion paper" to *The Champion*, *Pluck*, and *Young Britain*, No. 1 was dated February 14th, 1923. Claimed on the colour-printed cover to be "The Biggest Story Paper in the World," its size was larger than was that of its companions, 28 pages 9 by 12½". Apparently it was introduced as a challenge to D. C. Thomson's very popular *Adventure* and in the editorial a special point was made of the class of story that would appear in its pages—all of them would be of a sensible, feasible nature and none of the fantastic type would be entertained.

As was the case with its rivals and companions, a photo card was given with each copy, but in the case of *The Rocket* a departure

was made from the usual posed photograph of a sporting celebrity, the cards being action-pictures of famous boxing knock-outs. The subject was so limited, however, that they were given for only eleven weeks, being replaced by a competition with prizes that included fifty pounds, a motor-cycle, and radios.

In No. 1 of *The Rocket* began two series of complete stories, and there were three serials, a long complete story, a comic strip, and joke and puzzle departments—excellent value for twopence. The best-known of the authors was Reid Whitley, who contributed a series somewhat contradictory to the editor's statement regarding the type of story to be published, under the title of "Cyclone Sid." Sid was the commander of an amphibian submarine which was able to deal successfully with death rays

and giant crabs. The other series of stories, by Jake Denvers, featured the exploits of "The Cowboy Tec." A ship-building serial, "Chums o' the Clyde," was supplied by Capt. Malcolm Arnold, the other continued stories being "The Temple of Thrills" and a human interest drama, "The Golden Ladder," written by Rupert Drake and Raymond Lee respectively. There were no less than thirty-nine illustrations, including the story title backgrounds, in the first issue, many by well-known Amalgamated Press artists Lunt Roberts, Fred Holmes, and J. H. Valda.

IN SUCCEEDING ISSUES nearly all the space was devoted to the adventure type of yarn, little room being found for stories of school and sport. The earlier serials were followed by "The Isles of Gold," a pirate yarn by

Paul Hotspur, "The Long Trail," by S. S. Gordon, "The Valley of Secrets," by Carras Yorke, while Reid Whitley introduced Crackerjack Jim, a series of stories concerning adventures with a metal kangaroo, very reminiscent of the *Adventure* stories of that period.

The long complete stories were mostly written by unfamiliar authors, an exception being a motor racing yarn, "The Terror of the Track," by Gilbert Chester. Well-known artists whose whose work appeared from time to time were Tom Peddie and Harry Lane.

The Rocket ceased publication in 1924, as did its companions *Young Britain* and *Pluck*, the last issue being No. 79, dated August 16th. The fourth member of the quartette, *The Champion*, is still being published.

THRILLING CHAPTER-ENDING

QUOTED FROM "Young Tom's Schooldays," a story of Tom Wildrake, son of Captain Thomas Wildrake, and great-nephew of General Bounceable Wildrake — characters in schoolboy fiction grew older in those days —, by George Emmett:

End of Chapter XXV: "Dabber . . . felt himself hurled

through the air, over the edge of the cliff, into the glittering sea below."

Beginning of Chapter XXVI: "But Dabber was not dead — oh, no. The fall over the cliff, great as it was, . . . could not kill him, for I could not afford to part with him yet, dear reader, and neither, I trust, could you."

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY

Reviewed by WM. H. GANDER :: Part Ten

TURNING TO Number 62 in The Greyfriars Gallery, Magnet Library No. 526, March 9th, 1918, we read:

"Major Cherry is just about what one would expect Bob's father to be. As a boy he was exactly the same type of boy as Bob, one feels certain." One has an impression that Major Robert Cherry was not a military man before the first World War, but one may be mistaken.

Evidently there was still something of the boy about him, for in a short story related by Mark Linley in *The Magnet* two weeks earlier the Major hurled a snowball at the Remove Form-master, Mr. Quelch.

Major Cherry has come into quite a number of stories, but at the time the Gallery was being written there were two that were outstanding: "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," in which the Major was in a shipwreck in the Red Sea and was rescued by Bob and his chums, accompanied by Colonel Wharton, and that in which is told the plottings of Esau Heath, a Removite of those days, against Bob, the latter being expelled following a charge of theft. The Major kicked up quite a "shindy"

at Greyfriars over that, but Bob was cleared of the charge and the sentence of expulsion was transferred to Heath.

Next week his turn in the Gallery came to one of the lesser stars in the Greyfriars firmament, Hop Hi (Number 63), of the Second Form, younger brother of Wun Lung of the Remove. Comparatively unimportant in the annals of Greyfriars though he is, Hop Hi has been featured in some of the stories, but we may leave it at that and pass along to Bolsover minor.

Hubert Bolsover, Number 64 in the Gallery, also has an older brother in the Remove. Actually Hubert came to Greyfriars as the adopted son of Percy Bolsover's father, having been taken from a London slum. Percy was not happy about it, but later the fact emerged that Hubert was really the younger son, long lost, of Mr. Bolsover, and so was Percy's brother. Troubles continued to haunt Hubert Bolsover after he came to the school, and at one time he returned to the slum from which he had been rescued. However, things worked out better after a while, and since then

Hubert has mainly been among the less-important characters at Greyfriars.

Magnet No. 529 brings us to Sir James Vivian, Bart., who, we are told, is "all right!" Jimmy, as he is usually called, also spent his younger days in a slum—in Carker's Rents, to be precise. "Sir Jimmy's father had done in the family cash," so "Sir Jimmy himself was dragged up—brought up is hardly the right phrase—in Carker's Rents."

Sir Reginald Brooke, guardian of Lord Mauleverer, got on Sir Jimmy's track and sent him to Greyfriars, where since his initial adventures he has usually played small part in the stories. Number 65 in the Gallery, he shares, if one remembers correctly, a study with Mauly, they being related.

JAMES WALKER and Rupert Valence share the spotlight in Number 66. Both of the Sixth Form, neither "has ever been among the leading characters of the Greyfriars stories. But both have played their parts at times, and of Walker we may hear again. Valence we have done with, I think." Valence we had done with because he left Greyfriars following the episode in "A Very Gallant Gentleman" in which his life was saved by Arthur Courtney at the sacrifice

of the latter's. Walker and Valence were somewhat shady characters, friends of Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form, but for both it may be said that they were not so deeply-dyed "bad-hats" as was, and still is, Loder. While Rupert Valence vanished from Greyfriars—Frank Richards probably didn't care to bring him back after J. N. Pentelow had written him out of the stories—Walker stayed on.

In "The Editor's Chat" of *Magnet* No. 530 it was stated that the Gallery was now nearing its end—"not many more characters remain to be written about"—but still the end was some distance off. Also in that "Chat," in response to many requests prompted, apparently, by the very popular Gallery, there was begun a list of Greyfriars story-titles in the order of their appearance. This was continued through the following weeks.

Number 67 in the Gallery is Dick Trumper, "the acknowledged leader of the Courtfield County Council School boys." He had not been heard of much lately, we are told, "but he is certain to bob up again sooner or later." Although he attends Courtfield School, Dick is not a Courtfielder, living at the sea-shore village of Pegg with his father, a fisherman. "There is

that fresh, breezy tang of the sea about Dick Trumper and his old father."

The snobs of Greyfriars and Highcliffe view Dick with disdain, but he is very well liked by the better fellows of both schools. He appeared more often in the earlier Greyfriars stories than in the later ones, and there comes a remembrance of stories of Dick Trumper and his friends in *Chuckles* of long ago. But copies of *Chuckles* are as hard to find as are halfpenny *Magnets*.

WHILE THERE MIGHT be a little doubt about Major Cherry having been a military gentleman in the pre-1914 stories, there is no doubt whatever that his great friend, Colonel James Wharton, was a military man in those yarns. It was as Colonel Wharton that we first met him in *Magnet* No. 1. He is Number 68 in the Gallery, *Magnet* No. 532. The Colonel took Harry Wharton, an unruly, wilful lad, in hand in the very first Greyfriars story and decided that sending him to Greyfriars would be the making of him.

As Harry's uncle and guardian Colonel Wharton is met quite frequently in the stories, usually during vacations when the boys go to Wharton Lodge in Surrey. "Colonel Wharton is just the

sort of uncle a fellow might be glad to have. But there was a time when Harry did not see this." The time came when he did!

Number 69 of the Gallery, in *Magnet* No. 533, brings one more Bunter, this time Walter, better known as Wally, cousin of Billy and Bessie and Sammy. Wally is both like and unlike his cousins: like them in looks, unlike them in almost every other way. He is, we read, "the other Bunter." He does not belong to Greyfriars, but he does to the stories; and, though he has very seldom come into them, I know that many of my readers remember him with strong liking."

Wally came to Greyfriars in an early story when he and Billy changed places for a day. Later, Billy was to persuade Wally, who was scheduled to go to St. Jim's, to come to Greyfriars as Billy, while the latter went to St. Jim's as Wally. An exciting double series of stories, one in *The Magnet* and the other in *The Gem*, was built up on this. Still later Wally (mysteriously three years older while Cousin Billy had not aged by a single day) was at Greyfriars as junior master, but that was no responsibility of Frank Richards'. A real good fellow, Wally Bunter.

Part 11 Will Appear in the Next Issue

A VOLUMINOUS VOLUME

THE PUBLISHERS of boys' story papers did not always pay very close attention to volume numbers, as will be known by collectors of, for instance, *The Magnet* or *The Gem* of the years before 1922, or *The Boys' Friend* of the period 1918-1921. The issues in a volume of *The Magnet Library* varied from a low of none at all to a high of 83 (Volume 13). In an effort, apparently, to offset this and other long volumes, there were no Volumes 14, 15, or 16. Then Volume 18 ran to 55 issues and there was no Volume 19.

In 1922 someone determined to take the volume-numbering of *The Magnet* in hand. Volume 21 ran from No. 731 to No. 750, just twenty issues, closing with the last issue in June. From that time on all the volumes contained 26 issues, January to June or July to December, with the exception of the last which, ending on May 18th, 1940, had but twenty issues. The volume-numbering of *The Gem* was straightened out at the same time.

One American publisher of boys' papers, Frank Tousey, had years earlier adopted a simple method of avoiding all fumbling with the volume numbers of at least one of his papers, *The Five*

Cent Wide Awake Library. I have reprints of three issues, Nos. 451, 479, and 553, and they are all in Volume I. No. 553 is but a little more than half-way through that volume, for it ran to No. 1000. Then Mr. Tousey decided to begin Volume II.

Although dated weekly, and bearing the words "Issued Every Monday," there were times when several numbers of *Wide Awake* were published each week. Thus, according to John T. McIntyre in Fred T. Singleton's *19th Century Peep-show* Nos. 7 et seq., in September of 1878 eleven numbers were published, while in October there were twelve. "And they continued to be produced at the rate of three or four a week until 1882. There was a time during this period when they were issued at the rate of one a day."

Many of the numbers were kept in print through the years, but the publisher would sometimes withdraw one title and replace it with another bearing the same serial-number. "More than once," writes Mr. McIntyre in *Peep-Show*, "there were two issues having the same number," which must be very confusing to collectors.

—W. H. G.



The BOY'S FRIEND 2^o

No. 1385. THE HIGH-CLASS PAPER FOR ALL BOYS! December 31st, 1927.



The ghost was tumbling down the stairs in a most human fashion.

THE CHRISTMAS GHOSTS.

A Fine Long Story of the Chums of Toppingham School.

SOME OF THE boys of Toppingham School were sitting in the school hall, waiting for the Christmas play to begin. The hall was filled with boys, and the air was thick with the excitement of the season. The boys were talking and laughing, and the girls were sitting on the benches, looking at the boys with interest. The schoolmaster was standing at the front of the hall, looking at the boys with a stern expression. The boys were all dressed in their school uniforms, and the girls were wearing their school dresses. The schoolmaster was a tall, thin man with a long nose and a serious expression. He was looking at the boys with a stern expression, and the boys were looking at him with a nervous expression. The schoolmaster was a tall, thin man with a long nose and a serious expression. He was looking at the boys with a stern expression, and the boys were looking at him with a nervous expression.

No. 1385 of *The Boy's Friend*, December 31st, 1927: The Last Issue

[Facing page 196.]



The Boy's Friend

No. 1385, New Series: The Last Issue

THE END OF the year 1927 brought with it the end of *The Boys' Friend*, after a run of nearly thirty-three years and a grand total of 1717 issues. Early in 1926 it was given into the care of a new editor who promptly cleared out such (to him, apparently) useless appendages as the volume number, "new series," and through-the-volume pagination. Less understandably, the apostrophe in *Boys'* was moved from after the *s* to before it, the paper now being *The Boy's Friend*. Other "improvements" included the dropping of the Rookwood School series after a run of eleven years, a new front page title block, and changing the pages to three wide columns instead of the four which had recently prevailed. In spite of all this, plus a new program of stories, there were soon to be seen signs, in the shape of reprinted stories and comics, that the paper was on the down grade. Announcement was made in No. 1385, dated December 31st, 1927, that next week *The Boy's Friend* would be combined with *The Triumph*.



YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT*

IN NUMBER 41 of *The Collectors' Digest*, May, 1950, there is reprinted a letter to the editor of a Yorkshire newspaper in which the writer tells of asking a newsagent, away back around 1908, for a magnet and being handed a *Magnet*, which he says would not pick up pins. How many times, we wonder, was this error made? It happened to us about the same time when, asking for a penny magnet, we were informed that *The Magnet* was a halfpenny. Not being so wise as Mr. W. Broome, writer of the letter, we turned down the halfpenny *Magnet* and insisted on being supplied with a penny magnet. We can not, therefore, claim that from that time we were, like Mr. Broome, "a regular reader until it went off the bookshalls."

WHILE THE PUBLISHERS of the late lamented *Gem* and *Magnet* do not see their way to reviving these and other favorite publications of by-gone years—they no doubt have good reasons—their editors are able to find inspiration in the pages of these papers and books.

For proof of this the reader is invited to compare, if he has access to them, the article on page 121 of *The Greyfriars Holiday Annual* for 1925 with an item on

page 7 of *Sun Comic* No. 71, new series, dated June 17th, 1950. In *Holiday Annual* we are told of the Great Rebellion at Rookwood in the year 1789; in *Sun* we read of the Barraging-out at St. Clement's in 1682.

Both accounts are, in part, word for word the same. Even more interesting is the fact that the illustration by E. E. Briscoe, facing page 121 of the 1925 *Holiday Annual*, which depicts the boys of Rookwood defending the school building from attack, is reproduced in reduced size in *Sun* with the artist's signature removed.

It has been said that the editors of boys' papers did strange things in the old days. And they are still doing them.

IS BRAZIL the Land of the Midnight Sun? The query was suggested by reading the following in "The Riddle of the Forests," a story placed in Brazil and written by Eric W. Townsend (*Boys' Friend Library* No. 332, new series, April, 1932, page 88, top of col. 2):

"All that they were aware of was a sort of shadow flung against the light of the sun. Judging from the position of that sun riding high in a tran-

*Editorial Page heading in early issues of *The Boys' Realm*, 1st New Series.

quill and kindly sky, it was midnight."

In passing, it is of interest to note that this story, running to 95 pages, is an elaboration of the theme used by Mr. Townsend in a short tale, "The Kingdom of Wildman Moneymoon," in the 1926 *Chums Annual* (page 585). In both stories we find the same "wild man" character, Wildman Moneymoon, carrying firefly lanterns for lighting his path, and the same huge cave in a mountain where work his slaves. The *Chums* yarn is short, running to three pages, or about nine *Boys' Friend Library* pages. In "The Kingdom of Wildman Moneymoon" the cave is lit by firefly-lanterns (who'd like to catch enough fireflies to illuminate a large cave?), while in "The Riddle of the Forests" Wildman has come up to date and lights it with electricity.

THE OCTOBER, 1912, issue of *The Captain* (No. 163) contained an early contribution from the pen of Leslie Hore-Belisha, in later years destined to become

Minister of Transport and originator of the Belisha Beacon. The title of his effort, we are informed by Len Allen, was "The Susceptible Monitor," and it consisted of three verses with apologies to the late Sir W. S. Gilbert.

THE "MYSTERY" in the title of *The London Mystery Magazine* appears to cover the entire field of things mysterious, not just the detective story. Published for The London Mystery Magazine Ltd., 221B Baker Street, London (Sherlock Holmes' address!), by The Hulton Press Ltd. (2/6d., bi-monthly), this magazine rates a liberal use of adjectives for which we do not have the space, so we will merely say that it is a joy to behold and a joy to read. We seldom let commercialism creep into these pages but do so for once. If any of our readers in the United States or Canada wish to see a copy and cannot gratify that wish locally, we offer to send one along in return for the small sum of forty cents, which includes postage.—W. H. G.

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