

FOUR ARTISTIC HUMOURISTS.

PHIL MAY, E. T. Reed, J. A. Shepherd, L. Raven Hill. What a carnival of fun and frolic is suggested by this quartette of names! What a merry jingling of cap and



PHIL MAY.

(From a photograph by Van der Weyde, Regent Street, W.)

bells! What mirth-provoking visions are brought to the mind—what memories of good wholesome laughs provoked by the creations of their pens and pencils! Here are no cross-grained satirists, no spiteful caricaturists, no political partisans, but simply good-tempered humourists, who, aided by artistic talent of the highest order, seek out and portray the funny things of life and present them for the amusement of society at large. Their work is genuinely humorous and does not depend upon a "tag" to point where the laugh should come in, as so many of the illustrations in so-called "comic" papers do. The characters they delineate would, as a rule, stand by themselves without text of any kind and still conjure up a smile; their accompanying letterpress only emphasises the joke and lends an adorning finish to the tale artistically served.

Taking the men in the order they are named, let us look at them and their work individually. It has not been the lot of many artists, humorous or otherwise, to leap into fame with the meteoric brilliance and speed of Mr. Phil May. He is only

just thirty-one, but his name is known in nearly every British household, and his work appreciatively recognised all the world round. Born in 1864 in Leeds, he had betrayed the possession of an artistic mind by the time he was eight years of age. His *forte* at that period was the portrayal of battle-pieces, with a superabundance of smoke and bayonets. When he attained to the dignity of twelve years of age he was taken from school and, in curious recognition of his artistic tastes, sent to an architect's office. But two weeks' attendance there was enough for the boy; he turned his back on the place and joined himself to a touring theatrical company. Here he filled a double capacity: he



A TYPICAL FISHERMAN.

(Sketched at Newlyn by Phil May.)

took minor—very minor—parts on the stage, and filled the other, and major portion, of his

time in portraying or caricaturing the leading members of the company for the advertisement bills exhibited in shop windows of the towns through which they passed. For four years this Bohemian life was endured, and then he returned to Leeds, contributing work to a local paper. His talent was recognised the same year by the manager of the Leeds theatre asking him to design dresses for the pantomime.

This, however, did not altogether satisfy Mr. May's ambition, and in 1882 he bought a single third-class ticket for London. With his arrival in the Metropolis, there began for him a season of great trial and hardship, but he fought bravely—and succeeded. After a while he obtained employment on *Society*, which led to his being engaged for the *St. Stephen's Review*. After two years he received an offer from Melbourne, which he accepted, and to Australia he went. There he developed his art as we know it. The necessities of the fast-driving rotary printing machines caused him to adopt the method of using as few lines as possible in his work; he rose to the occasion, and secured his fortune. He made his style and ran it successfully. He had no master, he is of no school; he has rather become a master with a vast number of imitators. But, as good old Sir Thomas Browne says, "he who owes himself to himself is the substantial man." 1889 saw him back in England again, with vast numbers of books filled with character sketches from Australia, the contents of which, by the way, have not yet been drawn upon, but which will shortly be revealed to us, and will doubtless prove full of delight. Mr. May made friends with the Australian people all round,

and it is characteristic of his lightness of heart that the last day in the Antipodes was spent in the enjoyment of the delights of a switch-back railway in company with several colonial notabilities.

His first work after his return to England appeared in the *St. Stephen's Review* again, and after a sojourn in Paris he found full employment, his drawings being in great demand. It was not, however, until 1894 that he received the highest recognition humours artists can receive—seeing that the Royal Academy does not acknowledge black-and-white artists, as such—a seat at the *Punch* table.*

His characters are now well known. He has chosen to seek his models in unfashionable quarters. It is because they attract him; their ways are past finding out to society at large, but Mr. May delights in "Arry and his 'Arriett." White-chapel and its denizens are well known and understood by him. By day and by night—he drives down east often at midnight—he seeks models on 'bus, tram, and train, and there he finds most material for his pencil: the grim humour of squalid life is caught where it can best be seen—in



A CHARACTER SKETCH.
(By Phil May.)

the streets. Why not? And why the charge of vulgarity against those who admire it recently brought by an irresponsible American critic? In Mr. May's drawings, as a rule, is humour pure and unalloyed, combined with art of the highest order. Let us hold it and rejoice in it; let us laugh at the oddities of

* For a full story of *Punch* and its artists readers are referred to Mr. M. H. Spielmann's "History of *Punch*" (Cassell & Co.).

the jester, for his "true intent is all for our delight."

Just a few words upon Mr. May's methods. Many imagine that his work is drawn as it is published. This is by no means the case. His first sketches—two of which are here reproduced—are carefully worked up from models, all light and shade attended to in the fullest details, and then the whole is, as it were, "reduced to the least common denominator," until everything is represented by a few lines, each one replete with meaning and representing untold thought and skill. It is a great source of amusement to Mr. May—but



EDWARD T. REED.

(From a photograph by A. Bassano, Old Bond Street, W.)

sometimes of annoyance, owing to the attentions of those who prey upon reputed wealthy artists—when he sees the paragraphs that make the regular round of the world's press, in which are set forth the fabulous sums he is supposed to earn. A continual ringing at his bell suggests to him that some paper has again stated that he "makes a million a month," and he tells the tale, with a quaint smile upon his face, of how, when his cab was being called after a fancy ball at Covent Garden, he saw a man in the crowd nudge his neighbour, and heard him whisper, "That's Phil May, who makes a hundred pounds an hour when he's at work." Such is fame!

For rollicking character of fun and unforced gaiety of spirit, it is doubtful if there has been anything published to equal, and certainly nothing to excel, the series of "Pre-historic

Peeps," by Mr. Edward T. Reed, which appeared in the pages of *Punch*. Strictly original, exceedingly well drawn (being quite free from the stiffness that had been, until their appearance, associated with Mr. Reed's work), bubbling over with merriment, they caught the popular fancy to a wonderful degree. Mr. Reed tells me that as soon as each drawing was published he received telegrams from all parts from people anxious to purchase the originals.

From friends in Australia he has heard that the "Peeps" were as popular there as here, and the pages containing them decorate the walls of many a solitary hut "up country." The genesis of the idea is interesting. Mr. Reed had drawn, for a Christmas



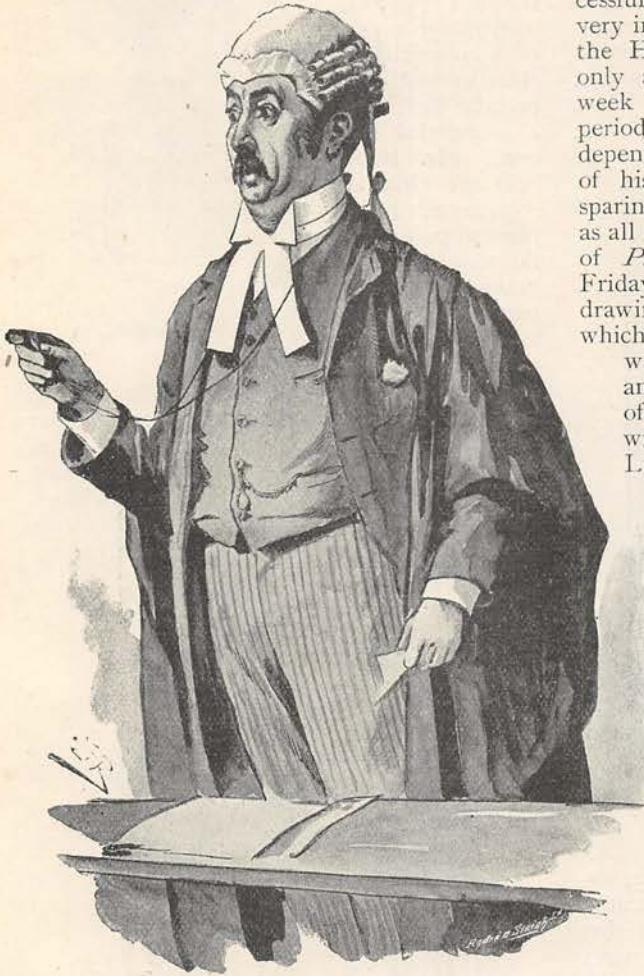
"A GEM."
(By E. T. Reed.)



"HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS."
(By E. T. Reed.)

number of *Punch*, an extinct specimen of a "growler" as he imagined it would appear in some Imperial Institute of the remote future.

This was to have been the first of a series, and he next proceeded to treat a "hansom" in the same manner. But he found that it would not differ materially from the fragmentary four-wheeler. What was to be done? Happy thought! Why not do the *first* hansom? The idea was acted upon, and the



A SKETCH AT THE LAW COURTS.
(By E. T. Reed.)

first of our skin-kilted ancestors came into being. The others of the series followed almost naturally. For many weeks they performed their merry antics as far as the rapacity of equally sportive plesiosaurs and other fearsome beasts would permit.

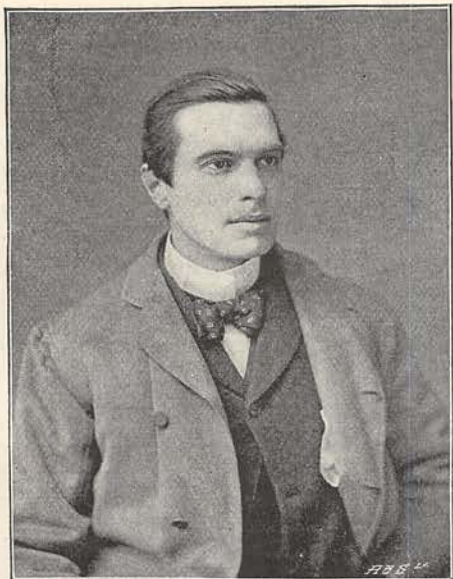
Mr. Reed's success was assured. He had been called to a seat at the board at Bouverie Street in 1890, but it was not until the "Peeps" made their appearance that his work was appreciated by the public at large.

For an artist who did not begin to draw until he was twenty-two years of age, and who looked upon himself as strictly an amateur, this was very gratifying, and was another testimony to Mr. Burnand's faculty of discernment. Mr. Reed was selected to take up the Parliamentary work after Mr. Furniss retired from *Punch*, and he has made some very successful "hits" in this direction. He finds it very interesting work, but the restrictions of the House affect him considerably. He is only admitted to the Press Gallery once a week and to the lobby twice in the same period. Mr. Reed, of course, sketches, but depends greatly upon his memory for most of his caricatures, using photographs but sparingly. The work has to be done rapidly, as all contributions for the following number of *Punch* have to be at the office by Friday evening. One of his most fanciful drawings—the extinct Parliamentary species, which appeared after the General Election, was conceived and executed in one day, and that while he was in the clutches of *la Grippe!* He of course collaborates with that journalistic genius, Mr. H. W. Lucy, each communicating the happy thoughts they may generate to the other, and working accordingly.

The Law Courts are his happy hunting-ground: the barristers delight him, but his attendance at Westminster debars him from the pleasure of meeting his legal models as much as he would like. But he has an unending fund of humour, as his Uganda exhibition series testifies, and I think his contributions to the "Punch Almanac" will prove that his resources are far from being exhausted.

Mr. Reed is the son of Sir E. T. Reed, K.C.B., F.R.S., the great naval constructor, and for many years the Parliamentary representative of Cardiff. He was educated at Harrow, and in 1877 was a member of the School Football Eleven, a position he still

looks back upon with pride. He entered in later years at Calderon's Art School, at St. John's Wood, with the intention of trying for admission to the Royal Academy Schools. But, as he humourously observes, "his idea of the antique did not apparently commend itself to the august authorities," and he did not succeed. He also worked at the British Museum, copying from the models there, but abandoned that after a short time. An introduction of his work to Mr. Burnand's notice



J. A. SHEPHERD.

(From a photograph by Lenton Bros., Bromley, Kent.)

was effected by Mr. Sambourne, with the result already stated.

It is of interest to note that Mr. Reed's original drawings are done but very little larger than the reproductions, and when the smallness of the figures on his full-page drawings is considered, it will be seen what close and careful application his work requires.

Mr. James Affleck Shepherd is the youngest member of our quartette, for he is only just twenty-eight years of age. He, too, has struck out an original line in artistic humour, for although Ernest Griset caricatured animals, Mr. Shepherd has easily outstripped him, and holds the premier position in this branch of work. His art training began when he was sixteen years old, by his being articled to Mr. Alfred Bryan, the well-known caricaturist. For three years he was a pupil, and then he stepped into the arena for himself and took a place in the forefront almost immediately. It is needless to say that he is abundantly equipped with the first necessary faculty of the humourist—observation. Who can doubt it after seeing his "zig-zags" and the clever series of humanised animals in *Punch*? With very little alteration of their forms he imparts expressions that are irresistibly comic.

He is, of course, a great lover of animals. When he was a boy he had the usual craving for white mice, guinea-pigs, and other like creatures cultivated by the average schoolboy. But he had something more: the instinct of the humourist, which discovered the possibilities

lurking in their harmless forms. This, carefully nursed and developed, has given him the power he now possesses. What an amount of labour, though, his work has necessitated! What patient waitings for opportune moments, what painstaking efforts to secure his subjects in the desired attitudes, what a filling of sketch-books with notes zoological, ornithological, and anatomical! But this infinite capacity for taking pains has not been developed for nothing; and although, like the true artist that he is, Mr. Shepherd is dissatisfied with much of the work he has done, the popularity he has won has been well earned and deserved. He maintains a small menagerie at his home at Bromley. He thinks that "there is only a sort of mist wants clearing away" to enable some animals, especially dogs, to speak. He was once possessed of a curious terrier, who, lacking all favourable qualities, being treacherous, sulky, and spiteful, had yet acquired the art of diving. He would perform graceful feats in the middle of



THE AUTUMN MOULT.

(A water-colour sketch at the Zoo by J. A. Shepherd.)

a pond, or take "headers" from the bank and bring stones from the bottom. He was a treasure for a showman. One of repute was



PORTRAIT OF A FRIEND.

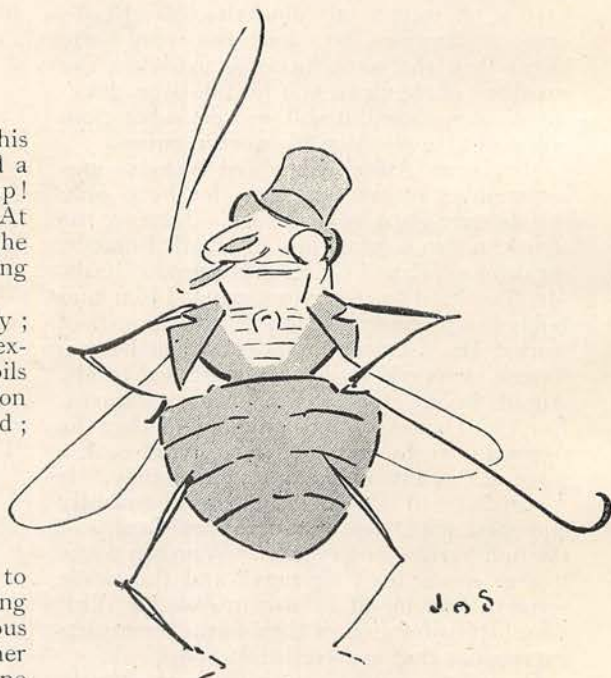
(By J. A. Shepherd.)

communicated with, and while awaiting his reply the dog was taken out for a swim and a dive. Down he went—and never came up! Was it suicide or weeds—who can tell? At any rate, the favourable answer from the showman came too late: the poor dog's diving days were over.

Mr. Shepherd admires hens consumedly; he thinks they are extraordinary birds for expression. They all seem to show the toils and sorrows connected with the production of eggs in a degree more or less marked; some have the lines of their mouths curved upwards, and seem to smile at their troubles; others have the curves proceeding downwards, and look most woe-begone and depressed. He has one hen that he declares only needs a cap to transform it into a most respectable-looking old lady. He once bought several of various breeds, and to the astonishment of the farmer from whom he purchased them, returned one "because he didn't like its expression." "Expression!" said the farmer, "I don't know anything about *that*, but she's the best of the lot, and lays a beautiful brown egg!" Ducks, he thinks, are expressionless crea-

tures: "Just a boot-button for an eye, a curve of white head, and a dab of yellow for a bill." But ravens are delightful: most difficult to portray successfully, with an outline unbroken in its regular curves—but what an eye! Always brilliant, and capable of innumerable expressions. They are so deep and, like Joey Bagstock, "dev'lish sly." Mr. Shepherd has a theory that all black animals are mysterious. He instanced to me a black wolf at the Zoo, who never allows more than his hind quarters to be seen, slinking into his den at the approach of visitors; the black cat with its proverbial uncanniness; its sister the black leopard, one of the most saturnine beasts at the Zoo; the jackdaw and the raven, both birds of ill omen. Evidently there is something in this! It is a fit subject for investigation by the Psychological Research Society.

Lastly, but by no means in an inferior sense, we come to Mr. L. Raven Hill. He alone of the quartette has not appeared in *Punch*, that absorber, sooner or later, of humorous artistic merit. His work is, however, well known. He is a conscientious worker, a wonderful draughtsman and delineator of character. He is a follower of Charles Keene, and confesses that he is his ideal of a humourist. At one



STUDY OF A BLUEBOTTLE.

(By J. A. Shepherd.)

time his technique was, perhaps, a little too like that master's; but he has proved himself

capable of working on original lines. He makes his own jokes, and studies his characters in their native lairs. He has a theory, which he works out to the letter, that the figures should be put in surroundings suitable to the accompanying "joke," and not planted down promiscuously in a landscape, with a background out of keeping with their supposed position.

For training he had a few lessons in the Bristol School of Art, and in 1882 entered at the Lambeth School under Mr. J. L. Sparkes. Here he had for fellow-students Messrs.

Ricketts and Shannon, and the trio lived and worked together for some time. In 1885 he



L. RAVEN HILL.

(From a photograph by Martin & Sallnow, Strand, W.C.)

went to Paris, where he stayed for two years, studying under various masters, but deriving most benefit from M. Aimé Morot. Returning to London in 1887, he started as a painter, but found that there was more chance for black-and-white work, and discovered that he possessed the faculty of a humourist. His first work appeared in *Judy*, and in 1893 he started a delightful little magazine called *The Butterfly*. He had contributions from some of the brightest rising artists, and the magazine was a really artistic production. But it only survived for ten

months. After this Mr. Raven Hill worked for the *Pall Mall Budget*, and he considers



Villager: "So you ain't had no luck this morning?" Keeper: "No luck! 'E missed me twice!"

(By L. Raven Hill.)

that his best work is to be seen in the pages of that now defunct periodical. In 1895, after indulging in the luxury of a "one man" exhibition, which fully showed the versatility of his talent as an artist, and justified his in-

fault on the part of its parent, but solely due to the non-fulfilment of promises of men who had undertaken to finance the concern.

But Mr. Raven Hill is not discouraged; he is a philosopher as well as a humourist, and



"And you really think this is one of the best places for an invalid or anyone who isn't strong to come to?"

"Wull, mum, they do say as this be a rare place for puttin' on flesh!"

(By L. Raven Hill.)

clusion in the front rank of our humourists, Mr. Raven Hill made another venture in journalism. This time it was *The Unicorn* which he launched, but alas, the posters announcing its birth had not had time to fade on the hoardings before it expired. This, it must be clearly explained, was owing to no

his well-known black and white work still comes to delight us, and he still paints—and well, too—besides being no mean etcher and lithographer. There is no doubt that he will take a lasting place upon our roll of eminent artists, for his capabilities are of no ordinary kind.

ARTHUR FISH.

