

# THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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## Hero Worship When Young

**T**HERE IS a certain fascination in probing into the real-life story of a hero, despite the feeling of "I shouldn't be doing this!" So many heroes are found to have feet of clay, upon closer inspection, and are found to be oh! so human.

My juvenile reading matter had no place for frail humans. I wanted to read about supermen, or superboys. The strong boy, the boy who could make himself invisible, the boy ventriloquist, the boy who could fly—these were my fundamental heroes, because youth is given to day-dreams, dreams in which one is the central figure.

Human nature being basically good, what good deeds I could have done to help frail and suffering humanity; what evil could have been eliminated throughout the world (and the space beyond!) if only, as a boy of twelve, I could have had the powers of flight, of invisibility,

and the strength of a mighty Samson!

The "fourth dimension" ventriloquism pandered to a sense of fun. What frolics I could have had with the adults (my natural, if undeclared, enemies) running around in circles! Even if my ventriloquial "hero" was as obtuse as Billy Bunter, he was still convincing because I wanted to believe, and belief is, after all, one of the basic planks in all platforms.

**I** BELIEVED in Greyfriars and St. Jim's and passed through the phase at one time of accepting the school characters as real boys. What reader of those papers, *The Magnet* and *The Gem*, has not at some time searched a large-scale map for Courtfield or Rylcombe?

If I had not believed in these things, my juvenile reading would have "passed me by like the idle wind" and would never have been remembered in my middle age.

Another type of hero was the one who, despite human limitations, could entrance by the

glamour of colourful costume in a supposedly romantic age. In this category is Dick Turpin, and Jack Overhill in his excellent article in S.P.C. Number 82, *Tracing a Legend*, delicately debunks the glamour attached to that name.

It was indeed an age of ignorance, filth, and cruelty. Our thanks, then, are due to the numerous hack writers of 19th century penny dreadfuls and 20th century Aldine publications for making Dick Turpin and his times palatable to our taste for the romantic.

—MAURICE KUTNER

Clapton, London E.5.

## Magazines From Scotland

IN THE GOLDEN AGE of British story and comic papers—about the years 1905 to 1925, I should say—I cannot recall one of the popular publications of those times that was produced in Scotland.

Perhaps this is a great pity, for Scottish weekly and monthly journals have an almost uncanny habit of survival. Who can say how much longer *The Magnet*, *The Gem*, and *The Union Jack* would have lived had they been owned by publishers like those

of *Blackwood's Magazine* or *The People's Friend*?

In over 145 years *Blackwood's* has not been changed in general appearance and it still sells at 2/6d. a copy, as it always has done.

*The People's Friend* has changed little in the last sixty years, except that the front cover page now has an illustration on white paper, while it used to have advertisements on dull green paper. It sold for many years at one penny, the present price being fourpence.

In this world of ever-changing public prints those two Scottish efforts are remarkable for their tenacity.

Can any reader recall comics or boys' story papers that were produced in Bonnie Scotland? If so, I would like to learn how and when they died.

—O. W. WADHAM

12 Military Road, Lower Hutt,  
New Zealand.

¶ Presumably the comics and boys' story papers published by D. C. Thomson & Co., Ltd., of Dundee are not so frequently seen on display in New Zealand as are those from *The Fleetway House*—or else the London address on the Thomson papers has misled Mr. Wadham. We have informed him of the many comics and story papers that have been published by Thomson since they launched *Adventure* in 1921.

## THE LOWER BRANCHES

By TOM HOPPERTON

WE HAVE OF LATE had our attention so concentrated on John Nix Pentelow as the Wicked Uncle of *The Hamilton Babe in the Wood* that we have rather lost sight of his considerable achievements in other fields. There is obviously a great deal to be said on that subject which has not yet reached print, but this present series is not the place for it. Pentelow himself would be surprised to find so much attention being paid to what he must have regarded as a fleeting and unimportant part of his career.

He wrote in all about 132 *Gems* and *Magnets*, and his work here has received plenty of comment but very little connected consideration. It should not be overlooked that it was not just shoved in when Pentelow was editor and so able to do as he pleased. He wrote at least 69 *Magnet* tales and practically half of them—34 to be exact—were certainly produced after he quitted the chair and were either commissioned or

accepted by H. A. Hinton or C. M. Down between 1920 and late 1924, while his last *Gem* was not till 1926.

He seems therefore to have had no dispute with the succeeding editors, and his troubles with Frank Richards did not affect his status with the Amalgamated Press. When Hinton returned from the Army in 1919 to resume control of the Companion Papers, Pentelow was switched to reviving the suspended *Boys' Realm*, and he followed this by launching *The Prairie Library*, *The Robin Hood Library*, and *Sport and Adventure*, all of which took him further away from the school story.

As far as his actual writing is concerned, the thing for which he was most hotly criticised was his killing-off of Richards' leading Sixth-former, Courtney. Mr. G. R. Samways, who is one of the few people in a position to know, informed us in S. P. C. that Pentelow was not an independent agent in this: he acted under higher directive to simplify

matters for readers who had been writing to complain of the confusions caused by Courtney and Courtenay. This is one of the most surprising things I have heard of in connection with boys' weeklies. One would have thought that boys who hadn't the savvy to distinguish between a Greyfriars senior and a Highcliffe junior, whose names were not even spelt alike, would hardly have had the initiative to grumble to the editor about it.

When, in the fullness of time, these muddled *Magnetites* came to read that remarkable Canadian classic *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* and found that the villainous priest who seduced the much-harassed Maria was Fr. Richards, I hope they appreciated that the "Fr." was an abbreviation of "Father" and not of "Frank." Unfortunately, they already had it on the authority of *The Boys' Friend* that Frank had been educated in Canada, and I fear that they went through life suspecting the worst.

IT IS NOW perhaps inevitable that the original writer will be subordinated to the stop-gap substitute, but even to understand Pentelow as an imitation Frank Richards it is still necessary to consider Pentelow—I nearly said Pentelow pure

and simple, but as I don't want to precipitate another semantic debate we can compromise with Pentelow as Pentelow.

Like so many of the Amalgamated Press authors, he began as something of a boy wonder, and he was only fifteen when he started contributing serials and long-completes of a highly dramatic nature to Guy Rayner's weeklies under such titles as *Captain Nemesis* and *Vanoc*; or, *The Gladiators of Old Rome*. He drifted casually into the occasional school story and does not appear to have made any sustained effort with them until he became a regular in *Pluck*. His most concentrated spell was during his *Magnet* days, and once that compulsion was removed he reverted to being something of a jack-of-all-trades, writing anything on demand and indifferent to whether his action was sited in Texas, Sherwood Forest, or Lords Cricket Ground.

There is no doubt about his popularity. The A.P. reprinted no less than 56 of his serials in the 1st Series of *The Boys' Friend Library*, and he was only outscored by Clarke Hook with 66 and David Goodwin with 64. Pentelow shared this high opinion of his literary ability and he had no inhibitions as an editor. Confident of improve-

ment, he would most likely have meddled with the text of the Ten Commandments if he had been on hand when the MS. was delivered, but as he wasn't he had to content himself with re-writing bits of his contributors' efforts and interpolating pieces of his own to add tone to them. He even cobbled some of Richards' stories in this way, and it is perhaps regrettable that there is no instance on record of Frank expressing his gratitude for the unsolicited embellishments.

This comes out in his *Gem* and *Magnet* stories. My own feeling is that he wrote among the best substitute stories, while being far from the best *ersatz* Frank Richards. He wore his rue with a difference. Stanley Austin and Francis Warwick, for example, made careful attempts to produce facsimiles of Frank's work. They used his favourite quotations and allusions and paid strict attention to his technical tricks. Pentelow's self-esteem, I take it, prevented him from following this stringent path. He did not so much *imitate* Richards as write about the same characters.

WHILE PENTELOW created a number of schools, his reputation stands mainly on the Wycliffe and Haygarth

series which ran for years and were popular reprints. Even so, it is now impossible for an adult to read them without mixed feelings.

The thing that hits one almost at once is that there is a remarkably *contrived* air about his work. Coincidence worked double shifts for the A.P. and most authors were bashful enough to try to gloss it over. Pentelow did not bother much with such aids to painlessness as softening the impact with pre-corroboration: if he had a coincidence to inflict he just sandbagged the reader behind the ear with it and plunged on with the story.

The entire effectiveness of the long run of Jack Jackson at Wycliffe tales hinged upon the opening incident that on the first day of term four new boys—one specimen from each of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland—meet at the railway station and immediately contract a lifelong friendship. The machinery creaks most horribly, and one does not require a crystal ball to foretell the developments.

The speech follows suit. If a stretch of Richards' dialogue is read aloud it flows smoothly off the tongue and falls within the conversational norm. Pentelow strove after a lifelike casualness and achieved disjointed involvements which trip the tongue. It

passes muster when read silently but no-one could speak it easily.

He adds an unnecessary distraction. One of David Goodwin's elegants reprimanded another for dropping his final g's with: "We used to do it, but every outsider caught on, so we don't do it now." Richards' swells refused to be stampeded by lower-class imitation and carried on dropping, while Pentelow took the process a stage further. His heroes dropped both g's and d's, so that his pages are littered with sentences like: "An' I was kickin' it." He presumably thought this attractive and an accurate transcript of public school speech, ignoring the defects that the pages are pocked with the marks of elision and that the dialogue looks as slovenly as it must have sounded. Nor did he ever explain why it was classy to omit final consonants when to drop h's was an unspeakable social crime.

This air of contrivance extends to his jokes. He imports odd names so that he can make puns on them, as with his Housemaster, Mr. Gazman alias the Gasman. It is easy to see why Smythe, Peele and Co., the smart set at Rookwood, are called the Giddy Goats. Pentelow contrived that the members of Mr. Williams' House at Wycliffe were known as the Goats. They

were far from giddy—in fact they were the heroes of the tales—and it seems a needless disparagement until the reader eventually stumbles across the far-fetched reason. Mr. Williams is nicknamed Big Billy.

THERE WAS A WELL of effusive sentimentality in Pentelow which was easily tapped. One can imagine Richards shying away from titles like *Kildare of the Great Heart*, *For the Old School's Sake*, and *The Heart of a Hero*. When he had to traverse similar ground he used the more restrained *Kildare for St. Jim's*, *For His School's Sake*, and *The Hero of St. Jim's*. Pentelow fulfilled the promise of his titles: Richards' economy of feeling in near-sentimental passages was beyond him. He gushed. Even his boys were given to addressing each other with mawkish affection in moments of stress, and in some of his more heart-felt substitute stories it is surprising how this one factor softens the crisp outlines of Richards' characters.

One inevitable extension of this was that Pentelow was a moralist. Neville Cardus spoke for boys in general when he said that he objected to all improving stories on principle, but Pentelow never hesitated to halt the proceedings while he delivered

wise saws, modern instances, and short lectures on ethics. He could not feel certain of the effectiveness of indirect condemnation of the decalogue of juvenile sins through the words and actions of the "goodies" and the routing of the "baddies." To reinforce the lesson, he mounted his portable pulpit and administered his moral much as Mr. Wackford Squeers did his brimstone-and-treacle. The victim was seized by the scruff of the neck and the nauseous dose ladled down his throat.

Then, he would meddle with his characters' progress, grabbing them by the seat of the britches and giving them the bum's rush along their destined path. Consider this typical quotation:

*Dangerfield had chosen his path. He knew it was the wrong one, and he was manful enough to admit it. But he would hold to it, chin up, proud with the pride of Lucifer, fallen Son of the Morning, perhaps not understanding himself, certainly not understood by the meaner spirits he chose for comrades. He was as one: "Having light, loving darkness rather." And yet—did he love it? Did he not hate it, even while choosing it.*

This may have been fine writing to Pentelow: it may even be fine writing to a fourteen-year-old. It is so long since I was

that age that I just don't know. At this moment, it looks to me like an unnecessary piece of rhetoric. Alice was right when she asked what was the use of a story without conversations. If Dangerfield had been allowed to explain himself through his own words and actions, with further light shed by the remarks and reactions of the rest of the cast, the story would have gone on with greater artistic effect and satisfaction.

THIS IS a formidable list of complaints, and it is only fair to say that they are adult judgments. When I was a boy I lapped up Jack North with avidity and I swallowed indiscriminately everything in both *Gem* and *Magnet* during the entire term of Pentelow's editorship. When re-reading the stories I frequently find that pieces of Pentelow have stuck in my memory when genuine stories have faded completely.

Pentelow's defects, in which there is an almost feminine quality, do not loom so large when considered only as part of his original work. They are dwarfed by the sweep of his imagination and the general vigour of his tales. He used much larger and more varied casts than the average serialist, and he manipulated them

adroitly in complexly-woven plots. The main reason for stressing them so much is that they take on greater importance when contemplating his substitute stories. He carried all his old traits into the new field, where they sometimes sat oddly on the shoulders of the original cast. This certainly led to a deterioration in the stories. Even when an effort is made it is impossible for one man to assume completely the thoughts and professional skills of another, and Pentelow did not exactly strain himself

to achieve the transformation.

We are emphatic enough about the worsening now, and it must have had some effect on the readership then. What we do not know is the exact or even the approximate degree. If anyone has a few tame thirteen-year-olds on hand it would be an interesting experiment to feed them for a few weeks on a mixed diet of Pentelow and Richards and then have them report on their reactions. I have a suspicion that we oldsters might be surprised.

#### Part Four Will Appear In Number 86

### Young O. B. B. Collectors

REFERRING to the item by Mr. O. W. Wadham about a young collector of old boys' books (S.P.C. Number 83) there are two other very young ones. They are Alex and Helga Baker, the son and daughter of Mr. W. Howard Baker, who was the Editor of *Sexton Blake Library* in its final years and author of stories of Sexton Blake.

Alex and Helga are 13 and 11 years of age and are avid readers of *The Magnet*. Between them they have a collection comprising the last five years of *The Magnet* and all of the "Bunter

books," Annuals, and others of the Charles Hamilton bound books. Apart from these, they have thousands of copies of the modern Libraries.

In one of the Annuals Alex has a personal message from "Frank Richards," written a short time before Charles Hamilton's death. In it, Mr. Hamilton gave some advice on starting at a new school.

Helga writes Greyfriars pastiches, and very good they are, too. There are hopes of her developing her writing ability and following in the footsteps of her well-known father, who was a keen Greyfriars reader in his youth. —W. O. G. LORRS

# PICTURES OR PROSE?

By MAURICE KUTNER

MANY OF US who are interested in old boys', or girls', publications may be more interested in collecting, and reading about, the precious story papers of our own youth than in the publications which appear weekly on the bookstalls today.

Our *Magnets*, *Gems*, and the rest, are like the tuneful songs of yesteryear with all the pleasant youthful memories of happy hours which they recall. It is perhaps natural for the ear attuned to lilting melodies to classify the dreary stridor of a modern "pop number" as rubbish.

The world of our youth was the best of all possible worlds, we say, with very little spending-money and pennies hard to come by. It can be said, too, that this perpetual state of penury was good for us, and that such inconveniences were character-forming, creating within us the initiative to obtain, honestly, the much-needed penny which, obtained, we plonked down on the counter of our local newsagent for the current number of one of our favourite weeklies. Great nations have

fallen into decay through the evils of affluence and its attendant indisposition to activity, but we had no fear of such a fate overtaking us, and many an unpleasant chore was performed before the necessary penny was ours.

It has been said (and perhaps has always been said) that the youth of today have too much spending-money for their own good. As the juke-boxes spew out their "top-twenties" like a sickness in a sick world, the lover of the good old-fashioned ballad might find it an interesting, and even profitable, pastime to attempt to investigate the fascination which these fleeting "pops" have for the youthful musical ear. Even more important to us of our hobby, to look for some enlightenment, over the shoulders of the youngsters, to see what they are reading today. As they would probably strongly object to us breathing asthmatically down their necks, let us instead browse among the bookstalls and newsagents'.

The weeklies are there, spread out on display, bright in colour and mostly on good quality paper. On checking the names

of the publishers it would appear that the greatest number are from D. C. Thomson, with Fleetway Publications in second place and Odhams Press third.

**S**TORY-AND-PICTURE papers of our youth such as *Film Fun* and *Radio Fun*, with their weekly adventures of Harold Lloyd, Fatty Arbuckle, and Ben Turpin, are no more. They have given way to *T. V. Comic* where television children's-hour favourites are depicted, along with some adult viewing-time stars whom we had often suspected as being fit only for infants: *T. V. Comic* confirms our suspicions. The action is carried on by words ballooning out of the characters' mouths.

The Americans, too, dip their bread in this gravy with such weeklies as *Huckleberry Hound* and *Yogi Bear's Own*. The child first meets the character via the television set, becomes intrigued, and is tempted to buy the weekly, as many an adult, seeing an epic film based on an old-established classic, has been enticed to read the original book for the first time.

One cannot always tell by the covers on the bookstall whether one has picked up the type of weekly one has in mind. There are a number with such titles as *Girl*, and *Boyfriend*, but a series

of drawings of a pretty, but disconsolate, girl with the thoughts ballooning out of her pretty little head in a series of bubbles: firstly, "I'm twenty-one tomorrow, but instead of feeling happy, I feel awful!"; secondly, "Look at me, nearly twenty-one, but I haven't even been steady with a boy yet!"; thirdly, "I'm going to be left on the shelf soon if I'm not careful!" tells one it is time to put the book down quickly and breathe deeply for a few moments to disperse the cold-water-on-the-spine, before returning to the world of sanity in our search for real boy and girl periodicals.

**O**DHAMS PRESS issue such papers as *Eagle* and *Boys' World*, which have their thrills of space-men, pre-historic and modern monsters, modern detectives, war-time battles, gladiators and men of ancient Rome, palefaces and Redskins, all in pictures and, what's more, historical anecdotes, sporting articles—and a two-page story in "real writing"! Diagrams are also given of anything from an atomic submarine to a locomotive.

Among the Fleetway weeklies are *School Friend*, *June*, and *Princess* for girls, *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Valiant*, and *Buster* for boys. The girlish adventures in *School Friend* are

made more palatable to us in particular by a two-page spread of Bessie Bunter, not forgetting her dear brother William. In this series Mr. Quelch is brought in, along with "Jones minor," a character borrowed from the Billy Bunter series in the old *Knockout*, now incorporated in *Valiant*. *Valiant* is practically all pictures, depicting the adventures of strong fearless men, but of most interest to us are the two pages devoted to Billy Bunter, billed as the heavyweight chump of Greyfriars, with Mr. Quelch and "Jones minor" in the supporting roles.

The old *Film Fun* is now incorporated in the all-picture *Buster*, where adventure "stories" are intermixed with the gallivanting gaiety of some television stars.

IT WOULD APPEAR from observations at various bookstalls that the larger group of boy and girl weeklies comes from D. C. Thomson & Co., Ltd. They burst into the juvenile market with *Adventure* 42 years ago and are still going strong. Of their weeklies for girls *Diana*, with its pages of drawings, mostly in colour, has at present a couple of items one doesn't usually associate with a girls' weekly: the serialisation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and a page devoted

to animal and bird wild life.

Another girls' publication is *Judy* which must have a big sale, as must also one more called *Bunty*, as the publishers issue a 64-page picture-packed edition of each at a shilling, and a summer number of *Bunty* at one shilling and sixpence.

Perhaps the D. C. Thomson boys' weeklies are of more interest to us. Among their picture-comics, mostly in colours, are *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, both of which have been published for over twenty years, *The Beezer* and *The Topper*. *The Victor* and *The New Hotspur* are composed mainly of picture-stories, from the heroic to the comic. Being products of the last two to four years, one must assume them to be the type of weekly the modern boy wants.

They contain quite an assortment, "stories" of bushrangers and horses, desperate missions behind the enemy lines in World War II, Morgyn the Mighty, space capsules and astronauts, the wild and woolly West, Hereward the Wake and Norman England, and adventures with wolves in Northern Canada.

The most important paper of this group is surely *The Wizard*, plodding along now for nearly forty years. It contains no picture-"stories" whatsoever, being

— wonder of wonders!— composed entirely of stories in “real writing.” No story, or episode of any serial, is longer than five pages, which necessitates fairly good prose, exciting and to the point, while character-building, although terse, is expertly done.

Some themes of these stories deal with the lawless West of the last century (a “must” for boys), a Spitfire squadron over Northern France in the last war, Rugby League football, and airliner crash survivors on an ice-field in the Arctic Ocean, while the front and back cover pages give bits of information ranging from treks across frozen wastes and burning deserts to facts about the Royal Horse Guards, with regimental badge.

A FAIR PROPORTION of editors keep in touch with their readers by offering small prizes for the best letters on hobbies and experiences and the like, and some weeklies have formed readers’ clubs, complete with club badge.

Editors, generally, appear to have a strong sense of responsibility towards their young readers, presenting a quota of encyclopaedic knowledge, sugaring the pill somewhat, given in an interesting manner which must appeal to the bright child.

In the history of boys’ papers

sport has always been given its fair share of space. This continues to be the case today, but with the addition of first-rate photographs.

Each of the big publishers has at least one paper which, along with the usual type of stories, gives the reader a series of backgrounds to travel, science, and history, and the serialisation of well-established classics, though often depicted in pictures.

Some non-fiction and classical items are: *Boys’ World* (Odhams) — *Having Fun With Science*, *The Story of the Colt .45*, and *Under the Polar Ice With “Nautilus”*; *Diana* (D. C. Thomson) — *Macbeth*, *History of Queen Victoria*, and *Homecraft*; *Princess* (Fleetway Publications) — *Girls of Tokyo* (travel), *I Will Repay*, by Baroness Orczy, and *The History of Mary, the Tragic Queen*, from birth to the scaffold.

IT HAS SOMETIMES been suggested that the young reader of today has been given a raw deal by the publishers. Looking over the modern book-stalls fills one with the certainty that the publishers do fairly well in that most difficult of tasks, pleasing, interesting, and trying to educate (in the wider sense of the word) the modern child.

Today's young reader may be unfortunate in growing up in a world where Damocles' sword hangs threateningly ever by a thread. However, he is more fortunate in his periodicals, with their excellent paper and colour printing, than those of us who lived our "purple period" in an age of war, shortage of paper (poor quality at that), and such small letterpress that it is a wonder we still have enough light left in our poor maltreated eyes to enjoy them.

Perhaps because the pace of life has quickened to such a degree since our day, the young 'uns have no time to wend a weary way through pages of descriptive matter, and require the essentials—quickly! Growing up with films and television must make pictures a kind of natural language, and publishers, being business-men, are entitled to meet what they think are the customers' needs.

**P**ICTURES OR PROSE? A statistical report by the librarian of the children's section of many a local public library might not agree with the publishers, but what is the ideal to be striven for? The advocates of prose must not forget that *The Wizard* has no picture-stories and caters for the "reader"; are the sales of *The Wizard*

greater or less on that account?

What is certain is that the bookstalls are full, catering for all tastes, and apparently they have good sales. If, as is popularly supposed, the young 'uns of today have too much spending-money, it is a certainty that they are spending a fair proportion of it in the best possible way.



## Muddled Magnetites!

**T**HINKING ABOUT those muddled Magnetites who could not distinguish between Arthur Courtney, the Greyfriars Sixth-former, and Frank Courtenay, the Highcliffe Fourth-former, but who still had the savvy to write to the Editor about it (see page 182): we may presume that they were not readers of *The Gem*.

If they had been, they would have written to the Editor telling him how much they were confused by Harry Wootton of Rylcombe Grammar School having a name that was too similar to that of Harry Wharton of Greyfriars.

Especially should they have been confused when the Goggs, *Grammarian* serial commenced in *The Magnet* early in 1919, featuring as it did, along with Johnny Goggs and others, Harry and Jack Wootton. +

# A COLLECTOR YARNS ABOUT YARNS IN THE CAPTAIN

By RON GALLOWAY

**A** LONG TIME AGO, away back on a fine warm Saturday in 1917, I had my first introduction to that excellent boys' magazine, *The Captain*. I was a teenager at the time, working in a corn-merchant's office in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and we did not finish work until 4 p.m. on Saturdays. On my way home, I glanced at the nearby Bigg Market stalls, where traders displayed a miscellany of goods for sale to a jostling crowd of bargain-hunters.

Two of the stalls were exclusively devoted to the sale of secondhand magazines and novels. One belonged to an old chap known as French, and the other to an elderly man, with a limp, whose name escapes me now. On this latter stall I saw three copies of *The Captain* for sale at, I think it was, half price, threepence each.

I was captivated by the colourful front covers and bought all three copies. They were taken home and read avidly, and it did not take me long to realise that I had stumbled on extremely high class boys' literature,

comparable even with the mighty *Boy's Own Paper*, then in its heyday. One of the copies formed part of Volume 34, for the year 1916.

**T**HE MAIN ADVENTURE serial was *Wreck Cove*, by W. Bourne Cook. This is a strangely compelling story, even today, with a mystic phantasy all its own. Some of the strange doings take place in a lonely Cornish cove during the 18th century. Young Dick Raven is the central character, with the tang of the sea in his blood. His father is dead and he lives with his mother and his grandfather, old Melchior Raven, in a lonely cliff-top house. Melchior has his study rigged out as a ship's cabin.

One day Dick meets by the sea-shore an old sea-dog named Captain Blunt, whose purpose is to seek out Dick's grandfather, who holds the key to a vast treasure overseas. Dick's curiosity lands him in the power of one of Blunt's henchmen, Aaron Windghast, who has converted an eerie cove on the shore into

fairly habitable living quarters.

Strange and weird doings ensue, involving the eye of an idol and a voyage overseas in a craft chartered by Melchior Raven. The party have a final and thrilling showdown with the rascal Blunt and his cut-throat crew.

I consider this to be Cook's best serial, although some years ago a fellow-collector said I ought to reserve judgment until I had read the same author's story, *The Black Box*, which appeared in *The Captain* several years earlier. Later, I was able to obtain the volume and read this story, which dealt with the Monmouth Rebellion.

It, too, was a stirring story, and its historical background would probably lead many readers to class it above *Wreck Cove*, but I still consider the vein of weird mystery in the latter story to be more than compensating.

While Cook was not a prolific author, he did in later years write a serial for *Chums* under the title of *The Grey Owl* which was, however, a pale shadow of his serials in *The Captain*.

The bound volumes of *The Captain* in their striking maroon-coloured covers with the school Captain embossed thereon in gold had always fascinated me as they took their places in the booksellers' windows at Christmas-

time alongside *Chums Annual*, *Boy's Own Annual*, *Young England*, and the others.

There was, unfortunately, never a superabundance of money in those days and it was not until the 1920's that I was able to buy my first volume, secondhand, of course. It was Volume 28, year 1913, and it would surely have been difficult to find any volume more crammed with literature to stir the boyish heart. All three of the serials, one adventure and two school, were top-class.

MAX RITTENBERG produced a school gem in *The Cockatoo*, a nickname for Tod MacLean, son of a wealthy New Zealand sheep farmer. Tod is sent to Whiterock, an English public school, for his education. "Blue blood" flows in the veins of nearly all the pupils and Tod is regarded as an outsider just because his blood happens to be an ordinary shade of crimson. After all kinds of vicissitudes and trials, Tod's natural courage triumphs over snobbery.

That skilful purveyor of school stories, Percy F. Westerman, provided an excellent example in *The Stolen Cruiser*. Da Silva, a foreign rascal, and his gang of cut-throats actually accomplish the unprecedented feat of capturing a British cruiser lying

in the Solent and sailing her away. High-seas piracy is their object, but Nemesis eventually overtakes them in Antarctic waters.

THE LAST SERIAL was from the pen of the inimitable P. G. Wodehouse, the title being *The Eighteen Carat Kid*. This is a story of the young son of an American multi-millionaire, Cyrus P. Bullmeyer (or some such name as that). The father grows tired of the boy-precocity "in extremis"—being captured and held to ransom by clever kidnappers—so he decides to send him to a small remote country-house school in England that is run by a reverend gentleman with two young assistant masters.

It is hoped that the seclusion will prevent any further depletion of the parental dollar-coffers. They have not, however, reckoned with the astuteness of one of the American kidnapers, who has obtained by bribery news of the boy's whereabouts and with cool effrontery and unknown to the father has already had himself installed in the school as a butler.

This position gives him ample opportunities to plan further kidnapping on English soil. One of the young masters "gets wise" to the kidnapper and after a

number of serio-comic episodes manages to frustrate his plans.

Eventually the parents of the boy turn up at the school and, on the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief," the would-be kidnapper is offered the post of guardian at worthwhile pay, to put an end to the costly incidents. The whole story is superbly readable and great fun, and well up to the standard of this gifted writer.

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### Other Papers Called *Boys' World*

WE ARE INFORMED by Mr. W. O. G. Lofts that in the years after the second World War there was still another paper called *Boys' World*; it was short-lived.

Much earlier, there was an American magazine named *The Boys' World*. It was published monthly, priced at 5 cents, from December, 1885, to May, 1887, 18 issues in all, and was edited by Matthew White, Jr.

This information is given in the June, 1963, issue of *Dime Novel Roundup*, which has a reproduction of the front page of a copy. The illustration, a line drawing, shows two boys on "penny-farthing" bicycles, one of them apparently falling off. +

## Corrections to

Where Charles Hamilton  
Went to School

IN NUMBER 84 of *The Story Paper Collector*, in my article *Where Charles Hamilton Went to School*, I stated that he had attended Ealing British School for a short time. This was written in good faith and was based on the fact Mr. Hamilton had once stated that his first school was next door to where he lived.

I have since been told by Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright that this is incorrect and I now wish to make it clear that Charles Hamilton never attended a Board or state school. The name of his actual first school will be revealed by Mrs. Wright when her *Biography of Charles Hamilton* appears.

In my references to Mrs. Una Harrison, the sister of Charles Hamilton, there are two small errors in transcription: Mrs. Harrison actually attended the Royal Academy of Music in London, for eight years, and she became a Teacher of Voice Production and Singing. She was never a governess, but she was, on account of poor eyesight in childhood, brought up by a governess.

— W. O. G. LOFTS

Presenting **Pot-Pourri: 4** Under the Title of . . .

## A MIXED LOT

## “Bunter Beds” at School

THE FURTHER information about Bunter Beds (in *S.P.C.* Number 83) took me back more than thirty years. About five miles from here is a local beauty spot called Clent Hill, and a master at school told us that the Clent soil was a mixture of marl and sandstone.

I recall, as if it were yesterday, his talking about “Bunter marl and Bunter sandstone, and Keuper marl and Keuper sandstone.” I have, however, never heard of *Muschelkalk*.

I enjoyed very much your article, *Collecting Old Boys' Books: Not “A New Craze.”* At the end you write, “I seem to have wandered rather more than was necessary.” My comment is, go on wandering as much as you like if you continue to write so fascinatingly. — T. W. PORTER  
Old Hill, Staffs.

\* \* \*

## That Word on Page 186

IN THE SHORT ITEM on page 186, *Two Young O. B. B. Collectors*, we were guilty, when re-writing it from a letter, of using a word that may be strange to some of

our readers. It would have been strange, indeed probably quite unknown, to us if we were not a reader of the two magazines that are devoted to Sherlockiana and the study of the stories of Sherlock Holmes, *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* and *The Baker Street Journal*.

There have been quite a lot of imitation Sherlock Holmes stories written, and they are referred to as pastiches. In the *Universal English Dictionary* a pastiche is *A literary work written in imitation of the style of another author.* (There is another definition which does not concern us here.) Pronunciation: *pasteesh*.

If any of our readers had to go to their dictionaries to find what the word means—as we had to do the first time we met it—we extend to them our regret for venturing beyond our proper vocabulary level.

“Our” meaning ourself.

\* \* \*

### School Stories Today

I WAS PARTICULARLY interested in Tom Hopperton's remarks (*The Lower Branches*, Part 1, S. P. C. Number 83) upon publishers and present-day school stories. There is certainly a kick in the “fossil,” for there are a number of present-day writers of school stories whose work seems to

command a ready sale and two of them, at least, are mentioned in Mrs. Margery Fisher's book: *Antonia Forest and William Mayne*. There is also a mention of these two writers in Brian Doyle's article, *Arch-Fossil—Bicycle Pump Product*, in the November, 1961, issue of *The Collectors' Digest*, which dealt largely with Mrs. Fisher's book.

William Mayne's books are about a choir school and he has produced quite a number for the Oxford University Press. Personally, and especially as so many collectors are interested in the school story, I would like to see every encouragement given to Mr. Mayne and Antonia Forest for their efforts to keep the flag flying, and I would like Mr. Hopperton to produce an article on their work.

It would be very interesting, for instance, to ascertain where they obtained their inspiration from—did they read Charles Hamilton as children, for example. . . . I am certain that Mr. Hopperton would make a very fine article of such material.

—W. J. A. HUBBARD

Nyeri, Kenya.

\* \* \*

### The Day Inflation Began

BACK NUMBERS WANTED—By G. E. Gittins, Stourport.—*Magnet*, Nos. 1-360; *Gem*, Nos. 1-370;

Boys' Friend, Nos. 1-790. Half-penny each offered.—By H. Taylor, Upper Parkstone, Dorset.  
—Magnet, Nos. 1-400. Double price offered; 4d. each for first ten.

—Quoted from Readers' Notices column in *The Magnet*, Number 480, April 21st, 1917.

\* \* \*

### Hope Springs Eternal!

THE ARTICLE IN S. P. C. Number 83, *Collecting Old Boys' Books: Not "A New Craze,"* in which there are references to advertisements of story papers, reminded me of the time, a few years ago, when I was looking through some old copies of *Meccano Magazine* dated about 1952.

In the *Wants and Sales* section there were three advertisements offering Magnets for sale. I sent stamped addressed envelopes and in due course I received two replies. One of them offered me thirty copies of *The Magnet* and two bound volumes.

The volumes had, unhappily, been bound without the covers. (How could anyone do that?) The loose copies were dated in 1930-32 and included those with the Eye of Osiris, my favourite holiday series, and most of the Harry Wharton's feud with Mr. Quelch series, another fine story. The two bound volumes were dated 1938-39 and included the

*Water Lily* series, which is another favourite.

This account of writing to addresses, some years after the advertisements had been published, in the hope that the persons might still be there and still have some Magnets is, I think, proof that hope springs eternal! —MAURICE HALL

Worcester Park, Surrey.

\* \* \*

### Dick Turpin Stories

I WAS VERY interested in the article about Dick Turpin in S. P. C. Number 82. After I had got out of the "comics" and fairy tale stage I turned to the Aldine *Dick Turpin* and *Black Bess* Libraries. In fact, I still have a dozen of them. They certainly had the finest coloured covers of any boys' books before or since.

I think they attracted me mostly because the stories were in the main about Old London. I suppose I am an oddity, really, because I am a Cockney (having been born within the sound of Bow Bells) who knows his London. On my days off, which are usually during the week, I am always exploring the nooks and crannies of London, especially Dickensian London.

Turpin has to thank Harrison Ainsworth for making him famous, and the publishers of

boys' periodicals can thank both Turpin and Ainsworth for the fortunes they made from the never-ending spate of stories about Turpin and his band.

### Robin Hood Stories

THE ARTICLE ON Robin Hood (in S. P. C. Number 84) by Jack Overhill was interesting to me, as the Aldine *Robin Hood* and *Dick Turpin* Libraries were my first loves in the boys' books world. The *Robin Hood* series of 1919 with a character called Thom Cure All was published by the Amalgamated Press. It didn't run for long.

I understand that the Robin Hood copyright was bought from Aldine by George Newnes, Ltd., who reprinted all the Robin Hood stories. I have had the complete sets of Aldine and Newnes issues at different times, but have none now. I still have, however, about thirty Aldine *Dick Turpins*.

### Sexton Blake

SO SEXTON BLAKE has left us. I suppose it had to come, in this space age. . . I have had vast amounts of pleasure over the years with Blake, Tinker, and Pedro, right back to the first World War. I remember *Sexton Blake Library* Number 1, *The Yellow Tiger*, and a smashing story it was. In later years I

picked up a copy or two on bookstalls for a penny. But the last time I saw one it changed hands for £2/10/0!

### School & Playground Stories

I WAS VERY interested in the two illustrations of *School and Playground Stories*, published by Fox. I thought that I had seen the originals of, or pictures of, all boys' books. but this is a new one to me.

—CHARLES WRIGHT  
Greenwich, London S.E.10.

\* \* \*

### Arget Harris, Not Arthur

IN THE ARTICLE, *Collecting Old Boys' Books* (S.P.C. Number 83, page 147), we referred to one of the advertisers in the O. B. B. C. List as Arthur Harris. We ought to have known that he was Arget Harris, who was interested in Victorian boys' papers, and not Arthur Harris, of Penrhyn Bay, Llandudno, whose interest is in Amateur Journalism and in comics of the earlier years of this century.

—W. H. G.

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