

THE Evolution of the Comic Picture and the Comic Artist.



MEMORY is a tricky thing. There was a time when there was no comic supplement in garish color on the Sunday morning doorstep. There was a time when there was no Yellow Kid, no Happy Hooligan, no Buster Brown, no Lulu and Leander, no Mamma Katzenjammer and terrible Katzenjammer Kids, no Alphonse nor Gaston, no Foxy Grandpa, no tricky little bears and awfully sophisticated little tigers—none of the host of people whose faces are more familiar to us than our next door neighbors, whose names are oftener on our tongues than those of the heroes in the Hall of Fame.

There was such a time and we have forgotten it already, although it was only ten years ago. Nowadays the lucky youngster of the family sneaks down the front stairs on his tippy-toes, in his little nightgown, at the first crack of day on a Sunday morning—while the oldsters are taking their weekly "late sleep"—opens the front door as softly as the most accomplished burglar, grabs the fat wad of morning papers and sneaks up the stairs and into bed again. There his mamma finds him when she comes in to wake him up in time for the special Sunday morning breakfast, sitting up among his pillows with all the "funny papers" carefully sorted out from the ponderous printed mass, chuckling himself purple as he follows the adventures of his favorites from their almost complete annihilation of the Sunday morning before.

Lucky youngster! This is an age of opulence and indulgence, and he doesn't know, as he discovers what new delirium the Katzenjammers have gotten into, what new mischief Buster Brown has invented, what a childhood of privations his papa and mamma suffered, what a barren Sunday was theirs without the Sunday morning "funny papers." He doesn't know that they had to grow up without the aid of the comic supplement.

Perhaps if he did he would harbor less resentment against those oldsters who hang on to the "funny paper" from breakfast to bedtime, and make it necessary for him to get up so early to find out what the "funny paper" people are doing.

Perhaps if he did he wouldn't give his surreptitious snort of scorn when papa explains to the callers that he takes so many Sunday papers because the youngsters want to see the comic supplements.

However that may be, the comic supplement is an American institution, recognized and established, like the trolley car and the quick lunch counter.

It is only ten years old, yet it is firm as though it had been established forever. The public doesn't subscribe for the newspaper that doesn't have one, and no postoffice is so remote that the comic supplement doesn't reach it and find youngsters eagerly waiting to receive it on the day that it's due.

Yet the comic supplement did not spring into being as the responsive supply to a demand.

On the contrary, it is a creation that has created its own demand. Ten years ago there were no comic supplements nor comic supplement artists.

Ten years ago, or, to be punctiliously exact, eleven years ago, in the evolution of the newspaper the color press was produced, that is a press that would print in several colors and that would register; that means, that it would print those colors where the artist in drawing his pictures had designated they should go. Before that there were experimental color presses that would print in colors, but the colors would land in the most unexpected places, placing the red of Hooligan's nose and of Buster Brown's tie—had there been a Hooligan or a Buster in those days—quite without the outlines defining either nose or tie.

When at last the color press was perfected so that it would print the red of Hooligan's nose where Hooligan wore his nose, there was a conclave of editors in the editorial sanctum of the newspaper that had secured the first color press. They had gathered to decide the momentous question:

"What shall we do with the color press, now that we have it?" One was for this thing, one was for that, and almost the fate befell it of being used for printing a "woman's supplement" of fashions. The day was saved for the comic supplement by a young man whose observant eyes had noted the fact that most of the men coming down town on the cars in the morning had their morning papers folded over to make the "funny column" easy reading, and most of them when going home at night turned to the funny columns of their evening papers after reading the sports or financial news, according to their particular tastes and interests.

"What's the matter with American humor—and humorists? What's the matter with making a color supplement of humor?" he asked. His fellow-editors fell upon his neck in joy for his solution—as rapidly as they could resign their own pet schemes; and thus the comic supplement scheme came into being.

Then came the question of comic supplement artists. Apparently there was none born and carefully laid away in cotton wool awaiting the emergency. So, with the usual newspaper enterprise, they were made.

The very first of these whose history will serve for a sample was Richard F. Outcault, known as "Dick" Outcault everywhere except on the payroll.

Dick Outcault was the first of the comic supplement artists who made a hit, whose pencil creation became a national, yea, even an international character.

He was a young New Yorker living the semi-Bohemian, semi-domestic life of the young man with ambition who must coin his brain for rent, car fare, clothes, etcetera.

He had studied art in Paris rather casually, and when he came back to New York and had a wife, a baby, and a Harlem flat to provide for, he utilized his knowledge of art as an illustrator. He worked as a draftsman, making mechanical drawings for the Electrical World and the Street Railway Journal, and he worked out page drawings that he tied up in manila paper and carried down to the newspaper offices under his arm to submit to the heads of newspaper art departments. Sometimes he got \$5 for one of them, and sometimes he didn't; but more often than not he made the exchange for he was both a good fellow and a good workman.

By way of relaxation from the mechanical drawing and the page pictures of serious subjects, he scratched little scenes on left-over bits of Bristol board, and the editor of Truth seeing them, he sold them to that frivolous and forward weekly and got encouragement. Because of his little "comics" in Truth the editor of the first comic supplement seized upon him as the likeliest material to manufacture into a comic supplement artist. It was wonderful editorial prescience.

For the first comic supplement Dick Outcault borrowed a suggestion from stage comedy, from the song "Maggie Murphy's Home" in an Ed Harrigan play. One line in this song, "Down in Hogan's alley," gave Outcault his creative ready to give way to a cartoon. Hogan's alley, and with them reproduced every current event from the Hogan's alley point of view. The idea caught on just enough to be accepted as "good." It had almost run its course, and was being ready to give way to a thing else when Outcault's first hit was made. In his workshop in his Harlem flat he was hiding his pencil quite valiantly for some new twist to give to Hogan's alley that week. When in the out on the publicity his small son walked in in his little nightgown grinning happily and displaying his new teeth. Outcault popped him into the Hogan's Alley Company—nightgown, two teeth, grin and all. A happy inspiration led the color man to print the new kiddie's nightgown, and lo! upon the next Sunday morning the Yellow Kid was born—the most famous kid, in literature, if we may stretch the term so far as to include the comic supplement in literature.

The Yellow Kid was born and "Dick" Outcault's fortune was made. By accident!

Well, perhaps it was by accident—but it was an accident that depended upon Dick Outcault's peculiar gift for seeing things just so.

Think how many kiddies, with two teeth, a nightgown and a grin have been seen by their papas without ever before producing a Yellow Kid.

The Yellow Kid meant everything to the man who made him.

Before the day of the comic supplement Outcault was glad enough to get \$15 for a page drawing. The comic supplement tacked a cipher to the value of his page drawings and made it worth \$150 to him to be funny where it had been only worth \$15 to be serious, but the Yellow Kid brought opulence.

He became a furore with the public. Rival papers outbid each other for Outcault and wrangled over him. Imitators stole his creation and brought laurels upon their heads. The Yellow Kid was dramatized and placarded upon billboards and breakfast foods, on dry goods and wet. There were Yellow Kid neckties and games, Yellow Kid commodities of every kind that hoped to float into notice with his popularity, and the Yellow Kid, being copyrighted, Dick Outcault had a rake-dance on his every appearance in the way of royalty.

But the Yellow Kid, in the very nature of things, wore himself out and Mr. Outcault was left in the lurch for a successor while successful comic supplement artists were tickling his public and getting the laughs and the dollars.

Again there was a lucky accident.

Again Mr. Outcault realized the advantage of being a family man. The original of the Yellow Kid, like the pictured imp of popularity, had disappeared. A little disconsolately he admitted it to himself. But—what was this in his place? What funny, sturdy little chap was this, everlastingly inventing inequities to drive his father and mother mad?

A successor to the Yellow Kid! And right here in his own household—grown for the purpose, as it were!

So—Buster Brown happened!

So Buster Brown—the most pervasive youngster of them all—came into being. Buster Brown broke out in the comic supplements, Buster Brown invaded the nurseries, spread over his own country, invaded Europe. And now we not only have whole pages of Buster Brown in colors on Sunday morning, we have Buster Browns on every block, in almost every family; we have Buster Browns stockings and hats and ties and suits and belts; Buster Brown on the stage and in the show windows, at fancy dress parties and in amateur theatricals and living pictures.

The interest in Buster Brown extends to his creator or inventor, or portrayer, or whatever you please to call Mr. Outcault. The youngsters who gobble the comic supplements and their grown-ups, of course, who like to give the children everything their little hearts want, do not only demand Buster Brown in all his variety, but they demand the maker of Buster Brown, too. He has to be trotted out and exhibited to them.



R. F. Outcault

BOY GLOBE-TROTTER

And the result is that Dick Outcault, the first of the comic supplement artists, who has all he can do making pictures of Buster Brown and raking in the dollars, has a demand that is estimated that there are about 75,000 of them per year has had to go on a lecture tour to satisfy the demand. He has to go from city to city and town to town and get into stage and tell stories and draw Buster Brown pictures.

"I didn't want to do it," Mr. Outcault said when some one asked him how he happened to begin lecturing. "It was a case of simply answering a demand that I couldn't ignore any longer. I don't know why any one should want to see me, but in some way people have learned that I could tell stories as well as draw pictures. Some one who has heard me of an evening at home must have given the news away. This, coupled with an expressed desire on the part of the children everywhere to see the man who made Buster Brown, made me finally consent to give a cartoon lecture or two, and here I am launched on a career that I don't know how I am to get out of."

"The trouble began years ago when Buster Brown was in his infancy. I commenced to get letters like this: 'Dear Mr. Outcault: I like Buster Brown, and I would like to see the man who draws him. Can't you come to my house some time and make a picture of Buster for my very own? I would give anything to have it.'"

"This is just a sample of what I got, and some were more insistent. Furthermore, children began to find out where I lived, and many an afternoon when I've got home and found proud but misguided parents at my house with their youngsters, who demanded that I chat with them, tell them all about Buster and also say whether or not they were not the original Buster Browns from whom I got my inspiration."

"I like children—every one who knows me knows that—but this got to be a nuisance. Finally, about three months ago, I got a letter from an orphan asylum manager in Brooklyn, telling me that he was going to bring his entire collection of youngsters over to Flushing to see me, and that I had better be at home or they would tear the place down in their enthusiasm."

"I wrote back to him not to bring his asylum, I would come there instead. And I did, and gave my talk on Buster and other comic little chaps, illustrating my stories by drawing pictures on a blackboard. The entertainment seemed to make a hit, and the manager of the asylum told Mr. John Leffer, the well-known director of lecturers and concert singers, about it."

"From that time on I got no peace until I agreed to make a tour of the country, giving my lecture. And that's all there is to it."

Lecturing, much against his wish and to the temporary destruction of his home life, isn't all that Buster Brown has got Mr. Outcault in for. He has put a pretty heavy responsibility on him, for there are parents all over this country and in parts of Europe who think they can trace their youngsters' naughtiness direct to Buster Brown inspiration. Here is one story that Mr. Outcault tells on that score: "Recently," says Mr. Outcault, "while I was lunching in a hotel in New York,



a gentleman approached my table and asked if I were Mr. Outcault. I didn't deny the allegation, and the man handed me his card.

"I want to see you on a matter of business," Mr. Outcault said to the father of a young gentleman of 7, who in many respects is the living prototype of your Buster Brown. No, I'm not going to tell you how cute he is, or try to get you to immortalize some of his pranks in your drawings. It's just the other way. This small boy of mine waits all week for Buster to appear in the Sunday papers so that he can get inspiration for some new prank. Whatever Buster does in the pictures, my boy tries to imitate, and he does it

pretty successfully, too. I don't mind telling you. But it's all right, for the pranks, as a rule, are just plain, good, boyish mischief.

"Now, however, I've got a scheme, and if you fall into it I'll make it worth your while. My next door neighbor is a crank, and, what's worse, he seems to single me out as his special enemy. I'm a law-abiding citizen and don't want to retaliate, but I've got a plan to get even. If I could get the idea into my small boy's head to play a series of tricks on the old chap his life might get so miserable that he'd move. Now, here's where you come in. I can't go to my boy and put these ideas into his head, that wouldn't be fatherly. But if you will have Buster play some tricks of the kind I'll indicate my kid will follow them to the letter and he's sure to pick out the man next door as his victim."

"You go ahead on my ideas, make the pictures and print 'em and if the plan works I'll give you a thousand dollars. What say?"

"Much as I like money," said Mr. Outcault, "I was obliged to turn the man's proposition down. For all I know, my own boy would imitate the Buster tricks and I might be picked as the victim."

Still Mr. Outcault doesn't hold any grudge against the original of Buster. He seems to think pretty well of him, as this "credit" that he gives to him will show:

"There is nothing that you can invent about children half so funny as the things they really do," he says. "Try as you may, you can't imagine stranger pranks than those they invent for themselves. For instance, I have sat at my table for hours at a time trying to think of something for Buster to do, only to give it up in despair, when at the last moment something that will reach my ears and I'll make a page drawing of the incident."

"I recall one time in particular. I was digging away at my brain in vain, when Mrs. Outcault rushed into the room, exclaiming: 'Oh, Dickey has just done a dreadful thing and I told him you'd punish him dreadfully for it.'"

"What is it?" I asked, wondering whether he had set fire to the barn or painted the horse green again.

"He dressed the cat and her four kittens up in Mary Jane's doll's clothes, and they're down in the village square, scaring horses and everything. The hired man can't catch them."

"Good!" I shouted, to my wife's astonishment. "Don't interrupt me again for an hour." And without further argument or explanation I began to make a series of drawings about the incident, giving Buster credit for it. It turned out to be one of the funniest I ever made.

"As to punishing Dickey, I bought him a bicycle for having furnished me with the inspiration. It was worth it."

Dick Outcault has a fine home, and so much money invested and still rolling in that he needs a secretary and a lawyer, as well as his clever wife, to look after it for him—while he goes on making more.

He owes it all to the comic supplement. If it hadn't been for that lucky invention and perfection of the color press, if it hadn't been for that far-seeing comic supplement editor, if it hadn't been for the great American public that takes to humor as a duck to water—and also if it hadn't been for Dick Outcault's knack of seeing things, Yellow Kids and Buster Browns, and such things, in just the way he does—perhaps Dick Outcault would have gone on to this very day drawing page pictures and getting \$15 apiece for them. Who knows?

where things are doing. I haven't seen any place I like better than my own country."

Fred Otfofy went on the transport Sherman the other day on his second trip around the world, for he says, no matter how long he stays in Manila, he is coming "home" when he is in a man-

train, never had my pocket picked or lost my ticket, put up at good hotels wherever I stopped over, and—Oh, pshaw! I only did what any American boy my size can do!

"Where'd I rather live after being around the world? Why, in America, of course—in New York or Chicago,

After a delightful visit with his father he again started on his way around the world, still in knickers. He was one of four passengers on a "Swamp steamer" going from Manila to New York by way of Suez—a steamer belonging to the Standard Oil Company, carrying all sorts of merchandise to all sorts of ports, and he says: "I had the time of my life on her. I learned more about geography on that trip than I'd been able to learn at school in all my life."

"Her name was the Kennebec, and she was a big ship, carrying, it seemed to me, an immense cargo. There were only four passengers on her, so we got pretty well acquainted. The officers were friendly and we had the run of the ship. Oh, it beat traveling on a crowded liner. I guess there wasn't any part of that ship that I didn't see before the voyage was over—nor anything at any of the ports we stopped at that I missed seeing."

"We went from Manila to Singapore and stopped there a week, unloading our own cargo and taking on tin. We took on ever so many tons of it in bricks, and every brick of it was worth \$5. Every day while we were there I went ashore in a sampan—we were anchored out in the bay—and explored the town."

"Then we went on up to Penang, another town on the Malay Peninsula, and staid there twelve hours. I was taking a rickshaw ride through the streets of Penang and ran right into a boy I had known at school in Yokohama. Maybe you think that wasn't a surprise!"

"We saw a waterspout while we were at Penang and another on the Indian Ocean on our way to Ceylon. We passed very close to Ceylon, but didn't touch. We went through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and across the Red Sea; we stopped at Suez for six hours and took on searchlights; we staid at Port Said twelve hours and I saw the milkmen with their goat herds, milking a goat for each customer there wanted milk. We had ten hours at Algiers and I took the chance to explore Africa and I saw everything in the town that I could find."

"We crossed the Mediterranean, of course, and I saw Gibraltar—that's the biggest thing I saw on the trip. I guess that's the thing I'll remember longest. Then we crossed the Atlantic and had a storm while crossing. I spent five days in New York sightseeing, and I saw everything I could find out about there from Grant's Tomb to all the shows I had time for."

"Then I took the Limited to Chicago—and that completed one round around the earth for me."

"I had no adventures—never fell overboard, never missed a steamer or a



Fred Otfofy