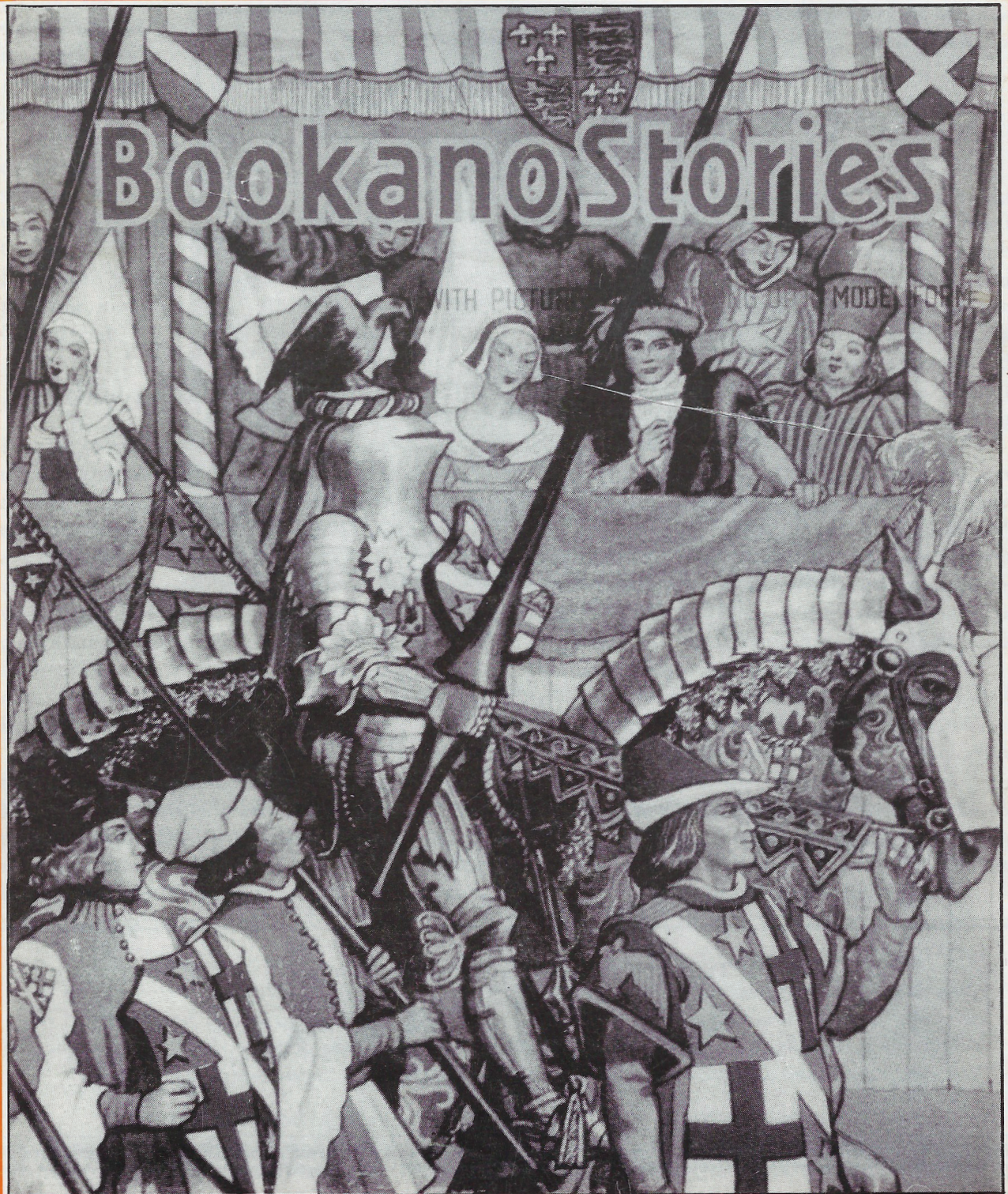
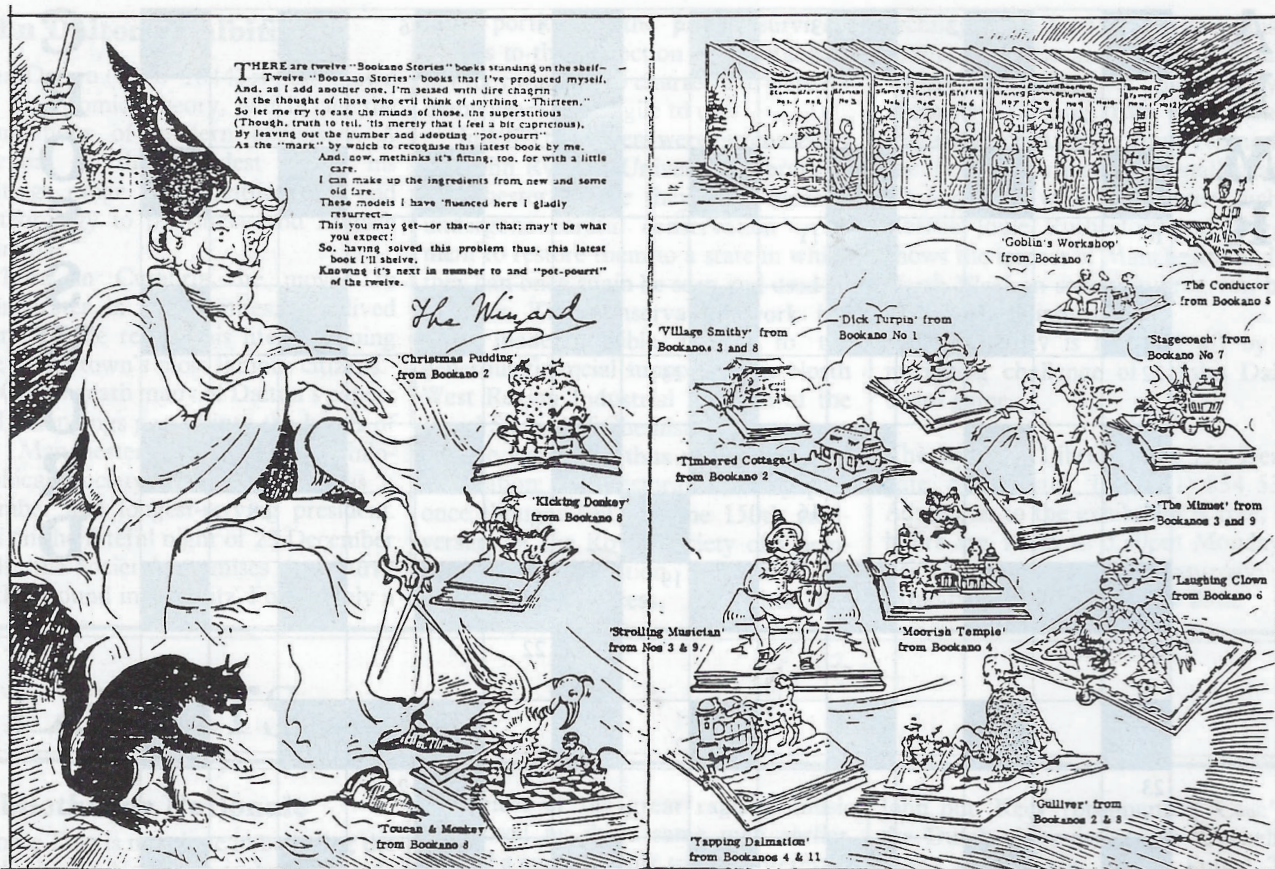


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The Wizard's preface to Bookano No. 13 which he called the 'pot pourri' edition, as it included only previously used pop-ups. E. da Costa's line drawing depicts some of the more spectacular effects from earlier books (with captions added by the present author to help identify them).

S. LOUIS GIRAUD, The Wizard of Bookano

Michael Dawson

S. Louis Giraud's career as a children's book publisher lasted almost exactly twenty years; the first *Daily Express Children's Annual* appeared in the Autumn of 1929 and the last *Bookano Stories* for which he was personally responsible (number 16) came out for Christmas 1949 – six months before he died. Throughout the period it was the annuals that provided the mainstay of his output but there were other titles such as *The Story of Jesus* (1934), *Hans Anderson's Fairy Stories* (1936), *Adventure and Building Book* (1936) and *Bookano Zoo* (1939) with which he attempted to enlarge the range and extend it beyond a seasonal market. In total he published about 50 books, though several appeared in a variety of editions (sometimes with substantially varied contents) making it difficult now to produce a definitive bibliography.

There is a remarkable consistency to the whole

series: having established a format and gathered a team of writers and illustrators in his early days at the *Daily Express* Publications Department, he maintained almost exactly the same house-style to the end. All were produced with highly-coloured pictorial covers (usually illustrating historical or mythical subjects), the paper being pasted directly onto the boards: there was even a characteristic colour scheme – predominantly of ochres, oranges and reds – for the later Bookanos. From the *Daily Express Children's Annual No. 2* onwards, it was Giraud's fancy to introduce each volume – prior to title page and frontispiece – with a preface in verse (often excruciating!) in which he adopts the role of 'The Wizard' to enumerate the delights to be found within. (See illustration.) The accompanying line drawings often show the seer at work devising current pop-up effects: in some, he is depicted as young and puckish; in

others, an ancient Methuselah with knee-length beard.

Like other annuals of the period, the contents are a compendium of stories, pictures, comic-strips and puzzles but the Bookanos do make a conscious effort to match illustrations with text and provide a certain amount of knowledge and instruction. For instance, the historical scenes appearing on the outer covers and (often) monochromatic pictorial end-papers are invariably linked with stories inside and virtually all the pop-ups have accompanying tales or rhymes, usually concerning fairies, goblins, witches or dragons. Presumably they were intended mainly for 5 to 10 year olds.

It has to be said that, despite such good intentions, the books are distinguished neither by their literary nor artistic style. Other well-known children's annuals of the period, such as those produced by Collins, Nelson, Raphael Tuck or Blackies, usually commissioned decent authors and graphic designers who contributed lively tales and vigorous line and colour illustrations. Despite the fact that Giraud became a member of the Royal Society of Literature around 1936 and thereafter always included MRSL after his name on the title-pages, his own prose style as a children's writer, and that of his other contributors, can at best be described as vapid; at worst, glutinously sentimental or trite. The verse is rarely more than doggerel and the pictures, usually by E. da Costa, Eileen M. Watts or Jocelyn Hughes, are adequate rather than inspired. It is really only the pop-ups that distinguish these books from the morass of cut-price juvenilia that appeared in the penny bazaars up until the forties and beyond.

From his daughter's testimony, it is known that Giraud wasn't a natural story-teller nor did he show any particular interest in young people's literature prior to the 1920s. Peggy Giraud-Saunders worked closely with her father both during his time with the *Daily Express* and later when he had established himself as an independent publisher. Although now in her eighties, she vividly recalls her childhood and cannot remember Louis ever telling bed-time stories. So how did he, at a comparatively late stage in his life (by 1929 he was 50) become so involved as a children's author and publisher? Where did the idea for the pop-ups come from? And what special expertise had he to draw on that enabled him to produce such remarkable effects in these otherwise undistinguished volumes?

The slightly unusual family name (which Giraud himself always anglicised as 'Jee-ro') is of Huguenot origin – Louis's great great grandfather had been a Protestant minister who fled France following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Some of the descendants appear to have settled around Faversham in Kent, others in Suffolk at Lowestoft. Louis's father was a prominent citizen of that town, for several years holding the office of Inspector of Weights and Measures: he had five children of which Stephen Louis

was the penultimate, born on the 17th August 1879. When the boy reached 15 he was apprenticed to a local general printer and compositor, completing the six-year training '... to his own credit and the satisfaction of his employer ...' in 1900.

Louis's ambitions must have extended well beyond Lowestoft and the trade of small-time jobbing printer: perhaps too he was anxious to shake off family restraints because his first appointment thereafter was as junior crime reporter on a newspaper at Ashby-de-la-Zouche. Before leaving his home town, however, it seems that he had courted (albeit somewhat clandestinely) a Catholic girl, Gertrude Emily Marsden, of whom – on religious grounds if for no other – his family strongly disapproved. After establishing himself in the Midlands he returned three years later to marry her – though no close relatives from the (Low Protestant) Giraud family or the (High Catholic) Marsden family could bring themselves to attend the ceremony. An inauspicious start for any young couple.

Back in Leicestershire a first daughter (Evelyn) was born, then followed promotion for Louis to a newspaper in St Albans and the arrival of a second child



Apparently S.L.G. rarely allowed himself to be photographed – no doubt an aspect of his reticent nature. This is the only surviving portrait retained by his family.

(Peggy) in 1910. From then until the outbreak of war it seems that ambition and the need to provide for a growing family forced Louis to follow his fortunes wherever opportunities occurred: his wife and daughters spent much time with the Marsdens in Lowestoft whilst he pursued his career as a provincial journalist. Presumably with his training as a printer he was soon singled out for managerial responsibilities: just prior to 1914 he was offered a post supervising the production of one of the Berry Group of newspapers in London and the family were together again at a new home in Dulwich.

But the disruption of World War I made it a brief reunion. Louis joined the Royal Flying Corps (precursor of the RAF) and spent the ensuing four years away from home, working as part of a ground-crew servicing and repairing aeroplanes that had been damaged in combat. Fortunately his job with the Berry Group (which published various City newspapers) awaited his return to civvy street but by 1923 he was looking for further advancement: in that or the following year he was invited by a national paper, the *Daily News*, to manage its Books Department (Fleetgate Publications) which specialised in publishing readers' contributions. For instance, the paper ran articles about the supernatural and invited those with unusual experiences to submit them. In due course a series of four books appeared under Giraud's editorship with such titles as *True Ghost Stories* and *Warnings from Beyond* (both 1927). Similarly, young readers of the paper's children's column were asked to send tales about their pets from which *True Animal Stories* (also 1927) was compiled. Louis may also at this period have taken a hand in commissioning work for the paper's children's section because two further anthologies: *Pinto's Panto* (1926) and *More Bedtime Stories by Star Radio* (1927) were issued under his name – his first appearance as editor of books for children.

No doubt such appointments were made on a five year contract basis; at the end of his term with the *Daily News* an even more prestigious opportunity presented itself: the setting up of a similar unit for the *Daily Express* under Beaverbrook's dynamic proprietorship. At that time the *Express* was engaged in a vigorous circulation war with its rivals: the new Publications Department was to play a part in the campaign by producing a range of attractive 'special offers' for regular readers. By now an experienced hand in this field, Louis seems to have been given a fairly free reign in devising and producing suitable material: uniform editions of Dickens and other classics, health and hygiene manuals (including one called *Thou Shall Not Catch Cold!*) and so on. He helped to pioneer community singing on the paper's behalf, arranging a big sing-along at the Albert Hall and subsequent concerts at smaller venues elsewhere. The three *Daily Express Song Books* that were published to support these events combine traditional folk music with popular lyrics and

can occasionally be found still in use by choirs and community groups.

The impression one gets of Giraud at this period is of an energetic and forceful ideas-man who was virtually a workaholic. Almost inevitably, his marriage came under strain as a result of diverging interests and the long hours on Fleet Street but whilst his eldest daughter Evelyn tended to take her mother's side, Peggy – now in her early twenties – joined her father at the *Express* as his personal assistant. She remembers: 'People were always arriving at the Department with new ideas and it was my father's task to sift them out to decide what was worth doing and what should be rejected ... and then carry the worthwhile proposals through to publication.'

One such hopeful was a Mr Theodore Brown who turned up one day from Woking with some folded paper contraptions which he thought might be used for advertising purposes or perhaps as toys for children. It is a mark of Giraud's entrepreneurial flair and acumen that he immediately saw the possibilities of these ingenious models and seized the chance to exploit them. Whether it was strictly within the terms of his contract with the *Express* or not, he quickly escorted Mr Brown to the Patent Office in order to jointly register the invention in both their names. The application was lodged on February 1st 1929: within weeks Giraud must have been mobilising the forces necessary to produce the first Annual which was ready in time to catch that year's Christmas market.

It can have been no mean organisational feat – especially bearing in mind the problems of finding paper-suppliers; printers and die-cutters able to cope with his unusual requirements; the need to locate and rent central premises for an assembly-line; and the problems of recruiting, training and supervising a workforce of casual helpers who would be able to stick all the bits accurately together. Peggy had the job of interviewing and selecting suitable people for the assembly-team and Maisie Mostyn (now Mrs Plumb), then a fifteen year old, was one of those she chose. Maisie recalls: 'When I first went to work for Mr Giraud in 1929 I was one of about 50 girls brought in to put together and paste down the pop-up effects in the first *Daily Express Annual*. That year we had a workshop in a large hall behind a jeweller's shop in Hatton Garden. First we had to fold the models from prepared sheets, then paste them into the books. One girl was usually responsible for assembling a complete book though occasionally we worked as a production line. Mr Giraud showed us all how to bend the stiff paper and stick it so that it folded away correctly when the book was closed. He even gave us each a special thimble to help with the folding, though I personally always found it quicker and easier to sharpen the creases with my thumb nail. We had pots of glue beside us and had to paste very accurately or the models wouldn't stand correctly. Evidently I was good at the job because he asked me to return several years

running and eventually, when he moved production to North Finchley, he wanted me to go as his Supervisor.'

Although some of the models in that first annual may seem rather impoverished alongside the later inventions, it is a tribute to all who were involved that copies can still be found with all seven pop-ups intact and (more or less) working. In the earliest issues, models appeared on both front and rear end-papers as well as on four or five double spreads inside where they were actually incorporated amidst the text of the stories or rhymes they were intended to illustrate. This evidently caused pagination problems because indexes don't always correlate with the numbered pages. As time went on, the idea of using the end-papers for models was dropped as was the attempt to feature pop-ups within pages of printed text. In later versions, page numbering was dropped altogether and the models were distributed more arbitrarily. Incidentally the first *Daily Express Annual* – and the one that followed in 1930 – now have an added rarity value because they include the first pop-up appearance of Rupert Bear, illustrating two of Mary Tourtel's rhymed stories.

The second was altogether more sophisticated and robust, indicating that most of the initial production difficulties had been overcome. It contains one of Giraud's most audacious effects which not only uses folded and pasted card but incorporates a piece of dowelling and tensioned thread to activate a clown who swings head-over-heels on a parallel bar as the pages open (illustrated last month). To what extent did the shadowy influence of the inventor Theodore Brown contribute to these early conceits? It is impossible now to say. Peggy remembers him as the sort of person whose head was always 'up in the clouds' and although the two of them may have collaborated quite closely on the first two annuals, she thinks that he 'faded right out of the picture – perhaps even died' shortly afterwards.

Curiously, though the five *Daily Express Children's Annuals* were self-evidently produced under the newspaper's banner they do not seem to have been used as circulation-boosters as was other material from the Publication Department: the paper ran a regular children's column called 'Junior Edition' at the time but the books hardly received any mention in it. Peggy is certain that from the start the Annuals were sold through bookshops rather than by readers' subscription and it is interesting to speculate why. It is my belief that from the outset Giraud deliberately disengaged this part of the operation from the other things he was doing for the *Express* because he had shrewdly decided to exploit the idea for himself once his contract with the newspaper ran out.

In any event, from 1934 onwards, the annuals continued to appear, but under the imprint of Strand Publications (the business name under which Giraud began operating as a sole trader) and a new title 'Bookano Stories' was adopted. (Why Bookano? It was

evidently intended as an amalgamation of 'book' and the name of the popular mechanical construction system 'Meccano'.) For a time he retained a business address in the City but he removed all remaining aspects of the enterprise to his home at 269 Ballards Lane in North Finchley – a large, double-fronted semi-detached Victorian house (still standing) which offered space behind in what had been stabling for eventual expansion.

The transfer was successfully accomplished. Giraud retained most of the free-lance writers and artists who he had first commissioned during his regime at the *Express* and one of them – the illustrator Joscelyn Hughes – eventually joined his small team of full-time staff. By now production methods had been refined, of course, and much of the preparatory work on the models could be undertaken by out-workers who were no doubt easier to find in suburban rather than central London. Peggy explains: 'The sheets containing designs for the models were printed separately and came from the printer ready-cut in packs of 100. They were sent off to out-workers for assembly. We had a lot of helpers of this sort who folded and stuck the models together at home. It was piece work. I remember we used to have a bright yellow van with a big Bookano model on the roof which used to deliver the sheets to people's houses and then collect the finished models when they were ready – it was a familiar sight around Finchley in those days! By that time Maisie Mostyn was working full-time for my father as Supervisor: one of her jobs would be to check through assembled models as they came in, labelling the boxes so that if any proved defective when they were used, the person responsible for the mistakes could be quickly identified. The main work at the Ballard Lane premises was the final assembly of the finished books. They would arrive, ready-bound, from the printer with only the models missing. An assembly line of girls then opened them and pasted down the models on appropriate pages. A mixture of Gripfix and Secotine was used – I can still remember the almond-like smell it made. Finally, each of the books was carefully examined (another of Maisie's responsibilities) to make sure that everything was working as it should be before being dispatched.'

Evidently the business prospered in the years leading up to the Second World War: soon the Ballard Lane premises became too small to serve as both workspace and dwelling so Giraud moved his family to a similar house nearby. The books themselves demonstrated a growing assurance and inventiveness – in particular, *Bookanos No. 5* (1938) and *No. 6* (1939) combining an interesting and varied series of models with considerably improved graphics. Giraud's undoubted talents as a paper-engineer were unfortunately never matched by his skills as an artist, a fact that he no doubt recognised himself. So as time went on, he increasingly relied on professional illustrators such as E. da Costa and



An historic reunion in 1990 – Maisie Plumb (formerly Mostyn) on the left meets Peggy Giraud-Saunders for the first time in over forty years. Both worked closely with S.L.G., both at the Daily Express and later when he became an independent children's book publisher.

Joscelyn Hughes to embellish his inventions. Where did the paper-folding ideas themselves come from? No one knows. It seems that Louis had a reticent side to his nature so neither members of his family nor surviving associates that I have spoken to can ever recall seeing him with scissors and paste striving to achieve new effects. In his adopted guise as 'The Wizard' he obviously decided to keep some creative secrets to himself.

The advent of war in 1939 must have come as a severe setback to many small independent publishers who were increasingly affected by paper shortages, enforced economy standards, disrupted supplies and (for those based in London) the ever-present threat of bombardment. It is a tribute to Giraud and his employees that despite such stringencies, the annuals continued regularly to appear, albeit in a far less innovative manner: most of the *Bookanos* between Numbers 7 and 13 are predominantly compiled from previously-used material. Only with the culminating trio: Numbers 14 (1947), 15 (1948) and 16 (1949) did the series regain some of its previous form. A final issue *Bookano Stories No. 17* was apparently produced after Giraud's death but that, like most of the wartime editions, was merely a regurgitation of earlier successes – an effort by his daughter Peggy and some of his former colleagues to maintain the tradition. Inevitably,

the attempt failed and the last vestiges of the Strand/Bookano imprint were finally wound up the following year. Sadly, because of family differences, it seems that none of the company's records or archives survived the closure.

Maybe this was what Giraud intended. As Peggy says: 'The whole enterprise was controlled at every stage by my father – so far as Bookano was concerned, he was IT! So it was quite obvious to me that when he eventually died, the business was bound to fold. No one was ever trained to design models or anything of that sort. My father was the only one who knew how to do it, so once he'd gone the secrets went with him . . . perhaps he didn't want the business to survive him?'

Chance played a part in guiding S. Louis Giraud to his culminating achievement as a pop-up originator: his skill was in seizing an opportunity and exploiting it with imagination and tenacity. It is a mark of both his ingenuity and entrepreneurial flair that his 'living models' – such ephemeral and simply-wrought assemblages – have survived the boistrous admiration of succeeding generations of children yet still retain the power to delight and amaze.

The author has compiled a detailed check-list of all Giraud's pop-up books, particulars of which he would be pleased to supply if contacted c/o ABMR.