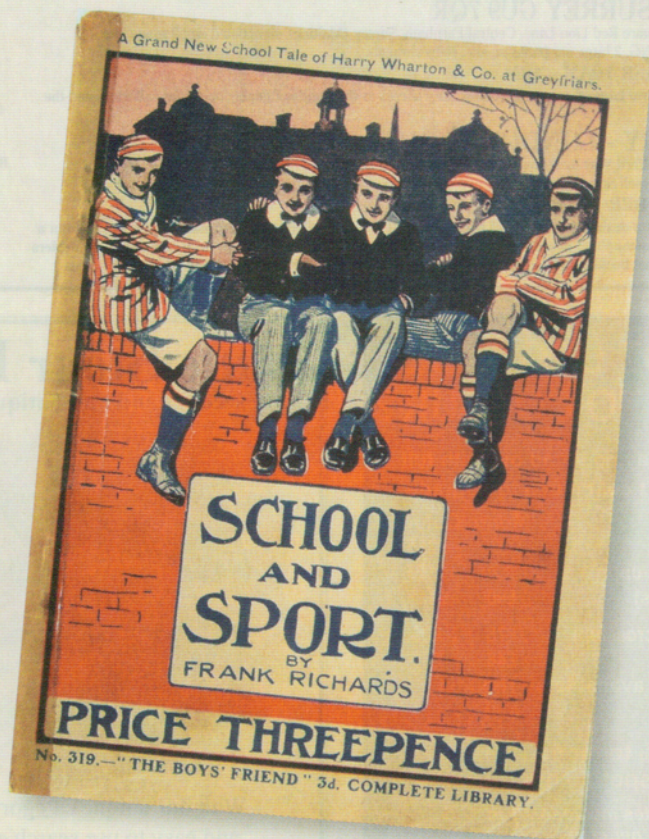


GEORGE RICHMOND SAMWAYS



By David Whitehead

When George Richmond Samways died at the age of 101 on 8 August 1996, 'old boys' everywhere bade a sad farewell to the last survivor of the age of the so-called 'Companion Papers'. Because Samways — who adored the fictional universe of Charles Hamilton (BMC 2, 30, 61, 72, 93, 114, 147) — played an important part in the early success of the *Magnet*, *Gem* and others as the immortal 'Frank Richards' himself. Indeed, *Magnet* editor C.M. Down never made any secret of his admiration for the author, whom he always considered to be his most useful staff writer.

Samways was such a prolific wordsmith that to list his entire output here would require a book the size of a London Telephone Directory. He penned close to a hundred Greyfriars stories for the *Magnet* and at least a further fifty St. Jim's yarns for the *Gem*. He claimed to have produced most of the fillers published in the *Greyfriars Holiday Annuals* (i.e. the verses and items related to the schools) and using the names of fictional schoolboys, also wrote verse, jingles and stories for those beloved four-page supplements, the *Greyfriars Herald* and *St. Jim's Gazette*. As 'Dicky Nugent', Samways created the infamous 'Dr Birchmal' of St. Sam's (the name of this imaginary school being taken from the first part of his surname), and it is now

known that, in all, his work appeared under more than twenty pseudonyms.

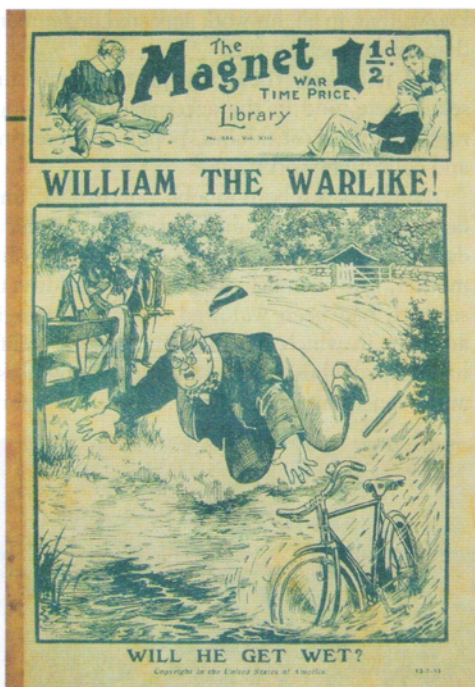
Of necessity, then, we must restrict ourselves here, and in the accompanying bibliography, to his most famous, popular, interesting and collectible works.

Samways was born in a blizzard in 1895 and delivered by his grandmother when the local doctor failed to arrive in time. Unfortunately his mother, who already had three other children to support, had been widowed following a tragic accident in which her husband, a farm bailiff, had slipped whilst trying to train a young horse and been trampled to death. Thus, the infant

**MAGNIFICENT, NEW SCHOOL STORY OF
ROOKWOOD, GREYFRIARS, & ST. JIM'S.**



Football Champions, published in December 1919, was another sporting issue of the Boys Friend Library written by Samways under the 'Frank Richards' byline. Like its predecessor it too concentrated on sporting adventure.



Magnet 544: "William The Warlike", published in July 1918, was one of close on a hundred Greyfriars stories Samways wrote for the weekly.

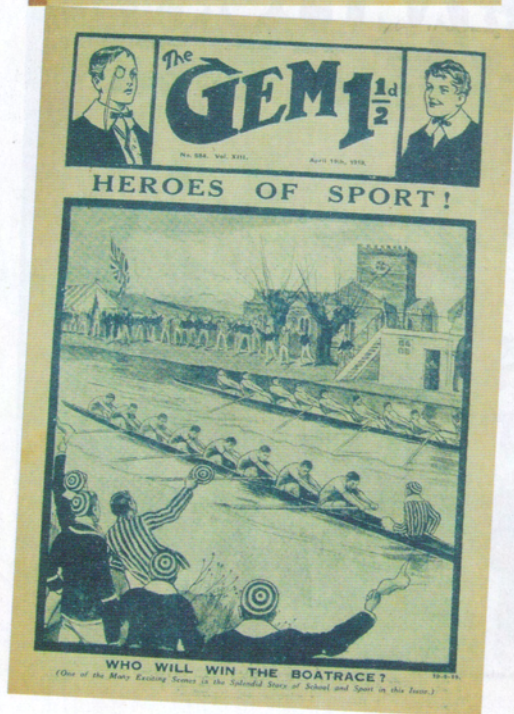
"Heroes of Sport" in **Gem** No. 584, published in April 1919, was one of the many stories of St Jims that Samways wrote for **The Gem**.

George (who was named after the father he never knew) found himself born into a family that was both homeless and without funds.

That being the case, it was only a matter of time before the Samways children were split up, George's two brothers going to live with relations not far from his grandparents' home in Kingsclere, Hampshire, and his disabled sister to a 'crippleage' in London. George himself grew up in the care of his grandparents, and though his childhood was happy and well-adjusted, he was to suffer a lasting sadness at never really knowing his mother, later observing of her, "Never have I known so bleak and joyless a life, barren of happiness, and star-crossed, it seemed, by a malign fate. The closing years of her life brought few consolations... (and) I am sure that when death ultimately came to her, it was in the guise of an angel of mercy".

Up to the age of ten, Samways attended his local village school, where he dreamed of becoming a famous poet, or playing cricket for Hampshire. In September 1905, he transferred to King Edward VI School in Witley, Surrey, a charity school founded by Royal Charter in 1553... although the young Samways soon discovered that there was nothing charitable about it. "Corporal punishment in its severest form was inflicted daily", he later recalled. "Solitary confinement on a bread and water diet was a punishment frequently employed".

A gifted student with a particular love of poetry, he was always interested in writing, and in fact sold his first poem to *Under The Dome*, the magazine of the Bethlem Royal Hospital, when he was just eleven years old, earning himself the princely sum of ten shillings (50p) in the process. Despite this modest success, however, life at boarding school remained a largely gloomy



Thrilling Adventures of Middy Nelson in "Chuckles"!

13



THE DAREDEVIL SCHOOLBOY

Exploits of a High Spirited and Fearless Boy,
Whose Wild Pranks Cause Him to be Expelled
from the School and Join a Cinema Company.

By PAUL PROCTOR.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Trafford, a high-spirited, fearless boy of St. Peter's School, brings about the downfall of Jasper Steele, the unscrupulous headmaster, and is expelled by the latter out of revenge.

Dick is wandering along the country road, driven from his father's house in disgrace, when he comes in touch with the World-Famed Cinema Company at the "location" near the dangerous jump over the bridge at the last moment, as Dick comes forward and offers to take his place. The producer sees at once that Dick is no ordinary boy, and accepts the offer. Dick, dressed in uniform of a convict, waits on the parapet for the train on which he is to jump. The train comes roaring through the valley.

ceded to scramble, inch by inch, foot by foot, over the loose and shelving coal. Any moment might have been his last, for as he moved great lumps of coal fell upon his foothold, and he

plied the man in the fur coat. "Eustace Henderson is my name, and I run the World-Famed Cinema Company. I understand you've been responsible for saving the lives of everyone on this train, and I'd be very glad to give you a position in my company."

"THE DARE-DEVIL SCHOOLBOY!" STARTS TO-DAY!

Week Ending—
Mar. 26 & 1921.
New
Series,
No. 116

The POPULAR 11d 12d

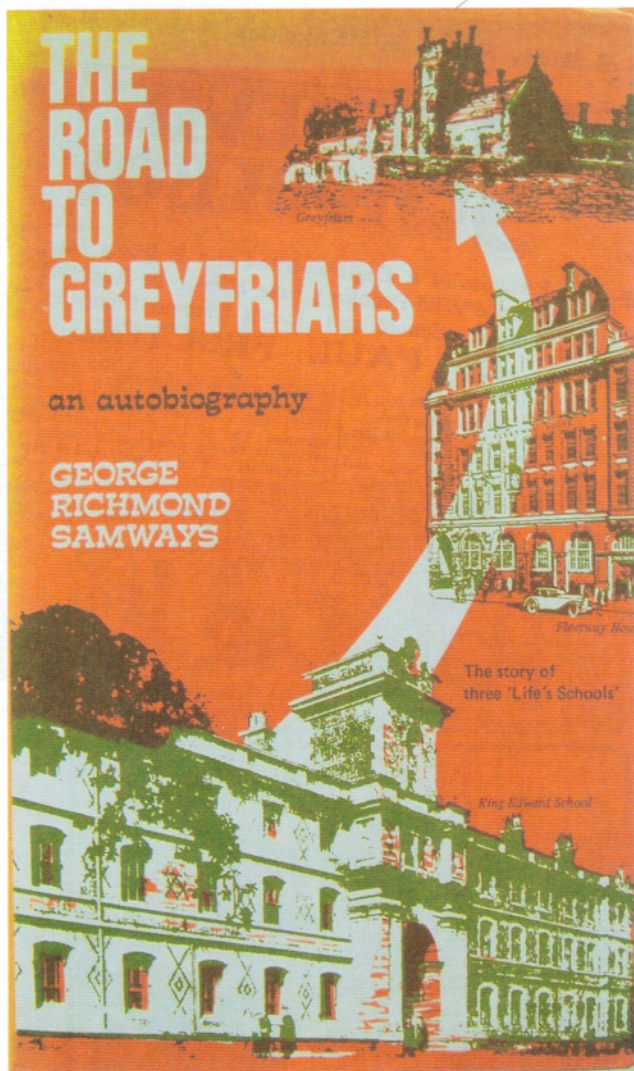
Stories, Jokes & Pictures
of Greyfriars, Rookwood & St. Jims

Title illustration for the third instalment of "The Dare-Devil Schoolboy" in The Popular No. 116.

The Popular for March 26 1921
banning the first instalment of
Samways' serial: "The Dare-Devil
Schoolboy", written under his Paul
Proctor byline.



CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF "BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY!" The Grand Supper in this town.



affair until Samways' mother (by this time the owner-manager of a Hampshire newsagents) sent him the very first issue of *Magnet* in February 1908.

Even though the story paper was quickly banned by his teachers, who considered it to be 'subversive', Samways became a committed fan, so much so that week after week he gave 'public readings' of the stories to his fellow pupils.

Leaving school a month after his sixteenth birthday, Samways went to work at the L.S.



The young Samways surrounded by some of the publications he wrote for. This photograph appeared in his autobiography.

The Road To Greyfriars, Samways' fascinating autobiography published by Howard Baker in 1984.

Starrett Company as a general dogsbody, his salary ten shillings per week. Life in a tool manufacturer's warehouse proved to be such a deadening experience, however, that he eventually made his way to Waterloo Station's ticket office, produced all his money and asked a bemused clerk how far it would take him. It took him to Guildford, in Surrey, from whence he eventually ended up in Southsea, Portsmouth, working as a stockbroker's clerk for the grandly named Portsmouth and Gosport Hide, Skin, Fat and Wool Company. It was during this period that they decided to send one of his poems to the *Magnet*.

A few weeks later, he was startled to read in the editorial page, "One of my Southsea readers has sent me some verses expressing appreciation of his favourite paper, the *Magnet*. He does not

ask me to publish them, as some readers do, whether they are good or bad; but I have great pleasure in publishing them, for I think they are very good indeed".

Samways quickly saw a way to supplement his meagre 15s (75p) a week salary, and soon submitted some limericks and other light verse, for which he was paid 7/6d. Encouraged by this success, he promptly wrote twelve poems, each one dedicated to a different *Greyfriars* character, and for these he received six guineas. A further twelve poems about the schoolboys of St. Jim's quickly followed. As Samways later explained, "All the poems were written by candlelight in my bed-sitting room, with Flossie the cat lying at my feet. They were easy to write, for years of reading had familiarised me with all the characters at *Greyfriars* and St. Jim's. I simply had to produce a pen-picture of each, describing their virtues, or their faults and failings".

His '*Greyfriars* lyrics' and '*St. Jim's* jingles' soon became regular features in the *Magnet* and *Gem* respectively.

One Friday in 1914, editor H.A. Hinton summoned Samways to Fleetway House, the home of amalgamated press, and asked the fledgling writer to create his first 'Frank Richards' story. In *The Road To Greyfriars*, his marvellous 1984 autobiography, Samways is diplomatic in describing how this invitation came about, explaining that Charles Hamilton had gone on one of his periodic trips to the South of France, apparently not realising that his backlog of stories had dropped dangerously low. In truth, of course, Hamilton frequently missed deadlines because of his fondness for both travel and gambling, so ghost-writers (such as Samways was to become) were often drafted in to supply *Greyfriars* stories, for which they received just over half of Hamilton's fee.

Taking lodgings in London, Samways immediately set to work with typewriter and paper supplied by Fleetway House. "In a situation of this sort, there was only one thing to do, and I did it", the author subsequently confessed. "I prayed for help! Soon I grew calmer, and it was impressed on my mind what to do. Instead of plunging into the story with frenetic haste, I should go out and have a meal, then retire early. A plan would be

The Fleetway House, headquarters of *The Magnet* and *Gem* and countless other periodicals issued by the Amalgamated Press. Samways was very familiar with this building, now long demolished.



formulated in my subconscious mind whilst I slept, and on waking I should know exactly how to proceed. To my great delight, I awoke with the outline of the story clear in my mind".

Samways produced seven chapters over the weekend, and when these met with Hinton's approval on Monday morning, he was instructed to finish the manuscript, which he did by the following Thursday. The story — a Billy Bunter yarn set in and around *Greyfriars* — eventually appeared in the *Magnet's* 353rd issue (cover dated 14 November 1914) as 'The Reign of Terror'.

Although this story is a stylish, pacy yarn which cleverly mimics Charles Hamilton's distinctive style, copies take considerable finding today. Of course, early numbers of the *Magnet*, with their distinctive 'Red Brick' style covers, have for many years been the most difficult to find, and thus the most expensive, but should you be fortunate enough to track down this or any

Special Supplement to the "Holiday Annual," 1927.

BILLY BUNTER'S ANNUAL



COOLING MR. LICKHAM'S ARDOUR!

The hose started to play on Mr. Lickham as he mounted the ladder and a fierce jet of water knocked him backwards. He alighted with a wail of anguish on the Head's pet corn! (See "The Rebbles of St. Sam's!" inside)

(191)

Supplement 4.

Characters Samways created for his humorous 'St. Sams' school story skits are seen here used on a title page illustration for a supplement in the 1927 Greyfriars Holiday Annual.

come there, as one contemporary later confirmed, writing: "So familiar was he with Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and their numerous and diverse characters, that Samways was welcomed to the Fleetway House with a red carpet".

In all, Amalgamated Press published six of Samways' stories in the most collectable format (details of which are given in the accompanying bibliography) before making the change to blue and white (and later orange, yellow and blue) covers. One of Samways' best known *Magnet* stories, 'The Sunday Crusaders', came about as the result of a request to write "a sob-stuff story with religious overtones". His response appeared in the 400th issue (cover dated 9

October 1916), and because

subsequent issues containing a Samways story, you shouldn't have to pay more than a very reasonable £5-6 each in good condition.

'The Reign of Terror' was to have important ramifications for Samways, however. Not only did it earn him fifteen guineas and an invitation to produce more material, H.A. Hinton also offered him a job as the *Magnet's* sub-editor, at a salary of £5 a week.

Leaving Southsea, Samways promptly moved to London to take up his new post, and always described his days at the *Magnet* as the happiest days of his life. Certainly he was made to feel wel-

of its religious theme and background, hundreds of free copies were sent out to clergymen and headmasters throughout the country to prove that the *Magnet* was suitable reading for young people. Samways himself personally mailed a copy to his old headmaster, but the ban at King Edward School remained.

Following 'The Sunday Crusaders', his first and last attempt to tamper with the tried and tested *Magnet* formula, Samways penned almost ninety further stories, all of which were published in the newer format, and though he always claimed that Charles Hamilton's style was easy to

emulate, many readers who have made a life-long study of the canon can instantly tell one of Samways stories from that of Hamilton. To his credit, however, he created many new characters himself, including Archie and Phyllis Howell. His 93rd and final contribution to the *Magnet*, a typically rollicking, sport-orientated story entitled 'Schoolboys V Pros', appeared in the 919th issue, cover dated 19 September 1925. All of these later issues presently command between £3-4 each, in good condition, and amazingly are still relatively easy to find.

At the outbreak of the first World War, Samways took over sub-editorship of the Companion Papers from C.M. Down. At about this same time, Amalgamated Press launched *Chuckles*, a colour comic which featured original Greyfriars stories penned by Hamilton and the editor of *Magnet*. Later, Samways commenced a very long series of school stories of his own creation, featuring Teddy Baxter of Claremont School. The first of these tales appeared in the 96th issue and ran for about three years and well over 150 issues. Copies of *Chuckles* are much collected today (primarily, it must be said, for the cut-outs of Greyfriars and St. Jim's models), but should still cost no more than £3 a copy in good condition.

The following year Samways created his first *Greyfriars Herald* supplement, often producing the contents of every issue under the names of the school's fictional pupils, as we have already noted. Although Charles Hamilton himself was often scathing in his opinion of ghost-writers, however, variously describing them as "The Menagerie" or "wretched impostors", Samways always held them in the highest regard, maintaining that, "Substitute writers have in my opinion been most unjustly maligned. Some were original writers of great merit, who did not care for doing imitative work; but having been called upon in an emergency, they gave of their best. I can remember more than one occasion when their ready response to an SOS has preserved the continuity of the *Magnet* and *Gem*".

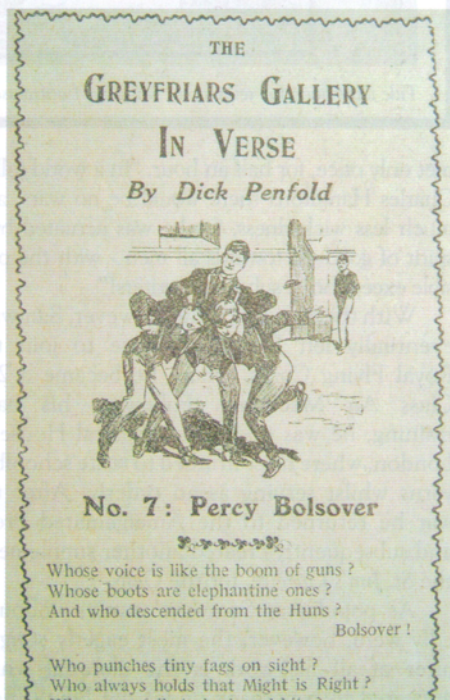
Also in 1915, Samways began his long association with the *Gem*. Under the pen-name of

'Martin Clifford', he wrote fifty-six stories, the first of which — a Tom Merry yarn entitled 'The St. Jim's Volunteers' — appeared in the 396th issue, cover dated 11 September 1919. It is unclear exactly when Samways made his final contribution to the paper, but it is most likely to have been with 'Baggy Trimble's Charity' in No 1006, cover dated 11 June 1927.

Although the *Gem*, too, eventually changed its distinctive cover colour from green to blue and white, nearly every issue is now valued at around £3-£4 each in good condition.

Several of Samways' early stories were written in collaboration with Amalgamated Press editor and one-time journalist John Nix Pentelow, which has made it difficult to attribute authorship with any degree of authority. Although Samways is effusive in his praise of Pentelow, however the two men rarely saw eye to eye. The author was similarly charitable when discussing Hamilton, whom he

Title vignette for one of the countless rhymes Samways wrote for the *Greyfriars Holiday Annual*



IN THE EDITOR'S DEN

By MONTY LOWTHER



Title illustration for yet another Samways feature used in a Greyfriars Holiday Annual.

met only once, for half an hour. "In a world full of Charles Hamiltons there would be no wars, and much less wickedness, for he was actuated by a spirit of goodwill towards all men - with the possible exception of substitute writers!"

With the war still raging, however, Samways eventually left Fleetway House to join the Royal Flying Corps, where he became a 2nd Class Air Mechanic. Following his basic training, he was posted to Adastral House in London, where he continued to write schoolboy yarns whilst serving as an orderly. After the war he returned to the Amalgamated Press, and subsequently created another supplement, the *St. Jim's Gazette*, for the *Gem*.

As popular as Samways' stories undoubtedly were, however, the most eagerly sought-after of all his work is the material which appeared in paperback under the *Boys' Friend*

Library banner between 1915 and 1936. Writing as Frank Richards, Samways' most famous story was *School & Sport*, which appeared in the 319th issue (cover dated December 1915). This yarn, which features all of the Magnet schools (Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Courtfield Grammar, Highcliffe and Rylcombe) was written at the express request of H.A. Hinton, who had learned that his readers wanted more sports stories, and though it has often been criticised for its lack of plot, copies in good condition can now fetch as much as £30 each. As with the early Magnets, this issue of *Boys' Friend Library* is very scarce, so it's likely that you'll have to search high and low before you can find a copy.

Equally rare, but somewhat cheaper, is *Pride of the Ring* (No 461, cover-dated May 1919), written as 'Mark Linley'. This paperback

reprints all the weekly instalments of a serial which originally appeared in the *Greyfriars Herald* throughout 1915 and as its title implies, is mainly concerned with boxing. Good copies of this hard to find title can change hands for at least £20, if you find one. Incidentally, aficionados of the Companion papers will recognise the author, 'Mark Linley', as a scholarship boy in the remove.

Samways' next contribution to *Boys' Friend Library* was an original story featuring Greyfriars and St. Jim's, entitled *Football Champions* (no 489, cover-dated December 1919). Issued under the 'Frank Richards' pseudonym, this issue presently commands a very reasonable £15 a copy in good condition.

Samways' penultimate *Boys' Friend* story was *Renton of the Rovers* (no 587, cover-dated December 1921) by 'Paul Masters'. This football story originally appeared in serial form in the *Gem* (issues 657 to 670) and featured Samways' own fictional school of St. Clives. *The Schoolboy Film Actor*, written as 'Paul Proctor', appeared in the *Boys Friend Library* second series (issue 543, cover dated September 1936) and is believed to have originated in the early days of the comic *Merry & Bright*, and later serialised in the second series of *Penny Popular* (issues 114 to 133). This title is very scarce today, but as with *Renton of the Rovers*, should cost no more than £10 for a copy in good condition.

In 1916, the London publisher Arthur H. Stockwell issued a modest collection of Samways' poetry, written during his time in the Royal Flying Corps. This slim little volume, entitled *War Lyrics*, did not meet with notable success, however, although it did showcase Samways' talents as a poet, of which the following is a typical example:

**"Let other Bards applaud the Guards
And the heroes of the line;
Britannia's sons who man the guns
With strength and skill divine.
Here's a health to those who swiftly
The men of the Royal Flying Corps!"**

Of course, it may not be the stuff of great literature, but it is certainly of sufficient interest to collectors to be worth £15-£20 a copy in good condition. "The title was a misnomer", Samways later lamented, "for few of the poems were directly associated with the war. Most were romantic love lyrics, too hurriedly written to possess any true poetic quality. The publishers must have been in a benign mood to have accepted them". The book is, of course, a very difficult one to find today, but copies do occasionally surface.

The author enjoyed greater success with his next book of verse, *Ballads of the Flying Corps* (Stockwell, 1917) because, as he admits, "I had taken pains with the poems, all of which dealt with some aspect of life in the Royal Flying Corps". The book, dedicated to all British airmen, was warmly received, and today can command a very fair £15 in good condition.

Samways' rarest book is undoubtedly *Fighting to the Front*, which was also published by Arthur H. Stockwell in 1917. Few details are known about this title, since the only known copy was destroyed by bombing during the Second World War. However, an entry in the *British Library Catalogue* suggests that this 'lost' title was a story of school life — though not in the style of the Companion Papers, as one particularly ironic review of the work made clear. "The schoolboy characters in this book talk like Oxford dons. We suggest that Mr Samways makes a study of the Greyfriars stories in the *Magnet*. These will give him a lesson in natural, unstilted dialogue".

Another poor seller at the time of publication, *Fighting to the Front* is an incredibly rare title presently worth between £40-£60 in good condition.

This same year, Samways married for the first time to Helene Logan, with whom he had one son and one daughter. By his own admission, however, "we were often separated from each other, not always through quarrels, but sometimes by amicable agreement. We always came together again, and were together when Helene's death in 1958 finally dissolved our strange, unregulated partnership". Shortly after

THE GREYFRIARS
HOLIDAY
 1924 ANNUAL 1924
 FOR BOYS AND GIRLS



The Limit!

The Greyfriars Holiday Annual for 1924. Samways contributed dozens of short pieces to most issues of the Greyfriars Holiday Annual. These were invariably under the byline of one or other of the Greyfriars Fourth Form Remove.

Helene's death, in fact, the author married for the second time, to Olive Field — whom he had first met during an air raid forty years earlier.

In 1919 Samways began his association with Amalgamated Press's *Penny Popular* — and popular it certainly was. In the beginning this title reprinted earlier stories of Charles Hamilton's famous three schools, Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood (all revised and updated for new readers by Arthur Aldcroft) and later added Sexton Blake yarns. After seventeen issues of the paper, however, new stories were introduced. Samways first contribu-

tion was "The Lads of Lancashire", which appeared in the eighteenth issue, cover-dated 24 May 1919. In all, he wrote some eighty-four titles for *Penny Popular*, his last story being the superlative "Christmas at Bunter Court", which appeared in the 101st issue, cover-dated Christmas Day 1920. In addition, he also created several memorable characters for the 'Remove', including 'Denis Carr', a character never actually used by his creator. Issues of *Penny Popular* in good condition are now worth about £2-£3 a copy.

In 1921 Samways turned freelance, moved to the Isle of Wight and wrote prolifically for *Flying*, *Aeronautics*, *The passing Show*, *John O'London's* and *Punch*, among others. By the late 1920s, however, wide-ranging changes at Fleetway House forced him to find an alternate source of income, and he embarked upon a career as a professional competition solutionist, selling solutions to hundreds of subscribers. Indeed, so good was he in this sphere of endeavour that he was able to use the many substantial prizes he won to supplement his income as a writer.

Over the next few years, Samways lost contact with his colleagues at Fleetway House. N.W. Twyman, an old school friend and editor of the Sexton Blake stories which appeared in *Union Jack*, heard that he had contracted tuberculosis and died in middle age. Happily, however, the author had never been in better health. Between 1942 and 1945, he served with the RAF in Iceland, afterwards returning to his

business as a competition solutionist. He pursued this enterprise through his later years, working from a new home in Dursley, Gloucestershire, where he regularly walked and swam to keep fit.

W. Howard Baker, the prolific British author, publisher and one-time editor of the Sexton Blake Library, issued Samways' autobiography *The Road to Greyfriars* in January 1984 to coincide with the Author's birthday, remarking proudly that the original manuscript had been so beautifully presented that it needed no sub-editing at all. Certainly the book has an enviable clarity of expression, and provides a

unique insight into the world of the Companion Papers, making it a fitting tribute to a remarkable man, and should cost no more than £12-15 in very good condition, in its distinctive orange dustjacket.

A man of strong religious beliefs, who neither smoked nor drank, Samways claimed that his greatest pleasure lay in entertaining the young. Although a fall eventually confined him to a nursing home, he remained mentally alert to the end, and was still discussing his days at Fleetway House with the many admirers who turned up to pay their respects at his 100th birthday party.

GEORGE RICHMOND SAMWAYS - A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Priceguide to current values of books and periodicals in very good condition.

THE MAGNET

THE REIGN OF TERROR (No 333, 14 November 1914)	£5-£6
THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUIST (No 361, 9 January 1915)	£5-£6
THE OLD BOYS' CHALLENGE (No 385, 26 June 1916)	£5-£6
SPORTSMEN ALL (No 390, 31 July 1916)	£5-£6
THE FELLOW WHO WON (No 394, 28 August 1916)	£5-£6
THE SUNDAY CRUSADERS (No 400, 9 October 1916)	£5-£6
SCHOOLBOYS V PROS (No 919, 19 September 1925)	£3-£4

THE GEM

THE ST. JIM'S VOLUNTEERS (No 396, 11 September 1915)	£3-£4
BAGGY TRIMBLE'S CHARITY (No 1001, 11 June 1927)	£3-£4

PENNY POPULAR

THE LADS OF LANCASHIRE (No 18, 24 May 1919)	£2-£3
CHRISTMAS AT BUNTER COURT (No 101, 25 December 1920)	£2-£3

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

SCHOOL AND SPORT (as 'Frank Richards') (No 319, December 1915)	£30-£35
PRIDE OF THE RING (as 'Mark Linley') (No 461, May 1919)	£15-£20
FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS (as 'Frank Richards') (No 489, December 1919)	£12-£15
RENTON OF THE ROVERS (as 'Paul Masters') (No 587, December 1921)	£8-£10
THE SCHOOLBOY FILM ACTOR (as 'Paul Proctor') (No 543, September 1936)	£8-£10

VERSE

WAR LYRICS (Arthur H. Stockwell, 1916)	£15-£20
BALLADS OF THE FLYING CORPS (Arthur H. Stockwell, 1917)	£15-£20

NOVEL

FIGHTING TO THE FRONT (Arthur H. Stockwell, 1917)	£40-£60
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

THE ROAD TO GREYFRIARS (Howard Baker, 1984)	£10-£15 (£15-£20)
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