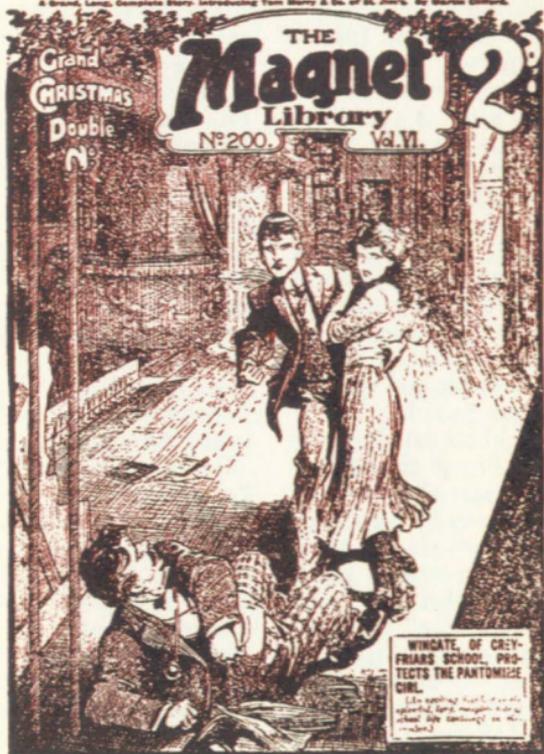


THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

JANUARY, 1952
No. 45 :: Vol. 2

"WINGATE'S FOLLY!" A Spirited, Romantic, Genuine School Tale of Harry Warner & Co. of Pagan Street. "THE STARS OF THE CIRCUS!" A Grand, Lively, Genuine Story Introducing Tom Barry & Co. of St. John's, by Martin Clifford.



Fourth Magnet Christmas Issue: No. 200, December 9th, 1911

The Story Paper Collector
WHO'S WHO

No. 18: JAMES W. MARTIN

FOR THE WRITING of these potted biographies we do, in imagination at least, get around. The last one took us to London, the one before to New Zealand. Now we journey to that land of sunshine (as we northerners gather it to be), California. If we arrive in the San Francisco area at the right time and look in the right place we will locate Jim Martin.

Jim is a bachelor and his work takes him to various parts of the Western U.S.A. For this reason he keeps his collection of dime novels in storage, which, all collectors will agree, is no place for one's collection to be, whether it consists of penny thrillers or dime novels.

A native of Missouri, Jim was born in 1913. From this latter fact it will be seen that he was not buying and reading current issues of dime novels in their heyday. His father was a great reader of the "thriller" and "blood and thunder" type of literature, so it is not surprising that Jim turned his attention in the same direction. Even though, as he says, "Mom sure did frown on Dad for letting me read that 'trashy junk,' but I guess it never hurt me too

much. But I did acquire a restless habit of travelling all over the country, seeing what made things tick."

At the "ripe old age of 12" Jim began to take a real interest in the colored-cover novels that began to make their appearance about 1898 and the thick-type pocket novels issued by Street & Smith, Westbrook, and other publishers, but he had been a reader of such periodicals from the age of nine.

"I saw very few of the black-and-white novels, Beadle's Dime Novels ('yellow-backs'), until I was fourteen," he says. "I have been on my own since I was fifteen, and am still travelling around. I never knew there was any kind of a collectors' club until 1946, when I came upon a copy of Ralph Cummings' *Dime Novel Roundup*." He quite naturally joined the Happy Hours Brotherhood, of which *Roundup* is the official organ.

In Jim's collection there are "novels" dating all the way back to 1860, plus more than a sprinkling of items from Britain. Among the U.S.A. titles are some very good runs, including a fine one of *The Boys of New York*.

Although Jim has never been a member of any amateur press association, he has gathered together a surprisingly large collection of amateur journals, many

[Turn to page 266, please]

The Story Paper Collector

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

No. 45—Vol. 2

JANUARY, 1952

Priceless

. . AND TUPPENCE [HIGHLY] COLOURED!

By TOM HOPPERTON

IN THE MID-1920's there appeared to be some perturbation among the pundits of Fleetway House. Since the Harmsworths had laid the foundations of the Amalgamated Press about forty years before, they had put out of business such old specialists in boys' papers as Fox, Brett, and Henderson, while firms as influential as Newnes, Pearson, Shurey, Trapps-Holmes, and Cassell had retired in disgust from attempts to break their monopoly.

But now Thomson-Leng had not only established *Adventure*, *The Rover*, and *The Wizard*: they were, if A. J. Jenkinson's survey can be relied on, outselling the older papers by two to one. By contrast, no less than eleven of the A. P.'s post-war ventures had crashed.

The response to the Thomson threat was four-pronged. A

strangely-transformed *Champion*, with *The Triumph* and—later—others entered into direct competition with the Scots papers. *Modern Boy* opened up a more intelligent field than Thomson's catered for, and it seems reasonable to assume that the knowledge that the A. P. could no longer afford to take chances was one factor leading to the elimination of the "sub" writers from *The Gem* and *The Magnet* and the subsequent improvement of those papers.

The peak age for reading the *Wizard-Adventure* stuff is twelve (*vide* Jenkinson again), so an attempt was made to create papers appealing to 'teen-agers in general, and yet still attractive to the unsophisticated adult. There was accordingly a shift in the traditional policy of *The Union Jack* which culminated in its "apotheosis" into *The*

Detective Weekly and – reminiscent of the days when the half-penny *Union Jack* bragged that it was “a 3/6d novel for ½d” – there appeared on February 9th, 1928, *The Thriller*.

“THE NEW PAPER With a Thousand Thrills” headlined “A Gripping Book-Length Complete Story by a Star Author” each week. In those days the king-pin of sensation was Edgar Wallace. His huge output was a constant source of argument (some of it publicity-inspired) and dark parallels were drawn with the elder Dumas as it was contended that only with the aid of a squad of “ghosts” could one man produce so much. (All this must have been highly amusing to Charles Hamilton, whose production – without a dictaphone – was thrice that of Wallace.) A yarn by Edgar was, then, the logical choice for the initial story and, to a tremendous fanfare, “Red Aces” opened *The Thriller’s* eleven years’ run.

The 28-page paper was about an inch wider than *The Magnet*, and the vivid red and blue of the illustration showed up strikingly on the white cover. Arthur Jones, familiar to Lee and Blake devotees, was the artist for the main story and appeared to have hunted diligently for purple patches for his

drawings. Consider his captions: “‘Look! Blood!’ he screamed”; “Two hands reached out of the darkness and gripped her wrists”; “He peered into the house of death”; “Through the secret panel they saw something that terrified them.” J. G. Reeder was the star character, and he managed to have as harrasing a time in these 30,000 words as usually befell him in double the wordage in a normal Wallace novel. George Dilnot, another popular crime specialist, began “The Trapper! A Drama of the Night Haunts of London,” and, apart from a brief note by the editor, the only other feature was a series of “Bafflers” – short stories of crimes which the reader had to solve from the clues provided.

The paper was an instantaneous success and “all” the editor had to do was to keep cooking to the same recipe. He succeeded very well: few papers with as long a life will have varied so little from their original format as this one. Hugh Clevely wrote “Lynch Law” for No. 2, but Edgar Wallace was back the following week with another J. G. Reeder story, while Leslie Charteris came in for the fourth issue.

The Thriller was a natural stamping ground for the Sexton Blake writers, Anthony Skene

being the first on the scene in No. 5, when Nat Long displaced Jones as illustrator for one week. Gwyn Evans and another Reeder story followed. The "Baffler" was now headed "Are You a Sherlock Holmes?" which was a dirty trick to play on poor old Sexton Blake. Plummer, Charteris, and Stacey Blake rounded off the first ten, and the pattern was set. The bulk of the stories came from eight or nine writers, although the paper seemed to be a more open field than *The Union Jack* was and a very wide range of names appeared at one time or another.

John G. Brandon, Edmund Snell, Edgar Wallace, John Hunter, Leslie Charteris, Berkeley Gray, L. C. Douthwaite, and Hugh Clevely each contributed more than 25 stories, and accounted for 284 of the 587 issues. At the other extreme, such famous names as Peter Cheyney and E. Phillips Oppenheim made practically solo appearances and their stories were probably solicited as "boosts."

Some of the more prolific Blake writers probably preferred to stick to their lasts, in spite of their advantages in writing for the companion paper, even such a "natural" as Gilbert Chester turning in only one yarn. Apropos of this, it is significant that while Edwy Searles

Brooks was still trying to keep Nelson Lee afloat he was unknown to *The Thriller*, but subsequently (as Berkeley Gray) he was a prolific contributor.

THE WEEKLY gave birth to quite a number of characters who were later promoted to the dignity of cloth covers. Some of these, such as John G. Brandon's Inspector McCarthy, were more or less normal policemen, but it was inevitable in this type of paper that the star characters should be those irritatingly omniscient young aristocrats whom—as the Editor would certainly ban the scatological term that is most appropriate—I can best describe as thorough Clever Dicks. The Saint and Norman Conquest, the productions of Leslie Charteris and Berkeley Gray, are still going strong, and it is amusing to reflect upon the number of people who cheerfully pay 7/6d to follow their adventures and who would have sniffed indignantly if their newsagents had offered them the twopenny version.

That is, in a way, a tribute to the manner in which the paper fulfilled the task it set itself, but merit counted for little in 1940, when *The Thriller* was lost in the black-out. It is rather surprising, though, that it has not been revived as the demand for the

sensational is even greater than it was in 1929. Judging by the bookstalls and the continual prosecutions, that demand is being largely met by pseudo-American compounds of sex and perversion—sadism with all the trimmings—deliberately designed to sail as near the danger line of the law as possible.

Should the directors of the Amalgamated Press ever enter

their library, they will find that some of their papers of the 'nineties bore slogans that they were "founded to counter the pernicious influence of the penny dreadful," and if pride of ancestry then impels them to do something to counter the pernicious influence of the eighteen-penny horrible, they could do worse than revive *The Thriller*.

CORRECTION: The first issue of *The Thriller* appeared in 1929, not in 1928 as stated in the above article (line 6, page 260). Printer's error!

MORE DETECTIVES!

By LEONARD M. ALLEN

WHAT A STRANGE mixture of juvenile and adult material was offered each week to readers of comic papers in the old days! The main attractions were, of course, the illustrated adventures of Weary Willie and Tired Tim, T. E. Dunville, Tom the Ticket-of-Leave Man, K. N. Pepper, Lazy Leonard and Lively Lawrence, Homeless Hector, and the rest.

But the serial stories were definitely aimed at the adult reader—heavy stories of human interest with titles indicative of their theme: "Justice," "Lon-

don," "In the Shadows," "The Prison Chaplain," "The Girl Who Married a Scoundrel." No comic paper, however, could be considered complete without a story of a detective. Usually these were complete weekly adventures written around the same character.

Do you remember the front page of *The Jester*, the centre depicting the latest hair-raising adventure of Hawkshaw, the Man from Scotland Yard? Although he was employed by the Police most of Hawkshaw's efforts were spent on Secret Service work. Few weeks went by

without his recovery of stolen plans or documents, the loss of which would prove the utter ruin of the Old Country. Seldom did it take this remarkable man over a week to avert the gravest peril.

The *Butterfly* favourites, Daring & Co., often required three weeks to apprehend the criminals but nevertheless were equally successful. This firm was a combination of two *Butterfly* detectives who had worked single-handed—John Dare of the Metropolitan Police and Polly Smith, the Board School detective.

The latter had plenty of experience, having served her apprenticeship to Gordon Barington, a Secret Service type, later teaming up with Dare, and finally reforming a gentleman crook, Matmaddock, who married her and supplanted Dare as head of the firm.

MOST OF THESE comic-paper detectives had some unusual hobby or assistant to distinguish them. George Gale of *Chips*, well ahead of his time, was known as the Flying Detective, his machine apparently being supplied by his department at Scotland Yard. Each week criminals were relentlessly brought to justice with the aid of the 'plane, lack of suitable landing grounds proving

no obstacle to this intrepid sleuth.

Hector Hazard of *Lot-O-Fun*, the Admiralty Detective, was employed solely on naval matters, whilst his successor in that paper, Pontifex Shrewd, the Scientific Detective, could produce a new ray or gas at the critical moment. The *Funny Wonder* favourite, Pat O'Keefe, would have been an utter failure but for his ventriloquism. The *Butterfly* for a long period featured a Doctor Detective, a series under the intriguing title of "The Doings of Dr. Dread," later to be replaced by Mary Power, the Taxicab Sleuth.

One of the strangest of these crime investigators was Victor Brand of *The Favorite*. He employed as an assistant Jacko, a trained gorilla. This animal very conveniently understood every word his master uttered and was accepted without misgiving by the detective's clients. He must have been an economical proposition for Brand, as the only reward he received for his services was a cigar, although sometimes he brought a criminal to justice single-handed.

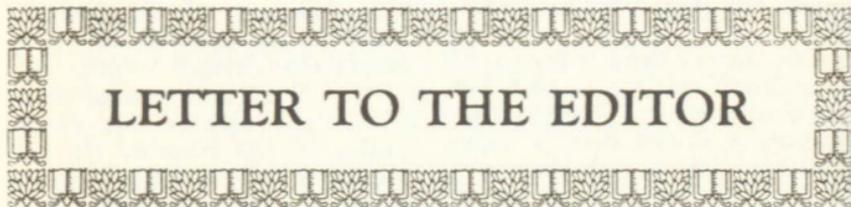
In the comics boy-detectives were not forgotten as assistants and were obtained from that never-failing source of supply, the gutter. Gentleman Joe of *Merry and Bright* rescued and

employed four lads known as the Urchin Detectives. These were replaced in due course by Ragged Jack, the Tramp Detective, whose consulting-room was any street or open space. His status was maintained by giving away to the derelicts of the Thames Embankment any fee he received for services rendered.

Phil Flash, who followed, dispensed with the services of assistants, as he possessed a "rubber face" which could be altered

at will to resemble anyone, at the same time being able to assume the voice of his subject. Abel Daunt of *The Firefly* had a large practice in spite of interviewing prospective clients in a consulting-room full of wild beasts.

Rather significantly, the most enduring of the comic-paper detectives proved to be Ferrers Locke, of *Chuckles*, who enlisted no outside aid to his deductive and courageous qualities.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Those St. Frank's Stories: Roger Replies to Len

To the Editor,
THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR.

Sir:

Len Packman's letter expressing the consternation of many members of the Old Boys' Book Club at the appearance of my St. Frank's article in No. 43 of *The Story Paper Collector* calls for further comment, especially in view of his assertion that it created an unpleasant precedent

and that it was unethical to "run a paper down."

Len has deservedly become a famous figure in O.B.B.C. circles, and he is well-versed in the St. Frank's lore. Had he therefore contented himself with exposing the fallacy of my arguments, I would have had nothing further to say. Unfortunately, however, Len has seen fit to question the propriety of my conduct in writing such an article, and

accordingly I feel that in fairness to myself the following facts should be placed on record.

The London Club has twice staged debates on the relative merits and demerits of Greyfriars and St. Frank's, and on neither occasion did adverse criticism seem to arouse consternation; on the contrary, the Club minutes refer to the second debate as "one of the highlights of the meeting." Furthermore, the protagonists on that occasion were Len and myself. Naturally each of us defended his own school and attacked the other's. No member of the Club registered any protest about this. Why, then, does the publication of my article (much of which contains verbatim extracts from the manuscript of the speech I delivered at the debate) now cause Len such pained surprise? And by what reasoning is his attack on Greyfriars ethical but my attack on St. Frank's unethical? Len seems to be criticizing me for doing the very thing he has done himself.

As for the contention that the publication of of my adverse criticism created a precedent, a glance through the files of *The Collectors' Digest* should relieve

Len's mind on this point: an attack on Greyfriars appeared in No. 1 and attacks on St. Frank's in Nos. 3 and 13. I may add that few pieces of writing about the hobby seem to have aroused such lively enthusiasm or stimulated such animated correspondence as these have done.

I can appreciate the point of view of those who prefer to regard the hobby only with affection, though Len, by participating in the debate, seems to have departed from this standpoint. But I do feel that the danger of being too uncritical is that, by refusing to differentiate between good and bad, we reduce all stories to the level of the mediocre; in short, everything looks the same through rose-coloured spectacles. What is good and what is bad are, of course, matters of opinion, but so long as that opinion is honest there is surely no reason to resent the expressing of it.

Finally, I note that Len has forgiven me for my attack on St. Frank's. In the same spirit of magnanimity, therefore, I forgive him for his attack on Greyfriars. I am sure that he and I will remain the best of friends.

ROGER JENKINS

H. E. Twinham, 25 Hazelden Rd., Lupset, Wakefield, Yorks,
wishes to obtain S.P.C. Nos. 3, 4, 6 to 17, 19 to 22, 24, 28 to 31.

FURTHER JOTTINGS

SHORTLY AFTER MY "Jottings" had appeared in *The Story Paper Collector* No. 42 I received a letter from Herbert Leckenby in which he informed me that Walter Webb was of the opinion that the Sexton Blake woman-author was Miss Cicely Hamilton, the playwright.

Not having advanced any further in my original belief that she was Mrs. Dicker I decided to write to this lady. I am still awaiting a reply. However, Mr. Webb, writing in the *September Collectors' Digest*, leaves no doubt that she is Miss Hamilton and I must apologize for leading any reader astray with my findings, though the coincidence of names and certain other details I had could only lead me to this conclusion.

I AM SORRY to have to report the death of George Dilnot on February 23rd, 1951, at East Molesey, Surrey, at the age of 68. While we have had only three

Sexton Blake stories from him in the second series *Sexton Blake Library*, Mr. Dilnot will be remembered for his yarns in *The Detective Weekly* and *The Thriller*, and also for the series on Scotland Yard which commenced in No. 1 of *The U.J. Detective Magazine Supplement*.

Born at Hayling Island, Hants, Mr. Dilnot was for many years with *The Daily Mail* and allied publications. His first novel, written with Frank Froest, was published in 1911. Early in his career he was officially thanked by Scotland Yard for discoveries which led to the arrest of a man on a charge of murder.

I HEAR THAT a series of films is to be produced featuring John Creasey's character, "The Toff." What about a Sexton Blake series? I understand the last two films, made during the war, proved good "box office." And why not a radio (the last one was just before the war started) or television show as well?

— DEREK FORD

THE S. P. C. WHO'S WHO [From page 258]

of them issued during the first decade of the century.

It will be seen that Jim Martin is a man to be envied: he lives in California, and as if that were

not a sufficient blessing, he has a grand lot of dime novels, penny thrillers, and amateur magazines.

— W. H. G.

CHUMS IN COUNCIL ★

JUST IN CASE anyone wondered why we chose for reproduction on the front page of S.P.C. No. 44 a copy of *The Penny Popular* in which there are no stories written by Frank Richards, here is the reason: we have copies of but two early issues the new series *Penny Popular*; the copy we did not use does contain genuine vintage St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood stories, but the cover of the one we used appeared much more suitable for reproduction. When having zinc etchings or half-tone blocks made we must always consider the limitations of our small Pilot press.

★THE HEADING of this page is from the Editor's page in No.

155 of *The Dreadnought*, dated May 15th, 1915.

WITH S. P. C. No. 44 we came to the end, at long last, of our Review of The Greyfriars Gallery. Considering that Cedric Rickard wrote a Review of The St. Jim's Gallery that appeared complete in one issue (No. 24), it does seem that we were perhaps a little long-winded. Following his example we should, allowing for the fact that The Greyfriars Gallery ran somewhat more than twice as long in *The Magnet* as The St. Jim's Gallery did in *The Gem*, have completed the job in two or three instalments. But we didn't.

It has been suggested that we should have listed in the final

COLLECTOR'S MISCELLANY

A Journal for Collectors of Old & Modern Boys' Papers, "Bloods," Penny Number Romances, etc.

Issued at Irregular Intervals, Three or Four Times a Year
Single Copy, 1/6d. Three Issues, 3/9d. Six Issues, 7/6d.

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SALTBURN-BY-THE-SEA, YORKS., ENGLAND

—Courtesy Advt.—because we'd like Joe to get some more subs.

part of the Review all the names mentioned by J. N. Pentelow in No. 102 of the Gallery—"The Rest of Them." And maybe we should have. We think that we might, perhaps, in some future issue reprint a part of "The Rest of Them" as an *Appendix* to the Review.

JOHN MEDCRAFT

FOR MANY YEARS John Medcraft has been something of an elder statesman in our little realm of old boys' books, for it is three decades or more since he began his collection. It was, therefore, with a feeling of shock that his friends and correspondents learned of his sudden death on September 25th last. Some of us knew, others suspected from the non-arrival of letters from him, that he was unwell, but none imagined that soon the sad news of his passing would reach us.

Primarily a collector himself, Mr. Medcraft never forgot that

with a collector condition is of major importance. The period of his interest ended more or less at 1914, but it extended away back into the Victorian era, for he had acquired a high regard for the boys' papers and penny serial publications of those days with their quaint wood-cut illustrations.

John Medcraft will be greatly missed, not only in his immediate family circle, but in that larger circle which includes all his collector-friends in or near London and correspondents at a greater distance from Ilford, in Essex, where he lived.

RECOMMENDED READING—"The Rivals of Rookwood School," by Owen Conquest (Mandeville Publications, London: 7/6d). It has been a long wait, but this first story of Jimmy Silver & Co. in hard covers—apart, that is, from those in the *Tom Merry's Own Annuals*—is well worth waiting for. —W. H. G.

★ The Editor needs 1 or 2 copies of Thomson's *Adventure* No. 1391, October 6, 1951.

H. E. Ellison, 8 Warwick Road, St. Annes-on-Sea, Lancs., wishes to obtain S.P.C. Nos. 3, 4, 6 to 17, 20 to 25, 27 to 31.

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