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THE WONDER and THE JESTER

IT HAS BEEN drawn to my attention that the comic paper *Wonder*, the publication of which was suspended in September of 1953, dated back through various series only as far as 1912, and not to 1892 as suggested in "Good-bye, Mr. Chips" in S.P.C. No. 51. This is correct. The situation regarding *The Wonder* and *The Jester* was made plain by Walter Dexter in No. 20, Christmas, 1944, but as some of our readers have had no opportunity of seeing that number it might be well to explain the matter briefly here—just in case anyone is interested.

A series of *The Wonder* which commenced in 1901 ran to No. 26 under that name; No. 27 was called *The Wonder and Jester*; No. 28 was *The Jester and Wonder*. With the latter name the paper ran to No. 533, January 20th, 1912. From No. 534 it was *The Jester*, *Jolly Jester*, and once again *The Jester*, until it ended in 1940 by being combined with *The Wonder*. Three weeks after the words *and Wonder* were dropped in 1912, a new comic paper named *The Penny Wonder* was

launched. This was replaced in less than a year by *The Wonder*, an all-story paper, which about fifteen months later was in turn succeeded by *The Halfpenny Wonder*. This paper, its name shortened to *Wonder*, is the one that came to an end in September of 1953.

When he wrote "The Wonderful Story of the Third-Oldest British Comic Paper" (S.P.C. No. 20), Mr. Dexter chose to regard the *Wonder* of the time he was writing (1944) as sharing descent from the *Wonder* of 1892 with *The Jester*. I followed his example. However, while Mr. Dexter made things clear in his article, with a list of start/stop numbers and dates, I did not. Perhaps I unconsciously remembered that the matter had been explained in the earlier article, and overlooked the fact that some of S.P.C.'s readers have had no chance of reading that article.

While assuming a descent of *Wonder* of 1953 from *The Wonder* of 1892 is not beyond reproach, at least the name was continued for ten years as part of that of *The Jester and Wonder* and only dropped when preparations were being made to start the new paper in 1912, so that to assume a connection was perhaps not to draw too much on the imagination. But it was misleading and inaccurate.—W.H.C.

The Story Paper Collector

No. 52—Vol. 3

Priceless

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE SCENES

By ROGER M. JENKINS

THE ESSENTIAL quality about Charles Hamilton's writing is its timelessness. Yet it is true that one or two stories in the early days deal with trips to current exhibitions which serve to date the stories by reference to a particular moment in history, but these are rare indeed. The vast majority of the tales are not topical at all—they possess the immortal quality of the characters they feature. This Peter Pan-like attribute is one of the main reasons for the continued readable quality of the stories, but it is nevertheless intriguing to wonder what the author really thought about the topics of the day. A careful search through the stories will now and again reveal a fascinating glimpse behind the

scenes, but first of all let us consider the background of the period.

St. Jim's and Greyfriars were born in the era which historians now call the Indian Summer of Liberalism. The Liberal Government had embarked upon a comprehensive scheme of social reform—Labour Exchanges, Old Age Pensions, and a National Health Service—and Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was engaging in what he called fleecing the rich to finance these projects. Gussy often had cause for a complaint like this one from Gem No. 104:

"Fivahs are gettin' ware now. The governah says he can't keep 'em up since the Budget. That amounts to my payin' the Supah

Tax out of my pocket money. I wegard it as wuff. I was thinkin' of w'iting to Lloyd George on the subject, puttin' it to him as a sportsman."

Some while later, in *Gem* No. 210, Monty Lowther sang a comic song entitled "*Who's Going to Lick the Stamps*" (on the insurance cards). Throughout this period, too, there were many occasions upon which Gussy's friends commiserated with him because he would be unable to sit in the House of Lords, which the Government were thinking of abolishing, after that august body had taken the unprecedented step of rejecting the Budget in 1909. There were a number of such references, all very good-humoured, but nonetheless suggesting that Charles Hamilton did not perhaps regard Liberalism with much enthusiasm.

IF LIBERALISM was not favoured, it seems clear that Socialism was disliked. Skimpole was the first Socialist to be introduced into the stories. He was of course depicted as a young ass, not old enough to understand the subject, and the tales of his endeavours still make amusing reading. Yet there came a time—in *Gem* No. 163—when Skimpole made a convert of Joe Frayne, and for once the crack-

pot of the Shell was allowed to make out quite a good case for Socialism, which Tom Merry could refute only by telling Joe he was too young to make up his mind on the subject. Bunter the Bolshevik in *Magnet* No. 593 was only a farce by comparison. In striking contrast both to the St. Jim's and to the Greyfriars presentation of the subject was this serious and forthright denunciation from the Rookwood story in No. 998 of the weekly *Boys' Friend*:

Mr. Bandy gave a grunt. He did not like being disturbed at tea, especially as he was deep in the columns of the "Clarinet," his favourite paper, of a strong socialistic turn. Mr. Bandy was by way of being a Socialist. It helped him to find compensation for many faults and failures in the happy knowledge that he was, after all, as good as his betters. His Socialistic proclivities helped to provide the gentlemen of the "Clarinet" with an easy living, and to save them from the painful necessity of turning to work.

Having grunted, Mr. Bandy laid down his paper, and came into the shop. He ducked his head respectfully to the well-dressed Adolphus. Socialism did not prevent Mr. Bandy from paying respect to wealth. It seldom does.

And in the next issue:

Mr. Bandy was a great orator

among the free and independent democrats who gathered of an evening in the parlour of the Peal of Bells. But evidently he was a grocer first and a socialist second. The socialist derided the lofty manners of the Head of Rookwood; but the grocer was anxious for his custom.

IT WOULD BE quite erroneous, however, to infer from all this that Charles Hamilton was then a complete reactionary, opposed to every measure of social reform. The description in Gem No. 150 of Tom Merry's experiences amongst the destitute in the slums of London was a stern indictment of social conditions, which was re-affirmed in the stories about Bolsover minor in Nos. 206 and 228 of *The Magnet*. Nor was Charles Hamilton a snob. The tales about the coming of scholarship boys make quite clear that his sympathy was wholly on their side, and in Gem No. 83 Gussy gives Gore this thoughtful reason for not looking down on the school page:

"Why, if there is anythin' base or dewogatory to a chap's chawactah in cleanin' boots, what should we think of the Head for givin' the boy such a job? The Head would be wesponsible for Binks's doin' a disgwaceful thing—a very gwave wesponsibility."

Gussy set forth the duties of the upper classes very neatly thus:

"The people in a higher posish have more matewial comforts than the people in a lower posish. Therefore they have more duties to perform. Ewevy hundwed a year bwings new duties with it. A twue gentleman performs all these duties in the most punctilious mannah. Othahwise he is no gentleman, but only a pawasite. A chap who takes the good things of life, and does not perform any duties in weturn, is no bettah than a maggot livin' in an apple."

Whilst on the topic of snobbery and prejudice, it may also be noted that Hurree Singh was made a member of the Famous Five in an attempt to help to eradicate the colour bar.

REFERENCES to contemporary figures in the world of the arts and science are frequent. We learn, for instance, that Ibsen and Shaw were not regarded very highly as playwrights, while Bunter's howls were compared to the never-ending melody in Wagner. Darwin's theory of evolution was often utilized for the purpose of satire, as it was in Gem No. 103:

"I am sorry I was late for class, but I was deeply interested in a scientific book, sir, in which the

author proves that the Darwinian theory, while undoubtedly true and correct, is hopelessly at variance with other scientific theories, equally true and correct."

And later:

"Think of the intense satisfaction it will cause to every truly scientific mind to know that, at a certain period, between six and sixty million years ago, the human race——"

"Skimpole, you must not talk nonsense!"

"This is not nonsense, sir!" said Skimpole in astonishment. "This is science. It is quite a mistake to suppose that science is at all nonsensical—a common mistake, I know, but quite a mistake, all the same."

Charles Hamilton was right to trust his instincts, for it appears that Darwin's theory that men and apes had a common ancestor is now being discarded by scientists today.

THE MONETARY value of a Public School education was a pertinent question often considered when characters in the stories were contemplating leaving school and finding work. Kit Erroll's hopes could not have been raised when he was told this in No. 836 of the weekly *Boys' Friend*:

"You have been educated to take your place in the Lower Form of a

Public School. Are you going into the labour market, saying that you can construe Virgil, that you can compose tenth-rate Latin hexameters, that you are passably good at French and mathematics? When will you get a job?"

The St. Jim's juniors discovered the same thing, in rather less dramatic circumstances, in *Gem* No. 750:

Work was the way, according to Arthur Augustus, and his chums agreed with him. There was a half-holiday that day, and they were prepared to spend it in work, if there was any going. But there was, as Lowther said, no market for Latin verse, especially Lower School Latin verse. Blake remarked that people were paid for giving French lessons, but it was doubtful whether any pupil wanted to learn Lower School French. It was amazing that seven sturdy and willing workers, receiving an expensive Public School education, seemed to be of no value in the labour market, even as heavers of wood and drawers of water. But there it was. They were not only unemployed, but seemed actually to be unemployable.

IT WAS ON the subject of his own profession, however, that Charles Hamilton was most eloquent. He would point out the difference between the two types of literature for boys in the manner of this extract

from Gem No. 83:

"You must not wead that twash!" said D'Arcy firmly. "I have often wead of cases where boys have been led into cwime by weadin' gowy twash. When such a case happens, ewevy ignowant and ill-natured person gets up on his hind legs and says nasty things about boys' litewature—as if all boys' books were necessawily of the same sort. It is just as if a person were to condemn w'itahs like Shakespeare and Milton because Pope and Dwyden w'ote immowal poetry. But you cannot get these ignowant and pwejudiced people to distinguish between a good healthy book and a wotten, twashy, blood-and-thundah wag. Theahfore, ewevybody ought to be down on this Amevican stuff."

Those who condemned all stories for boys without bothering to differentiate between the good and the bad were also pilloried by these words of Mr. Selby's in Gem No. 123:

"I can only conclude that your nature has been warped and poisoned by reading depraved literature for the young—that literature which I am glad to say I have never read, or even seen, but which I have always thoroughly and unhesitatingly condemned."

Finally, in a more mellow mood is this good-humoured jibe at the sensational type of school

story from Magnet No. 1566, when Harry Wharton wanted to tear up a copy of a story entitled "Burglars' Boarding School" as scent for a paper-chase:

"You jolly well let that alone!" exclaimed Billy Bunter warmly. "I haven't finished reading that yet. I say, you fellows, it's a jolly good story—all about a boarding school for burglars, with the headmaster a crook, and the assistant masters all convicts. A real-life story, you know."

"Oh my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It sounds a lot like real life!"

"Thrilling, too," said Bunter. "I can tell you that the part where young Burglar Bill gets a gun on the headmaster in his study is ripping—realistic and all that! I'll tell you about it. He walks into the study as cool as you please and says 'Hands up, headmaster——'"

"Oh crikey!"

"And just as he's making the Head hand over the loot another master comes in and slugs him on the back of the head with a gaspipe," said Bunter. "That's the sort of story I like—realistic!"

There were other highlights in this story:

"I say, the part where the Head shoots the Scotland Yard man and hides the body behind the blackboard is fine! And the part where young Burglar Bill blows up the school with dynamite——"

"Fetch it along," said Frank Nugent.

"You'd like to read it?" asked Bunter.

"No; I'd like to tear it up for scent!"

THE TOPICS on which Charles Hamilton was prepared to digress in this manner were few and far between, and when he did digress he never rode his hobby horse for more than a few lines. It is the comparative

rarity of these asides together with the light they shed on a remarkable author that make them worthy of note. The iron curtain which separated Charles Hamilton from his public until 1943 had hitherto been raised only on these few occasions when the readers were permitted these infrequent personal touches which afforded them every time such a rare, intriguing, and tantalizing glimpse behind the scenes.

The Story Paper Collector

WHO'S WHO

No. 21: DON WEBSTER

CHAIRMAN and founder of The Old Boys' Book Club, Merseyside Branch, Don Webster became a reader of the Companion Papers in 1912 and had a collection until 1930. It was, alas, disposed of while he was away from home, except for the 1920 and 1921 *Holiday Annuals*.

In 1950 Don saw a copy of *Tom Merry's Own* and as a result got in touch with Frank Richards and *The Collectors' Digest*. He then joined the Nor-

thern Section of the O. B. B. C. and saw possibilities of forming a similar branch on Merseyside, which now has thirty to forty members. He has contributed occasionally to *The Collectors' Digest* but has no pretensions to being a writer.

While having a preference for *The Gem*, particularly the "Toff" series, Don places *The Magnet* a close second. He says he is not a *bona fide* collector, but keeps one copy of each boys' paper for nostalgic reasons. His son, Peter, aged twelve, a member of the Remove at Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby, is following in his father's footsteps. Don has a feeling that he is the only O. B. B. C. member who has visited all the other English branches.

REGGIE PITT'S HAUNTED CASTLE

By BERNARD THORNE

DURING THE PERIOD 1920-1930 *The Nelson Lee Library* was enjoying perhaps the highest standard in its history. Left behind was the annoying habit of narration by Nipper, and yet to come the puerile "Cubs Academy" and K. K. Parkington series. Edwy Searles Brooks was writing St. Frank's tales which were, in our opinion, the equal of anything appearing in the Amalgamated Press publications. His wealth of description and detail and skilfully used dialogue furnished him with a style possessing a great degree of originality and freshness. It might be said that his plots did not possess the same degree of originality. But, by 1920, almost every angle of schoolboy life had been drawn by countless authors and Mr. Brooks was left with the only alternative—to present old ideas in fresh guise.

A series which we still consider to be among his best opened the Christmas of 1928, and comprised Numbers 137, 138, and 139, First New Series. Reggie Pitt, one of our favourite St. Frank's characters, was the

centre figure. Pitt, notified by a lawyer of the death of an uncle, found that the terms of the will made him the sole owner of a genuine mediaeval castle. He was delighted, and arranged immediately to visit his new possession. So that afternoon a band of schoolboy cyclists, including Pitt, Jack Grey, Fullwood, Archie Glenthorne, Nipper and Co., Handforth, Church, and McClure, left for Market Donning, and after an hour's ride viewed the ancient turrets and battlements of Raithmere Castle silhouetted against the snow-laden sky.

How well we remember our delight when, reading on, we found the party accosted by none other than Ezra Quirke, the schoolboy mystic, so long absent from the St. Frank's scene. It being a long-standing tradition that all castles and ancient mansions are haunted in some manner or other, we were not surprised when Quirke warned Pitt of supernatural beings that stalked the dark corridors and rooms of his new acquisition. We expected to read of secret panels, uncanny

noises, the unexplained movements of furniture, and pictures crashing from the walls. We were not disappointed. As we read on the whole box of tricks was presented in the inimitable E. S. B. manner.

ONCE INSIDE the stone walls, the boys enthusiastically explored the many rooms and corridors, and were amazed to find the reception rooms and vast bedchambers fully furnished, although thickly coated with dust. Debris and broken glass lay everywhere; in fact the dilapidation gave rise to considerable conjecture. Why had that fine old edifice been left deserted and no attempt made to preserve the costly furnishings? Obviously it needed attention—light, log fires, and the cheery sound of youthful voices. And as the schoolboys tramped through the long corridors, Reggie Pitt outlined his scheme for filling the castle with servants, and inviting a huge party of St. Frank's fellows for the Christmas holidays.

So the time passed, until suddenly they realized that the sky was darkening and snow was falling thickly.

Here we must quote from a typically descriptive passage of Edwy Searles Brooks:

Nobody had thought of looking

outside until then. During the brief period that they had been exploring the castle, however, a great change had come about in the weather conditions. All the juniors had noticed those dark clouds coming up over the sky, but they had not noticed that snow was so near.

The vista from the window was limited. For the snow was whirling down in such clouds that it was almost like fog. It was impossible to see for more than two or three hundred yards. The flakes were coming down steadily and thickly. And there was silence everywhere—the strange, dull silence which always seems to come with a fall of snow. Already the courtyard was white, and the ground further out was losing its ordinary character. The snow was laying as it fell and by the looks of things the downfall would be a heavy one. . . . But it really seemed later than it was. In ordinary circumstances there would still have been a little daylight left, but the heavy snow-clouds had obscured the sky, and a premature gloom had descended. The upper corridor of the castle was almost dark, and it seemed even darker to the juniors, after withdrawing from that open window.

Even as the boys prepared to leave, a series of heavy crashes sounded below; and when they had descended the wide staircase into the enormous hall they found several heavy oak chairs

smashed to matchwood. Yet there was no tangible evidence of what had caused the damage, although the astute (?) Nipper immediately suspected wires. Then came a whole series of strange happenings, terminating in the appearance of a weird old man at the top of a staircase. Dressed in mediaeval clothing and clearly defined despite the almost total darkness, he seemed to float rather than walk down the stairs, passed (seemingly without difficulty) through an oak table, and finally disappeared into the solid stone wall.

This was too much, even for the stout-hearted Handy, and the juniors rushed panic-stricken out into the open air. They were still uneasy as they cycled back to St. Frank's; but Reggie Pitt was adamant about his proposed Christmas house-warming at Raithmere Castle.

WHEN NEXT we saw the place (No. 138, "The Mystery of Raithmere Castle"), it had undergone a near-miraculous transformation. Powerful incandescent lamps illuminated the many rooms. A log fire blazed and crackled in the enormous banqueting hall, which was festooned with gaily coloured paper decorations, adding warmth and colour to the old paneled walls. Reggie's

father, when told of his son's idea, had entered whole-heartedly into the scheme. Work had been going on at the castle, and the habitable wing had undergone a complete spring-cleaning. In addition, the entire staff of the Pitts' London residence, reinforced with additional servants, had been installed in the castle.

The advance guard of the guests had arrived. It consisted of Pitt, Jack Grey, Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth, Church, McClure, and Willy Handforth. The main party, which included most of the Remove and Fourth Forms, plus Browne and Stephens of the Fifth and about a dozen of the Moor View girls, was to arrive later that evening.

Edwy Searles Brooks lost no time getting into action in this tale. Almost before the juniors had removed their hats and overcoats, a young maidservant ran screaming along the main corridor and collapsed, fainting with terror. She had seen the spectral old man, and again he had disappeared into the wall. And before the time came to meet the main party at the station, a footman had reported footsteps sounding as if in the paneling, and Handforth watched, goggle-eyed, as a suit of armour raised an arm and

pointed at him. With a feeling of general uneasiness the boys left the castle and trudged through the snowladen lanes to the railway station, only to find that the train was snowed up and would not arrive until the following morning.

DISCONSOLATE, the juniors left and began their tramp back. On the way they met Ezra Quirke, who again warned them passionately of the dangers awaiting at the castle. They were in no mood to listen to his occult ramblings and threw him into a snowdrift. But a few minutes later they had reason to remember his words when they encountered the entire domestic staff heading for the village. The butler, Ward, admitted to Reggie Pitt that he and his staff were deserting, after a further series of uncanny happenings had brought the maids to the verge of hysterics. Despite Pitt's persuasive powers Ward refused to return to the castle, so the boys tramped on alone.

Inside the walls, the weird occurrences continued; tables and chairs were overturned, footsteps sounded behind the walls, and finally when they were about to retire to one big bedroom for the night, a monstrous apparition materialized out of the air—a thing, half-man,

half-goat, that crouched on the staircase balustrade. Before the startled juniors could collect their wits it leapt forward, floating on air, and vanished. Panic-stricken, the boys rushed into the bedroom and closed the door. But scuffling sounds outside sent Nipper and Handforth racing along the corridor, where they were in time to see an old man vanishing into the paneling. A close examination by Nipper (it had to come!) revealed a sliding panel. Further investigation led them to a sort of priest hole in which they found their quarry. Explanations followed.

It transpired that the man was a trusted retainer of Reggie's uncle who could not bring himself to leave the castle after his master's death. Fearing that he might be turned out by the schoolboy heir, he had resorted to the ingenious use of wires and his knowledge of the castle's secret passages and rooms to scare the St. Frank's boys away. But he emphatically denied any knowledge of the Pan-like apparition, or of the old man dressed in old-time clothes.

SO WE COME to Number 139, the final story in the series. The long-delayed party of schoolboys and Moor View girls arrived; the servants had been persuaded to return, and

Raithmere Castle echoed to the sounds of Christmas revelry.

With the discovery of the old hermit, the ghostly manifestations ceased. By mutual consent Nipper, Reggie Pitt, and the others said nothing to the new arrivals, and a grand time was being had by all. Skating, tobogganing, snowballing, and dancing were in full swing, and even Ezra Quirke had ceased to talk of elementals and poltergeists. Then events took a sudden turn. Fatty Little, walking down to breakfast, was amazed to see a huge banquetting table laden with every kind of tuck. He stretched out a fat hand to help himself and the table disappeared. Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, and Mary Summers saw a witch, complete with broomstick, skinning along one of the corridors. Doris Manners gazed in wonderment at fairies dancing on the terraces in the moonlight. And Ezra Quirke was scared almost to death by the sight of an ogre, fully fifteen feet high, striding soundlessly down the main staircase. Not one, but many of the guests saw these apparitions. Finally, the unimaginative Handy, after jumping into bed, gazed incredulously at a mannikin—an elf barely

six inches high squatting on the bedpost.

But, of course, there had to be a rational explanation, and Mr. Brooks brings the story, and the series, to a climax by introducing yet another stranger—an inventor who, with the aid of an amazing stereoscopic projector, had roamed the secret corridors projecting fairyland pictures on to the air itself. This projector, it appeared, required no screen and the resulting image seemed solid and real. Little did Edwy Searles Brooks realize that in those closing months of 1928 he had forecast the advent of 3-D films!

THIS SERIES was, we think, marred a little by the introduction of two unauthorized persons in the castle. Had the author made one man responsible for the weird happenings, the tale would not have seemed so improbable. However, this is a small point and was, no doubt, of no importance to his youthful readers. The Raithmere Castle series is, in our opinion, great stuff, and ranks with "Nerki the Sorcerer" and "The St. Frank's Flood" as one of E. S. B.'s finest.



THE END PAGES

IN S.P.C. No. 50 I quoted from an advertisement in *The Boys' Weekly Novelette* No. 33, February 11th, 1893, in which C. A. Ransom offered old boys' books for sale. At that time I had quite forgotten that Mr. Ransom had been referred to by John Medcraft in *The Collectors' Digest* No. 50, February, 1951 ("Pioneers of Juvenalia"). Some day Herbert Leckenby will have to compile an Index for his magazine, otherwise much useful information will remain hidden in its pages, inaccessible because it would take too much time to hunt for what's wanted. Incidentally, I note that I failed to include Mr. Ransome's name in the Volume 2 Index. Mr. Medcraft wrote of him:

C. A. Ransom, one of the last collectors of the older school, passed on in 1939, and the modern section of his extensive collection was auctioned two days before the outbreak of war, a most unpropitious time for a sale, and finely bound volumes of Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, Big Budget, and Jester realized less than one shilling per volume.

As Mr. Ransom stated in the 1893 issue of *The Boys' Weekly Novelette* that he had been "Established ten years in the *Boy's Standard*," it follows that his

interest in boys' papers started at least as long ago as 1883 and lasted until his death in 1939, or fifty-six years.

I have been informed by Ronald E. J. Rouse that some of the rare "bloods" from Mr. Ransom's collection came into his possession following the death in 1951 of John Medcraft.

PEARD SUTHERLAND

IT IS WITH regret that record is made of the death of Peard Sutherland, of Vancouver, B.C., on June 11th last. Peard was only 52 years of age, and while his correspondence-friends were aware that he had been in indifferent health for the last year or two, none of us were prepared for the sad news of his passing.

Peard was born in Durham, Ontario, and educated in Winnipeg; served with newspapers in West Virginia and Vancouver before joining the public relations staff of the British Columbia Telephone Company 25 years ago; and was assistant public relations manager and editor of the B. C. Telephone's magazine *Telephone Talk*.

Recognized as a top authority on baseball, Peard was also a collector of boys' books and

periodicals and illustrators' original drawings and paintings. His complete set of *Chums Annuals* is one of the very few known. In addition to these varied interests he was a keen Sherlockian.

THE GRIM REAPER was busy elsewhere in our ranks in North America during the past year or so. Roy Caldwell and George H. Hess, Jr., well-known collectors of U.S.A. dime novels and British boys' papers, both answered the final call. Mr. Caldwell's collection was placed in the hands of Ralph Smith for disposal; that of Mr. Hess was to be presented to the University of Minnesota. Mr. Hess was one of the two collectors whom I have met. He visited Winnipeg occasionally in connection with his position with the Accountancy Department of the Great Northern Railway. At such times he would run out to Transcona for a brief call on me.

ST. GERALD'S HERALD

JOSEPH MEECHAN is determined that the school story in periodical form shall not vanish. Last year he suggested that I turn this magazine into a school-story paper; or, alternatively, that Joseph Parks be persuaded to produce such a paper. In his

enthusiasm Mr. Meechan overlooked, or was not aware of, the fact that if Mr. Parks' and my printing outfits could be combined they wouldn't amount to a tenth part of that required to produce a *Magnet Library* as seldom as once a month.

A determined man will not be baulked, however, and finding no other way open for the production of a school-story paper, Mr. Meechan decided to do the job himself. He already had a typewriter; now he purchased a duplicating machine and a stack of stencils and became author, editor, printer, and publisher of *St. Gerald's Herald*.

He has sent me copies of the first two numbers of the paper, and I note that it is issued fortnightly, has 18 to 20 pages, and costs 7d. each postage paid. He has found his duplicator a tricky thing to operate, but with practice he should be able to turn out a better job. For myself, I'd rather set a page of 8-point type for *S.P.C.* and run 300 impressions on my Pilot, than type a stencil and then humor an unco-operative duplicator until it had turned out a like number.

The stories which form the contents of *St. Gerald's Herald* feature Tom Bennett & Co. of St. Gerald's College; and I may be damning Mr. Meechan with faint praise when I report that

these two stories read rather better than I had expected, but such is the case. Though they do betray the lack of a sub-editor's vetting and the attentions of a proof-reader—even as the fact that I read my own proofs is revealed by the typos in *S. P. C.* that shouldn't be there. (See below.)

Joseph Meechan is not yet a Charles Hamilton or an Edwy Searles Brooks, but sometimes time can work wonders, when aided by enthusiasm and perseverance. Anyone who wishes to help keep the school-story type of periodical in existence will be doing his small part by sending a few shillings to Joseph Meechan, "The Mount," Kilsyth, nr. Glasgow, Scotland, as a subscription for *St. Gerald's Herald*. You'll not be getting a *Magnet Library* or a *Gem*—but you can't buy a copy of a current issue of *The Magnet* or *The Gem* at any price today!

JUST TO SHOW what I mean about reading my own proofs: previous page, column 1, for Roy Caldwell please read Ray Caldwell.

STARTED early in June, before Summer could really be said to have arrived in Manitoba, this Number 52 approaches completion in mid-August when one almost feels that Fall is near. This, the last page of text to be printed, goes to press on August 12th, 1954, with the front page still to be done. By dating this issue for July it will again be late, but not so late as recent issues have been; and instead of being a quarterly publication it will appear to have become a semi-annual. —W. H. G.

I WISH...

To purchase copies of *The Youth's Companion* dated March 30th, 1871, October 30th, 1873, and December, 1929 (latter a monthly issue). \$1 each offered for copies in good condition.—Mrs. Mittie Hazard, 6 Bliven St., Nichols, N.Y., U.S.A.

To purchase Vols. 73 and 74 of *The London Journal*.—A. W. Lawson, 13 Charles Square, London N.1, England.

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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