

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

JULY 1955
No. 55 :: Vol. 3



PLUCK
Jack Blake of St. Jim's,
By CHARLES HAMILTON,
AND
Phantom Gold,
A TALE OF DR. NEVADA

PERFECT MONTREUX CAKE OUT OF THE DOORWAY JUST AS THE BALL FLEW IN! BIFFY
AND A FEARFUL YELL. "MY! MURKURED KIDGINS. 'YOU'VE DONE IT NOW!"

NO. 106 VOL. 3, NEW SERIES

St. Gerald's Herald

BECAUSE the information at hand was not up-to-date the list of *The St. Gerald's Herald* stories printed in S. P. C. No. 54 was neither complete nor entirely accurate. This one is both:

- 1—*Rebellion at St. Gerald's.*
- 2—*Rivals of St. Gerald's.*
- 3—*The Outcast of St. Gerald's.*
- 4—*Barred From St. Gerald's.*
- 5—*Craig's Castle Commandoes.*
- 6—*The Desmond Scholarship.*
- 7—*The Flood-Lit Match Mystery.*
- 8—*"The Chancer" at St. Gerald's.*
- 9—*The Ghost of Atherton Grange.*
- 10—*Trevor's Television Triumph.*
- 11—*Dumbells of the Fourth.*
- 12—*The Curse of Zenda.*
- 13—*The Blackmailed Schoolboy.*

- 14—*The Lads at Loch Lomond.*
- 15—*Fourth Form Frolics.*
- 16—*The Mystery Master.*
- 17—*The Downfall of Tom Bennett.*
- 18—*The St. Gerald's Expedition.*

No. 18 is the "Summer Holiday" story and every copy has, Joseph Meechan advises us, a hand-colored cover. As stated previously in these pages, copies of *The St. Gerald's Herald*, each containing a complete school story with additional material (old boys' books, editorials, and the like) in most of them, may be obtained from J. Meechan, "The Mount," Kilsyth, nr. Glasgow, Scotland. The price is 7d. a copy, mailed as printed matter. If extra postage is provided for, copies will be mailed in sealed envelopes.

VISITORS AT THE ROOKWOOD PRESS: Sunday, April 17th—Arthur D. Gorfain, of Sydney, Australia, Editor of *The Silver Jacket*; on his way to Britain. Thursday, June 16th—Ray Hopkins, of London, Seattle, and New York; en route from New York to Seattle. Visitors No. Three & Four.

Pluck No. 106

THE picture of *Pluck* No. 106 on the front page is not as clear-cut as is usually the case with our reproductions because it is a reproduction of a reproduction. The engravers in

an absent-minded moment did not include words across the top of the page which read: *PLUCK'S Xmas Double Number Out Saturday Next. Order Now.* Rather early for a Christmas Number but that is the way it was done in those days.

The Story Paper Collector

No. 55—Vol. 3

Priceless

IN THE BEGINNING WAS PLUCK

By ROGER M. JENKINS

ALTHOUGH Charles Hamilton's first stories appeared in print in the late nineteenth century, the earliest point of interest for collectors today is the 10th of November, 1906, when the first St. Jim's tale appeared in *Pluck* No. 106. Those who were schoolboys half a century ago may remember the time when the heroes of St. Jim's were Blake and Figgins; the stalwarts of the Shell were then unheard of, and those famous papers *The Gem* and *The Magnet* were as yet unborn. Incidentally, these *Pluck* stories were published under Charles Hamilton's own name—there was no nonsense about pseudonyms in those days.

The St. Jim's story in No. 106 was entitled "Jack Blake of St. Jim's" and describes his arrival as a new boy. He met Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn on the way to

school and, having endured a good measure of contumely from them, he proceeded to incur the displeasure of George Herries, captain of the Fourth. After suffering the usual indignities meted out to new arrivals, Blake was allowed his hour of triumph at the end of the story when he was instrumental in foiling a plot of Monteith against Kildare. One cannot help comparing this with the first Tom Merry story which appeared later in *Gem* No. 3 to the detriment of the latter, though it should be borne in mind that Tom Merry was first presented as a rather mollycoddled junior whereas Jack Blake was the same from beginning to end.

The St. Jim's tales were intended to form a series, though they appeared only intermittently. The next one in No. 108

entitled "Our Captain" was a fine story indeed, being in the main a continuation of the feud between Kildare and Monteith. Kildare was suspected of an attack upon his New House rival and, after the atmosphere of brooding suspicion had culminated in a fight between them, Dr. Holmes asked him to resign the captaincy, though all came right in the end, of course. This story was adapted by Charles Hamilton for No. 261 of *The Gem*, which had a small part written in for Tom Merry & Co., and the adaptation was reprinted in its turn in No. 46 of *The Schoolboys' Own Library*.

NUMBER 110 entitled "The Rivals" dealt with the arrival of a new boy called Barby whose vote was essential in a forthcoming election for a treasurer of the school funds. A more important new boy, however, was the one who arrived a fortnight later:

He was tall for his age, and rather slim. He was clad in Etons which fitted him like a glove; he wore the silkiest of silk hats, the fanciest of fancy waistcoats, the shiniest of patent leathers, and the most delicate of lavender kid gloves. He also wore an eyeglass, which was screwed in his eye, and he was looking round him with languid interest.

This was, of course, the immortal Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and the story was entitled "The Swell of St. Jim's." Mr. Kidd, the housemaster, was addressed thus:

"Well, kindly have directions given for my trunks to be taken up to my wooms," said D'Arcy, with a wave of his hand. "I should like to have my tea sent up immediately. The tea must be strong, and the muffins hot. If the muffins are cold I will have a complaint made to the doctah. You had also bettah get my bath prepared, and the bath must be clean. I should also like you to see that the bedclothes on my bed are aired. Now, my man, whch are my quartahs?"

To the chums of study No. 6 Gussy confided these remarks:

"I think it most inconsiderate of Dr. Holmes to give me so small a woom. But my aunts told me I should have to submit to a great many discomforts at a big public school. Now, my boys, what are you all doin' in my woom? I weally can't have my quartahs crowded like this!"

It is not often that editors have good ideas, but the day when H.J. Garrish suggested the introduction of a character modelled on Beau Brummel lines was really a red-letter day.

Blake came to the fore again in No. 114 entitled "Staunch

Chums at St. Jim's" in which he was unjustly suspected of stealing money from the study of Sleath, the recently elected treasurer. "The Milverton Match" in No. 116 related how circumstances prevailed to induce Monteith to revive his feud with Kildare, while No. 118 entitled "The Mystery of the Housemaster" was an unsavoury episode in the career of Mr. Ratcliffe who was spying on Mr. Kidd in the hope of getting him dismissed. These three stories were adapted for *Gem* Nos. 253-255 respectively, once again with small parts written in for Tom Merry & Co. and with Mr. Railton substituted for Mr. Kidd.

MR. KIDD stands out in these *Pluck* stories as a subtle character-drawing, a well-meaning man not always too sure of himself. It was a pity that he was replaced by the forthright and straightforward Mr. Railton in the same manner in which Mr. Bootles of Rookwood gave way to Mr. Dalton. Once Mr. Kidd had left, the soubriquets of Kids and Rats were no longer appropriate for the juniors of the rival houses.

After the first tale of rebellion—"Mutiny at St. Jim's" in No. 120—Gussy came to the fore in No. 123 entitled "Missing" in

which he was kidnapped and held to ransom in the ruined castle by Barengro, a gipsy. Blake, in searching for him, fell into the gipsy's hands, but eventually a rescue was effected—despite the blunderings of Inspector Skeet. The future St. Jim's stories in *Pluck* were numbered by an advertisement in No. 123 for the first issue of *The Gem* which was to appear the following week.

A most unpleasant new boy who was destined to make a number of appearances in these early days was Marmaduke Smythe, the spoilt son of a Park Lane millionaire. The Rats were delighted to learn in No. 125 entitled "The Misadventures of Marmaduke" that he was to be put among the Kids in the School House, but Blake managed to turn the tables on them. Marmaduke was sentenced to be expelled for an attack on Blake whilst the latter was asleep, and Blake interceded with the Head. With mixed motives, he suggested that the new boy be allowed to make a fresh start in the New House, whereupon Figgins & Co. were aghast to find that the new boy was planted in their study. Marmaduke soon tired of school life, and sent a telegram to his mama to ask her to come and take him away, which she duly did.

Mr. Smythe, however, had

other ideas, and in the next St. Jim's story—"The Reformation of Marmaduke" in No. 129—Marmaduke was brought back again. In this story he began to change for the better, and shewed his sterling qualities by ruining a School House concert. These two stories about Marmaduke Smythe were reprinted in Nos. 12 and 13 of the old series of *The Penny Popular*. A further tale about Marmaduke was in No. 38 of the monthly *Boys' Friend Library* entitled "Tom Merry's Conquest." This was reprinted in an abridged form in *Gems* 167 and 168, and again—even more abridged—in *Gems* 1359 and 1360.

The twelfth—and last—St. Jim's story in *Pluck* was No. 132 entitled "The Shadow of a Secret," dealing with Kildare's weak-natured cousin Micky Kildare. After this the St. Jim's stories were transferred to *The Gem*, whilst Tom Merry & Co. stayed in *The Gem* but moved from Clavering College to St. Jim's. This amalgamation occurred in No. 11 of the halfpenny *Gem*, and collectors who are curious to learn what Jack Blake & Co. thought of the newcomers will find in the 1921 *Holiday Annual* a reprint which was not only shortened but also re-written in places.

THESE twelve *Pluck* stories form an interesting sequence of collectors' tales. They contain nothing to surprise the student of Charles Hamilton's work, but there are points worthy of note. The illustrations, for example, were better than those which later appeared in the early *Gems* and *Magnets*, but they are more dated, with the boys in Eton collars, Norfolk jackets, and knickerbockers (except D'Arcy, of course!). Leonard Shields illustrated all except No. 110 which was done by G. M. Dodshon. The stories, too, were better than many of those which were afterwards published in halfpenny *Gems* and *Magnets*; each *Pluck* tale seemed to have a driving force behind it that was both original and distinctive, and, though some incidents appear to be a little naive when judged by the author's later high standards, none of the stories could be counted a failure. The St. Jim's tales in *Pluck* combine the paradoxical attributes of evanescent gaiety and deadly earnestness; these are the hallmark of youth, and it is by these signs if by no other that we know that the stories were written for the delectation of those who were schoolboys when the world was young.

A sort of Sequel to the Article "Fun and Fiction and The Bullseye" in Number 4 of The Story Paper Collector, here is——

A Further Report on FUN AND FICTION AND THE BULLSEYE

IN NUMBER 4 of *The Story Paper Collector* there is an article about two papers, *Fun and Fiction* and *The Bullseye*. In it I wrote that while the stories in *The Bullseye* seemed to me to be new, some of the pictures in the early numbers were similar to illustrations in *Fun and Fiction* or its successor, *The Firefly*.

For what I wrote I drew on my recollections of *Fun and Fiction*, as I did not have any copies of that paper. Now I have proof of what I then stated, regarding two illustrations anyway. I had several copies, including No. 1 dated January 24th, 1931, of *The Bullseye*. Now, through the kindness of Ernest Hubbard and Don Webster, I have copies of two issues of *Fun and Fiction*: No. 5, November 11th, and No. 11, December 23rd, 1911. Oddly enough, this latter number, which is the Christmas issue for that year, carries no serial-number.

The illustration on page 13 of *The Bullseye* No. 1 is a re-drawing of the front page picture of *Fun and Fiction* No. 5. This is not an instance of an old block being used again. The scene is re-drawn, with changes to suit the new story. This will be seen by comparing the reproductions of both on the following pages.

As my memory told me back in 1941, the stories are different. Evidently the author was shown the old picture and asked to write a yarn to fit it; and he did, with variations. An illustration in the Christmas number of *Fun and Fiction*, redrawn, also appears in *The Bullseye* No. 1.

In that number of the paper these is a story about Mortimer Hood, Millionaire Detective, the illustration to which depicts a London scene—St. Paul's Cathedral overtopped by a huge wave. This scene really has nothing to do with the story. The author accounted for it by having the

THE ONLY HUMOROUS PAPER WITH TWENTY PAGES FOR 14.

Fun and Fiction 1 1/2

Vol. 1. No. 5.

Week Ending November 11th, 1911.

ONE HALFPENNY.

The Woman with the Black Heart (See page 13.)



"There are two doors to this room," said Jasper staring steadily. "One leads to freedom, the other to death. I give you the opportunity to choose the door of which I stand between the two ways out. My pistol will guide you. Now step this way, and 'T' for luck!"

Fun and Fiction No. 5, Nov. 11th, 1911

detective gaze into a crystal ball and describe what he saw therein, while a client anxiously waited.

As I remember the story in *Fun and Fiction* for which a simi-

lar illustration was used—a story about Adam Daunt, another and earlier Millionaire Detective—the tidal wave was supposed actually to have happened. Adam Daunt minimized its effects by causing great caverns beneath London to be opened to drain off the water. Judging by the enormous wave depicted in the illustration, they must have been an out-size in caverns to drain it away.

The writer in *The Bullseye* in 1931 could not have possessed the vivid imagination of the one in *Fun and Fiction* twenty years earlier.

THE SIGHT of copies of *Fun and Fiction* after so long a time brought for me a revival of old memories. I parted

with my set of the paper as far back as 1916. It meant a renewal of acquaintance with His Convict Bride, *The Woman with the Black Heart* (on her forehead), Adam Daunt, and Frank

Keen, the Fearless Fireman; and, in pictorial form, Dainty Daisy Dimples, Professor Doughnut, the Brothers Bright, and Gertie Goodsort. Plus the burlesque advertisement on page 2 of each number: Scrub's Soap (if your excuses won't wash — try Scrub's Soap) and the Flo-Eezi Fountain Pen.

Twenty pages for a halfpenny, and not one real advertisement to occupy any of the space — what a bargain!

ONE noticeable point about many of the stories in these papers was the lack of an explanation as to how things were accomplished by such characters as the Woman with the Black Heart (her real name was never revealed). In the story in *Fun and Fiction* No. 5, for instance, the reader isn't informed how she happened to be on the spot, ready to pop up through one of the holes in the floor as soon as they were

opened by the villain. They didn't even know if she knew beforehand of this feature of the room. The object seemed to be to give readers the impression that she was possessed

January 1931

THE BULLSEYE

13



"I am standing by the door at the far side of the hall." The man went on, and a door was opened, as though in proof of his words. "If you have pluck enough to make the attempt, and the luck to succeed in getting safely across, the situation will end all that is worse to you."

He hesitated to get his eyes accustomed to the deeper gloom of the passage, then went slowly forward. The passage he went, then found a break wall. A short delay followed, and then what appeared to be solid masonry opened suddenly to disclose a cavity a black as night.

Dangerfield walked in. He could see nothing. The passage seemed slightly to the left and sloped downwards, very gradually. He must have progressed ten yards before the first dark stain.

A sudden light in the right showed a coil, red glass, and, coming about a break in the wall, he saw the glare of a furnace deep in the foundations of the building.

A surge of flame swept up and embraced him, so that he ran fast and frantically, and was past the danger point. He thought he heard a long sigh in the gloom ahead.

Dangerfield felt he was on the threshold of discovery; the man of mystery could have told him, for he had decided that the money would be one to see only.

With half a million of money at stake, an answer would not be considered and returned blank.

He tried in vain at the secret that he considered the closed door indicated the floor of the passage dropped and he was on top level of street water.

What was the idea? Was this really designed as a test of pluck? He hesitated, then, with the attempt to get in, he had for the change if he went through the arch?

Dangerfield could scarcely credit that, but a sudden shower of extinguishing water from above put an abrupt end to his conjecture.

The water he almost ran over, raking a fall when suddenly a blast of white light lit his forehead. He put up his hands to shade his eyes when a blow on the head from behind knocked him wallowing backward.

Before he could recover himself his eyes were closed together in a grip of steel, and a word was told about his eyes.

Hands were about his head, his hands, and the heavy bundles raked away. Then he was pulled forward, his head upright, but lower behind the handgrip he could see that the handgrip glowed and there responded in give place to metal bolts, which seemed to close upon him. And

instead of mud and pebbles he felt a cold wooden floor beneath his feet. Then he sat down, across of a wooden case.

"Well, cousin," he heard, "you're more pluck than I gave you credit for. Perhaps you little nerve of slinks has done your best good. But the best is yet to come. Stay where you are while I lock the door behind you."

Dangerfield heard the door slowly locked him, but made no answer. At all costs his eyes must be shut that Stanley Haddon was in, his clerk.

Throughout the journey along the winding passage he had stopped to dispose the little extra bags, which, was as well, for his assistant must have been behind him when the glaring light had been switched on, and they had not been face to face.

And now the deaf, barking bawl from his forehead, added the discouragement. Fortunately he worked with his hands on boxes the racks in the shelves, he wanted to see, but he did not see the landscape remained.

The effort was in vain, however, for he could tell no where some the handgrip a chandelier, he judged, as it shone immediately ahead. And it

of slightly supernatural powers, but without saying as much.

Actually, *Fun and Fiction* does not appear to have been aimed primarily at boys, but at what a "highbrow" might think of as "semi-literate adults" of both sexes. (I read it!—But at least I can claim I was not an adult at that time.) The same thing might be said of *The Dreadnought* during its first six months, while it was *Fun and Fiction's* "companion paper," and *The Bullseye* and its companion *The Surprise* in the early 1930's.

Perhaps the editors thought that way about their readers, and considered that they would not object to minor mysteries remaining unexplained as long as the major mysteries were handled to their satisfaction.

IN *Fun and Fiction* No. 11 there is a notice of a special announcement in next week's issue. This would be of the pending increase in pages and price to 36 and one penny.

When we remember that it took *The Gem* 48 weeks to climb to the status of a penny paper, and *The Magnet* just over one hundred weeks, it is evident that *Fun and Fiction* must have sold well from the beginning. But the popularity was not permanent. The paper lasted only about two and a half years, while we know what contrasts the runs of both *The Gem* and *The Magnet* present.

The Dreadnought was able to survive for about three years; being changed into a boys' paper and becoming a companion of *The Boys' Friend* probably helped a little, but not enough, as was also the case with the reprinted Greyfriars stories a couple of years later, in 1915.

In the 1930's *The Bullseye* and *The Surprise* enjoyed runs that were equally short. It would appear that melodrama was at a discount in the nineteen-thirties just as much as it was in the nineteen-tens.

—W. H. G.

F. HAYDN DIMMOCK

FOR thirty-six years Editor of *The Scout* until he retired in 1954, the death occurred on April 26th last at his home in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, of Mr. F. Haydn Dim-

mock. Known to Boy Scouts as "Dim," says *The Daily Mirror* of April 27th, it was he who started the Scout "soapbox Derbies" and "Bub-a-job week."

THE END PAGES

IT is unlikely that an issue of *The Sexton Blake Library* ever was or ever will be reviewed in *The Times Literary Supplement*. But two issues were reviewed in *The T*m*s Literary Supplement*, a burlesque of the real thing in *Punch* for April 27th last. While Mr. *Punch*'s effort was a burlesque, the S. B. L. review was not, but actually a real, even if tongue-in-cheek, report, done in, presumably, the style of *The Times*. Written by one who knew his subject, I learned from the article that the *Library* was issued mensually and *The Union Jack* hebdomadally—facts I had not previously appreciated. Reviewed were "The Case of the Wicked Three," by Anthony Parsons, and "The Case of the Criminal's Daughter," by Hugh Clevely.

IF THE reviewer mentioned in the preceding paragraph had waited a few weeks he could have commented upon the drastic change that awaited *Sexton Blake Library* readers when they opened their copies of the May issues, Nos. 335 and 336. Gone were the two-column page and eye-straining type. Instead, a one-column page and much larger type. The easier-to-read type, which is somewhat nullified by

the very wide column, will be balanced by readers against the half-length stories, and the verdict may be against the change.

Are these changes ominous? They may well be. Reading appears to become progressively less favored in this "comics" and TV age. As witness the suspension last year of *The Western Library* while the issues of *Cowboy Comics* were upped from two to three a month.

BOOKS: "Billy Bunter's Double," the latest Greyfriars story by Frank Richards is well up to standard; as one reader of it commented, it's "a jolly romp." Billy and Cousin Wally change places. They've done it before, but the story is new. So the old-world seaside village of Pegg has gone modern! That is no gain! . . . 2/6d. St. Jim's and Jack of All Trades books—It was good news indeed when information was received of the launching of these two series. At the modest price they should do well.

THE graveyard of old boys' papers had one more occupant last March when *The Champion* suspended publication, it being combined with the newest Amalgamated Press boys' paper, *Tiger*.

Once a brash youngster challenging such oldtimers as *The Boys' Friend*, *The Gem*, and *The Magnet*, it lived long enough to become an oldtimer itself. The last issue was dated March 19th and its run of just over 33 years was some months longer than that of either *The Boys' Friend* or *The Magnet*. Having run so long it must be rated successful, but after its first 2½ years or so it would no longer appeal to old-time readers as it did while under the control of its founder and first editor, F. Addington Symonds. Wonder why the A.P. did not make over *The Champion* in the style of *Lion*, the way *Girls' Crystal* was remodelled along the lines of *School Friend*? Maybe they would have—if its name had been *Leopard*!

AFTER printing the article, to be found on pages 65-68 of this number, about *Fun and Fiction* and *The Bullseye*, I took another look through my few copies of the latter paper and discovered something I had not noticed before. In No. 72 of *The Bullseye* commenced a reprinting under the title "The Fetters of Fate"

of the first serial to appear in *Fun and Fiction*, "His Convict Bride."

It is with disappointment that I find "typos" still persist in finding their way into these pages, in spite of my recently-acquired bifocals.

FROM *The Magnet* No. 640, May 15th, 1920:

"Everything is Jake!"

This is the message which comes from Canada in a letter from two chums. This is what they say respecting certain grumbles:

"How can anyone find fault with the grandest and finest paper for boys under the sun? So cheer up, Editor! The war is over, spring is coming, and everything is Jake."

Many thanks. But who is Jake?

I doubt if that question can be answered, but Jake is O. K.!

LIKE Egypt in the long ago, S.P.C. has its fat and lean periods, but they occur more frequently. There is a reason for this fluctuation. The lesser number of pages this time prevents No. 55 from being completed late, and increases the chance of No. 56 being a plump issue.

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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