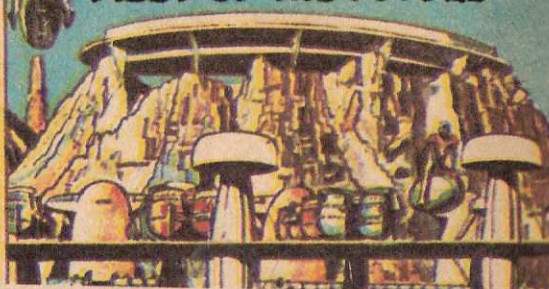


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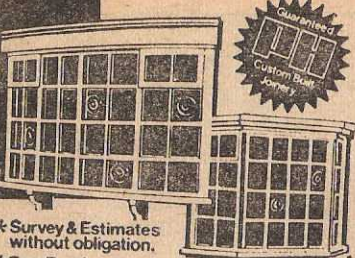
The GEM 2d

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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 "Comie Cuts" followed a few weeks later by "Chips" and both were priced at...

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

No. 1. NEW STORY BOOK!



... OF THE DOUBLE TREE AND GLAZED WINDOW

"Magnet", No. 1, Vol. 1, and the feature story 'The Making of Harry Wharton'. It was in becoming one of the great story papers of the '30s and '40s.

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 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

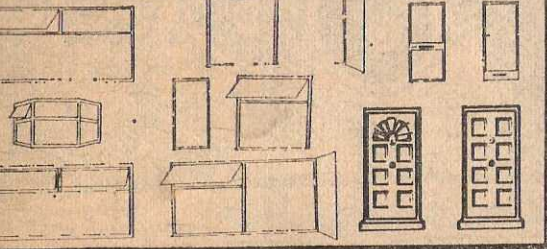
Regrettably, Hitler interferred with the progress of the comics' world though, as we know from our readers, many a serviceman had his "Hotspur" or "Wizard" sent on. But chronic shortages of paper spelt the end for some, including the famous "Magnet."

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THE COLLECTORS

How Phil turned hobby into a business

PHIL CLARKE'S eyes light up when he sees a "Mickey Mouse" comic. "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. At first, as he says, he bought comics, collected them and then moved on to new ones — like girls. Phil Clarke somehow found time for both girls and his comics. The years' fascination has turned into a business.

In the early '60s, it was a small group of enthusiasts who met to swap over the merits of comics and to swap Mr. Clarke recalls it was still possible to pick up old copies of each down at the Bingham Rag Market. They bought them as we liked the art he says. "But we read the stories too." The group began to grow and spread out from Bingham. This began the first comic convention in the area. In 1962, a national comic convention was being held in the city. There were only about 100 people there but it was a beginning.

In the United States the nostalgia boom was well under way and comics had become highly collectable. The same was bound to happen in this country. Phil Clarke says: "I was selling comics but I had to have other jobs too. My wife did not think I could make a living out of comics alone." Then, about three years ago, he judged the time to be ripe. The first small shop in Hurst Street was won a success for collectors. Now "Comics and Antiqua" is moving into bigger premises.

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 collect comics and they think they are extremely valuable," he says. "They may buy one for 50p and they have made a killing. But you can get at two which seem dear, though one may be worth £10 and the other very few are worth a deal of money." If you want to keep them open for collectable copies of "Beano" "Dandy" from the 1955 period are worth a fortune. Alas, the glorious "Magnet" and "Magnet" are rather common. What is the fascination of it all for Phil Clarke? "I think it is just the atmosphere of the '30s," he says.



Phil Clarke... "one comic may be worth £10 and another worth 10p."

THE MAN WHO DREW PANSY POTTER

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'.

... OR 'YOURS TILL WORMS WEAR SPATS'

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

started drawing strips at the age of 14. He began with Pansy Potter and...

"Knockout" and developed a super-hero called Marvelman. Since then he has written several books on the subject, including the British Comic Yearbook 1974-1975.

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 cheer "Yours till worms wear spats."

STOP HERE FOR A BIG THRILL, BOYS!

OOM, The Terrible!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.
OOM, THE TERRIBLE, IS A FLYING BANDIT WHO AIMS TO BE MASTER OF THE WORLD. HE HAS KIDNAPPED TOM DARE, A CLEVER INVENTOR, HIS BROTHER RICK, AND TWO CHUMS. RICK IS COMPELLED TO TAKE PART IN A RAID ON A MILLIONAIRE'S HOUSE. HE CONTRIVES TO WARN THE MILLIONAIRE, BUT HIS WARNING IS UNHEEDED. AS A LAST RESOURCE, RICK THEN FIGHTS A BATTLE WITH OOM IN THE AIR, BUT THE YOUNGSTER'S PLANE IS SOON CRIPPLED. MEANWHILE, BACK AT OOM'S HEADQUARTERS, HAM, THE BOY'S NEGRO SERVANT, IS ENDEAVOURING TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE BANDIT'S STRONGHOLD WHEN HE SUDDENLY COMES ACROSS A FEROCIOUS LEOPARD AND A DWARF ARMED WITH POISONOUS DARTS.

and, after a bit of manipulation, opened the door of the office. "Stakes on your pants!" he snapped. "Look here!" Behind a row of stacks and stacks of currency notes of all denominations, from the British bank note to the American "greenback," whilst piled in orderly array were the two leopards.

Ham on the Warpath! ... With trembling fingers Ham drew out of the top of the desk. ... A thrill a second for the boys who read "Magnet."

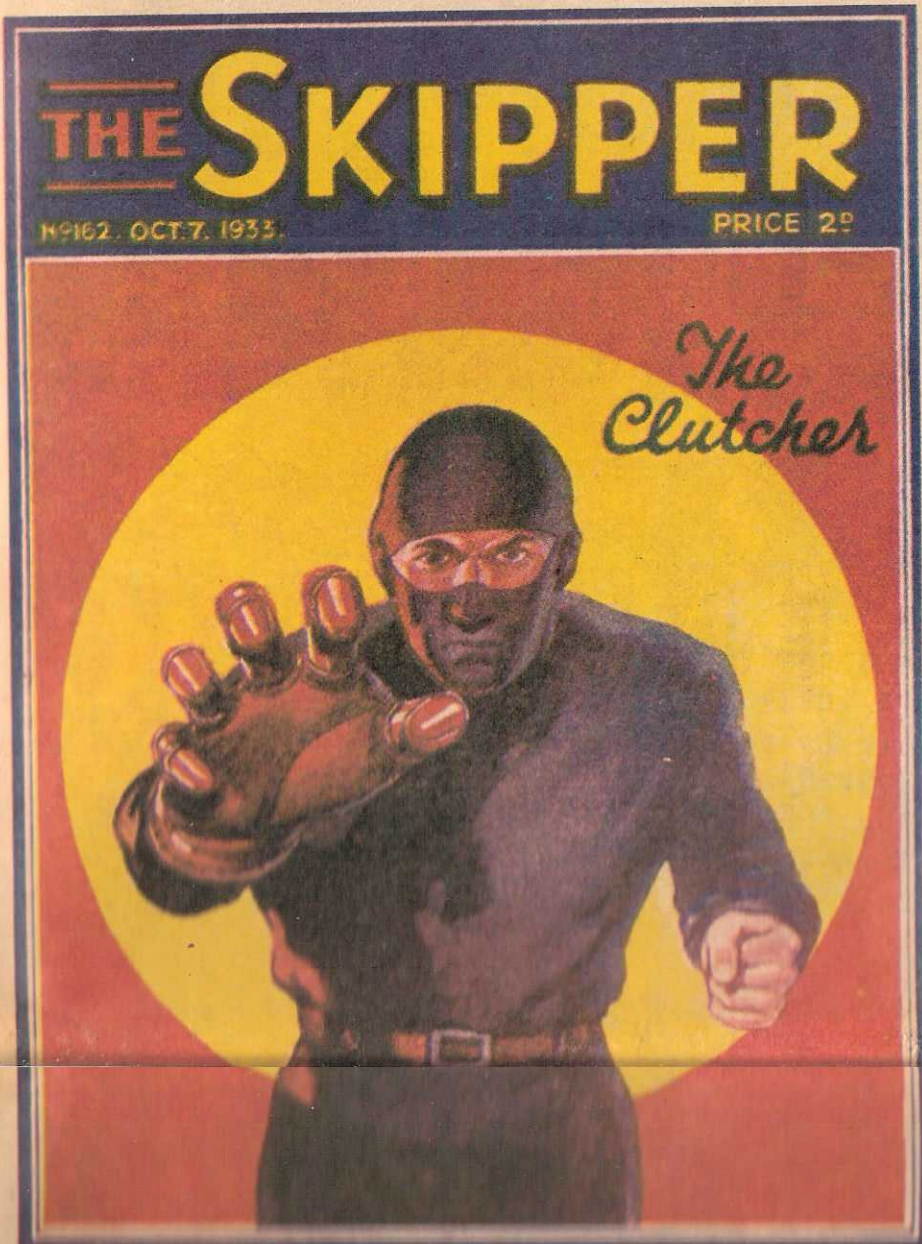
They're just wild about Dan

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 jepeets 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." Got it yet? Well, they also say that, though there is no membership fee, your application should be accomplished by proof of your Dan Dare knowledge. 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 Hampson. 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.



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

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 Bordenley 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 chug 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.'



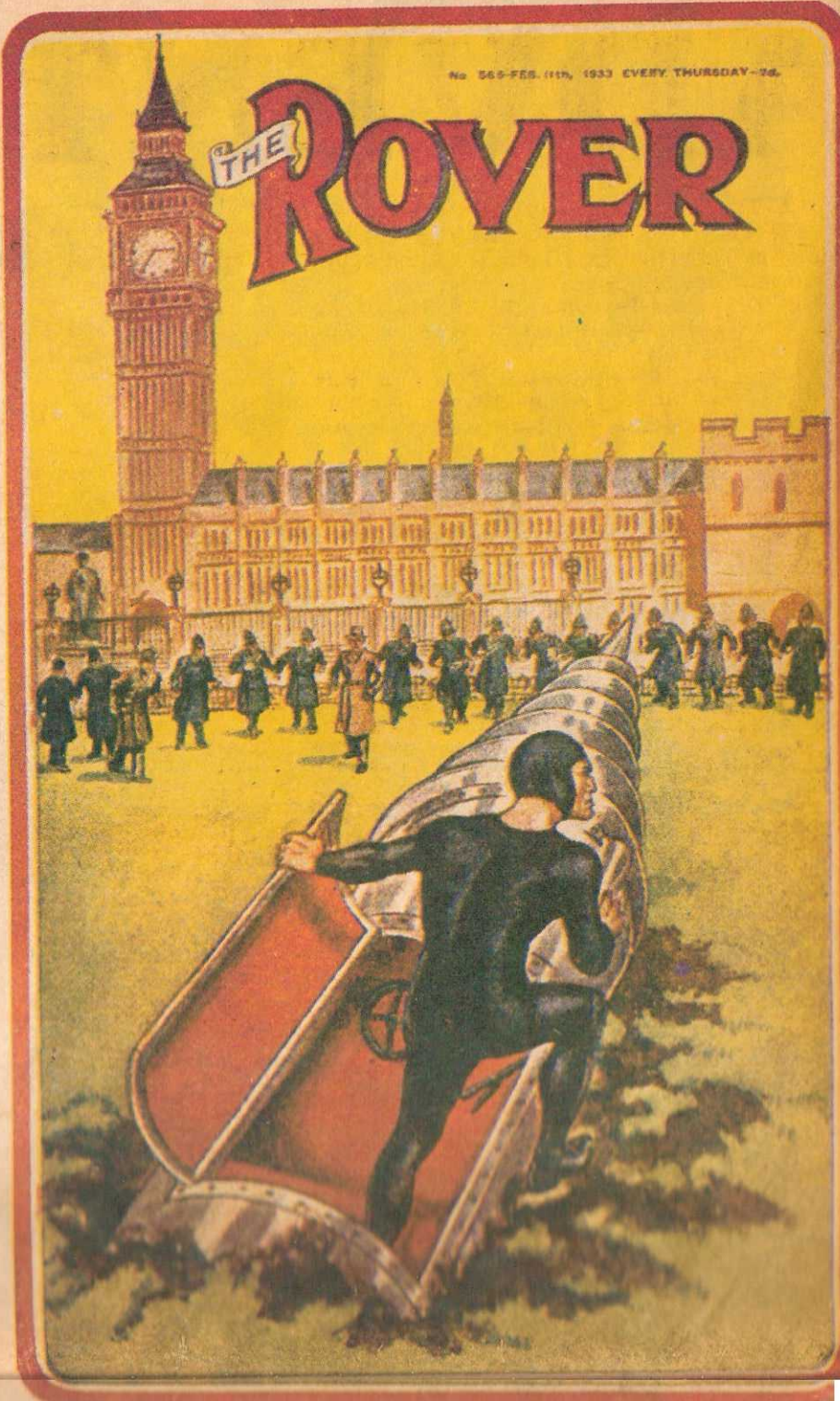
"Yes, the Adventure, Rover, Wizard, Skipper, Startler, Hotspur and the creepy stories of the Bullseye were my passport to tense excitement, thrills and adventure the world over."

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.

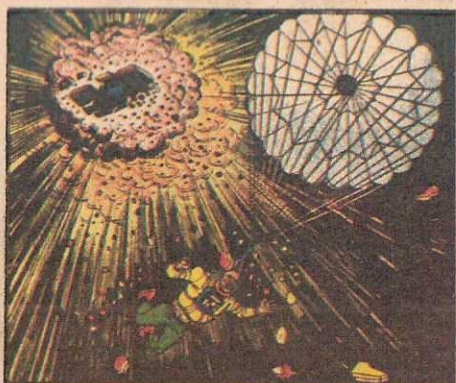
The front page facsimiles on this page are reproduced by permission of D. C. Thomson and Co. Ltd. who hold the copyright of the drawings and the titles of Adventure, Rover, Skipper and Hotspur.



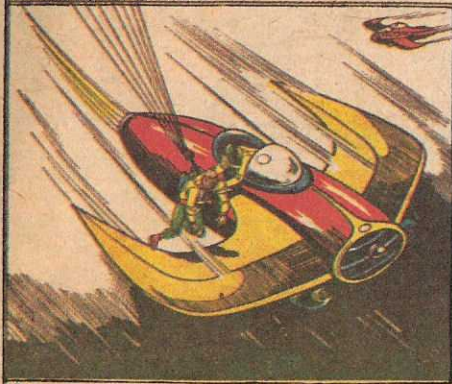
LOOK OUT! HERE COMES RED CIRCLE'S 60 SMILES-AN-HOUR SPEEDSTER



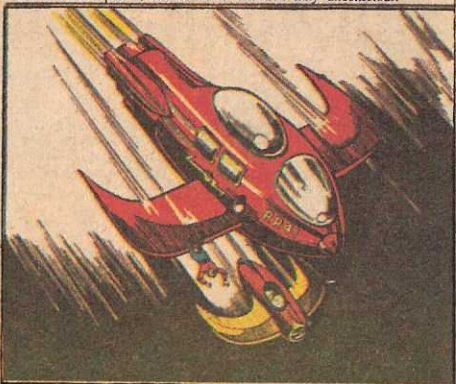
1-Inky Johnson, a negro member of the Inter-stellar Police, dived out through an open hatch in the side of the spacecraft carrier. Behind him he left a lighted fuse, and the carrier was due to blow up in a few minutes' time. At the moment, jet-craft from the carrier, manned by Venusian pirates, were 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. Skilfully 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)

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 their heads when their trotters 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!" scoffed Willie and Tim. "Fuddledoodleahs!"



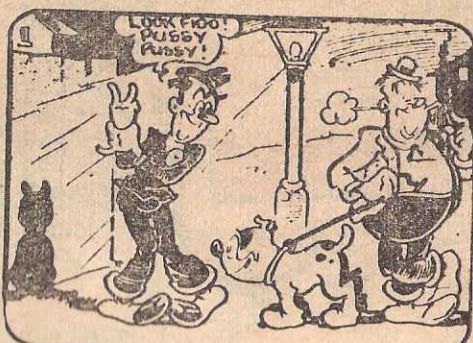
3. "Leave it to us, Dukey, old toff," said they. "We'll show you how to spurn spooks!" So they toddled into the ancestral hall, and blow us, if they didn't meet the old ghost!

CHIPS—THE FAMILY FUN PAPER

WANTED! **IVOR KLUE** THE GREAT DETECTIVE



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 the 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'ya know what I did? Why, cast the shadow of a muggie on the fence.



3. 'Course! I missed. And that did it! Yeh, the dog was duffed, and made a bound forward after the imaginary muggie. And as Bill was hanging on to the end, he got a kick over his nose, hitting the innocent!



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 mine. But he was a tough guy, and not knocked out, after all. "You're for it!" he huffed.



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



6. For Pongo, having made a marvellous recovery, was lunking after me. But he jerked away a plank, and it smote Bill a wharger 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 unlovely 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. Quetch, 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

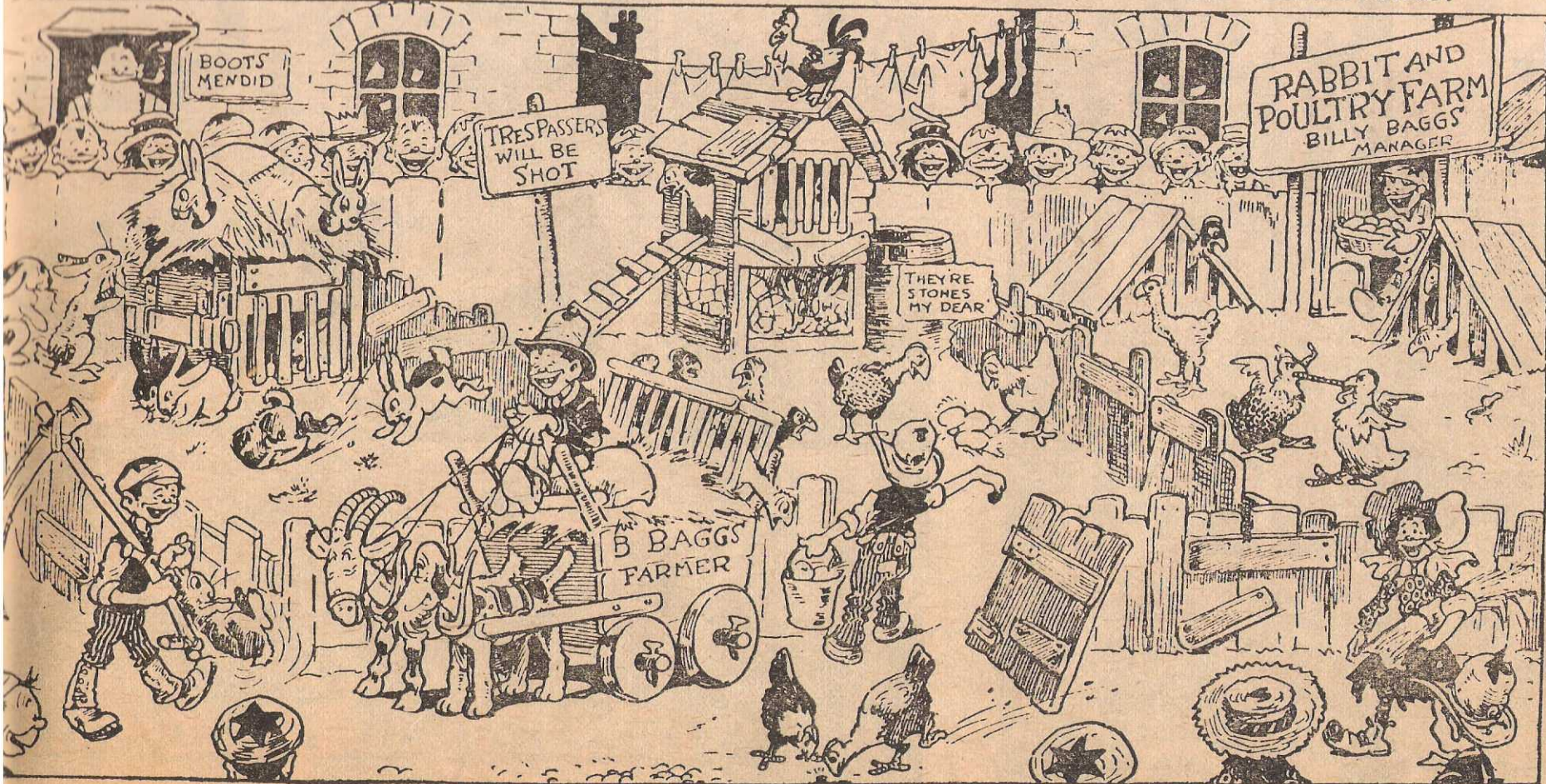
of Laurel and Hardy — and you have a classic situation.

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. The real illumination came with a spirited reply. The real illumination came with a spirited reply. The real illumination came with a spirited reply.

"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, an 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 socialism, by make up or lipstick, by the present discontent or by Mr. Orwell's thoughts upon the present discontent."

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 easy teas round the study fire in an age of blasé 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 Hurec Janset 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

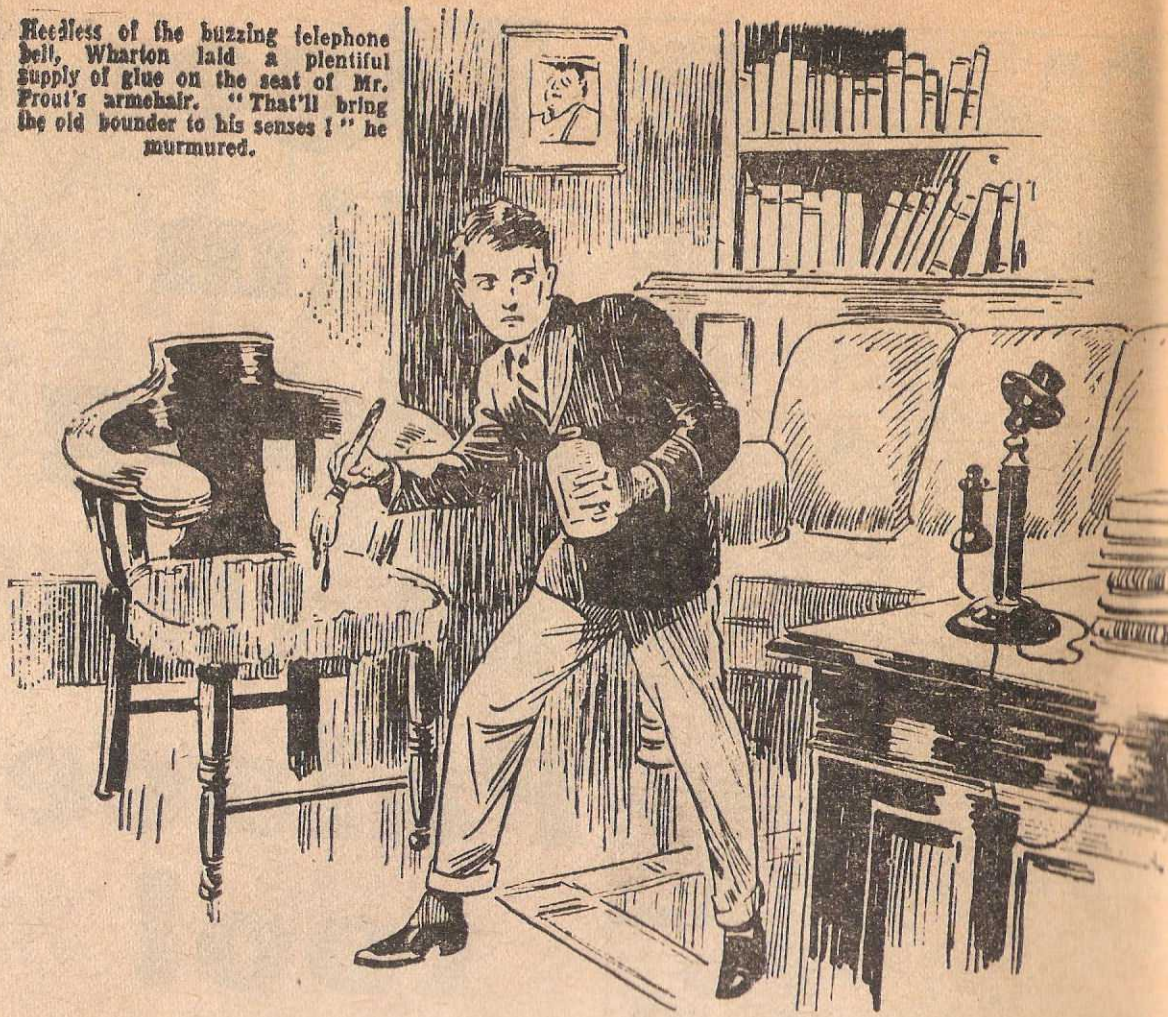
Many of the illustrations in this "Special" are taken, with permission, from Howard Baker books. In many ways they are Mr. Baker's own act of homage to the age and, particularly, to "the glowing imagination, the humour, the humanity and the well-nigh incredible industry" of Frank Richards.

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 Children's Favourite THE RAINBOW Splendid Stories and Pictures

THE TWO PICKLES

THE PICKLES CATCH SOME CRABS AND... BULLDOZZERS!

1. Dear Readers, didn't we cheer us up down in the beach on the first day of our holidays? Thanks for the merry old crabs and winkles. Taunted. Hip-hip-hip!

2. And thinking of winkle ways in the days of catching some. Look Peter! I've caught one already, called Pauline. A winkle with a daddy's name! I'll go and call it Pauline. With lots of legs!

3. Well, as we had numbers to put the crabs out dangle our feet and borrowed daddy's straw hat. You must know that daddy was having a nice little sleep at the time.

4. "Ha, ha! The hat makes a lovely 'crab-house'!" laughed Pauline, as we went on fishing and caught a few more. "We'll have to put up a 'House Full' board soon!" "Yes," I replied, to my sister. "I expect our crabs are wishing they were sardines, Pauline!"

5. Not long afterwards daddy woke up and searched all over the place for his hat. "Ah! There it is!" he exclaimed, when he saw it on our breakwater. "I want that to keep the sun off me, children!" "My hat! Don't put it on now, daddy!" I gasped, in great dismay.

6. But I shouted too late and the next moment daddy took up his hat and upset all the crabs over his head. "Help! What's happened?" he cried. "Something is nipping me!" "Yes, our crabs are little nippers," barked Fluff. "Mind your ears, won't you?"

7. "Oh dear! Wasn't daddy crabby with us for using his hat as a 'crab-house'?" "Home to bed," he stormed. "You've been on the beach quite long enough!" "But there's a lovely bed down here," wuffed Fluff. "Can't we try the SEA bed?" — Yours, PETER.

THE ADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE AND MONTAGUE, THE MERRY NICE

1. Marmaduke was picking some lovely flowers, when Montague noticed such a pretty shell on the beach. "I know," he said.

2. And he made his brother place the bunch of flowers in the shell. "Now we'll give them both to aunty as a present," he exclaimed.

3. As you can see, they made a lovely bouquet. "Well, that is kind of you, boys," said aunty. "I must take you out to tea!"

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 1950, 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 us 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 roiter 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 loss 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 fags 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!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D LIBRARY

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

SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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



CURING THE SLACKER!

Ralph Beckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth Form, is the grumpy of the Indignant Games Committee, with 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

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 Jamsset 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.



No. 1,210. Vol. XL. EVERY SATURDAY. Week Ending November 21st, 1931.

The MAGNET 2^D



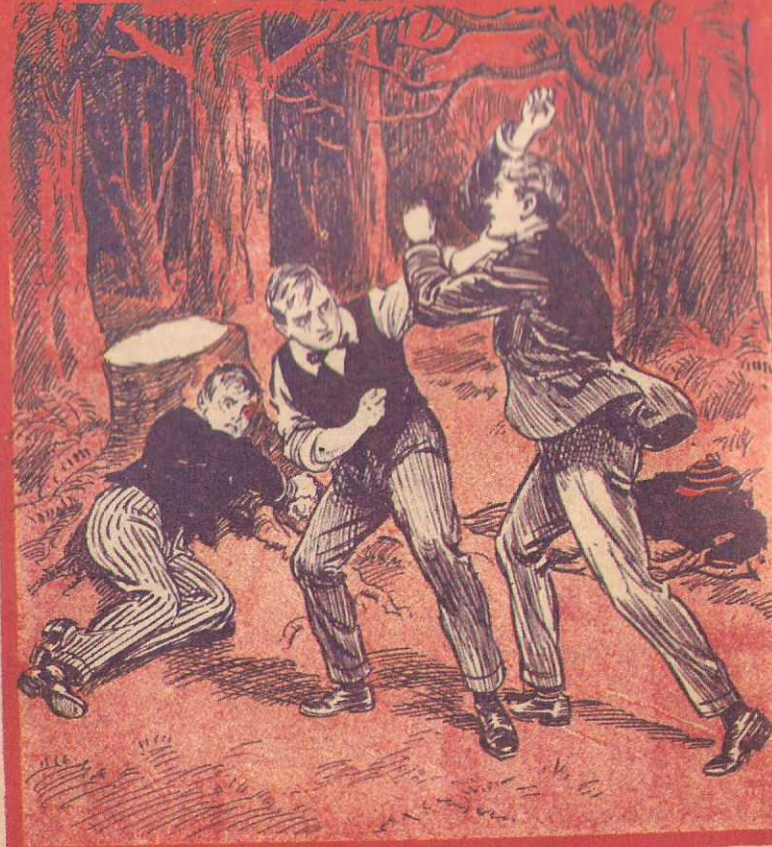
EVERY SATURDAY. Week Ending December 13th, 1931.

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

The GEM 2^D LIBRARY

No. 826.
Vol. XXV.
January 5th, 1924.

SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



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.)

No. 1,210. Vol. XL. EVERY SATURDAY. Week Ending November 21st, 1931.



Bessie Bunter



Jemima Carstairs



Barbara Redfern



Clara Trevlyn



Marjorie Hazeldene



M. E. Bullivant



P. Primrose

Our heroines! the girls of Cliff House

by MARY CADOGAN

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 "Girls' Own Paper."

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

Gypsies

Using a variety of extremely feminine pen-names, male writers like John Whinney, Horace Phillips and E. E. 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 "School-girls' 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. Bobin, who also wrote some Sexton Blake stories, specialised in female sleuths (Miss Alice, Lily Lisle 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 1950 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—complete in this issue.)

When love was just soppy...

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.

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

No doubt some young psychologists read a lot into all of this, though, heaven forbid should now start in gaging the private lives of the famous five or six of 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."

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

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).

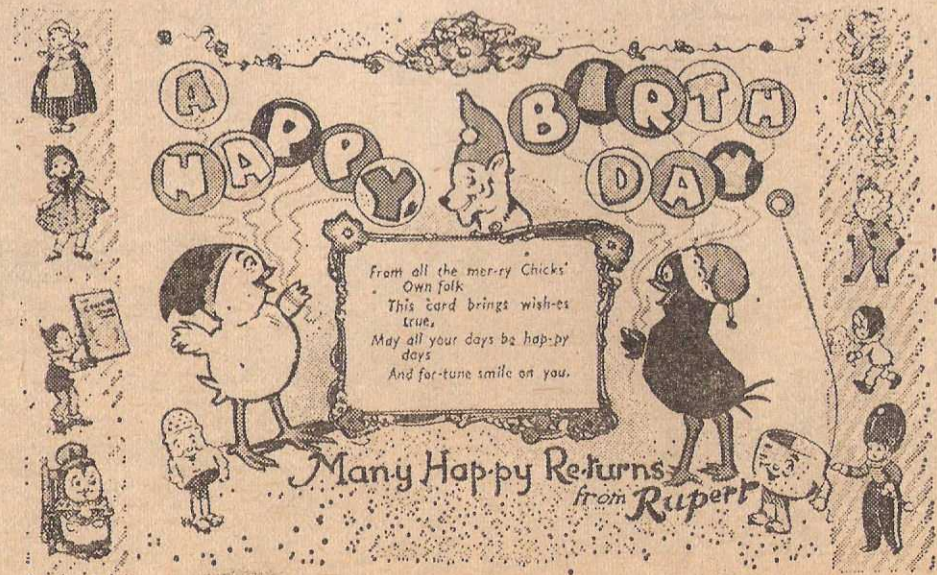
Illustrations "School Friend" reproduced by permission of Magazines Ltd.

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."

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.

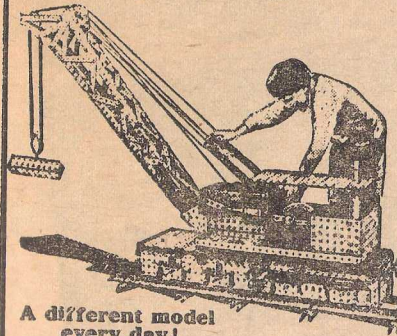
Tortures

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

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.

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The new Meccano Aeroplanes Constructor Outfits 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 new book. It contains a number of building articles, profusely illustrated, and contains many 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 add No. 33 for reference.



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 of 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 1s. 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 of your money back"? Not only would it give you extra ammunition but an iron will, self-control, virile manhood and personal magnetism. That last could give you a lift. 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 nuts to Kung Fu, dad knew all about the martial arts too.

Not that the ads were all so personal. 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 1s. 6d.

However, 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. Hoopie "D" 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 (yellow 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 'Tec 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?



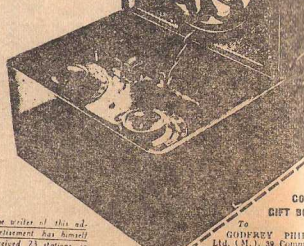
Buy "Standard"
SOLD EVERYWHERE
STANDARD FIREWORKS LIMITED, HUDDERSFIELD

WE HAVE SEARCHED THE WIDE WORLD

KÖLSTER-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 Kölster-Brandes.

500 COUPONS B.D.V. CIGARETTES

SPECIFICATIONS
The Kölster-Brandes "Masterpiece" The most compact 2-valve set in existence Over-all dimension 7 1/2" x 7 1/2" x 7 1/2" Highly sensitive regenerative receiver. Pure tone loud-speaker built into the lid. Polished dark figured mahogany finished case in Bakelite. Complete with two "Felix" in-cludes and instructions.



each Coupon worth 3 TIMES other coupon values

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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 Ebenon wood give it the handsome appearance of an expensive pen and it writes as well as it looks! Carries large ink supply! Durable simulation GOLD INK has a delightfully resonant touch that makes writing a joy! Yours for 1/- only! Why pay 10/6? GUARANTEE—Cash back in full if not delighted!

Over 50 all different stamps, including this very rare stamp which is catalogued 2/6, absolutely free. Just send 2d. postage, requesting APPROVAL. Choice of gifts free. LEBURN & TOWNSEND (U.K.B.), LIVERPOOL. BRITISH MADE. REDUCED TO 1/- FREE! Send P.O. or slip. OVER 5,000 TESTIMONIALS! M. G. POPE writes: "I bought with 'Silkrite' Pen, it equals any other make at 10/-." J. P. HURRY writes: "It is worth five times the money." Useful RICHLY ILLUSTRATED "ECONOMY" Catalogue Post Free. All kinds of Bargains! THE LEEDS BARGAIN CO. (U.K.), 58, Mount Preston, Leeds.

300 STAMPS FOR 6d. (Abroad 1/-), including Airport, Barbados, Old India, Nigeria, New South Wales, Gold Coast, etc.—W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, 132, Stourbridge.

BE STRONG I promise you Robust Health, Doubled Strength, Stamina, and Dashing Energy in 30 days or money back! My amazing 4 in 1 course adds 10 ins. to your muscular development (with 2 ins. on Chest and 1 in. on Arms), also brings an Iron Will, Perfect Self-control, Virile Manhood, Personal Magnetism, Supreme Confidence, Testimony FREE, or Complete Course 5/-, STRENGTH INSTITUTE (A), 28, Dean Road, LONDON, E.W.2.

HEIGHT INCREASED. Complete course 5/-. Clients gain 1 to 5 inches. Particulars, testimonials free. HARROGHOE, COLWYN BAY, NORTH WALES.

GROSE'S BILLIARDS AT HOME 1/- per week.
8, New Bridge Street, LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON, E.C.4.
SIZES Deposit 4 monthly payments Cash
2 ft. 2 in. x 1 ft. 8 in. 10/- 4/6 19/-
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Complete with 2 Cues, 3 Turned Balls (guaranteed unbreakable), Marking Book, and Table Cloth. COMPLETE LIST FREE.

BE TALL

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. Enclose stamp. Address in confidence: T. J. TEMPLE Specialist, "Palace House," 128, Shaftesbury Avenue, LONDON, W.1. (Tel. ever 24 hours.)

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parrots, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriquist's Instrument, 10/-, 15/-. Imitate Birds, Priced, each, 10/1/-, T. W. HARRISON, 102, Putney Rd., London, S.W.1.

GROW TALLER! ADD INCHES TO YOUR HEIGHT. Details free. J. EDISON, 39, BOND STREET, BLACKPOOL.

BLUSHING, BE TALLER! Shyness, Nerves, self-consciousness cured or money back! Complete treatment, 5/-. Details striking testimonials. Free L.A. STERLING, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.

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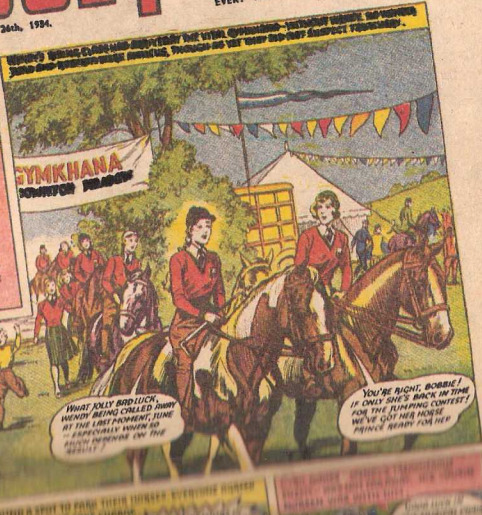
SCHOOL FRIEND ^{3D}

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 215. June 24th, 1934.

THE RIDING MYSTERY AT MOORLAND SCHOOL

John Farmer and Roberts Eye were loyal supporters of the Wendy Club, the new riding instructor at Moorland School. A voracious girl, Harriet Nokes, was plotting with her cousin Cyril against Wendy. Mr. Dawson, the school governor, had decided that the riding class could continue if they did well at the Diwanah Gymkhana. On the morning of the Gymkhana, they found a note from Wendy saying that she had been called away.



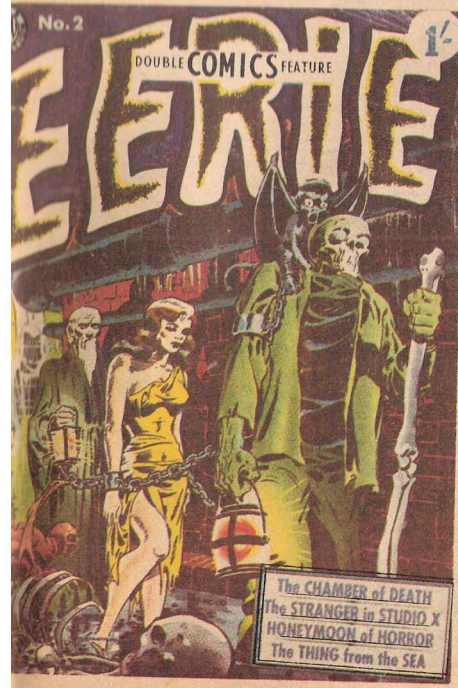
WHAT HOLLY BODLICK WENDY BEING CALLED AWAY AT THE LAST MOMENT, TUNE - ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE BATTLE HORSE ON THE

YOU'RE RIGHT, BOBBIE! IF ONLY SHE'S BACK IN TIME FOR THE HOPPING CONTEST! WE'VE GOT HER HERE! PLEASE BEATY FOR HER!



THAT'S ALL EXACTLY! THIS GIRL'S GOT TO FIND THAT THING! OTHERWISE SHE'S THAT, IN WENDY'S ABSENCE, TUNE SHOULD THIS COME!

PLEASE TURN TO BACK PAGE



DOUBLE COMICS FEATURE

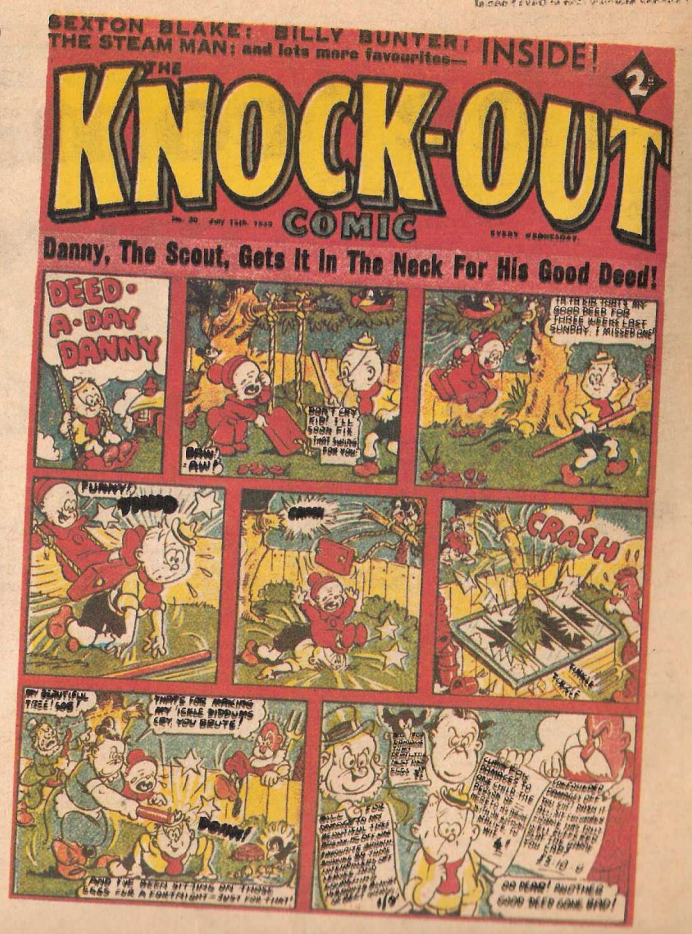
EERIE

The CHAMBER OF DEATH
The STRANGER in STUDIO X
The HONEYMOON of HORROR
The THING from the SEA

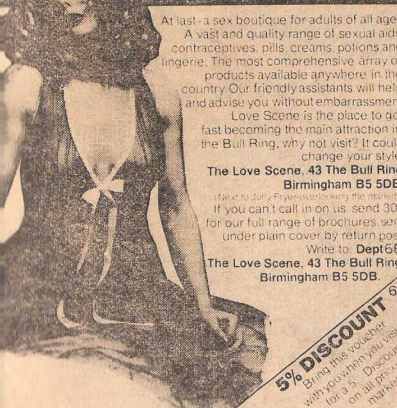
COMICS come in all shapes and sizes - to say nothing of tastes. Each of these represents a milestone in development. "Mickey Mouse Weekly" - this one dates from 1937 - not only reflects the global importance of Disney's squeaky superstar but sets a trend for high-quality colour production.

"School Friend," with its tales of gymkhanas and intrigues in the fourth-form dorm, was the archetypal girls' paper in an age before Women's Lib turned traditional notions inside out. "Knockout" was a post-war attempt to re-capture old magic in a new format. It was a successor to "Magnet" and included Billy Bunter - but this time in comic strip form.

Finally there is "Eerie Tales" and another significant trend. The arrival of the American influence brought its own problems and the authorities were, frankly, alarmed by the often bizarre tales. They tried banning some but things were never quite the same again.



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NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO REMEMBER THOSE COMIC DAYS

Magic of Weary Willie and Co.

THE TINPOT ALLEY BOYS START BROADCASTING!



The Tinpote Alley Boys in "Radio Fun"

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" "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 row pin, Billy Blunder, the fat ast of the Remova, 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 Korly the Cat or frighten Mrs. Bruin with astounding tales of Dan Dare from another age?

The schoolboys in the Red Circle school in the "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 subconsciously inflict our hatred of all teachers.

Remember how we were chilled by the freezing ray gun of "Adventure's" Green Silver and sizzled by the burning rays of the sun through the giant magnifying 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 Hawke" 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 hopscootch and bubbling fantasy drinks, the nights of Andy Hardy and Harry Roy — and the weeks and weeks of comics. — GORDON SPINK, Wembley Park, Middlesex.

What a feast for five dollars

AS A child I learned to read by means of a comic called "Chicks Own" 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 hypenated 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 21 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 errands for the lot. A week's pocket 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

"Dandy." The two comics I used to buy for my brother — Desperate Dan, Pansy Potter and Korly the Cat. After saving the day by holding up falling bride or tearing down girl DD would always be able to satisfy his enormous appetite with a giant comic.

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

Korly the Kat was son's favourite when was young and he had his own cat Korly. — MRS. W. JACKSON, Netchells, Birmingham.

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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 'gd to fetch my paper. But one morning I had a nasty accident and fell against

a garden wall. I remember my father picking me up with blood pouring from a cut in my forehead.

Happily all went well and I was able to enjoy reading my favourite comic. But I still have the dent and scar on my forehead to remind me of "Chips." — E. G. LACEY, Weston-super-Mare.

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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. PEPLow, Sedgley, Dudley.

YOUR good old comic days

Still reading 'em at 71!

Chester Conklin

(Continued from page 1.)



I READ "Nelson Lee," "Gem" and "Sexton Blake" from the age of 14 and I still think they were the finest stories of that and any other age.

What a great pity we have not got anything like them today. They were good clean fun and wonderfully constructed stories.

I am now 71 and pleased to say that I am still reading them as I have several copies of "Nelson Lee," "Sexton Blake" and "Buffalo Bill" dating from 1923. — E. CLAMP, Handsworth, Birmingham.

THE best detective magazine was "Sexton Blake," with Tinker, his youthful assistant, Pedro the bloodhound and their lovable housekeeper, Mrs. Bardell.

There was also the policeman, Inspector Grant, and a French girl called Julie. Both she and Blake thought highly of each other but that was as far as it went.

IN 1927 I used to scrounge jam jars and bottles and run errands to buy my comics. My favourites were "Comic Cuts," "Chips," "Funny Wonder," "Merry and Bright," and "Film Fun." Later I graduated to the book-type like "Hotspur," "Rover," "Wizard," "Champion," "Bullseye" and "Adventure."

When we had read them a local shop exchanged them, two for one off a file



POCKIST ROGAN, R.A.F.

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

If caught, you would lose your own and the exchanged one. You never saw the other end of the deal.

— A. J. B. MOSLEY, Birmingham.

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, Warwick.

"Comic Cuts" another of this period, y Tom the Ticket of Le man on the front page also featured Home Hector the stray dog, Pansy Pansake, the B

After has to be turned in years of age 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.

These comic strips were popular after the First World War. In December they were all issued Christmas double number at a penny each.

These comic strips were adorned with lavish amounts of snow and icicles, with plum puddings put out to cool to traditionally pinched the tramps or Home Hector. — W. N. NEWELL, Acocks Green, Birmingham.

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 chucked 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 1914-18 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 doughy deeds of that forgettable 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. FIGG, 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 just-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, stamps, five shillings for prizes. It was so very patriotic — but then, so were the others. — R. BURCHINALL, 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

strange character called at the mansion and told a story that was a cracker. Those were the days. — A.J.B. MOSLEY, Birmingham.

MY son, who will be 34 this year, joined the Eagle Club when he was seven.

Our milk woman used to bring his comic when she came on her round. Where we lived there were no shops or buses and his "Eagle" meant the earth to him. Mind you, we older ones always took advantage of our chance to read it while he was away at school. — MRS. D. B. WHITE, Donnington, Telford, Salop.

WHEN I was a schoolboy some 56 years ago my favourite comic was "Rover" which I had from the first issue. It was published every Thursday, price 2d, and I carried on reading it for some time after leaving school. I always found their

stories to be adventurous and exciting and they had articles on all sports and some very, funny comic cartoons.

I remember the free gifts which they gave such as miniature cars which were treasured possessions at the time. Most memorable of the free gifts, however, were the handy pocket albums which were full of interesting and useful information about birds, butterflies, stamps, trains, cars and coats of arms. — C. F. DARBY, Handsworth, Birmingham.

ONE of my chief memories from the comic days is a paper called "The Popular" which, every week, had a story from each of the three schools — Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood. To anyone like myself, whose affection was not confined to one school, this weekly selection was a Godsend. — A. ANDREWS, Sutton Coldfield.

I READ my first copy of the "Magnet" in 1923. My parents could not understand a little boy 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. SANDAL, Sheldon, Birmingham.

AMONG the wealthiest comics and magazines to be had during the years between 1920 and 1929, stood out from all the others and that was "Sexton Blake."

In the Birmingham Bl Coat School this much 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 Baw 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 leave 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 state 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 to 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 murex."

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 disgrace 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.

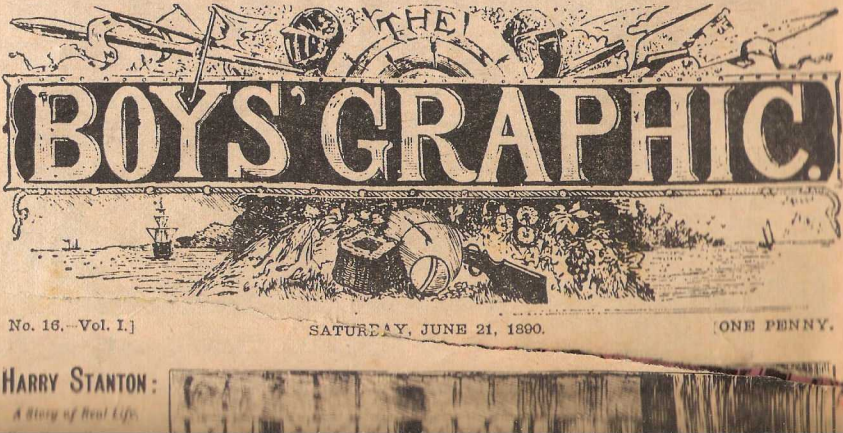
By GUY RAYNER.

CHAPTER XXI (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 under-clothing 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," was the resolute reply. "I am sure we will find a way out of this."



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."

A pal for life thanks to 'Gem'

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 1938. 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-

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, Allestey, 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 — one was a foreign girl who loved "cream uns." 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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SNAP!