

THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Number 93

JANUARY 1966

Volume 4

WHO WERE THE 2 FLAKEYS?

IT IS MY GOOD FORTUNE to have, bound in four volumes, the complete run of *The Boys' Friend* in its first or halfpenny series, 1895 to 1901. Occasionally I fill an interesting hour looking through them. That was what I was doing when I paused to write this.

On the outer margin of page 59, Number 164, dated March 19th, 1898, there are four impressions of a rubber name-and-address stamp:

THE 2 FLAKEYS

Permanent Address:
5, ST. JAMES PLACE,
ST. JAMES ST., LEEDS.

Every time I come to this page I wonder, who were The 2 Flakeys? How long were they readers of *The Boys' Friend*? Are they still around? Perhaps it is not very likely. If they were fifteen years of age in 1898 they would be 83 in 1966, so it is not impossible.

If they are, how surprised they would be to learn that the copy of *The Boys' Friend* which they decorated—defaced is the better word!—with their rubber stamp so long ago is still in existence in Canada and has been in North America for possibly sixty years. I bought these volumes from a collector living in Boston,

25TH ANNIVERSARY NUMBER!

Massachusetts, in 1939, and he had owned them for more than thirty years. It may be that The 2 Flakeys were the original owners of this entire set of *The Boys' Friend* halfpenny series.

Now I think about it, if 5, St. James Place actually was the "permanent" address of The 2 Flakeys, they should be there still. If they are not, then it was not their permanent address!

Another thought is this: was "Flakey" their real name? Or was it a "play" on their name? There is not one Flakey in the Metropolitan Winnipeg Telephone Directory! —w. h. g.

*

Upon being informed of The 2 Flakeys, Mr. W. O. G. Lofts did some research in old Leeds directories, perhaps more than the matter warranted. But when Mr. Lofts enquires into something, he does it thoroughly. This is his report:

5, St. JAMES PLACE, St. James Street, Leeds (off Number 78) :

Between 1898 and 1913, when it became non-existent, there were no fewer than eight different occupants, all of them shopkeepers, one a greengrocer. None of them bore the name Flakey or anything like it. Indeed, Flakey is not a recognised name for a person, at least not English, Irish, or Welsh. Flakey is, I have found, a nickname for

a boy who used always to be "scoffing" chocolate flakes, according to some writers.

The simple explanation could be, that two brothers, maybe sons of one of the occupants of Number 5, had this nickname, and like many other youngsters used their own rubber-stamp to mark papers which they exchanged with others.

— W. O. G. LOFTS

*

THAT SEEMS to make anything more about The Two Flakeys superfluous. Except: there being so many different family names among English-speaking people, why isn't Flakey used as a name?



Could There be a Natural One?
Before Bob could move . . . the unnatural ghost was shambling along the roof.

—from *The Bullseye* No. 96, Nov. 19, 1932.

THE MAGNET

Needed to complete set: Nos. 163, 217, 263; and good ones to replace my poor copies of 1 to 6, 90, 100, 110, 207, 308, 668, 942.

Wm. H. Gander

202 Yale Ave. W., Transcona 25,
Manitoba, Canada.

Thoughts on the 25th Anniversary of . . .

T H E

Story Paper Collector

Printed and issued occasionally by Wm. H. Gander, P. O. Box 60,
Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

No. 1.

JANUARY-MARCH, 1941

Vol. 1.

*— Set in types from the same founts as the original.
There is now no Box 60 at the Transcona Post Office.*

IN FEBRUARY OF 1941, when I was setting type for and printing Number 1 of *The Story Paper Collector*, I had no thought of looking ahead 25 years and visualizing myself setting type for and printing a 25th Anniversary Issue. Twenty-five years seems a very long time to try to look ahead. Looking back, it does not seem so long.

*

If regular quarterly publication had been the rule from the start, this would be Number 101. Five issues a year was the practice for the first five years; thereafter, four issues a year was the objective, not always attained, so this is Number 93. Perhaps not a really large total for a quarter of a century, but the

number of pages, now over 1400, and the amount of reading, all hand-set type and printed one page at a time on a Pilot hand-operated press, make it quite a spare-time accomplishment, even if the statement is made by the accomplisher himself.

*

While I did not think of looking ahead 25 years in 1941, I do look ahead now, and I do not see another 25 years for S.P.C. There once was an amateur journalist who became known, from his little journal, *The Tryout*, as Tryout Smith. When he was past ninety he was still producing his magazine.

I do not expect to equal his record, or even come near it. In fact, so far from equalling it, that

the stopping point for *The Story Paper Collector* has been decided upon, as far as the present sponsor is concerned, and it is most unlikely that anyone will adopt the magazine after it has arrived at that point.

If any reader should think back to Number 50 and remember mention therein of rumours about stopping at that issue, and a stop did not occur, only a pause—it should be sufficient to point out that Number 50 was almost thirteen years ago.

*

There is, I feel, a good reason for the decision to stop. It is this: I do not wish S. P. C. to end, as it must if I continue with it as long as possible, without a proper finish—as happened, it will be recalled, with *The Collector's Miscellany*.

If favourable circumstances prevail, the end of *The Story Paper Collector* will not be the end of my printing activities. Whatever form the product may take, it will not be S. P. C. with a different name, but it will be concerned with the same subject, "old boys' books."

*

There have been many who contributed articles through the years. Some of them are no longer here to write any more. One thinks of Herbert Leckenby,

John Medcraft, Henry Steele, R. A. H. Goodyear; and Charles Hamilton, who wrote an article, *Frank Richards Redivivus*, for Number 21 in Volume 1.

*

Others have just dropped contact, it seems. They are not heard from any more. Still, the supply of articles, though never overwhelming, has usually been sufficient, in spite of the opinion expressed long ago that the supply would soon run out. How wrong that prediction was!

*

I bought my Pilot press in 1927, thus getting back into printing after being out of it for eight years. In 1928 I "found" in a Winnipeg bookshop about fifty copies of *The Boys' Friend* in its last two years, thus getting back—briefly—into "old boys' books" collecting after being away from it for nine years.

The press and type were put to good use, but I did nothing more about collecting for another ten years. The reflection comes, that if I had resumed collecting in 1928, perhaps I would have thought then of printing a small magazine called *The Story Paper Collector*. If I had thought of doing that, then we could now be celebrating with a 38th Anniversary Number!

—W. H. G.

FRANK RICHARDS---FROM HIS LETTERS

By J. A. WARK

WHEN STORING AWAY S.P.C. Number 92 after reading it I came across some mislaid treasures — several letters from the old maestro himself, Frank Richards. Various contributors more gifted than I have written about him, but I wonder if it would be taken amiss if I added my humble observations on one who gave so much pleasure to so many.

Frank Richards' sincerity impressed me greatly and his sense of humour was always breaking through. When he decided to "take the plunge," as he called it, and purchase a TV set so he could see "his own Bunter" come to life on the screen, he confided that he was looking forward to seeing football and cricket on the small screen more than to Bunter.

His eyes were the drawback, however, and we were companions in distress because my own gave me much trouble. He counselled me never to put a strain on my eyes as sight is the most precious of God's gifts and worth more to us than all that

has been printed since the days of Caxton — even including the works of Frank Richards.

He was of the opinion that prices of his books were too high. How glad he was when his stories came out in a 2/6d edition. When his first "Western" novel, *The Lone Texan*, was published at 2/- he found it rather amusing to think of "an old bean starting a new line at eighty." He never made any mention to me of having written the Rio Kid yarns.

I asked Mr. Richards once if he would welcome the return of *The Magnet*, but he told me that it would never come to life again and in all truth he did not want it to — he much preferred writing books.

On telling him that an H. M. Inspector of Taxes, who picked up a "Bunter book" I had with me, was of the opinion that he (Frank Richards) had amassed a fortune he laughed this off, although he admitted a fortune was made, but it did not come his way. The tax system of the country was always a sore point

with him—he made this clear in his *Autobiography*.

His fondness for children was one of his virtues. He never failed to ask after my young daughter and brought her great delight when he sent her a *Jack of All Trades* book, autographed, on publication. He told her that he often thought of a wee lassie in Bonnie Scotland. Although grown up now, she treasures the book still.

MR. RICHARDS' last letter to me shortly before his death showed his feelings for his fellow man. I had mentioned that I had the Holy Loch, where the Polaris submarines are based, practically on my doorstep, and he told me that he had thought of me when he had heard of the new base and said that "Holy Loch" was a misnomer, for a more unholy beast of a thing than the Polaris would be hard to imagine.

It did seem strange, he went on, that nearly two thousand

years of Christianity had produced no better results than this, but the news from all quarters seemed to indicate that Satan was still walking to and fro on the earth. I could not agree with him more when he concluded by saying that at times he wondered if we should not be better off if all the "scientific johnnies could be packed in a large sack and dropped into the middle of the Atlantic."

During a recent visit, my Padre was discussing with me various books and authors, and Frank Richards' name came into our talk. He (the Padre) was most enthusiastic about Mr. Richards' works and mentioned that the author did a great deal of good, including what amounted to the backing of some home or other for unfortunate boys.

FROM HIS WRITINGS and letters, and from hearsay, I can conclude that Frank Richards was indeed "A Very Gallant Gentleman."

Gleanings From *The Gem* and *The Magnet*

"TWUE HEWOES are always modest," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sapiently. "I am a wather modest chap myself."—*The Gem*, Number 434.

"I'D APOLOGISE if I were in the wrong. I'd apologise if I made a mistake. I may mention that I've never had to apologise yet."—Horace Coker in *The Magnet*, Number 1042.

—Quotations selected by Roger M. Jenkins.

WILL THEY RETURN?---NO!

I THE EXCELLENT ARTICLE by W. O. G. Lofts in S. P. C. Number 92, *They Will Not Return*, will arouse once again the old arguments as to the possibilities of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* being successfully revived. Facts and figures indicate that these once-popular publications will never again grace the bookstall counters.

Charles Hamilton at his best produced work of a quality that appealed to both young and adult readers. Humour, mystery, tense situations, detailed locality descriptions, combined with superb dialogue and his own wonderful characters, resulted in the finest of school stories.

Unless it must be accepted that the modern generation has no interest in clean, wholesome reading, the reason for the failure of attempts to revive the Greyfriars saga must be looked for elsewhere.

The *Armada* paperbacks, excellent efforts though they are, cannot be considered in regard to a weekly paper. But the exclusion of the best of the Greyfriars stories to allow Billy Bunter (and not the best of Bunter) to dominate the *Look and Learn* series ruined what could have been a wonderful boost for the old stories. But of course they

were entitled *Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*.

Series such as Wharton Rebel, Brander, and Popper's Island, and many excellent single stories of the 1927-1934 period, aided by modern printing and colour, might have produced a demand for a *Magnet* equally as large as in the old days.

With regret we must accept that the youth of today have been denied the choice of accepting or rejecting the best of Charles Hamilton, and agree with Mr. Lofts that *The Magnet* and *The Gem* will never come back.

—JOHN TROVELL

* *

2 THE ARTICLE, *They Will Not Return*, by W. O. G. Lofts in S.P.C. Number 92 was most interesting—and true. My own sons, nephews, and nieces have at various times expressed an opinion on my very small collection of “treasures”—“old-fashioned.” If school tales were fashionable at one time, they are definitely “out” with the modern readers between 10 and 14 years of age.

If I had been born between 45 and 50 years on, I also should have preferred tales of adventure in space, and wars of the worlds, to tales of healthy, clean-living schoolboys. Tuck-hunting, the

illicit cigarette in the study, games of billiards in the back room of a drinking house, or the wicked game of cards for real money in the depth of the woods, are "small fry" in a world where the young mature so very early and know (if only at second-hand) of such things as purple hearts and other "kicks" while still at school.

While deploring the modern habits, manners, and thought—wasn't it ever thus?—I accept this "progress" as inevitable as old age, however unpleasant.

I have always strongly believed that my love of *Magnets*, *Gems*, and other papers is in the

Correction: Page 345, column 1, artist's name should read Arthur E. Clarke, not Arthur H.

In Daily Doses . . .

I'm not fond
Of James Bond.
I'd sooner take
Sexton Blake.

—O. W. WADHAM

Does Anyone Remember . . .

—or have any information about a favourite story of mine called *Where Time Stood Still*? It was a story of pre-historic times and was in the coloured comic paper *Comic Life* about 1913 or 1914.—Tom Armitage, 205 Batley Road, Alverthorpe, Wakefield, Yorks.

main based on pure nostalgia—home-sickness—and the amount of literary merit is not of paramount importance. The young readers of today have not, and cannot have, any nostalgia for "Billy Bunter weeklies."

Mr. Lofts is right when he states that Fleetway Publications would not hesitate to produce such weeklies if they thought there was a market for them. He is, as we all know, a "detective" of a high order, a meticulous gatherer of statistics, and, above all, a realist.—MAURICE KUTNER

* *

B THIS PAGE was left open until the last so that any further remarks suitable to appear under the section heading could be included. But there have been no more such remarks, at least none that carried any definite views on the subject beyond great appreciation of the *Magnet Library* Number 1 reprint.

Copies of this reprint have been welomed here; some were passed along to friends; one is now in our *Magnet* collection with our copy of the original Number 1, which we wish was in half as good condition.

It did seem that there would be further reprinting of Greyfriars stories, but whatever plans were in the making have, we understand, been postponed.

THE CORNER CUPBOARD: 11

A Chips Collaboration?

IF A NOTICE appearing in *Chips* dated January 2nd, 1915, was correct, that famous long-run serial in *Comic Cuts*, *The Red Rovers*, had two authors. The *Chips* announcement proclaims:

A Powerful New Story-Drama,
"The Grand Adventure; or,
The Convict's Luck,"
By the Authors of "The Blue
Lamp," "The Red Rovers," etc.,
Starts Next Week in "Chips."

In W. O. G. Lofts' article, *The Wonder Library* (S. P. C. Number 61) the author of *The Red Rovers* is given as E. Newton Bungay, while *The Blue Lamp* is credited to John Edmund Fordwich.

Could it be that those two writers collaborated in producing serials for *Chips* and *Comic Cuts*?

Reprinted as Number 13 of *Wonder Library*, *The Grand Adventure* is listed by Mr. Lofts in the S.P.C. article as "Author not known." If the *Chips* announcement was correct, the story was produced by the Bungay/Fordwich combination, so that mystery is solved.

And if John Edmund Ford-

wich did collaborate with E. Newton Bungay in producing *The Red Rovers* in its early period, it would be interesting to learn how many years they worked together on that long-run serial story.

Fordwich must have been a busy man: six *Wonder Library* yarns out of fourteen are credited to him; only two to E. Newton Bungay.

Maybe another *Chips* serial, *The Pride of the Potteries*, which was *Wonder Library* Number 4, also listed as "Author not known," could have come from the pens of Bungay and Fordwich.

Anyway, that *The Grand Adventure* advertisement in the New Year number of *Chips* for 1915 may cause curious collectors to ponder deeply.

—O. W. WADHAM

*

AFTER SENDING the above article to us, Mr. Wadham wrote: "According to a *Chips* I now have, *The Grand Adventure* was credited to John Edmund Fordwich. So . . . did two authors collaborate on the story or not?"

It may be that the notice in *Chips* really meant that one of the authors (E. Newton Bungay) wrote *The Red Rovers*, and the other (John Edmund Fordwich) wrote *The Blue Lamp*; not that they collaborated in writing the

two stories, even if *The Grand Adventure* was a joint effort.

—W. H. G.

* * *

A Serial Story From Long Ago

IT WAS intended that the following should be included with the short article about Edward F. Herdman in the previous issue, but space did not permit. It is the start of a serial story written by Mr. Herdman in 1873 at the age of 12½ years for his amateur paper, *The Boys' Friend*.

The Wreckers of Rusty Crag

It was a dark, murky night towards the end of November. Thick, dense clouds hung heavily overhead. Not a star was to be seen. The roads were thick with mud, the result of the heavy rains which had fallen for days previous. All was as silent as the grave. Even in day time Rusty Crag was a forsaken and desolate spot. There was not a house within five miles, look any way you liked. The place had, no doubt, got its name from the beetling rock which stood out like some grim monster away to the West, beyond which rolled the great Irish Sea.

At the time of which we are writing, a solitary figure of a man could be seen making his way across a field towards a path which led

down to the beach. As he approached the path he looked . . .

The story runs over on to the next page, so anyone wishing to continue with it will have to locate a copy of Mr. Herdman's *The Boys' Friend* Number 1. But perhaps it is possible to provide an ending:

As he approached the path he looked to left and right, saw no wreckers, so went home. THE END.

It was such a dark, murky night, anyway.

* * *

I Loved Them All!

I CAN WELL sympathise with Jim Cook. I have read again his article which appeared in *The Story Paper Collector* for January, 1965. I know just how he feels when criticism is levelled at *The Nelson Lee Library* in favour of *The Magnet* and *The Gem*.

I think it is all rather unfair. Of course, the stories in *The Nelson Lee Library* were good. Certainly, they were enjoyable; and they were enthralling.

There was only one series which did not appeal to me. That was over the period when St. Frank's and the old crowd gave way to *The Night Hawk*. To my mind the publishers made a mistake of the first magnitude there, because the stories

broke with tradition and would have been better suited to a new publication altogether or to one or other of the books of the time which offered adventure or fantasy yarns of similar type.

No! There was nothing wrong with the St. Frank's stories. I consider they were every bit as absorbing as those of St. Jim's and Greyfriars or Rookwood. And I suppose I can be considered some sort of judge.

After all, I read the lot!

I was lucky enough to have *The Magnet* on Monday, *The Popular* on Tuesday, *The Gem* and *The Nelson Lee* every Wednesday. In addition I was able to buy *The Boys' Friend Library* and *The Schoolboys' Own Library* (both 4d a copy), and *The Monster Library* (1/-). I had access to some issues of *The Boys' Friend*, *The Boys' Realm*, *The Champion*, and *The Boys' Magazine*.

I still have those cherished birthday presents from 1924 to 1928 inclusive — *The Greyfriars Holiday Annual*. I have also the bound volume of *The Nelson Lee* dealing with *The Death of Walter Church* and *The St. Frank's Circus*. And, perhaps the best loved of all — bound in morocco leather, dust-proof edged and embossed in gold — *The Schoolboy Magician*, or the *Adventures of Ezra Quirke*; not to mention

the sequel, *The Return of Ezra Quirke*.

Yes! Those far away days were truly the golden era of school stories. To this day I enjoy slipping away into an imaginary dream world — be it at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, or St. Frank's. I loved them then and I love them still: I read them then and I read them still.

I loved them all! And to my mind there was nothing to choose between any of them.

—LESLIE VOSPER

* * *

Bully Hayes: Pirate

IN HIS ARTICLE in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 91 Jack Overhill mentions a *Newnes Library* book, *Bully Hayes—Blackbirder*. Bully Hayes was a real person, possibly the most engaging of the many wild, lawless characters who haunted the South and China Seas in the '60s, '70s, and '80s of the last century. Hayes stopped short at absolutely nothing, from robbing copra stations to women-stealing, from plundering junks to schooner-wrecking.

He owned many very fast ships, the finest of which was probably the *Leonora*, a lovely little brig, extraordinarily fast for her size, 218 tons, built at Aberdeen and originally an opium

clipper. She carried no fewer than eight muzzle-loading truck guns on her main deck, which made her literally a terror to all ships other than naval vessels. I have a picture of the *Leonora* in her "black-birding war paint" — one of the few photographs ever taken of her — which shows what a lovely yacht-like craft she was.

Hayes was probably the last pirate in the true tradition of Captain Kidd, Avery, and "Black-beard" Teach. At least two biographies have been written of him: *Bully Hayes — South Sea Pirate*, by Basil Lubbock, the famous writer on the Clipper Ships, and *Modern Buccaneer*, by Rolf Boldrewood.

Hayes is also mentioned quite a bit in Louis Becke's *South Sea Reminiscences*. Incidentally, Becke, one of the finest writers ever on the South Seas, wrote at least one serial, *The Jalasco Brig*, for *The Captain*, published, I think, in the early 1900s, so it is possible he may also be the author of the story mentioned by Mr. Overhill.

— W. J. A. HUBBARD

* * *

Short Comments On Articles in # 92

MAURICE KUTNER'S *The Comic World* I found excellent and I

liked the little drawings accompanying it. The Frank Norris article by Henry Adams Puckner interested me, for I still remember the horrible but, I suppose, just death of the *Octopus* character. I had no idea Norris died so young. Upton Sinclair and he would have had much in common. — A. M. DAVIDSON

I was particularly impressed with Maurice Kutner's article *The Comic World*. One realizes that pretty well every basic situation in life has been dealt with in "Comic" form, and even though dealt with in light humorous style can still carry beneficial weight, so to speak.

— HAYDN SALMON

THE *Chatterbox* article brought warm memories of childhood enchantment over this publication. I am searching among my papers for a possible copy kept all these years. — WALTER J. HELD
Oakland, Calif., U.S.A.

* * *

More About Those Small People

The appearance of the several small figures in the pages of S.P.C. Number 92 brought these comments:

MAURICE KUTNER'S *The Comic World* ably describes the type of humour that reminds me of Frank Tousey's weekly, *Snaps*. I see some old familiar figures in

the text, Palmer Cox's Brownies: the Dude Brownie, the Irish Brownie, the Brownie Policeman, the German Brownie, and, on page 329, one whose name I cannot recall.

As a small youngster, the Brownies were great favorites of mine. I even had a set of large blocks with pictures of them on



all sides, in color: the Dude, the Indian, the Policeman, the Chinese Brownie, the Eskimo, and others. On several Christmas-es and birthdays a new Palmer Cox book was sure to be

among the gifts: *The Brownies—Their Book*, and *The Brownies Around the World* were among the titles.

Cox's pictures required close study, I remember, there being so many of the little elves doing so many things: one picture showing the Brownies in a toy shop, for instance, where they were dancing with the dolls to a tinkling music-box, the jack-in-the-box leaping up and scaring a score or more, and a rocking-horse coming apart from so many hanging on it.

— J. EDWARD LEITHEAD

Philadelphia, Penn., U.S.A.

¶ All that, Mr. Leithead indicates, was more than fifty years ago, so

the Brownies were no longer young when those little rubber-stamp pictures were bought about 1930. In the set there were two more figures, one of which could not be fitted into Maurice Kutner's article but is given on this page, while the other seems to have been lost. It was that of a little old fellow stepping briskly along.

* * *

Titanic Disaster Foretold In Book

THE STORY mentioned by Henry Adams Puckrin in S.P.C. Number 91 as foretelling the Titanic disaster was, I think, written in 1902, some ten years before the sinking of the famous liner. Not only did the author of the book have the dimensions and other particulars of his fictitious ship very close to those of the *Titanic*, but he actually gave her the name of *Titan*. I am almost sure this book is mentioned in one of the finest accounts ever written of the sinking of the *Titanic*—*A Night to Remember*.

It may also interest Mr. Puckrin that a story in a boys' paper foretold an attempt on the life of King Alfonso of Spain, which actually did occur in 1908 on the occasion of the king's marriage to Princess Ena of Battenburg. The story was published in one of the Aldine papers

and Herbert Leckenby wrote an article on the subject which appeared in *The Collectors' Digest*.

—W. J. A. HUBBARD

* * *

Early Charles Hamilton Tale Reprinted in 1916

*Splendid Story of the Old Slave
Traffic Days!*

THE CORSAIR CAPTAIN

By Chas. Hamilton.

This popular author needs no introduction to my chums. His works are well known the world over. This story is no exception to the rule of his general excellence—in fact, I will go so far as to say it is one of his very best.

THE ABOVE WORDING is printed over a story in *Pluck Library* Number 587, January 29th, 1916, but Charles Hamilton had not written it recently. Actually this story first appeared in, probably, *Union Jack* or *Marvel*, or even in *Pluck* itself, in the 1890s. In *U. J.* Number 171 of the halfpenny series is the story *Captain Nemo*; or, *Tracked O'er the Seas*, "By Chas. Hamilton. Author of *The Corsair Captain*, etc., etc." The date of *Union Jack* Number 171 is July 29th, 1897.

In 1915 and 1916 *Pluck* was using some material reprinted from papers of earlier years. In Number 580, December 11th,

1915, there is one of Sidney Drew's complete stories, *Ching-Lung's Stores*, "introducing all your old favourites," who were Prince Ching-Lung, Ferrers Lord, Rupert Thurston, Prout, Maddock, Gan-Waga, O'Rooney, and others. The illustrations were by Arthur E. Clarke who died in 1911, which suggests that this story was a reprint.

As I may have stated before in *S.P.C.*, *Pluck* of 1915 and 1916 (when it ended in March at Number 595 of the new series, like *The Magnet* 24 years later, because of paper shortage) is of special interest to me. Mainly, no doubt, because I was reading it week by week then. My reading any Amalgamated Press paper in those days was like unto a kiss of death: every one I began buying regularly soon came to a sad end—until I returned to *The Boys' Friend*, *The Gem*, and *The Magnet*. All of these were strong enough to continue for many years.

Pluck in its later years seemed to be a "catchall." It did have its resident Scotland Yard detective, Will Spearing, as a regular attraction, but in its pages were to be found Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee, Dr. Huxton Rymer, Charlie Chaplin, Billy Merson (another movie comedian), Captain Handyman, Cap'n Tibbs (in humorous stories), Tom Mix,

George Marsden Plummer, and Broncho Billy—plus a host of others who made just one appearance, or only a few.

An interesting point regarding the Ching-Lung stories: of the first story of this intermittent series, in Number 551, May 22nd, 1915, it is stated: "Getting Them Out has been written expressly for this issue of *Pluck*. It is not a reprint." But the illustrations to this story also were by Arthur H. Clarke. The "not a reprint" claim was not made about the Ching-Lung stories which followed, all of them—that I have—being accompanied by Clarke illustrations.

Fifty years since I was buying and reading *Pluck* each week! It does not seem that long ago! It is even longer ago—60 years, 1906—since *Pluck* secured for itself a niche in the O. B. B. Hall of Fame by presenting the first St. Jim's stories. —W. H. G.

* * *

A Vanity Fair Reader

I SUBSCRIBED to Joseph Parks' magazine *Vanity Fair*, which dealt more with the Victorian "bloods" than with the books of our generation. It was very interesting all the same. It was through *Vanity Fair* that I met Barry Ono, the "penny dreadful king." I visited him two or three times. What a collection he had! There

was enough blood in it to float both the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth*! I found Barry Ono a very charming man. He was a Music Hall act, and I remember seeing his "turn" at the old Rotherhithe Music Hall—long since demolished—it was near the river, in those days a tough neighbourhood.

—CHARLIE WRIGHT

* * *

A Different Comic

BEGINNING IN 1912* in the golden age of comics and finally taking the count in 1940 by being combined with *The Wonder*, in 1920 *The Jester* was more of a story paper than a comic, with strong adult appeal. Readers could see at a glance that *The Jester* was different from the other comics on the newsstands.

The issue I have—March 20th, 1920—has half of the front page showing a striking illustration from *Birds of Prey*, one of the three serials. Below, six small picture-panels show the adventures of Slim Jim.

The only other "comics" are on page 8, where four regular characters entertain: Moonlight Moggie, Harry Coe the Priceless Old Bean, R. Dupp the Artful Artist, and Freddie the Flunkey.

Readers of serials in *The Jester*

* After being *Jester* and *Wonder* since 1902.—Editor.

certainly got more for their money than they did in any other comic in 1920. Each story ran two full pages. The first was a very adult effort, *Silk! Cotton! Rags!* by Vera Louvenal, a story of the lives and loves of two Lancashire lasses. It was mentioned that Miss Louvenal also wrote *Jazz*, another *Jester* serial.

Then there is a two-page complete story, with the announcement that its chief character, Pat O'Flynn, would be featured the following week in a new serial, *The Romance of O'Flynn*. Two more pages were given to *Birds of Prey*.

How long *The Jester* devoted six of its eight pages to fiction I do not know. Copies are hard to come by now, especially those of the 1918-20 period. This suggests that it was largely bought by an age group older than those who bought the other comics in the same years. Maybe that is why so few have survived.

—O. W. WADHAM

* * *

It Could Have Been The Corner Cupboard Issue!

WITH LOTS of type and a larger press, an issue of S.P.C. could be printed in a very few press-runs. With a small press such as ours it wouldn't matter how much type we had, the pages can only

be printed one at a time. We have enough type for six pages, seven if there is a lot of italic in them. Usually we set type as far as possible and then print pages consecutively starting at the first one, then distributing the type into the cases and repeating the process.

This issue has been handled differently. Our stock of paper ran low, there being on hand only enough sheets for eight pages. The first four were run off, and still there was no new supply of paper. So it was decided there should be twenty pages and the last four were printed. When work on them was completed the paper came and we went back to the fifth page—but we skipped page 338 which will be the last one to come off the press.

This is one of the infrequent issues when we do not have one long article. But there is a thick file of shorter items—contributed pieces, extracts from letters, and some of our own—forming a reservoir of material that is drawn on for *The Corner Cupboard* or for page-fillers. That file is thinner now, and this S. P. C. could have been called *The Corner Cupboard Edition* if it wasn't already *The 25th Anniversary Number*. . . There is now on hand a long article for Number 94. +

JOSEPH PARKS OF VANITY FAIR

By ALMON HORTON

GEORGE MELL's interesting reminiscences in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 91 prompt me to submit many of the facts regarding the "gnome-like printer," Joseph Parks, as they appear in Chapter Seventy-two of my international, illustrated *History of Amateur Journalism*—a chapter still to be published.

Joseph Parks of Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Yorkshire, learned of the intriguing hobby of amateur writing, editing, printing and publishing through R. D. Williams of Manchester who, in 1902, produced a manuscript magazine styled *The Boys' Novelty Magazine*. During 1903-4 Joseph Parks compiled several issues of his own manuscript paper, *The Boys' Adviser*. In 1907 he compiled *The Coin Collector's Monthly*, which was a strange title for this venture considering that half of the magazine's sixteen pages were devoted to amateur literature.

In June, 1910, he was active with *The Comet* and *The Comet Advertiser*, "hobby papers of 4pp., neatly illustrated and novelties in their way." In September he was appointed a Committee member of the resuscitated British

Amateur Press Association, until the April, 1911, election. Three numbers of *The Southern Cross* he produced in 1914, and a fourth issue while on active service. In 1917 he printed the first issue of *Vanity Fair*, a paper devoted to Old Boys' Books, Philately, Numismatics, and Amateur Journalism. This illustrated magazine, after a few crudely-produced issues, made rapid progress and was very popular right up to its final number, for May-June, 1927. . . .

Then in April, 1928, came Number 1 of *The Collector's Miscellany*—Number 32 Old Series, being a continuation of *Vanity Fair*. Lavish in the use of line and half-tone blocks, this 5" by 8" publication devoted generous space to articles on Old Boys' Books, Numismatics, Match Box Labels, Stamps, Curios, and unusual aspects of collecting. Its circulation averaged 1,000 copies. Two years later the magazine was enlarged, but a new series from November-December, 1932, reverted to the former page size. It catered for collectors of "Penny Dreadfuls," Coins, Stamps, Cigar Bands, and Post Marks, and for people interested in

Toy Theatres of the Victorian era.

From 1942, while Joseph Parks was on war rescue service, J. A. Birkbeck of Dundee published eight numbers of *The Collector's Miscellany*, 4th Series, the 5th Series beginning in 1946 reverting to the original publisher. In February, 1947, Joseph Parks wrote: "I have knocked about the world quite a lot, have been at sea, soldiered in France in the first World War, and was engaged on rescue work during the bombing in this last one. . ."

Stories of highwaymen, Old Boys' Books, and Match Box Labels, were always interests dear to the heart of Joseph Parks. Eventually he had to enter hospital as his health was deteriorating rapidly. When he was discharged he intimated to his relatives that he did not feel he would ever be able to work in his printshop again. He went back, however, to his old interest of Match Box Labels and had accumulated a fair-sized collection before his death, at the age of 62, on August 10th, 1954.

YE OLDE BOOK SHOPPE

By MAURICE HALL

READING Jack Overhill's recollection of Dobbie Locker's "paper" shop (S. P. C. Number 91), I recalled one of my own—a recollection, that is.

It was back during the war, in 1940, when I was a youth, young enough anyway to be an enthusiastic follower of Greyfriars and its associated schools. About two miles from my home of that time was a level crossing which was a draw for me in itself, although the main attraction lay

on the far side of the white gates, in the shape of a rather dingy old shop. It was the sort that had not been painted for years, as the cracked and faded green paint showed.

Bad though the outside of the shop looked, the dark atmosphere inside out-did it. Shelves climbed from floor to ceiling, stacked with books and magazines. The prospective customer would have to state his requirements and see what happened.

On one visit to this collectors' paradise I entered to find the shop deserted, but after a few moments' wait soft shuffling foot-steps preceded the entry of the owner. My memory of the shop is better than that of

the owner. He was, as far as I can recall, a rather small, unshaven figure, stooping a little from age, with a pair of old style Billy Bunter-type "specs."

He approached the long box-like counter and asked me what I wanted. I do not remember what I replied, but I do recall his bending down to select from the top of a pile of small books a copy of *The Schoolboys' Own Library*. After he had blown the dust off it proved to be *The Beggar of Shantung*. He asked face value for it, after peering closely at the price. If only I could pay that little for it now!

The number of books and magazines that the shelves held — apart from those which he may have had at the back of the shop — must have been in the region of four to five thousand.

I made only a few calls at the shop, purchasing the odd copy each time. The old chap made no effort to force a sale, merely bringing out one copy — which was all I could afford.

Unhappily, the story has a sad ending. One dark and dismal night the Germans dropped a stick of bombs which, although they did not hit the shop, did cause old fellow to die of a heart attack.

The news was slow getting around to me and by the time it did the shop and its contents

had been sold. The new owner turned the place into a cafe and sweets/tobacconist shop, only a few salmon-cover *Magnets* ever showing up for sale.

What happened to all those books and magazines remains a deep mystery to me. The shop was almost opposite the Rutlish School buildings at Merton Park, S.W.19, around the corner from Hartfield Road.

THEY SERVED US WELL

I WAS MOST interested in the further comments on the subject of Robin Hood by W.J.A. Hubbard and W.T. Thurbon in S.P.C. Number 91. It is possible, in fact quite probable, that no such individual as Robin Hood actually existed, but mankind and the major religions have ever believed in the arrival of the one who will free them from slavery and cure all ills.

When the selection of real men is made, as in the case of a dictator or autocrat, mistakes can be grievous, so it is far better and safer to select an imaginary hero, a William Tell or a Robin Hood. Perhaps in medieval times the sufferings of the superstitious, illiterate, and down-trodden peasantry gave rise to

wishful thinking of the hero who was forever fighting injustice on their behalf.

A people without hope are lost indeed, so it is surely necessary to bolster up belief and hope for the future, either in a heavenward direction, or with the more legendary tales of heroism and hope, passed on by word of mouth (with its attendant evolution of exaggeration) from father to son until there arises a generation that really does believe in the hero's existence and in his mighty deeds.

As each king should be surrounded by a court and trappings of power worthy of his station, so Robin Hood is permitted his little "court" comprising Friar Tuck, Maid Marian, Little John, Will Scarlett, and Allan-a-Dale.

If these characters are mere figments of the imagination, there is no sense of loss. They have served us well, if not in actually turning the course of history, at least in the many pleasant hours which we have devoted to reading, in those very early and happy days when selectivity had no meaning for us, when we had little patience to properly digest our reading, quickly exchanging our periodicals amongst our friends—and reading on.

—MAURICE KUTNER

Robin Hood: He Was Necessary!

THERE HAVE BEEN several contributions in recent issues on the subject of Robin Hood. It is therefore of interest to note that W. O. G. Lofts had an excellent article, *The Real Robin Hood*, in the July, 1965, issue of *The Saint Mystery Magazine*.

When discussing the writing of the article with Leslie Charteris, author of the Saint stories and Supervising Editor of the magazine, Mr. Lofts remarked that the subject was a highly controversial one. He reports that Mr. Charteris replied:

"Remember that what Voltaire said about God applies almost as well to King Arthur or to Robin Hood: if he had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him. Maybe it should be scrutinized as a legend, but to debunk it entirely would destroy too much of our mythological heritage."

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