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THOSE GOOD OLD

COMIC DAYS

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OH PLEASE DON'T BE CROSS WITH THEM - THEY HAVE HELPING ME TO FIND TOMMY WATT

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From the dreadfuls to the 'Dandy'

OH, THOSE good old comic days — the vivid impressions of childhood which stay with us for all our lives.

But who can say where it all began? Maybe we should look back to the satirical lampoons of the 18th century or to the Victorian taste for lurid "penny dreadfuls."

What is certain is that a production called "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday" went on sale back in 1884. But perhaps the vital event came six years later.

It was in 1890 that the young Alfred Harmsworth founded the first and, arguably, the greatest of the comic dynasties. It began with "Comic Cuts" followed a few weeks later by "Chips" and both were priced at 1d.

"Cuts," incidentally, is an expression left over from the days when illustrations were made from woodcuts.

No. 1. NEW STORY BOOK!



"Magnet", No. 1, Vol. 1, and the feature story is "The Making of Harry Wharton". It was in becoming one of the great story papers of the 20s and 30s.

better comic with technical quality and excellence of content was taken up in the '50s by Hulton Press with their "Eagle" experiment.

The great story papers of the '20s and '30s like "Gem", "Magnet" and "Nelson Lee Library", did much to redress the balance and set high standards.

Then Amalgamated Press found itself with a serious rival. The second great dynasty and pretenders to the comics' crown came with the arrival of the Scottish firm of D.C. Thomson.

Their stable of titles was to include adventure papers like "Rover" and "Wizard" but immortality came with "Dandy" and "Beano", featuring the slapstick antics of characters like Desperate Dan and Lord Snooty.

The style was very different and young readers took to it with enthusiasm. Not only did they provide escapism but actually managed to show kids defying authority, or at least, challenging it in a rather forthright way.

Regrettably, Hitler interfered with the progress of the comics' world though, as we know from our readers, many a serviceman had his "Hotspur" or "Wizard" sent on. But chronic shortages of paper spelt the end for some, including the famous "Magnet."

The G.I.s also left legacy with their taste the Superman style thing.

But in the post-war years many of the favourites began to appear. "Chips" and "Comic Cuts" both bit dust in 1953, the "Rainbow" in 1956. Maybe they less appeal to a generation of kids learned all about the emerging delights of television.

But there were plenty to choose from. Thomson were well-lashed with Beryl the Poet and Dennis the Menace. Korky the Cat and all rest. Amalgamated Press were in there fighting productions like "Kneekout", while Hulton their "Eagle-Girl-Sw" Robin series.

Roy of the Rovers was saving the day, the Second World War was being re-fought by a wide variety of characters and our space was being explored daily.

We cannot hope mention them all in "Special," so please, do shoot the authors. In the same way we realise many fans will object to the story papers "Gem" and "Magnet" being lumped together with the comic strip productions. But we do hope that we shall be able to revive fond memories of childhood with this tale of those good old comic days.

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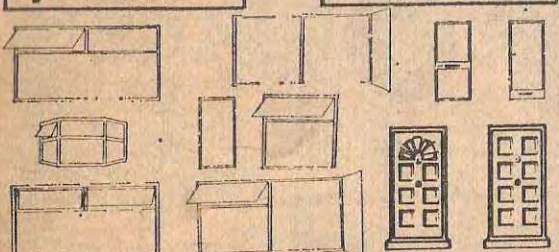
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Harmsworth's "Eagle" and "The Eagle" were the first of the "great story papers" which featured descriptions of the most ably trained, but his innovation was also filled with undoubted commercial potential and the age of the mass circulation comic strip had arrived.

It was in 1894 that Tom Browne created two of the most enduring characters of all — a pair of tramps called Weary Willie and Tired Tim, the stars of "Chips." The floodgates were open for a rush of comics, with Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press leading the way.

In the first quarter of this century came a whole galaxy of comic stars, with names like "Butterfly," "Puck," "Merry and Bright," "Chuckles," "Rainbow," "Playbox" and "Tiger Tim's Weekly." During the years of the First World War there was even room for propaganda. "Lot-o-Fun," for example, had a character called "Patriotic Paul" who made monkeys of sundry Prussian military types.

The rise of films also had its effects with spin-off productions like "Kinema Comic" and "Film Fun," featuring the likes of Harold Lloyd and Fatty Arbuckle. The idea of an entertainments link-up was not entirely new though, there had already been one starring music hall favourite, Dan Leno.

The history of comics has been punctuated with any number of rows about their suitability for young readers and even suggestions that they might be actively harmful to kids. The publishers were always conscious of this. "Rainbow," for instance, used to advertise itself as "the children's paper that parents approve of."

The theme of seeking a

PHIL CLARKE'S eyes light up when he sees a "Mickey Mouse" from the golden years of the late '30s. "I just look at the quality of that art work," he says and, once started, there is no stopping this enthusiast for those good old comic days. "I bought kids, as he says, bought comics, collected them and then moved on to new kids — like girls. Phil Clarke somehow found time for both girls and his comics. The years a fascination has turned into a business."

In the early '60s, it was a small group of students who met to cover the merits of comics and to swap. Mr. Clarke recalls it was still possible to pick up old copies of each down at the Birmingham Rag Market. "I bought them because we liked the art," he says. "But we read the stories too." The group began to grow upward and out from when they began buying their own comic books. They called themselves the "Birmingham Rag Market Comics Club." In the years, the

THE KING of Collectors has to be Denis Gifford — he has more than 22,000 comics dating as far back as 1880 in what, he says, is the biggest private collection in the world.

Mr. Gifford is also the mastermind behind the Association of Comic Enthusiasts, for whom he is currently compiling a massive part work called *The British Comics Encyclopedia*.

There is no doubting his pedigree for that task. He used to run his fiction in the business and

started drawing strips at the age of 14. He began with Pansy Potter in "Heavenly" draw "The World" in the "World" in

"Knockout" and developed a super-hero called Marvelman. Since then he has written several books on the subject, including the British Comic *1914-1914*.
To put you

entirely in the mood Mr. Gifford has been known to start his editorial column in the A.C.E. newsletter with the immortal line "Hello Folks" closing with a cheerful "Yours till tomorrow - yours till tomorrow - yours till tomorrow."

A black and white illustration depicting a scene of physical confrontation. In the center, a man in a light-colored suit is being thrown or falling backwards by a larger, more muscular man in a dark suit. The muscular man is holding the other's arm. To the right, a third man in a dark suit is running towards the left, looking back over his shoulder. The background features industrial machinery, including a large wheel and gears. The style is reminiscent of early 20th-century pulp magazine illustrations.

HOW THE STORY STATED.
DOM, THE TERRIBLE, IS A FLYING
HANDIT WHO AIMS TO BE MASTER OF
THE WORLD. HE HAS KIDNAPPED TOM
AND HIS QUAKER FATHER. BUT
ANOTHER RICK, AND HIS BROTHER
RICK IS COMPELLED TO TAKE PART IN
A RAID ON A MILLIONAIRE'S HOUSE.
HE COINVENTS A WAR MACHINE.
BUT HIS WARNING IS UNHEARD.
RICK IS A LAST RESOURCE. RICK THEN
FIGHTS A BATTLE WITH DOM IN THE
AIR, BUT THE
UNMUSTERED
SOON CRIPPLED.
WHILE, BACK AT DOM'S
HEADQUARTERS, HAN,
THE BOYS NEGRO
VANT, IS ENDEAVOUR-
ING TO LEARN THE
SECRETS OF THE
BUT RICK
BUTS STRONGHOLD
WHEN HE SUDDENLY
DROPPES A CROSS A
DANGEROUS
AND A DWARF ARMED
WITH POISONOUS

and, after a lot of manipulation, opened the door of the safe.

"Snakes," said the carpenter, "be careful."

"Look here!"

Inside were stacks and stacks of currency notes of all denominations and countries, from the British bank-note to the American "greenback," whilst piled in orderly array

Ham on the Warpath! the big chair, and from thence on to the top of the chest. With trembling fingers Ham drew out three or four of these and opened them.

A thrill a second for the boys who read "Magnet."

THERE ARE, of course, highly specialised clubs for comic enthusiasts and the Astral Group make no bones about their hero. Just read their publicity: 'If you think jeeps knock spots off hovercraft . . . space trains beat space shuttles . . . Anastasia means more than a Russian princess . . . you've got the slightest idea what we are thinking about . . . you ought to be in Astral'.

This is, of course, the International Dan Dare Club, in existence since 1965 and dedicated to the memory of the character and technology first portrayed by Eagle artist Frank Hamson.

They say of themselves: "Astral is a friendly and more-or-less sane group of mature enthusiasts, most of whom were readers of Eagle during its golden age between 1950-1960. Our interest is not merely nostalgic but also one of technical appreciation because we consider that the quality of the Dan Dare strip is such as to survive today on its own merits."

Already, they are laying plans to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Eagle in April, 1980.

If you are "thorking" on the same wave-length, more details can be had from Adrian Perkins, 19, Wolsey Way, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge.

Panel 1: A man in a checkered suit and hat is talking to a man in a top hat who is sitting on the ground. The man in the checkered suit says, "THAT'LL MAKE HIM LOOK SILLY!". The man in the top hat is holding a small toy train. There is a sign that says "TOYS" in the background.

Panel 2: The man in the top hat is laughing, saying "HA HA HA".

Panel 3: The man in the checkered suit is walking away, pulling the small toy train.

Panel 4: The man in the top hat is pointing at the man in the checkered suit who is walking away. The man in the top hat says, "COO'LL GET IT BACK!". The man in the checkered suit is carrying a bag.

1. Lupino was standing at the corner of Juarre Street enjoying a puff or three at a gasper, when a chap came along who owed him one. And this client cried: "Aha! Here's my chance. I'll make him look silly, I will!" So what did he do but tie the toy engine to our hero's stick. And when Lupino toddled off he trailed the engine after him, of course. How that joker did chortle, to be sure! But his mirth didn't last long. "That will cost you ten-and-six!" cried the toyshop proprietor. Well, that put the wind up his ribs.

2. "Ten-and-six, ch?" he howled. "That won't do. I must get that engine back." So he lost no time in rushing after Lupino, who meanwhile had found out what was which. Of course, he untied the engine from the walking stick. "I don't want this following me about," said he. "If you want it you can have it. Coming over your way." And he sent the engine whizzing along at express speed right towards the oncoming joker. It reached him before he could dodge it, and the result was that he tripped up.

3. "That serves you right, that does, my lad!" remarked Lupino, with perfect truth, as you will agree. But the funny filbert got very ratty, and he chased our worthy warrior, anxious to dot him one, or something equally unfriendly. But Lupino whizzed merrily along, and it wasn't long before he reached the river where an angler had got so tired of waiting for bites that didn't come that he'd dropped off to shut-eye. Lupino, being the quick-witted laddie, promptly hit on a clever notion. He grabbed hold of the line and pulled it.

4. "Here, what's the game?" bawled the angler, waking up. "You're not going? Let go, d'ye hear?" "Certainly," warbled Layano. "Anything to oblige?" So he let go, turning it to the right jolt. He took swung back and caught in the waistcoat of the onrushing wrathful one. That did it! He was jerked

The laughable larks of Lupino Lane as presented in this 1934 copy of "Film Fun."

Museum

Mr. Clarke's idea is for more than a shop. He wants to create a display of comics memorabilia which may gradually expand into a museum of childhood.

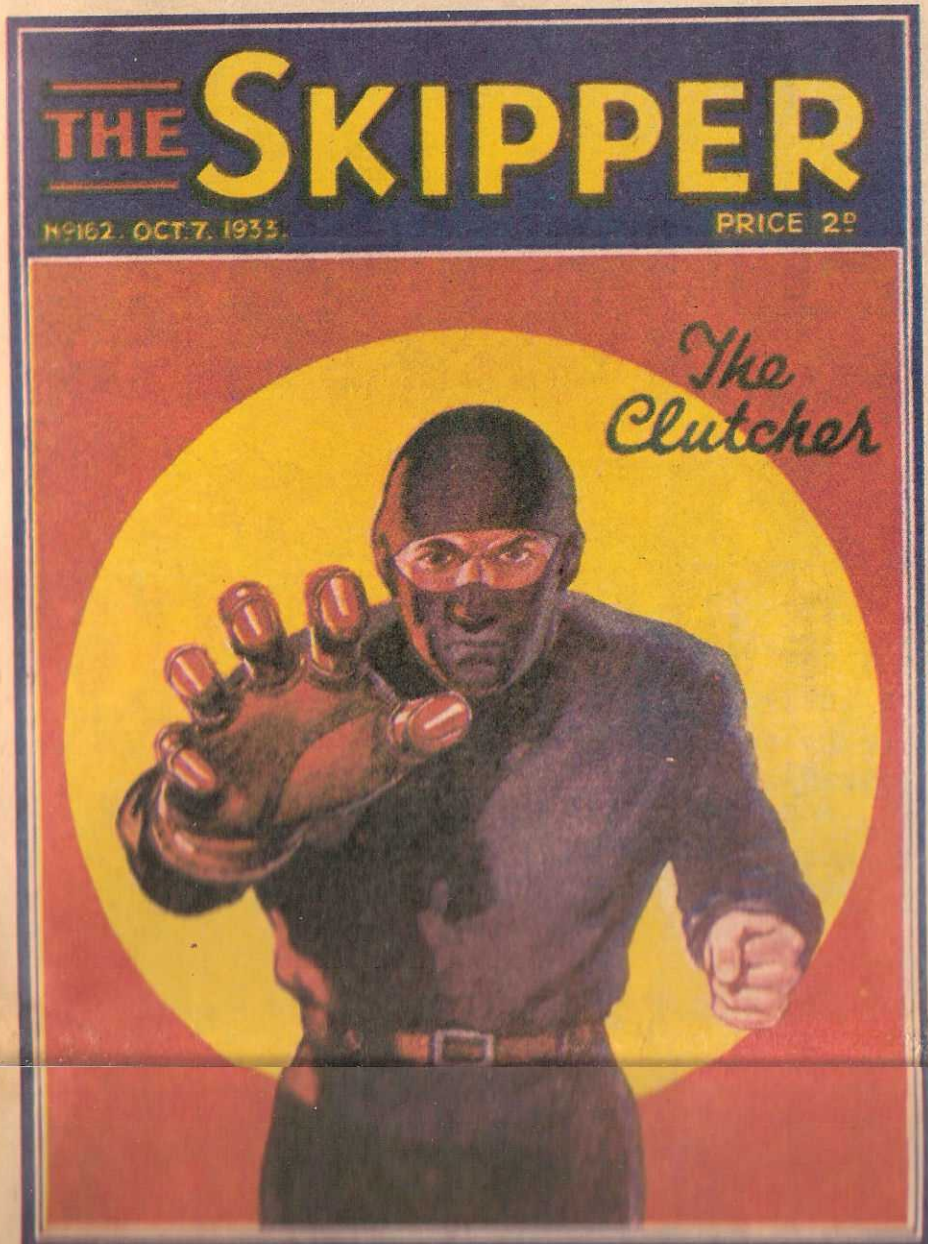
As to business, mostly it is American comics. Apart from anything else, there is a dearth of British publications, though that does not mean anything in this country is worth fortune.

A lot of people come to comic books and they think they are extremely valuable," he says. "They may buy one for 50p and think they have made a killing. But you can't tell at two which seem similar, though one may be worth £10 and the other £1. Very few are worth a great deal of money."

it if you want to keep
ye open for collectable
ties, copies of "Beano"
"Dandy" from the
1955 period are worth
ing. Alas, the glorious
m" and "Magnet"
s are rather common.
d what is the fasci-
n of it all for Phil
ke?

think it is just the atmosphere of cs," he says.

From penalty spot to Khyber Pass!



ROUND THE WORLD for 2d!

WHILE some story papers were content to stay at home with school yarns, there were those which chose to roam the world in search of adventure.

They had stirring names like Rover, Wizard, Hotspur and Champion and their pages seethed with imagination.



This is how Mercury reader F. D. Newman, of Bordesley Green, Birmingham, remembers them: "I've swung through the steamy jungle with 'Morgan the Mighty,' sat silent with breathless excitement alongside 'The Sapper' in his fantastic earth-boring machine as we burrowed underneath capital cities and clung with sheer delight as we soared overhead on his auto-gyro platform.

"I've stood poised with bated breath as the penalty was about to be taken, but glowing with the knowledge that all would be well with the safe hands of 'Cast Iron Bill' in goal.

"With forefingers and thumbs I have given the secret 'S' sign on recognising the Startler badge, while dodging the bullets of warring Afghan tribesmen as I negotiated the huge boulders of the Khyber Pass with the 'Wolf of Istanbul' and his trusty servant, wielding his fearsome 'clicket bat.'



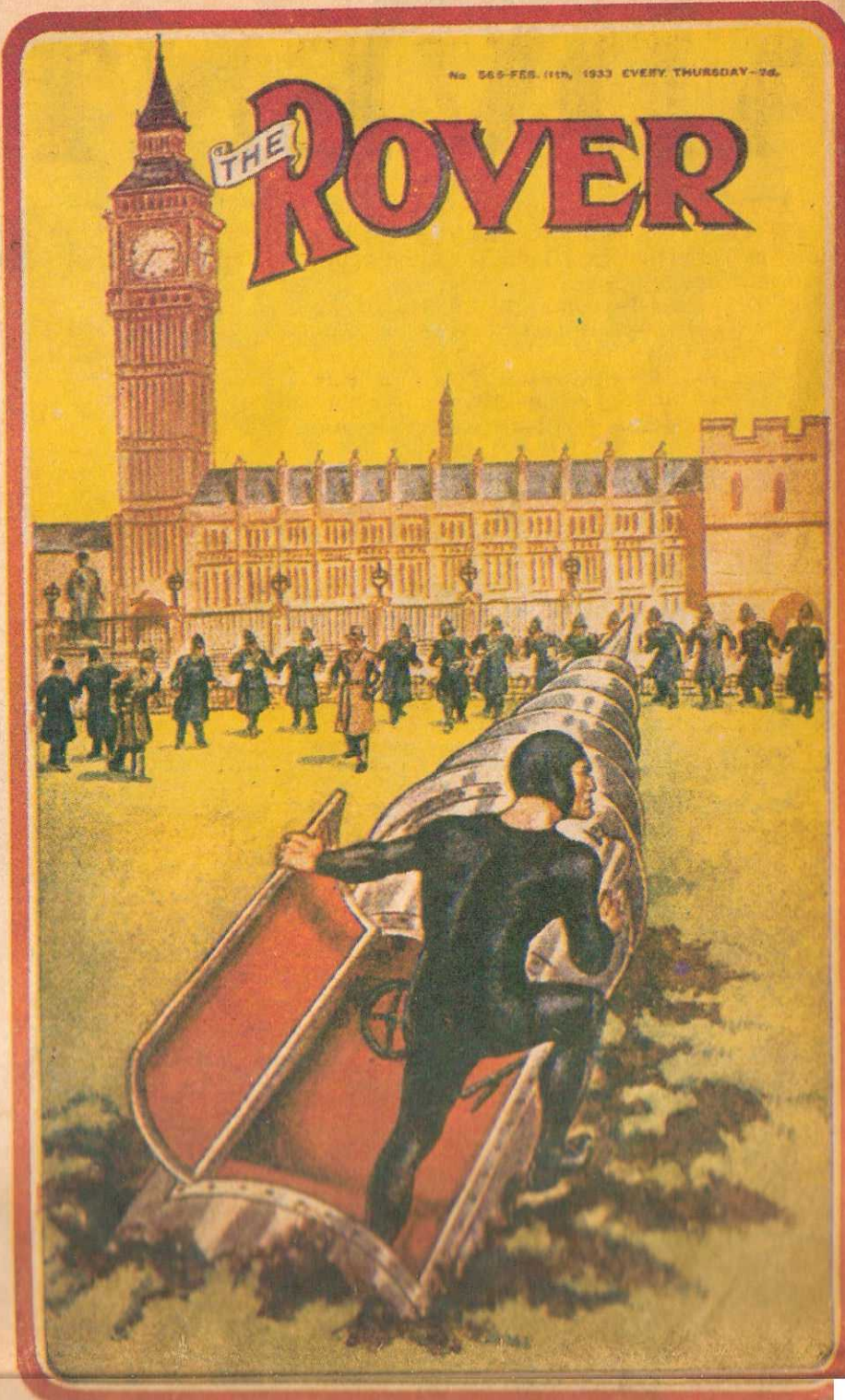
"Yes, the Adventure, Rover, Wizard, Skipper, Startler, Hotspur and the creepy stories of the Bullseye were my passport to tense excitement, thrills and adventure the world over."

Not bad for tuppence or so a time.

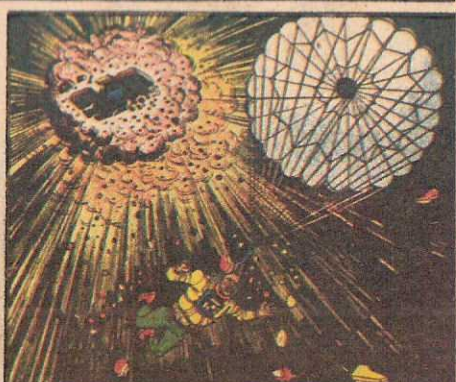
So double-dyed villains were thwarted by decent heroes week after week and somehow the magic never waned. It was, after all, the era of the clean sock on the jaw when retribution lay in wait for the wrong-doer.

On this page we reproduce four of those classic front pages with the certainty that they will get the adrenalin flowing again for many a fan.

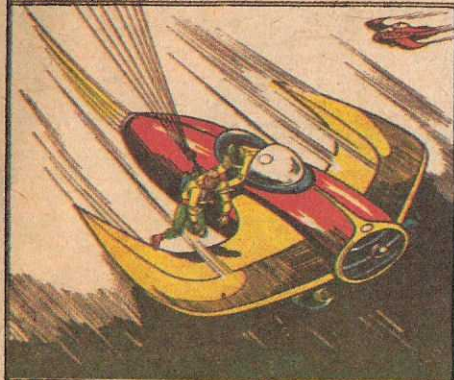
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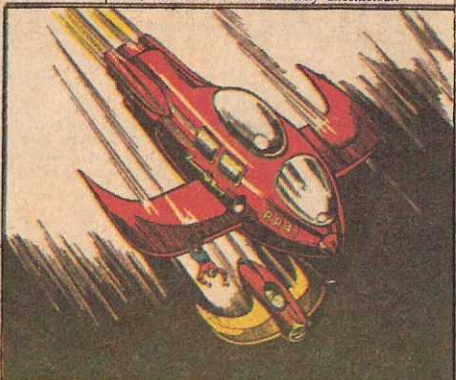
1-Inky Johnson, a negro member of the Inter-stellar Police, dived out through an open hatch in the side of the spacecraft carrier. Behind him he left a lighted fuse, and the carrier was due to blow up in a few minutes' time. At the moment, jet-craft from the carrier, manned by Venusian pirates, were busy raiding Uld, capital city of Fragg, one of Planet Jupiter's nine satellites.



2-As his parachute opened and he floated towards the ground below, Inky wondered if the pirates had succeeded in their bid to rescue Vaska, their leader, from prison in Uld. He was also wondering when the space-ship carrying his fellow-cops of Planet Patrol 41 would arrive. Suddenly a terrific explosion came from the carrier above and it shattered into a million pieces, one of which knocked Inky unconscious.



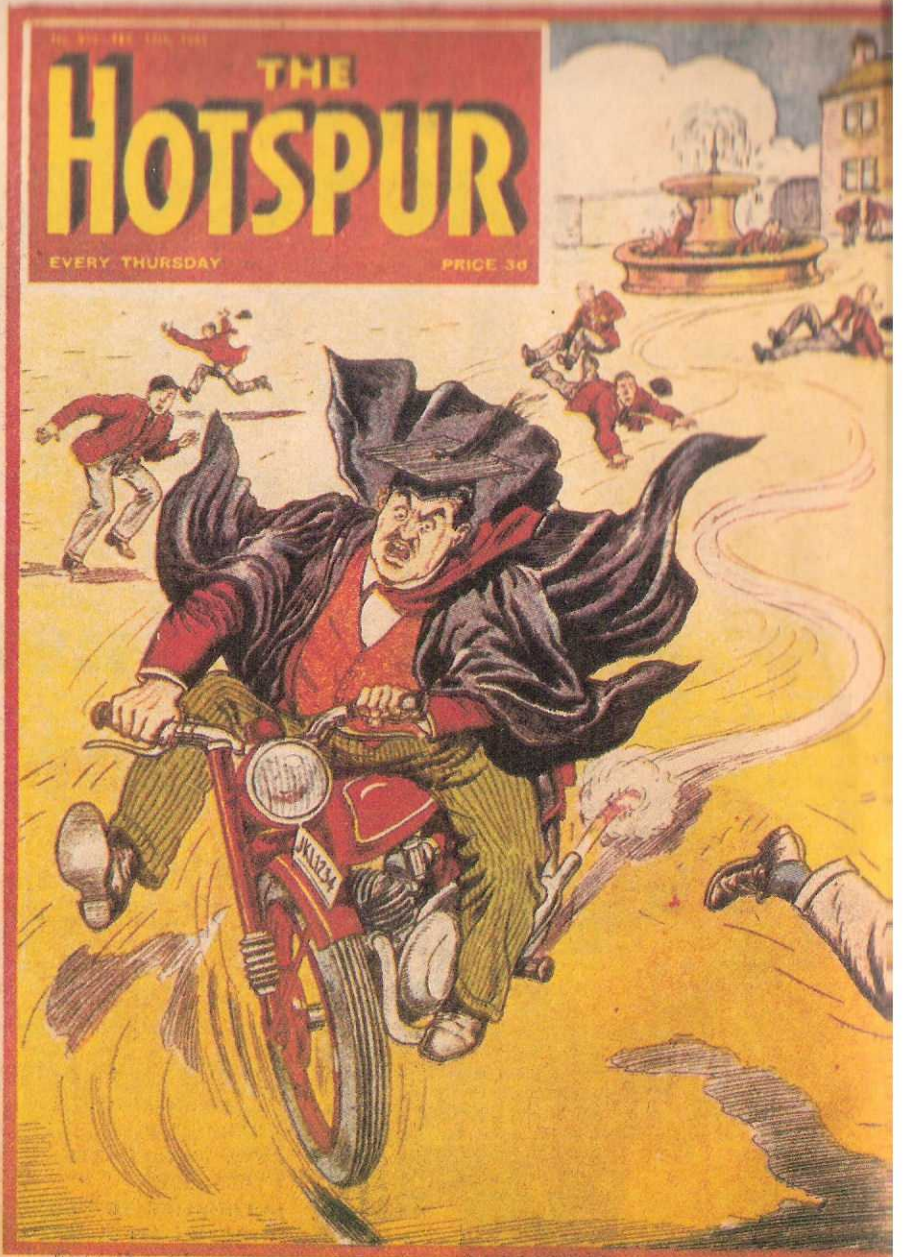
3-A pirate piloting a jet-craft saw what had happened, and as he swooped closer he recognised the unconscious space cop. He knew that Inky had been left a prisoner on the carrier, so the pirate guessed the negro was responsible for the explosion. Skillfully the Venusian throttled back until he was able to grab hold of Inky. Just at that moment P.P. came speeding towards the scene.



4-From the space-ship, with the aid of powerful binoculars, Lieutenant Nick Swift saw Inky's kidnapping and gave rapid instructions to Sergeant Logan at the controls. As the space-ship slowed down, Nick opened an inspection hatch in the ship's side then clambered out on to the wing, making use of the special hand-holds. Next moment Nick had launched himself in a death-defying dive towards the craft that had kidnapped Inky.

(CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE)

LOOK OUT! HERE COMES RED CIRCLE'S 60 SMILES-AN-HOUR SPEEDSTER



Eagle, the brainchild of a vicar

ON THE morning of April 14, 1950, youngsters were queuing up all over the country to pay 3d for a new comic called Eagle and 900,000 of them were lucky enough to get a copy.

That sell-out was the beginning of a post-war legend with an unlikely pedigree, for the comic was the brainchild of a young vicar who had always fancied his chances as a journalist.

Marcus Morris, Vicar of St. James's, Birkdale, in Lancashire, had also expressed concern at the American comics flooding into this country. He felt they were often over-violent, obscene and placed too much emphasis on the supernatural.

So, in 1949, he began to plan the Eagle, along with his chief lieutenant, an art teacher called Frank Hampson. Hulton Press liked the idea and the team began to grow. Among others there was a promising art student called Norman Thelwell and another vicar, Chad Varah — founder of the Samaritans.

Marcus Morris wrote later: "We had tried to start a paper which would be the first of a new kind of comic, one which would be the first of a new kind of comic, one which would be the first of a new kind of comic."

They wanted it to look good and it did. But the result was no pious sermon made dull with an excess of moral tub-thumping. Eagle was a vivid, exciting comic and from the pen of Hampson came its most famous character — Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future.

The intrepid Dan, aided by faithful

Digby and not forgetting Hank, Pierre, Sir Hubert, Sondar and Professor Peabody, were to fight many a campaign against the green Treens of Venus led by the dastardly Mekon.

When you came down to earth again there was P.C. 49 pounding the beat, Jeff Arnold riding the range and the idiosyncratic Harris Tweed, Extra Special Agent.

And who could ever forget Luck of the Legion? The rugged sergeant, loyal corporal Trenet and Legionaire Bimberg were to mount many sorties against the Touareg, accompanied by cries of "En avant, mes enfants!"

The famous — Churchill, Nelson, Baden Powell, Lincoln — had their inspiring stories told in comic strip. MacDonald Hastings was the Eagle special investigator and, on the centre pages, the innards of trains, planes and ships were laid bare in those famous "exploded" drawings.

Later came the sister paper "Girl" followed by Robin and Swift for younger readers. The Eagle family looked set to be an institution.

But its life was surprisingly short. Marcus Morris says 1950 to 1962 was the golden era. After that, the paper went into decline. Eagle was amalgamated with Lion and in 1970, disappeared altogether.

Gone but not forgotten by a generation of us who thrilled to the adventures of Dan, Jeff, Luck, Tommy Walls, '49', Storm Nelson, Harris Tweed and all the rest.

...and the 'family' that followed

SECOND OF OUR SPECIAL CORONATION ISSUES!

Girl
SISTER PAPER TO EAGLE
EVERY WEDNESDAY
VOL. 1 No 32
15 JUNE 1951
4½d

When the Master School girls are invited to Mary Raver's twenty-first party her jewels are stolen by Chandra, an Indian mystery man. Venus, a disreputable new girl and the thief's accomplice, finds a diamond clip for her dropped and takes it to her locker. The clip is found and Jane is under suspicion. With the help of Miss Lane, the sports mistress, Wendy clings Jane and proves that Venus was involved in the robbery. It is discovered that Chandra is really Mark Raven, the black sheep of the Raver family, and Wendy and Jane hope to find him and recover the jewels. They are awarded entry at the Coronation procession for being the two girls who best displayed good citizenship during the term. Miss Lane escorts them to London.

WENDY AND JINX
THE MYSTERY OF RAVEN CASTLE

LOOKING AT LAST! ISN'T THIS THRILLING?
WHAT CROWDS OF PEOPLE!
WE'LL GO STRAIGHT TO OUR HOTEL, GIRLS.
WELL, I CAN BUT TRY
WE HAVEN'T BEEN PROPERLY INTRODUCED YET!
MY NAME IS SON-DAR AND YOU WILL OBEY MY ORDERS COLONEL DARE
THE SHAKING OF HANDS IS AN EARTH CUSTOM THAT SEEMS ILLOGICAL TO US
ANY LUCK, SIR?
NO DIG — HE'S ABOUT AS FRIENDLY AS A RUSKY STOAT!
WE ARE NOW APPROACHING THE SILICON MASS
LOOK! THERES THE SHIP SIR! BANG IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT OUTSIDE MINT HUMBUG
I WONDER IF THEY'RE STILL ALIVE?
THAT IS OF MINOR IMPORTANCE. THE EFFECT OF THE FLUORINE SPRAY GUNS IS OUR MAIN INTEREST WE SHALL DIVE NOW

EAGLE - THE NEW NATIONAL STRIP CARTOON WEEKLY

THREEPENCE
EVERY FRIDAY
The ever-growing population of Earth lies under the threat of starvation. As a last resort, the Spaceship Ranger heads towards the planet Venus to find food. Three thousand miles from Venus, three Rocket Ships are launched towards the planet from Ranger. Two are still journeying towards Venus: No. 1, with Sir Hubert Dare and Professor Peabody on board, and No. 3, manned by Hank and Pierre. But No. 2 has already landed on Venus, where its crew, Dan Dare and Digby, has been picked up by the green Venusians, and taken to the city of Mekonta.
21 JULY 1950 No. 15

DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE

HERE WE ARE, GENTLEMEN, THE FINEST CITY ON VENUS!

MEKONTA
A CITY BUILT ON FLOATING ISLANDS IN AN ARTIFICIALLY CALMED LAKE, AND CIRCUMSCRIBED BY CANALS FILLED WITH THE VARI-COLOURED WATER OF VENUS. THE HOME OF THE TREENS — ARMOURLESS SCIENTIFIC AUTOMATONS WHO RULE THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE MYSTERY PLANET.

Dan decides to make friends with the Treen, though Digby thinks this will not work

WELL, I CAN BUT TRY
WE HAVEN'T BEEN PROPERLY INTRODUCED YET!
MY NAME IS SON-DAR AND YOU WILL OBEY MY ORDERS COLONEL DARE
THE SHAKING OF HANDS IS AN EARTH CUSTOM THAT SEEMS ILLOGICAL TO US
ANY LUCK, SIR?
NO DIG — HE'S ABOUT AS FRIENDLY AS A RUSKY STOAT!
WE ARE NOW APPROACHING THE SILICON MASS
LOOK! THERES THE SHIP SIR! BANG IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT OUTSIDE MINT HUMBUG
I WONDER IF THEY'RE STILL ALIVE?
THAT IS OF MINOR IMPORTANCE. THE EFFECT OF THE FLUORINE SPRAY GUNS IS OUR MAIN INTEREST WE SHALL DIVE NOW

WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM, THE WORLD-FAMOUS TRAMPS.



1. 'Twas a cold and frosty night, and Willie and Tim were looking for somewhere to lay down when their trunks brought them to Murky Manor, where they got a shock—



2. For the Duke de Murky was sleeping on his own doorstep. And all because a ghostly was creeping around the manor. "Ghost!" scolded Willie and Tim. "Fuddledododahs!"

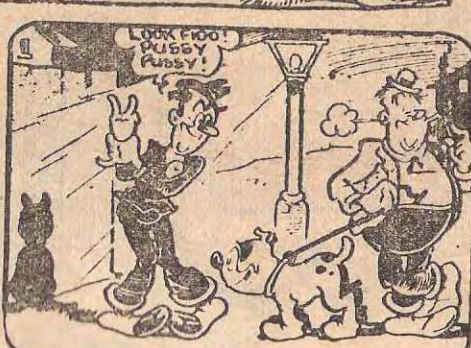


3. "Leave it to us, Duke, old toff," said they. "We'll show you how to spurn spooks!" So they toddled into the ancestral hall, and blow us, if they didn't meet the old ghost!

CHIPS—THE FAMILY FUN PAPER



1. Dear Followers, I was looking for Big But a bad boy who was wanted, and I thought my luck was in when I bumped into him (other night). But he laughed, and said he'd set his dog on me if I tried to get him.



2. Which made it awkward for me, as the dog was a fierce kind of hound. Then my marvellous brain got on the jump with a nobby notion. D'ye know what I did? Why, cast the shadow of a moggie on the fence.



3. "With boy! MUGGIE! YOUR SHADOW SHIELDED ON THE FENCE!"



4. Pongo caught his face a nasty one against the fence, which put him out of action, so I thought that Bill was as good as out. But he was a tough guy, and not knocked out, after all. "You're for it!" he hooted.



5. He turned back his sleeve in business-like fashion, and I thought it best to do a brisk bunk, after first stinging Pongo's lead to the fence. A good job, too!



6. For Pongo, having made a marvellous recovery, was barking after me. But he jerked away a plank, and it smote Bill a whanger that put him in dreamland!

Billy
—the
fat
owl
who
raised
many
a
hoot!



Billy Bunter at a keyhole — unaware of the "beastly" fellow about to give him a well-deserved kick up the backside.

OF ALL the schools in all the comics it is Greyfriars which is best remembered and of all the many great characters who stalked those famous corridors there is one mightier than the rest — William George Bunter.

To be accurate, he did not so much "stalk" as move in a tight-trousered waddle. For this is Bunter, the fat owl of the Remove, Bunter who hints at titled relatives, who waits for a postal order which rarely, if ever, comes. This is the unfat but somehow lovable youth whose mouth is usually sticky with jam tarts pilfered from other chaps' tuck boxes.

Most of all, he is the Bunter who screeches "yaroooh" and cries out with an anguished "beast!" at every imagined injustice.

Yet the fat owl, in constant battle with Mr. Quelch, actually had a talent. He was a noted ventriloquist. After all, a chap who is constantly described as being not very bright has to have something going for him.

But if William George Bunter was a fat duffer, an ass and all that, he has also earned himself a place in history. The tight-trousered buffoon has become a part of our language, a byword for greed.

Nor should we forget Billy's equally fat sister, Bessie, a pupil over at Cliff House. 1979 is her 60th anniversary and she still appears in "Tammy," a contemporary comic. Funny how age passed them by.

Fat chaps have always been the stuff of knockabout comedy. Put a thin fellow alongside — in the style

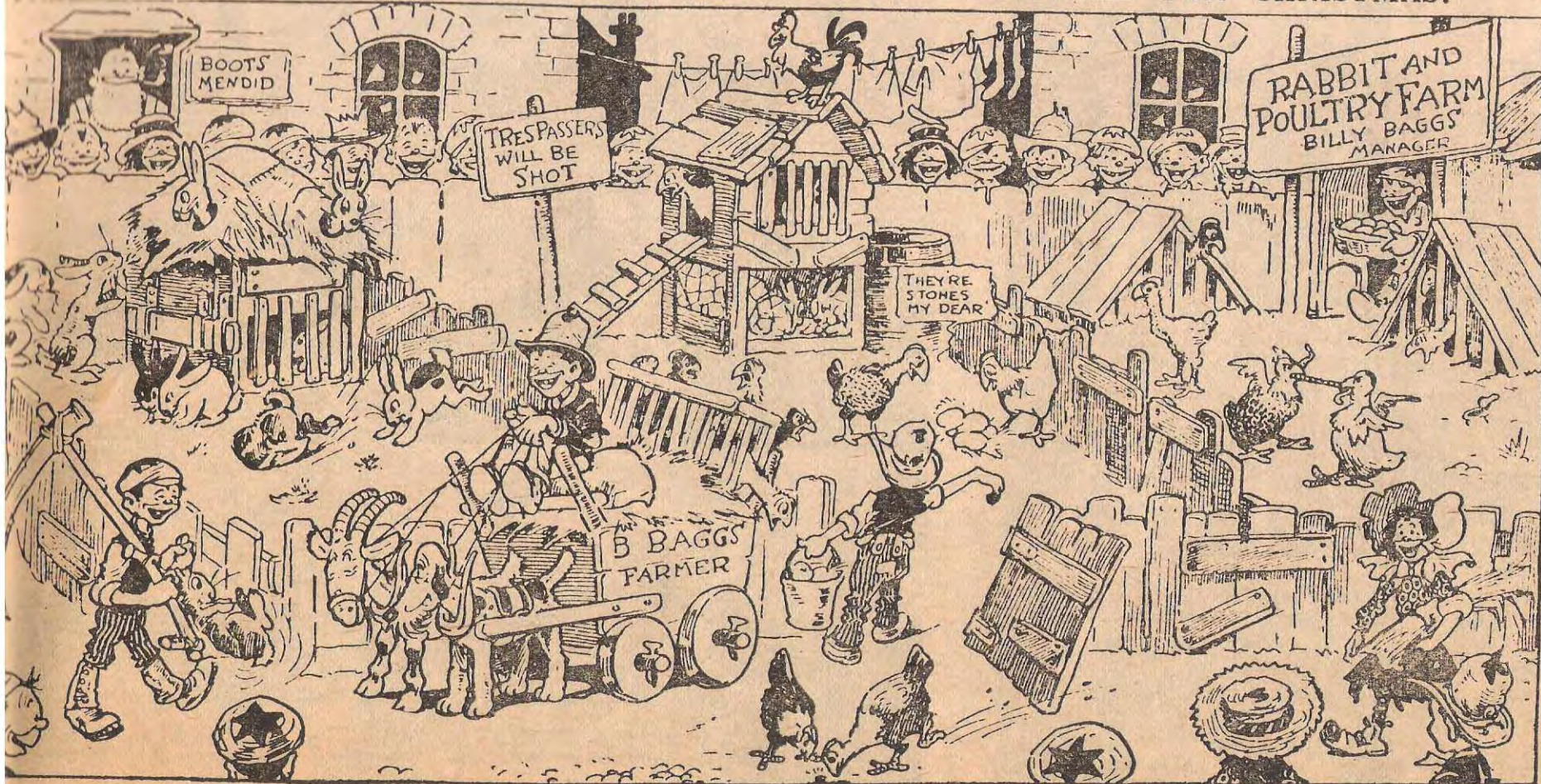
of Laurel and Hardy — and you have a classic situation.

After Bunter, the best remembered childhood characters of all are certainly such a thin-fat combination — Weary Willie and Tired Tim.

Also from "Chips" came two more of the best-remembered features of any comic, according to the memory of our readers. The first is Casey's Court and the adventures of the Nibs and Billy Baggs.

The other name that seems to stick in the mind is Ivor Klue the great detective. Hardly Sexton Blake, of course, but with a certain charm of his own.

THE CASEY COURT RABBIT AND POULTRY FARM PREPARES FOR CHRISTMAS.



Cave, you chaps it's George Orwell

IT WOULD be impossible to write any appreciation of comics and story papers without special mention of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest — all of whom were, of course, Charles Hamilton.

For the moment put the worth of his stories on one side — just marvel at the way any one author could be so prolific. Sustaining the Greyfriars stories in the "Magnet" alone from 1908 until 1940 is a remarkable achievement.

Someone, presumably with time on his hands and a taste for statistics, has estimated that Hamilton wrote the equivalent of 1,000 full-length novels during his 86 years. All of those millions of words found favour with an immense audience — and still do.

But the ins and outs of his style were best examined in a remarkable exchange of views 40 years ago. That was when George Orwell wrote a scathing attack on boy's weeklies for the magazine "Horizon".

Mr. Orwell found it a startling phenomenon that such papers as "Gem" and "Magnet" should have survived into the 1930s. What on earth would he think to see them still being read in 1979?

Apart from Billy Bunter, whom he considered a first-rate creation, as well known as Tarzan, Sexton Blake or Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Orwell seemed to find Harry Wharton, Tom Merry and all the rest stereotyped.

He criticised the unchanging style and the slang — "you frabjous ass" — which he considered to be 30 years out of date.

He accused Hamilton of snobbishness, of avoiding sex as a subject, of never mentioning politics. In fact, he saw it all as a fantasy world which was nothing like the reality of public schools, a world in which all foreigners were funny. In short, he seemed to think that the reader was not simply being duped but led on into a dangerously insulated world in which reality had no part.

But the real illumination came with a spirited reply, written by "Frank Richards" which not only repudiated the attack but gave an insight into the mind of the author.

"The most serious charge against my series is that it smacks of the year 1910, a period which Mr. Orwell appears to hold in peculiar horror," he wrote. "Probably, I am older than Mr. Orwell and I can tell him that the world went very well then. It has not been improved by the Great War, the General Strike, the outbreak of sex-chatter, the make-up or lipstick, the present discontent or by Mr. Orwell's thoughts upon the present discontents."

But Mr. Orwell not only reads a diaphanous dunderhead, "Tory into a harmless author for boys, he accuses him of plagiarism, of snobbishness, of being out of date, even of cleanliness of mind, as if that were a sin also."

In what was a witty riposte, Frank Richards then proceeded to refute Orwell's criticisms point by point. In the course of this he opined that "if Mr. Orwell supposes that the average sixth form boy cuddles a parlour maid as often as he handles a cricket bat, Mr. Orwell is in error."

The likes of Walter Scott, Chekhov, Shaw and Ibsen were dismissed as "duds" while foreigners, he declared, really were funny, lacking "the sense of humour which is the special gift to our own chosen nation." Hitler and Mussolini, he argued, would have been laughed into oblivion had they tried on their antics in Britain.

Science fiction, apparently admired by Mr. Orwell, was nothing new. Voyages under the sea, flights to the moon, death-rays and Martian invasions had all been done, some of them even before Frank Richards was born.

It is easy to see how George Orwell could have been astonished at the time of the exchange, for the world was in turmoil in 1939-40. It is even easier now to scoff at cosy teas round the study fire in an age of blase acceptance of just about anything from sexual liberation to urban terrorism. But the undeniable fact is that the charm persists. Bunter is still funny, Greyfriars has an appeal.

Maybe it is no longer possible to live the fantasy as fully as the readers who amazed George Orwell, but who can resist all of that "I say you chaps" stuff? It had a certain amiability and now it is possible to regret the passing of such an age of innocence.

The 'swap' shop

HOW eagerly we looked forward to weekly comics like "Chips," "Jester," "Butterfly," "Comic Cuts" and so on, and how we laughed at Weary Willie and Tired Tim, Tom the Zoo Keeper and The Bruin Boys.

What joy we derived from following the adventures of Harry Wharton and Co., with Billy Bunter and Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh providing the comic relief.

To add to our enjoyment there was the ritual of "swaps," when we read each others books and comics. There was also the local second-hand bookshop where you could swap two for one.

Even today, at the age of 63, I like to read my grandchildren's books, but they lack the fascination of the good old "Wizard," "Magnet," "Gem" and "Champion." — A. G. HAYDEN, King's Norton, Birmingham.

Serving up some nostalgia

WHEN the unfortunate intrusion of Adolf Hitler and his war spell the end for so many comic favourites, things were never quite the same again. Some of the characters came back in a different format but the original magic had gone.

That was when Howard Baker had his brainwave — why not reproduce the originals as exact facsimiles?

When the first bound volumes of "Gem" and "Magnet" appeared a few years ago, the reaction was tremendous. "All quite wonderful... a lush wallow in nostalgia... sheer delight... good bedside books for anyone over 30... the sociological value is immense..."

Now the Howard Baker Press produces more than 100 volumes of facsimiles of "Magnet," "Gem," "Nelson Lee," "Sexton Blake," "Union Jack" and so on. Tiger Tim's Own Comic Collection presents 16 of the best-loved picture strip papers from the inter-war period.

Homage

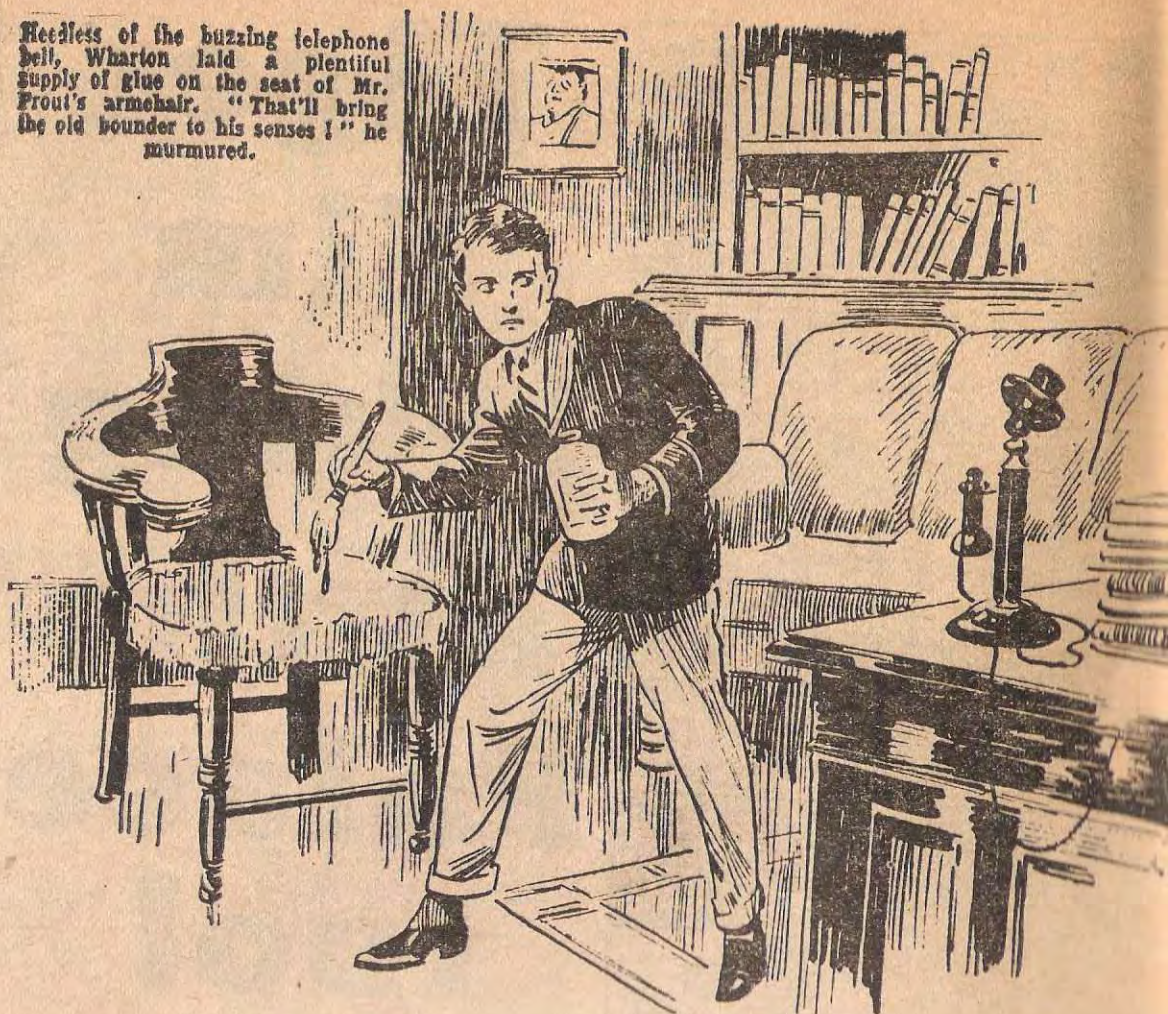
Many of the illustrations in this "Special" are taken, with permission, from Howard Baker books. In many ways they are Mr. Baker's own act of homage to the age and, particularly, to "the glowing imagination, the humour, the humanity and the well-nigh incredible industry" of Frank Richards.

The books have found a strong adult readership, perhaps among those trying to recapture an age when things seemed to be better. A survey showed an astounding variety of readers, including doctors, accountants, lawyers, pilots, industrial workers, M.P.s, professors, clerics.

Now Mr. Baker is producing full-length Billy Bunter books which, he says, will introduce the fat owl of the Remove to a new generation of young readers.

Could that be full cycle — from schoolboys through middle age and back to the kids? Frank Richards would probably appreciate that himself.

Reckless of the buzzing telephone bell, Wharton laid a plentiful supply of glue on the seat of Mr. Frou's armchair. "That'll bring the old bouncer to his senses!" he murmured.



A sticky situation for Harry Wharton in "Magnet."

...AND LAUGHTER FOR THE THIRTIES



The Two Pickles on holiday in "The Rainbow" the children's favourite. This story was printed August, 1938.

Yaroooh! But did anyone yell it?

GRAND RE-OPENING OF ST. FRANK'S THIS WEEK!

NELSON LEE



One of the many amusing incidents contained in the magnificent extra-long school yarn, featuring Nipper and his cheery chums, complete in this issue.

New Series No. 29.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 9th, 1933.

"Nelson Lee" and "Gem" ... took a nice line between snobbery and democracy.

MONEYBAGS MINOR!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



TWO STAUNCH READERS!

VIVIAN BIRD'S SCHOOLDAYS

WHEN LATIN RULED THE DAY

I STILL remember my horror, around 1930, when in one of my son's comics there appeared a strip cartoon of "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, the Fat-test Schoolboy on Earth." To find one of the fictional schools of my boyhood thus reduced was like seeing one's old school tie in the dock at a police court.

Keyholes

Not that I ever liked Billy Bunter, a Dickensian caricature, eavesdropper at keyholes, heir to the imaginary Bunter Court, whose postal order never arrived.

Yet Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, and particularly St. Frank's — named by Edwy Searles Brooks after his wife, Frances — still have their part in the leap of my ageing heart whenever I pass my old school at Camp Hill.

Unbalanced

Frank Richards, "Martin Clifford", "Owen Conquest", and E. S. Brooks aimed their school stories at grammar school boys who, with one foot up the academic ladder, had dreams of public boarding schools. Yet as rigger-playing "grammar cads" had played soccer at our council schools, so the one concession made by these lordly fictional establishments was to play, not the rigger their status demanded, but the soccer common to all their readers.

The "Nelson Lee",

"Gem", "Popular", and "Magnet" were "Establishment" motivated. Yet they trod a nice line between snobbery and democracy. We know that Somerton of St. Franks and Mauleverer of Greyfriars were belted earls, that Tregellis-West (St. Franks) was a baronet, and that Singleton (St. Franks) and D'Arcy (St. Jims) were "Hons", yet this was seldom emphasised, and peer or scholarship boy, each received short shrift from Messrs. Crowell, Quelch, and Prout, the form-masters in charge of an unbalanced curriculum consisting almost entirely of Latin, at construing which our schoolboy heroes were remarkable for puns rather than accuracy.

Incredible

What wisdom was shown by Brooks and Co. in making the incredible

credulous. No nonsensical bionic boys; no ridiculous laboratories forever ranging space. We doubted that 14-year-old Jerry Dodd of the Remove could ever have played for Australia in test matches; that Reggie Pitt could have revived his family fortunes with his earnings as a professional footballer in pre-Francis days; that Dick Lawrence could have been a champion boxer; or, the Onions brothers a famous trapeze artiste and a lugubrious circus clown. We wondered — but it was within our range of possibility.

Prodigies

Having starred throughout a series these prodigies subsided into the background of a Remove which must have grown inordinately large and strained the alphabet with three boys to a study. Yet they were resurrected

occasionally as voices in crowd scenes with "My only topper"; "My sainted aunt"; or "Jumping Jehosophat"; unlikely comments, though I did have a school friend who constantly called on "Fiends and jellyfish." But does anyone, anywhere, ever yell "Yaroooh"?

Amazons

An incipient sex interest was created by the introduction of "cousins" or pupils at nearby girls' schools. Barbara Redfern and Co. of Cliff House not only enhanced the Greyfriars chronicles, but had their doings told weekly in the "Schoolgirls' Own", illustrated as hockey-playing Amazons, panama-hatted and gym-slipped, with bulbous black-stockinged calves. Occasionally their interventions were dramatic. Fullwood, the original rotter of St. Franks, owed

his reformation and place in the Eleven to Winnie Pitt. A visit from Cousin Ethel always caused the immaculate D'Arcy of St. Jim's to give an additional polish to his glossy topper.

Righteous

The old school stories could have a salutary effect on boys in this less disciplined age. Half a century ago our youthful ethics were moulded, and the School was ruled by the righteous demagogues of the clean-living leaders of the Remove. Occasional problems were posed by a "black sheep" such as Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars, in whom smoking, gambling, and sliding on knotted sheets from the "dorm" for nocturnal trysts with shady characters at the local, were surprisingly compatible with athletic attainment. Normally, however, virtue brought its own reward,

and moral backsliding carried fear of "Coventry", and less of one's place in the team, with expulsion the ultimate horror.

Those who were boys when I was a boy have never forgotten Handforth, Wharlon, Jimmy Silver, or Tom Merry; but to re-read the old stories today is a voyage of re-discovery of names like Owen Major, "Squiff", Tom Redwing, Fatty Wynn ... Majors struggle to keep their Minors on the straight and narrow, dignified prefects take ashplants to inky-fingered lags who burn the toast, there are pillow fights and feeds after lights-out.

Boisterous

Thus they lived, our boyhood companions, in their boisterous and cheery fashion. They had their day, and a happy one it was, and we are the better for having shared it.

YOU MAY WIN ONE OF OUR 30 PRIZE MOTOR-CYCLES! Turn to centre pages and get busy!

You're Buying the BEST BOY'S BOOK When You Get This Bumper Twopennyworth!

The GEM 2^D
LIBRARY
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 824.
Vol. XXIV.
November 24th, 1923.

30 MOTOR-CYCLES
and
800 other Valuable Prizes
for readers!
Enter Our Great
FOOTBALLERS' NAME'S
COMPETITION
on pages 14 & 15

The MAGNET 2^D

Bunter the Boxer!

EVERY SATURDAY. Week Ending December 15th, 1923.

CURING THE SLACKER!
Ralph Beckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth Form, is the grumpy of the Indignant Games Committee, suffers the penalty for cutting footer practice! (See the grand long bit, Jim's story in this issue.)

BOYS! THIS COSTS TWOPENCE, BUT IT'S WORTH A BOB!

The MAGNET 2^D

Rescue!

No. 1,210. Vol. XL.
EVERY SATURDAY. Week Ending November 21st, 1921.

Gems of a golden era...

IT WAS a world in which chaps "jawed" rather than simply talked and greeted each other with hearty cries of "I say, you fellows." More than anything else Magnet and Gem are remembered for those magical stories of a way of life about which the average reader could have known little — the public schools. They did not carry picture strips like so many of their contemporary rivals but, for 3d, they offered long stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

From 1908 until 1940, when wartime paper shortages got the better of Greyfriars, Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Huree Jamset Ram Singh and, of course, Billy Bunter, held sway in Magnet. The stories were the work of Frank Richards, alias Charles Hamilton.

But there was more than Greyfriars on offer. Inside the covers of Magnet you would find many an adventure tale, perhaps of "Oom the terrible," the flying bandit with designs on world domination. Or, if the fancy took you, features about football penned by "Old ref."

School and soccer were the mainstay of the Gem recipe too. St. Jim's featured such stalwarts as Tom Merry and the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The author of those tales was one Martin Clifford, or Charles Hamilton, alias Frank Richards. The prolific Mr. Hamilton somehow managed to sustain both storylines and quality and is estimated to have written the equivalent of 1,000 full length novels in his lifetime.

The result was an extraordinary loyalty from both "Magnet-ites" and "Gem-ites". In his column on November 7, 1931, the editor of Magnet reported receiving fan letters from a 42-year-old lady from Nuneaton and a 58-year-old Yorkshireman. In the golden age of the story papers Gem and Magnet reigned supreme.

"TOM OF THE AJAX!" Battling New Training Ship Story in This Issue!

The GEM 2^D
LIBRARY
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 829.
Vol. XXV.
January 5th, 1924.

DEFENDING HIS FOE!
Tom Merry hits out at Cutsie, the bullying Fifth-Former, and saves his scorn enemy, Cardew, from a severe handling. (An exciting incident from the grand long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. contained in this issue.)



Bessie Bunter



Jemima Carstairs



Barbara Redfern



Clara Trevlyn



Marjorie Hazeldene



M.E. Bullivant



P. Primrose

Our heroines! the girls of Cliff House

WITH the launching of Amalgamated Press's "School Friend" in 1919 spiffing schoolgirls quickly superseded the strait-laced and ladylike heroines who had been served up to girl readers since Queen Victoria's time by moralistic magazines like the "Girl's Own Paper."

The "School Friend" starred the "absolutely ripping" Marjorie Hazeldene, Tomboy hockey captain Clara Trevlyn, the balloon-like, buffooning Bessie Hunter and other girls at Cliff House School.

by MARY CADOGAN

the wartime paper shortages of 1940. "Oh, chin up—chin up!" Jemima muttered fiercely. "Chest out, old thing! Remember the bulldog spirit."

The success of the "School Friend" encouraged Amalgamated Press to bring out the "Schoolgirls' Own" (featuring Betty Barton & Co., of Moreover School) the "Schoolgirl's Weekly" and the "Girls' Crystal."

Gypsies

Using a variety of extremely feminine pen-names, male writers like John Whaley, Horace Phillips and E. R. Ransome transported their audience for twopence a week through endlessly successful school themes, "tales of bygone days," ghost stories, mystery and detection, exploits of gypsies in disguise, poor little rich girls and rich little poor girls.

For more than two decades there were Girl Guide stories, dangerous enterprises in Africa, India

and the South Seas, plots set in film and broadcasting studios, jungle and wild west adventures, and so on, for thousands of millions of words.

Well-cut

Teenage heroines, of course, became more and more liberated. Perhaps the most potent symbols of career-girl success were to be found in the "Schoolgirls' Weekly" and "Girl's Crystal," which produced a lot of girl reporters (like "Sadie the Live-Wire of the Daily Wire"), aviators and detectives. W. J. Robin, who also wrote some Sexton Blake stories, specialised in female sleuths (Miss Alice, Lily Lash and Valerie Drew). As well as equipping them with "magnificent and super-intelligent" Alsatian assistants, he endowed them with trim figures, well-cut fashionable clothes, red-gold hair and eyes that were "a deep blue (or violet), fringed with long dark lashes...sparkling with humour and the joy of life."

After the Second World War schoolgirl sleuths

were replaced by equally compelling symbols of intrigue and adventure—the Secret Society. Girl readers responded to the romantic atmosphere of clandestine meetings in ancient crypts lit by flickering candle-light, where, hooded and robed against the cold, masked schoolgirls planned how they would solve mysteries and right injustices.

Nostalgic

The Silent Three first appeared in the 1950 picture-strip version of the "School Friend" and until the early 1960s this secret society often occupied the star position in this comic, holding its own against the pop-star, pony-riding and ballet-orientated adventures which still dominate today's girls' papers.

And, among these 1950s heroines, we can still find Bessie Bunter; she celebrates her 60th birthday this month and is going strong as a character in a children's comic. Still fat and anarchic she prances across the pages of IPC's "Tammy" and provides a nostalgic link with the golden age of the comics and story-papers in the 1930s.

THE SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN PAPER!

THE SCHOOL FRIEND

Every 1¹/₂ Thursday

No. 6. Vol. 1.

Three-Halfpence.

Week Ending June 21st, 1919.



BESSIE BUNTER MAKES A FAULTY STROKE

(An Amusing Incident from the Grand, Long, Complete Tale of the Girls of Cliff House—continues in this issue.)

Conceited
Conceited

Some of them, of course, had already become popular in the celebrated boys' paper, the "Magnet", in Greyfriars stories by Charles Hamilton (Frank Richards). The first few "School Friend" adventures were written by the same author, using the name of Hilda Richards, but rather surprisingly he soon came off the paper. He had perhaps over-exploited the comically conceited Bessie, and his lurid, skirted version of Billy Bunter had to be mellowed to satisfy girl readers.

Subsequent writers, all of whom were men using female pseudonyms, changed Bessie from a fat and greedy sneak into the plump, well-meaning duffer who was loved by several generations of schoolgirls during the 1920s and 30s in the "School Friend" and the "Schoolgirl."

The Cliff House girls were a fearfully talented and charismatic lot of teenagers. Barbara Redfern the idolized Fourth Form captain was a brilliant artist; her chum Mabel Lynn, at 14, had already turned down offers of stardom on the London stage and even Bessie Bunter was a cook of Cordon Bleu standards.

Tortures

In the 1920s the astute, Eton-cropped, monocled Jemima Carstairs symbolized the freedom-loving flapper and her craving for new horizons. She unmasked spies, outwitted international jewel-thieves and defied torturers and, like Barbara and Clara, could also drive fast cars, speed-boats and aeroplanes.

Always keeping her cool she remained popular until the "Schoolgirl" folded in

NO LESS a person than Noel Coward once commented on the apparent total lack of sex in the classic school stories of the '20s and '30s.

On the face of it, he seems to have been quite right. Oh, yes, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry

of Greyfriars both had a tremendous admiration for Marjorie Hazeldene of Cliff House and one or two of the chaps had an occasional excursion with the fair sex but there was nothing to write home about.

Love was soppy, romance out of the question for the dashing cricketers and the ripping

gels. Or have we been under-estimating them all these years?

In "The Schoolgirls' Album" Mary Cadogan comments on how most of the girls were always described—and drawn—as immaculate dressers. No wrinkled stockings, for

instance, while "they also managed to achieve sartorial elegance in holiday garb of flared shorts, sleek but unsuggestive bathing costumes and those rather gorgeous beach pyjamas which were popular then. Much emphasis, too, was laid on finery for special occasions; there were mouth-watering descriptions of silk jumpers,

crepe-de-chine, taffeta and chiffon dresses and lacy handkerchiefs discreetly dabbed with eau-de-cologne or lavender water."

Bad form

Oh my hat, what's this? Surely the gels were not dressing up to impress the chaps? There was, after all, a tendency to sneak out of the dorm and moon over Douglas Fairbanks senior movies.

It is true that running up excessive dress making or millinery bills was bad form, as was wearing too much face powder or scent, but it makes you think.

Liberated

The emphasis may have been on a healthy life, ability at sports, a sense of justice and decency and all that. But these were talented girls who could do anything that the lads at Greyfriars or St. Jim's could manage—and a lot more besides, when it came to flying and driving and that sort of thing.

As Mary Cadogan says, they were a pretty liberated lot, on the whole. Was this the real beginning of the women's equality movement? Were they all far more attractive than

the later breed of schoolgirl with an apple obsession and ponies all things "horsey"?

No doubt some young psychologists read a lot into all of this, though, heaven forbid, should now start imitating the private lives of the famous five or Barbara Redfern.

But it must be remembered that as early as Bob Cherry was heard say: "Ripping! I thought an evening with girls could be a ripping."

Mary Cadogan co-author (with Patricia Craig) "You're a B Angela" (Gollancz). Her latest book "The Charles Hamilton School Album" written with John Werr (Museum Press, Tonbridge, Kent).

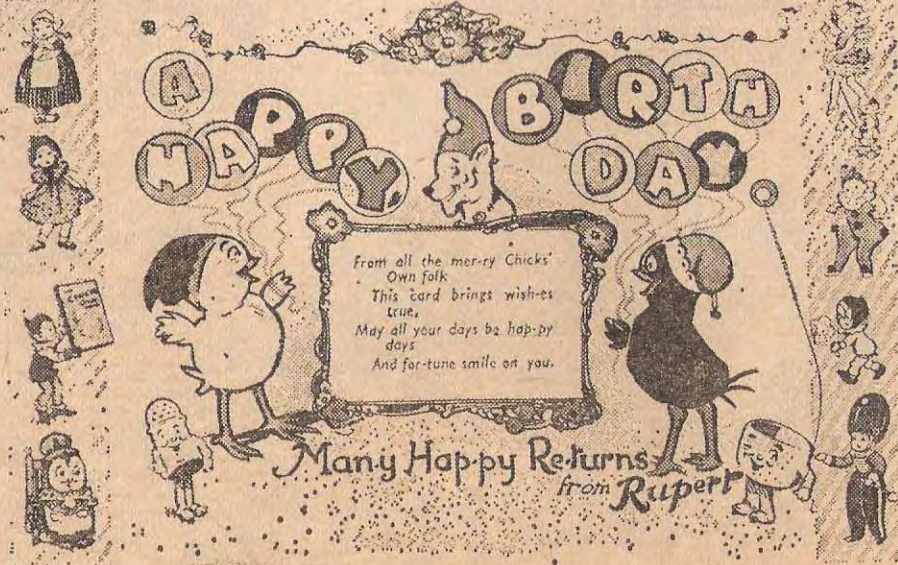
Illustrations "School Friend" reproduced by permission of Magazines Ltd.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM 'CHICKS' OWN'

IT must be nearly 70 years since I used to wait patiently for my brother to finish reading "Chips," the pink comic paper. Then I would at once look at Weary Willie and Tired Tim. How I loved the antics of the little fat tramp and his tall thin companion.

The Casey's Court cartoon gave me great pleasure, sorting out the goings on and many details of its inhabitants. How well I remember the "washin' dun 'ere" sign.

Going back a mere 40 years "Chicks' Own" was a great favourite of my son and he still has birthday cards which used to be sent to readers. — H.M.H., Handsworth, Birmingham.



A 1938 birthday card sent out by "Chicks Own."

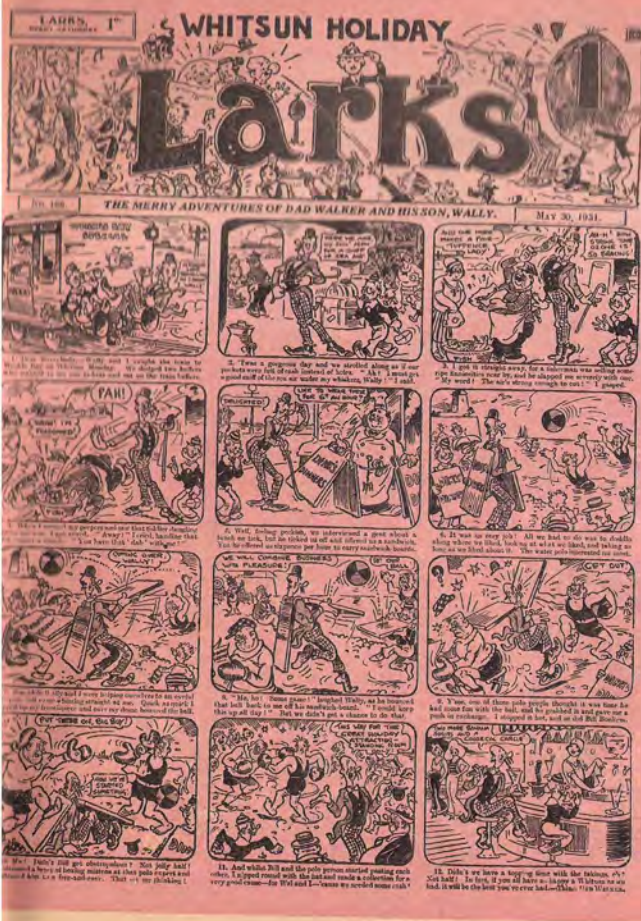
JOLLY HOLIDAY FUN FOR BOYS AND GIRLS!



HAVE A RIGHT ROYAL TIME WITH THE KING OF COMICS!



The Rainbow, as colourful as its name, was a favourite from 1914 until 1956. The Bruin Boys held the front page while the Two Pickles brought up the rear. But perhaps the most famous of them all was considerable stable of comics.



Of
st
s
of
Th

Larks, featuring
and his son W
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CHIPS 1
This jolly paper's the pick of the bunch; funniest pictures and tales with a punch. You'll never find better wherever you seek, for it gives you the finest of value each week. For enjoyment and pleasure it gives you full measure to brighten your leisure.



WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM, THE WORLD-FAMOUS TRAMPS. [NOVEMBER 12, 1926.]



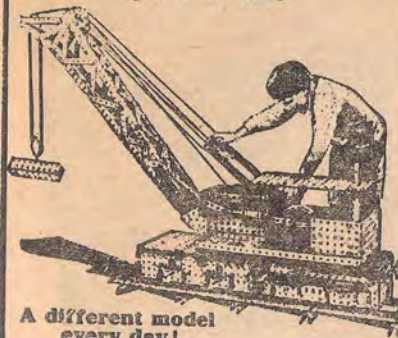
Householders regard Chips with a special affection. It was back in 1896 that the public first met in a two-cent 'Weary Willie and Tired Tim,' the famous...

Sunday Mercury Comic Days Sp



The 'comic' cures

Boys! Build anything you want



A different model every day!

There is no limit to the number of models you can build with Meccano—you can have a different model every day of the year if you wish!

A Meccano Outfit will give you endless enjoyment and hundreds of thrills! All the time you are building and inventing models you will be learning the secrets of engineering—knowledge that will be invaluable to you when you grow older.

The models you build with Meccano are real engineering models in miniature, because they are built with real engineering parts—Nuts and Bolts, Girders, Plates, Gear Wheels, Pinions, Cranks and scores of others. These parts can be used over and over again to make hundreds of different models.

If you already possess a Meccano Outfit, buy more parts so that you may build bigger and better models. Be sure you get Meccano this Christmas!

PRICES OF MECCANO OUTFITS FROM 2/6 TO 4/6

£500 IN PRIZES

Ask your Meccano dealer for an entry form and full particulars of our grand 4500 Model Building Competition.

The new Meccano Aeroplanes Constructor Outfit enable boys to build their own model aeroplanes. Ask your dealer to show them to you.

Send for this free book to day

Write today for this free book. It contains a number of stunning pictures, probably illustrated, showing some famous engineering feats. In addition, the full range of Meccano Outfits is shown, and there are illustrations of many wonderful Meccano models.

We will send you a copy, post free, in return for the names and addresses of three of your friends. Write your own name and address clearly, and ask them to do the same.

MECCANO
MECCANO LIMITED (DEPT. 15), OLD SWAN, LIVERPOOL

Your blushes banished for just five bob!

"HAVE YOU a red nose? Send a stamp to pay postage and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge." There must have been something in it, the firm with the miracle cure had been established for 25 years.

Remember these advertisements? They were all a part of the wonderful world of comics, too.

Back in 1931 there seems to have been quite a lot of sensitivity about inches. "Your height increased in 14 days or your money back" for just five shillings, said one ad, followed a few weeks later by another "astounding" system offering three to six inches in 10 days for 15. 6d. "Why pay more for less results?"

Then there was the chap from Scarborough who increased his own height to 6ft. 3ins., though he neglected to say how tall he was when he started. If red noses and a lack of inches were pretty bad, what about incurable blushing? Obviously something that concerned "Magnetic" But "shyness, nerves, self-consciousness" could all be cured for five bob.

Stammers silenced

Needless to say, there were also patent cures for stammering.

And how about the chap who promised "robust health, double strength, stamina and dashing energy in 30 days or your money back"? Not only would it give you extra muscles but "an iron will, self-control, virile manhood and personal magnetism." That last one five bob too. No wonder it said "surprise your friends!"

If that failed to enhance your personal charisma then you could "learn to fear no man" with a course of Jujitsu lessons, said to be "better than boxing." So notes to Kung Fu, dad knew all about the martial arts too.

Not that the ads were all so preposterous. There were plenty of stamps on offer—on approval, of course. Or how about the world's best pea pistol—20 peas in the magazine, rapid fire with force and accuracy? That cost 15. 6d.

Patent models were reminding everyone in 1931 that Britain held the world speed records in the air, on land and sea—with equal potential, presumably, from their miniatures. Heavily "B" gauge trains were all the rage and so was Meccano—today it may be a working model of a travelling crane, tomorrow a motor car chassis, the day after a traction engine, a lorry or lorry.

What had could have done without the services of The Boy Detective Supply Stores? Disguises, grease paint (sallow or Chinese, sunburn or red Indian)—to say nothing of removable scars and warts—were in the kit on offer. And a shilling bought that invaluable manual "Things the Boy Tee Should Know".

Modern concern for health might have frowned on the ads for cigarettes and the gifts to be had with coupons.

Finally, there was the "great adventure." Boys, aged 11 to 19 were wanted for work in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the ad said. "Training, outfit and assisted passage may be obtained through the Salvation Army." How many took up the offer?



Buy
"Standard"
SOLD EVERYWHERE
STANDARD FIREWORKS LIMITED, HUDDERSFIELD

WE HAVE SEARCHED THE WIDE WORLD

KOLSTER-BRANDES "MASTERPIECE"
We tested dozens of new 2-valve sets... examined every set that claimed to compete with the K-B "Masterpiece" and not one surpassed the standard set by Kolster-Brandes.

The K-B "Masterpiece" is the finest value offered! A revelation in 2-valve radio. Get your K-B quickly and enjoy the pick of the winter programmes... free by saving B.D.V. coupons—from to-day.

500 COUPONS
B.D.V.
CIGARETTES

each Coupon worth 3 TIMES other coupon values

10 20
6 12

Old King Cole was a merry old soul... And a merry old soul was he: He called for his pipe, He called for a light, And he called for his B.D.V.



EVEN LESS COUPONS REQUIRED FROM B.D.V. TOBACCO—EACH TOBACCO COUPON BEING WORTH 1 CIGARETTE COUPONS.

RARE ABYSSINIA STAMP FREE!!

The WORLD FAMOUS "SILKRITE" FOUNTAIN SELF-FILLING GREATEST PEN-VALUE EVER OFFERED!

Gold plated Mounts and Safety Clip on rich Ebony body give it the handsome appearance of an expensive pen and it writes as well as. GOLDEN has a delightfully responsive nib that makes writing a joy! 1 yours for 1/- only! Why pay 10/6? GUARANTEE—Cash back in full if not delighted!

300 STAMPS FOR 6d. (Abroad 1/-), including Aspidochelone, Harp, Old India, Nigeria, New South Wales, Gold Coast, etc.—W. A. 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NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO REMEMBER THOSE COMIC DAYS

Magic of Weary Willie and Co.

WHERE HAVE all the comics gone? Not the red-nosed or blue type, but the penny pink and the tuppenny coloured comics around which our young world revolved happy years ago.

Those were the days when "School" and "War" were dirty words dreamed up by those who ought to know better, when no-one was a cissy because no-one was ever seen to hold hands with the girl next door - holidays and birthday parties excepted. Sex in comics was, of course, taboo.

But what enchantment the titles conjured up - "Larks," "Happy Days," "Comic Cuts," "Chips," "Puck," "Bubbles," "Skipper," "Wizard" and "Champion" and "Gem".

Has the "Rainbow" finally disappeared in the grey skies of the pop picture-story magazines which are born yesterday and die tomorrow?

Have Weary Willie and Tired Tim at last found a haven of rest outside the warm pink pages? Were the boys of "Casey's Court" evicted when the brave new Britain was planned?

Luvly grub in 'Film Fun'

CHILDHOOD memories come tumbling back of all those special characters from the old comic papers. There was Desperate Dan and his rose-pine Billy Hunter, the fat cat of the Henchmen, was always raiding tuck boxes. Then there was Our Ernie in "Knockout" saying "what's for tea, ma?"

Laurel and Hardy were in "Film Fun," always hard-up and in another fine mess. But usually they ended up with some rich chap handing them an old-fashioned white fiver for a nosh-up of 'luvly grub'.

Nor should we forget characters like Pansy Potter, the strong-arm gal and Keyhole Kate from the "Beano".

The list is endless but one thing is certain - they don't print comics like 'em these days. - PATRICIA M. RODWELL, Oldbury.

Do Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys now find time to laugh at their contemporary Korley the Cat or frighten Mrs. Bruin with astounding tales of Dan from another age?

The schoolboys in the Red Circle school in "Hotspur" grew up, the ones at Greyfriars and St. Jim's did not. But all were schools of our dreams where the masters were those on which we could enormously inflict our hatred of all teachers.

Remember how we were chuffed by the fencing rag on "Adventure's" green Silver and stilled by the burning rage of the sun - though the giant magnificent glasses of The Last of the Incas in "The Wizard"?

If ventriloquist Val Fox failed to amaze us at times, we could try our hand at detection with "Dixon Hawk" or disappear into the bowels of the earth in Sapper's wonderful tunnelling machine.

There was always a football serial around to give us a big kick or we could take a trip into the wild west with Solo Solomon the cowboy ventriloquist (beat that today), or laugh with an older "Adventure" westerner Ticky McTurk.

A new boys' magazine in those days was an event to be reckoned with. If you could not afford the 1d or 2d there was always a swap to be had with someone. "The Hotspur" sprang into being with a giant eagle on the cover and a jumping frog inside the second issue. Free gifts galore.

But those were our days. The mornings of tramcars and cigarette cards, the afternoons of hopscotch and bubbling Vantas drinks, the nights of Andy Hardy and Harry Roy - and the weeks and weeks of comics. - GORDON SPINK, Wembley Park, Middlesex.

MORNING I NEARLY HAD MY CHIPS!

ALTHOUGH it is many years ago I still remember my favourite comic paper - "Chips." It was pink with the adventures of Weary Willie and Tired Tim on the front page.

Every Thursday morn. ing I was given 'd to fetch my paper. But one morning I had a nasty accident and fell against

THE TINPOT ALLEY BOYS START BROADCASTING!



The Tinpot Alley Boys in 'Radio Fun'

What a feast for five dollars

AS A child I learned to read by means of a comic called "Chicks" before starting school at five years of age. I wonder if other readers of the Sunday Mercury found this comic of similar value? The words were so clearly printed and the syllables hyphenated to help.

Another memory of the later years of boyhood is what I recall as a splendid paper, though it was not a comic as such. This was "The Modern Boy" though I do not think it lasted very long.

At my age I am out of touch with the comics of today, but in my day it was common to give away free gifts with the penny or twopenny comics. I remember "The Modern Boy" giving away coloured cut-outs of racing cars and trains.

Perhaps because of my early introduction to reading through "Chicks Own" I have always been fanatically keen on books and papers. One Christmas when I was perhaps 10, an Uncle in Canada sent me five dollars as a present. After cashing the five dollars for £1 I horrified the local newsagent by spending the lot on all the Christmas issues of every comic and boys' paper.

But normally children of

my era ran arround for the lot with a present money only ran to one comic.

I lost my dad at an early age but I still remember the simple pleasure I felt when he came home from work on Friday nights, bringing me a copy of "Chips" or some such. - FRANK COLLINS, Smethwick.

I REMEMBER my brother sending me for the "Rover" and "Wizard." These he would swap for other comics every week.

Nosey Parker, I believe, was on the back page of the "Rover." Nosey would, of course, end up with his nose trapped in someone's letter box each week.

There were papers like "Film Fun," "Tiger Tim's Weekly," "Funny Wonder," "Adventure" and "Kinema Comic." You would find in them characters like Merlin the Wizard, Barney and Gus and all your film favourites like Laurel and Hardy, George Formby, Lupino Lane and Charlie Chaplin.

But, of course, I remember best those characters from "Beano" and

"Tommy" the lion cub. I used to buy for my Desperate Dan, Pansy Potter and Korley the Cat. After saving the day holding up falling brick or tearing down girl DD would always be a to satisfy his enormous appetite with a giant pie.

Pansy Potter, strong man's daughter would be almost bionic times.

Korley the Kat was son's favourite when was young and he has his own cat Korley. MRS. W. JACKS, Neechells, Birmingham.

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Champion—for the champs

BORN in Wolverhampton, I used to get my comics from a secondhand shop on the Dudley Road. They cost a penny for two or you could take four clean ones in and exchange them for two.

"The Champion" was the only comic I bought new, because of the glossy black-and-white picture cards. I collected a set

of 50 showing past and present boxing champions and kept them for years.

My other favourites were "The Magnet," "Comic Cuts," "Chips" and "Nelson Lee." How about bringing them back — boys don't really change that much. — H. T. PELOW, Sedgley, Dudley.

**YOUR
good old
comic
days**

Still reading 'em at 71!

Chesler Conklin



Using to see Tilly in his? he asked. "I'm in that!" he said. Chester, who was the first character in the comic. What think you of the humor? I asked, and Tilly declared that he was too cute. Then Chester spotted the wooden fence and began to bark at it.



What was he doing? he asked. "I'm in that!" he said. Chester, who was the first character in the comic. What think you of the humor? I asked, and Tilly declared that he was too cute. Then Chester spotted the wooden fence and began to bark at it.



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From "The Keweenaw Comic" of October 18, 1930.

Measles and Mickey Mouse

I WAS six at the time and in bed with measles. A young school friend dropped by and left me a copy of "Mickey Mouse Weekly."

I chuckled away at Mickey, Goofy, Pluto, Donald Duck and the others and forgot all about my uncomfortable spots.

Even today, whenever I hear Mickey Mouse mentioned, it takes me back to the days when I had measles. — MRS. M. PUTNAM, Allesley, Coventry.

LOOKING back many years, the very first comic which I remember was "The Rainbow."

At the time there was a very sad serial story running about a little boy whose soldier father was missing in the 1914-15 war. The title of this pathetic story was "Where is My Daddy?"

The most serious side of my early reading was taken up with the doughty deeds of that unforgettable trio Jack, Sam and Pete

(not forgetting Rory the dog) who were portrayed weekly in the "Marvel."

The exciting exploits of those boyhood heroes fascinated me, with the formidable assortment of firearms they toted, together with the fantastic amounts of money they had which enabled them to fight or buy their way out of any sticky situation.

Another great favourite weekly of mine was "Union Jack" which, years later, changed its name to "Detective Weekly." The character featured in this famous paper was Sexton Blake, with Tinker and the bloodhound Pedro.

These famous names and the many cases of hard fought battles with their enemies in the criminal underworld provided me with countless hours of thrilling reading. — THOMAS J. FIOG, Acocks Green, Birmingham.

MY delight of the week when I was at school was "Girl's Crystal." I used to fetch the groceries to earn

the money to pay for it on Saturdays.

The dear man at the shop would give me a handful of sweets from each of the open boxes on display and I think I used to have almost a pound of them for free. That, and my book, were heaven. — MRS. PEGGY PHILLIPS, Kingstanding, Birmingham.

WHAT wonderful weeks they were shortly after the First World War for the first-growing-ups. For the adults, there were world problems and local difficulties but to those of us who were still at school each day was a bonus.

On Monday "The Magnet" with Billy Bunter, Tuesday brought the "Funny Wonder," Wednesday was Tom Merry in the "Gem" while Thursday had both "Sexton Blake" and "Nelson Lee."

That there were earlier ones, we knew. "Ally Sloper's Weekly" could always be had from market stalls. I remember the gaudy

"Union Jack" which lived up to its title, and the Monday I went to get my first copy of the newly-published "Rainbow." A year or two later came the never-to-be-equalled "Children's Newspaper" while my older brother had "Topical Times" — a weekly sports magazine.

Later came "Kinema Comic" to oust Wednesday's "Comic Cuts." The "Boy's Own Paper" was too classy for us, but we looked for the annual every year, when we had outgrown the marvellous "Chatterbox."

Never, though, did we outgrow the marvellous "Chums" with its special offers of pen-knives and five shillings for prizes. It was so very patriotic — but then, so were the others. — R. BURCHNALL, Leicester.

AN unforgettable "Bullseye" story concerned a millionaire cripple living in an eerie mansion. He would pay £1,000 to anyone who could thrill him with a story. Every week a

BOSS OF THE RAJAHS SPEED



on the counter. The regular dodge was to slip one inside another, but it did not always pay.

It caught, you would lose your own and the ex-husband one. You never read it before. The money was all right. — R. L. LILLINGTON, Earlswood, Warwickshire.

HOW well I remember "The Magnet." There was always an argument in our house as to who should read it first. Usually, my elder brother won, being bigger than me. He would curl up on the sofa for a couple of hours or so, chuckling at the antics at Greyfriars.

We would be giving him devastating looks but my brother could not care less. He was in another world

reading about Bunter and Co., and so was I when I eventually got hold of "The Magnet." — R. L. LILLINGTON, Earlswood, Warwickshire.

With tea to be turned in front of me to remember comics such as "Chips," "Weary Willie and Tired Tim," the comical tramps on the front page, always seemed to be nipping pies or iced cakes off window sills. But why they were put out to cool by the cook always puzzled me.

On the back page were the crazy kids of Casey's Court and a feature called Mi Collum by the "Chips" office boy, which was full of bad spelling and frowned on by my parents as being detrimental to my education.

"Comic Cuts" another of this period, a Tom the Ticker of a man on the front page also featured. House Hector the stray dog, Penny Pockets the boy

These comic strips were adorned with large amounts of snow pictures put out to cool to traditionally pinched the tramps or Homies Hector. — W. N. NEWELL, Acocks Green, Birmingham.

I READ my first copy of the "Magnet" in 1929. My parents could not understand a little bit of liking a boys' paper, but spent my 2d. pocket money on it every week and always asked for it annual at Christmas and I left school at 14.

I wish I had kept my books and comics for my own two sons, but they were worn out with reading.

Even now I go to the children's department of the library and bring home a Billy Bunter book. I always makes me smile. — MRS. J. SANDALS, Sheldon, Birmingham.

AMONG the wealthiest comics and magazines I had during the years between 1920 and 1929, of stood out from all the others and that was "Nelson Lee."

In the Birmingham Hill Coat School this was sought after book was feast of crime detective and also a form of currency among us pupils. It bought you, by way of barter, a round two of dry bread.

"Nelson Lee," "Gem" and "Magnet" all had the worth but "Sexton Blake" was the most valued. — HANDFORD, Great Bas Birmingham.

ADVENTURE AHoy!

"MASTHEAD ahoy, shouted a bluff old sea-dog clad in a captain's uniform, with a patch over his right eye, as he stamped about on a wooden leg."

Thus began another saga of the sea in the "Boy's Graphic" back in the summer of 1890. Other thrilling items included an Englishman's adventures in Spain, a tale called The Fakir's Curse and Riven by Steel — a yarn of soldiering written by one Colonel Penn.

"Does any stain rest on my birth?" So asked Rob Daring, the hero of the Colonel's tale, before setting off to enlist in the army to fight the Zulus.

Moral tone

It was, perhaps, in this age of Empire and British might that the style of successive waves of boys' story papers and comics was truly set. There was a moral tone, a belief in

cleanliness of thought, word and deed and a taste for adventure around the world that was to survive for decades.

But most illuminating of all were the letters to the editor from his readers — or rather, the editor's replies. For, in an often confusing conundrum of a page, the letters were not printed at all, just a name, initials or pseudonym followed by the weighty

Fakir's Curse — and a flogging from Editor!

advice of the man behind the desk.

Often the tone was stern as with the immortal lines — "Smoking is a dirty habit and any boy caught indulging in it deserves a sound flogging."

Heaven knows what misdemeanour had been committed when the editor thundered: "We refer your friend to his father. He wants a flogging."

Perhaps he had been carried away by another series running in the magazine on life at Eton which had more than a

passing mention of the uses of corporal punishment. But it all helped to leaven the usual diet of queries about keeping rabbits or the right foodstuff for guinea pigs.

Freckles

Various imperfections and physical disabilities were often the subject of letters too, like the appearance of freckles; stuttering and so on. There seems to have been quite

a pre-occupation with stature even then — "good food and plenty of open-air exercise are the only means to increase your height."

Good work with Indian clubs and dumb bells was recommended straighten out round shoulders while "a large hook tied between the legs when going to bed at night is often recommended to cure knock-knees."

On the other hand, there was such splendid advice as "Persons having weak lungs should on no

occasion play wind instruments" and the cryptic "all depends on the state of the glands. Try something of an acid nature."

Poets were not suffered gladly and were often rebuffed with a curt "don't ask silly questions," or the withering: "We have never heard how many Hs there are in St. Luke's Gospel and have not time to sit down and count them."

While praise for the publication was always welcome, certain suggestions for stories were not. One poor lad and his friends who simply requested a highwayman story were told: "We do not intend to disfigure our paper with sensational rubbish."

An aspiring poet got pretty short shrift, too, when he was told: "Your verses are not poetry at

all, as they lack the first essentials — they do not even rhyme." What would all our modern poets say?

Hand-writing was clearly a big thing and if it was good you might be told that you were suitable for office work. One genius with a pen was actually given the ultimate accolade of being told he was good enough for the Civil Service.

On morals, the Graphic thundered: "You are a very foolish boy to allow such thoughts to take possession of you. Give up the idea once and for all or you will inevitably suffer."

And finally, was everything so marvellous in our Empire when the editor could say: "We should not advise either clerks or book-keepers to emigrate to any of our colonies?"



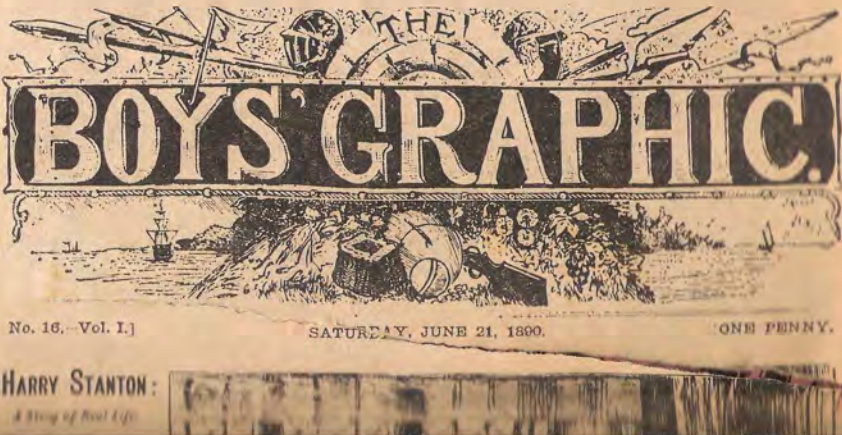
HARRY STANTON:
A Story of Real Life.
By GUY RAYNER.

CHAPTER XXX (Continued)

COMPLETELY exhausted Harry fell down upon a hedge bank, and Charlie dropped by his side, neither attempting to speak until some minutes had elapsed. Their faces were burning hot, and their underclothing clammy with perspiration.

"Do you think it wise to go on in this state?" ventured Charlie. "I feel more dead than alive, and by this time the whole neighbourhood will have been alarmed. It's very easy to talk about running away, but —"

"I shall have to be taught and sent back home before I give up my extraordinary plan," Harry said with a determined look.



No. 16, Vol. I.]

SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 1890.

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WHEN I was small and stayed with my grandma she used to buy me "Funny Wonder."

I can see her now, carefully donning her shawl and placing her hat on her head, securely fixing it with a pin through her bun. Then, with her basket on her arm, she would go shopping.

She asked me why I liked the "Funny Wonder" and I said it was because it was funny and made me wonder.

I used to like the "Gem," even though it was a boy's paper. They used to run a penfriends feature and in 1933 I began to write to a girl in New Zealand.

We have kept in touch all through the years and still write regularly, so the "Gem" has a special place in my memories. — MRS. L. J. GOODWIN, Penn, Wolverhampton.

I HAVE some 400 issues of the "Nelson Lee Library," published between 1915 and 1933. Originally it was a weekly detective story but later featured the adventures of the boys of St. Frank's College.

Initially, the stories were about the private detective Nelson Lee and his assistant Nipper. The transfer to school stories was effected smoothly by the expedient of Nelson Lee and Nipper being threatened with assassi-

A pal for life thanks to 'Gem'

nation by a Chinese secret society and taking refuge at St. Frank's School. Nelson Lee became a housemaster and Nipper a pupil.

The series I remember with the greatest affection appeared early in 1927 and concerned the discovery of a lost oasis in the Arctic.

The boys were being shown over an airship which was due to set off in search of a lost explorer when it broke free from its moorings. It drifted out of control and eventually landed in the oasis which was warmed by surrounding volcanoes and inhabited by lost races of people still living in mediaeval times. — E. R. BROADFIELD, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent.

I WELL remember a character called Clever Clarence who performed wonders with odd bits of wood. Using orange boxes and the like he made fabulous chairs and tables.

My sister and I tried to copy these items of furniture but our efforts never turned out like Clarence's. — MRS. D. RIGBY, Northfield, Birmingham.

I DON'T know why, but as a very small child I was always a little scared of Keyhole Kate in the "Dandy." Whenever I came to her page I quickly skipped over it. — MRS. M. WILKINS, Allestley, Coventry.

AS I got older my favourite paper was "School Friend." I eagerly awaited it each week to read the happenings at the boarding school attended by Polly Linton and her chums — loved "cream puffs." I'm not ashamed to state that I was still reading "School Friend" when I was 21. — MRS. VALDA SHELDON, Brixham, Devon.

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