

## ERIC PARKER

BY NORMAN WRIGHT & DAVID ASHFORD

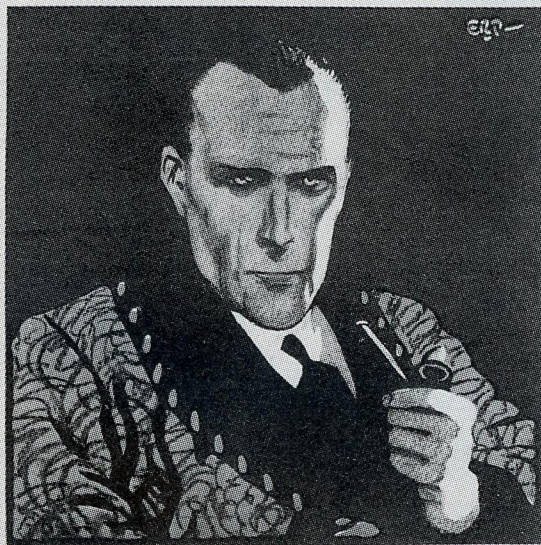
**E**ric Parker was an extraordinarily prolific artist who possessed a dynamic visual imagination. He became one of the most dearly loved of all artists of boys' magazines and comics and one of the first really successful picture strip artists this country has produced. His career spanned almost sixty years and exhibited a remarkable versatility, an ability to be completely at home in almost any genre or historical period and, most of all, a vivid, idiosyncratic style which made any drawing he did radiate life and fluid movement.



*The prolific and versatile Eric Parker, whose career spanned almost sixty years.*

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Complete Sexton Blake Detective Story Every Week



#### THE RETURN OF SEXTON BLAKE

SEXTON BLAKE'S sensational come-back in his great campaign against the King-Crook and the Double Four. Featuring also RUFF HANSON, and "Splash" PAGE, of the Daily Radio.

A Long Complete Detective-Adventure Story.

EVERY THURSDAY.

June 25th, 1927.

*A typical Eric Parker portrait of Sexton Blake for Union Jack.*

For over three decades Eric Parker was responsible for nearly all the illustrations and cover paintings of the various periodicals devoted to the annals of the Amalgamated Press's ace detective, Sexton Blake (see BMC 16 & 105). As it was Sidney Paget who was responsible for imprinting the image of Sherlock Holmes on the mind of the general public, so it was Eric Parker who brought Holmes' Baker Street rival to vivid life. There were many other 'Sexton Blake' illustrators — some extremely good — but Eric Parker stood head and shoulders above them all, not only through the quality of his work but from the sheer quantity of his 'Blake' illustrations.

Eric Parker's distinctive 'Sexton Blake' drawings began to appear in the story paper, *Union Jack*, in

November 1922, shortly after he joined the Amalgamated Press. A few years later, in 1926, he modelled a seven-inch high plaster bust of Sexton Blake that readers could obtain by introducing six new readers to the *Union Jack*. The busts were also given away as prizes by cinemas showing one of the many 'Sexton Blake' films. These plaster busts are now highly prized collectors' items, changing hands for up to £80 each.

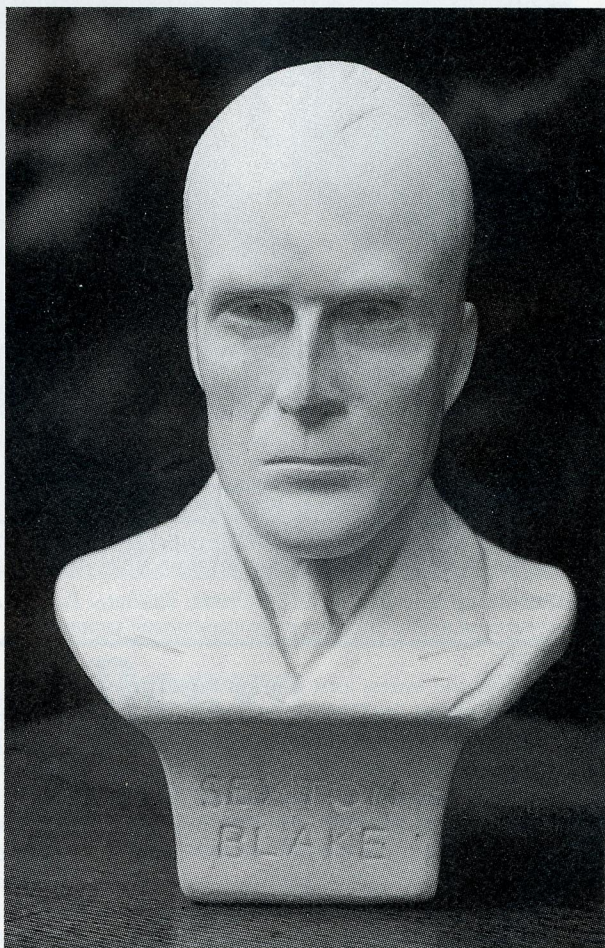
Parker's dynamic style, ideally suited to the genre of the detective story, soon became an integral part of Blake's adventures and, throughout the 1930s, he shared the stories with few other artists. It was clear that, in Eric Parker, the paper had found the perfect 'Blake' illustrator. Parker's distinctive style was immediately recognisable, his covers strikingly depicting the mood of the stories — usually sinister and brooding, mysterious and exciting. The faces of his characters, obviously drawn at speed, conveyed with a few deft strokes their owner's true nature. The title-page illustrations, sometimes spreading across pages one and two, often rivalled the cover for their dynamic impact.

## INTUITIVE

Eric Parker did only the minimum pre-drawing for his illustrations, as is borne out by some of his unfinished work in the authors' collections. He was a completely spontaneous, intuitive artist who could see in his head exactly what he wanted, so all he had to do was put it straight down on paper. The only preliminary work was a fast pencil scribble to suggest composition, movement and angle. He had no particular preference as far as paper or board was concerned and, as his daughter, Sheila, has said:

"A pencil was rarely out of his hand and restaurant menus, theatre programmes, the *Radio Times*, were always smothered in little thumbnail sketches. To watch him sketch was a joy; his stump of pencil or tatty piece of chalk were for him more eloquent than words. He was always very certain of what he was drawing; the lines were always confident and strong."

Eric Robert Parker was born in Stoke Newington, North London, on 7th September 1898. From an early age he was always drawing and, at the age of fifteen, he was awarded a special art scholarship to give him the opportunity to develop his talent.



Eric Parker's Sexton Blake bust now sells for up to £80.



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A THRILLER WITHOUT A GUN – a real creepy thriller,  
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EVERY THURSDAY.

August 16th, 1930.

This *Union Jack* cover from the 1930s vividly illustrates Parker's ability to capture a mood, in this case "fear of the awesome and uncanny"!

Between the wars, Eric Parker lived in Bloomsbury, first in Guildford Street and then in Gower Street. He was a genial, sociable character, very much a 'clubman', becoming a member of the Savage Club and of the London Sketch Club. (His portrait can still be seen on the walls of the latter establishment.)

He married in 1929, and his wife, Beatrice, was often used as the model for his drawings of the many female characters

in the 'Sexton Blake' saga. In 1940, the couple moved with their only daughter, Sheila, then a very small child, from the centre of London to Mill Hill in the outer suburbs of North London, where he was to live for the rest of his life.

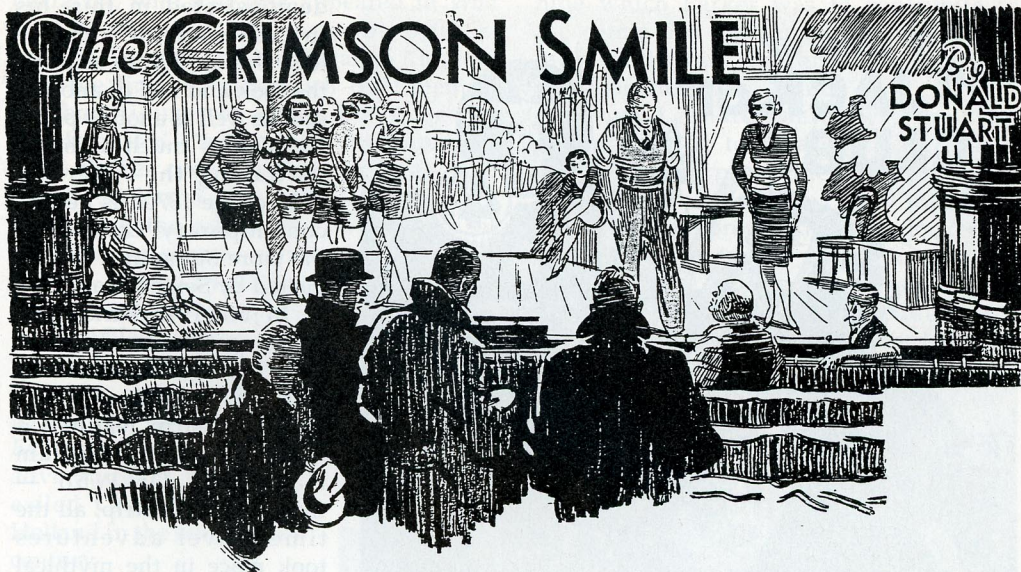
Eric Parker began his career in the early 1920s, producing work for a wide range of publications, including press books for film publicity. When the Amalgamated Press formed in 1922, Parker became a staff artist and continued to work for them for over fifty years until his death in 1974 (by which time the firm had been swallowed up by I.P.C.).

## COVERS

The 1930s was Eric Parker's busiest 'Sexton Blake' decade. Apart from producing the artwork for the weekly *Union Jack* and, later, *Detective Weekly*, he was also regularly designing and painting four covers a month — which included all the lettering — for the *Sexton Blake Library*. It is estimated that over the decades he painted around 900 covers for the *Library*. Copies of the *Sexton Blake*

*Library* from the inter-war years are now keenly sought after, with Very Good copies selling for between £4 and £5 each. Later issues from the late 1940s and 1950s with Parker cover art are still very modestly priced and can usually be picked up for a couple of pounds or less.

At the same time as drawing 'Sexton Blake', he was working for, among other publications, *Chums*, *The Strand Magazine*, *Pearsons*, *The Scout*, *Wide World* and *Wild West*



Parker's illustrations for *Union Jack* often went across two pages, as in this example from December 1932.

Weekly. Throughout his life, Parker was an indefatigable worker, with more work on the go at any one time than any normal artist could possibly manage but, however busy he was, editors always found that he could be depended upon to deliver the goods on time.

At the end of the '30s, Parker found a new outlet for his work: children's comics. In 1939, Amalgamated Press brought out a new-style comic called the *Knockout* and from the very beginning Eric Parker was closely associated with the title, his lively spot illustrations adding life to text stories.

'Mickey's Pal the Wizard' was one of the long-running series of stories that benefited from Parker's work. Early episodes had been illustrated by Fred Bennett and occasionally other artists had contributed to the series, but the majority, and the best, were by Eric Parker who captured perfectly the knockabout fun of the tales. 'Bert and Daisy the Happy Vakkies', 'Rivals of the Rolling Road' and 'Gypsy Joe the Drummer Boy' are three of the most memorable of the many text serials and series he illustrated during the 1940s.

'The Queer Adventures of Patsy and Tim' was his first comic strip. It began in

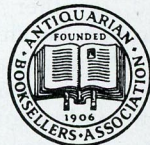
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A striking cover from a 1930s issue of the *Sexton Blake Library*. It is estimated that Parker painted around 900 covers for the *Library*.

September 1940. Patsy and her brother, Tim, discovered some “dwindling pills” invented by their uncle. When the pills were swallowed, the pair began to shrink and, together with their Scottish terrier, Scrubby, the children embarked on a series of whimsical adventures. The strip was stylishly and amusingly drawn but gave little indication of the good things that were to come.

Then, in January 1942, came Eric Parker’s western strip, ‘The Adventures of Bear Cub’. In just the same way as he had been able to capture the authentic atmosphere of many an exotic location in his ‘Sexton Blake’ illustrations, so he

demonstrated in this, his first adventure strip, that he had the ability to express the look and feel of another time as well as another place. He was as much at home portraying the American West of the 1870s as he was contemporary London or the more outlandish locales visited by Sexton Blake.

In June 1942, Parker was drawing ‘Jimmy Jingles’ Time Machine’ in his ‘Patsy and Tim’ whimsical style. This jolly strip featured a dead ringer for William Hartnell’s Dr Who — though, in this strip, all the time travel adventures took place in the mythical past, with Jimmy Jingles helping King Arthur against his foes.

## ADAPTATION

A year later, in April 1943, Parker drew his first picture strip adaptation of a classic tale, ‘Stories from the Arabian Nights’. After a brief interlude with ‘Frank and Fred the Pocket-Size Cowboys’ (1943), he began drawing a long series of

famous boy’s classics: ‘Peter the Whaler’ (November 1943), ‘Mr Midshipman Easy’ (April 1944), ‘Children of the New Forest’ (January 1945), ‘Kidnapped’ (November 1945), ‘The Three Musketeers’ (August 1946), ‘Westward Ho’ (December 1946) and ‘The Black Arrow’ (March 1948). He seemed really to get inside these old tales and revitalise them, making them live again in a new and exciting form. Copies of *Knockout* containing Parker’s classic strips will usually cost between £5 and £8 each.

Despite the heavy workload these ‘classic’ strips entailed, he also found time to draw a one-page serial strip, ‘The Phantom Sheriff’ (1947). This Western

character, who had first appeared in *Wild West Weekly* in the '30s, was a cross between the Lone Ranger and the Durango Kid, and was the first of many such dual-identity cowboy figures to grace the pages of Amalgamated Press comics. In December 1947, Parker drew another one-page strip serial, 'Nick and Nan and Stainless Stan', recounting the adventures of a group of explorers in search of the treasure of the Incas — helped by a robot, "the Wonderful Radio Man, Stainless Stan".

'The Black Arrow', the last of his 'classic' strips for *Knockout*, was followed by a rousing strip version of the Douglas Fairbanks Jnr film, *The Exile*, recounting the adventures of the young exiled Charles Stuart in Holland in the seventeenth century.

Although Sexton Blake had featured regularly as a picture strip hero from the first issue of *Knockout*, it was not until 1949 that Parker brought his inimitable understanding of the character and his milieu to the comic in his only 'Blake' strip, 'The Secret of Monte Cristo'. This is a splendid serial strip, full of mystery and intrigue, set in a strange castle littered with secret passages. It is thick with real Parker atmosphere and is certainly the finest of the 'Blake' strips.

Parker was back in the saddle again in December 1949, with his fourth western strip, introducing a hero new to Amalgamated Press Comics. The real-life frontiersman and scout, Kit Carson, rode into the pages of *Knockout* for the first time in a two-page complete strip, the first of

nine which Parker was to contribute to the comic. Kit Carson became one of the most enduring western characters in Amalgamated Press comics.

When Leonard Matthews, the then editor, decided to take over the comic's middle 'colour' pages (they were printed in red and black) with a text story instead of the usual humorous strips, he looked to Eric Parker to supply dramatic pictures. The resulting series was based on the unlikely but none the less delightful premise that the famous Regency dandy, George Brian 'Beau' Brummell, had a secret life as a highwayman, 'Will-o-the-Wisp'.



There were only four *Sexton Blake Annuals*, and Parker did the covers for three of them. Very Good copies in the glassine jackets now sell for up to £90.



# THE THREE MUSKETEERS

By ALEXANDRE DUMAS

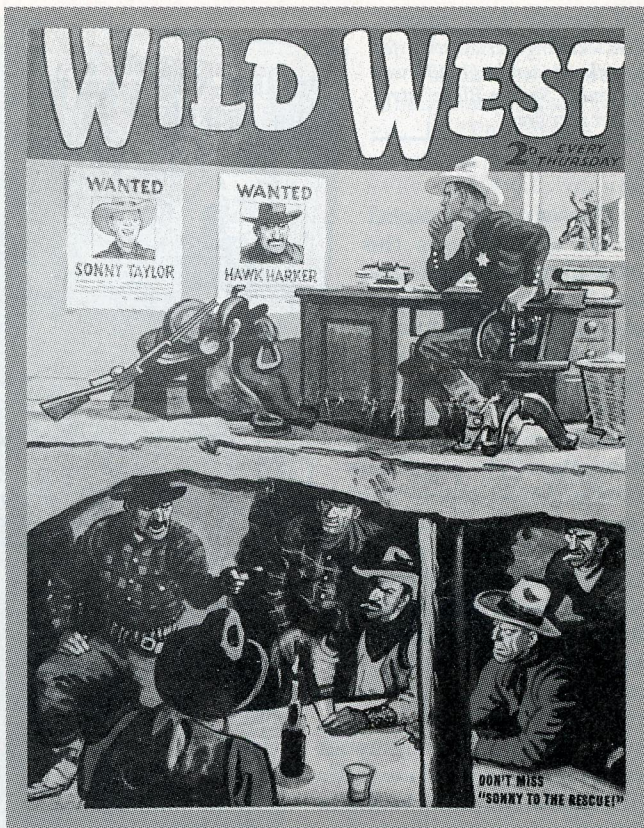


Eric Parker's lively version of *The Three Musketeers* for *Knockout* captured all the swash and buckle of the original.

This Scarlet Pimpernel/Zorro idea proved most successful thanks to the skill of Frank S. Pepper, writing under one of his many pen names, 'John Morion', and Parker's superlative illustrations. Parker contributed three drawings per weekly instalment and was obviously in his element — Regency London came alive in his atmospheric and authentic pictures.

### ADVENTURE STRIP

Later in 1950, the centre pages were again taken over by picture strips, but this time — another first for the 'colour' pages — it was an adventure strip, 'The Adventures of Buffalo Bill'. Buffalo Bill Cody had appeared on numerous occasions in *Knockout*, but this was the first serial strip devoted to the famous scout and Parker really went to town on it. Comparing it to 'The Adventures of Bear Cub', drawn almost ten years before, it is easy to see the strides the artist had made in his mastery of picture strip technique. The story, vaguely based on an old dime novel, brings Buffalo Bill into the events leading up to 'Custer's Last Stand'. Parker's drawing gives this strip authenticity and power as well as a sense of tragedy.



*Parker's unerring eye for composition and detail can be seen in this cover for Wild West Weekly. He regularly drew spot illustrations for this title.*

It should not be forgotten that, at the same time that Eric Parker was drawing for *Knockout* comic, he was also one of the main contributors to the *Knockout Fun Book* (as the comic's annual was called).

## *In Next Month's Issue*

**H.G. WELLS' 'THE TIME MACHINE'**  
**ANTHONY BUCKERIDGE AND 'JENNINGS'**  
**'SPIDER-MAN' COMICS**



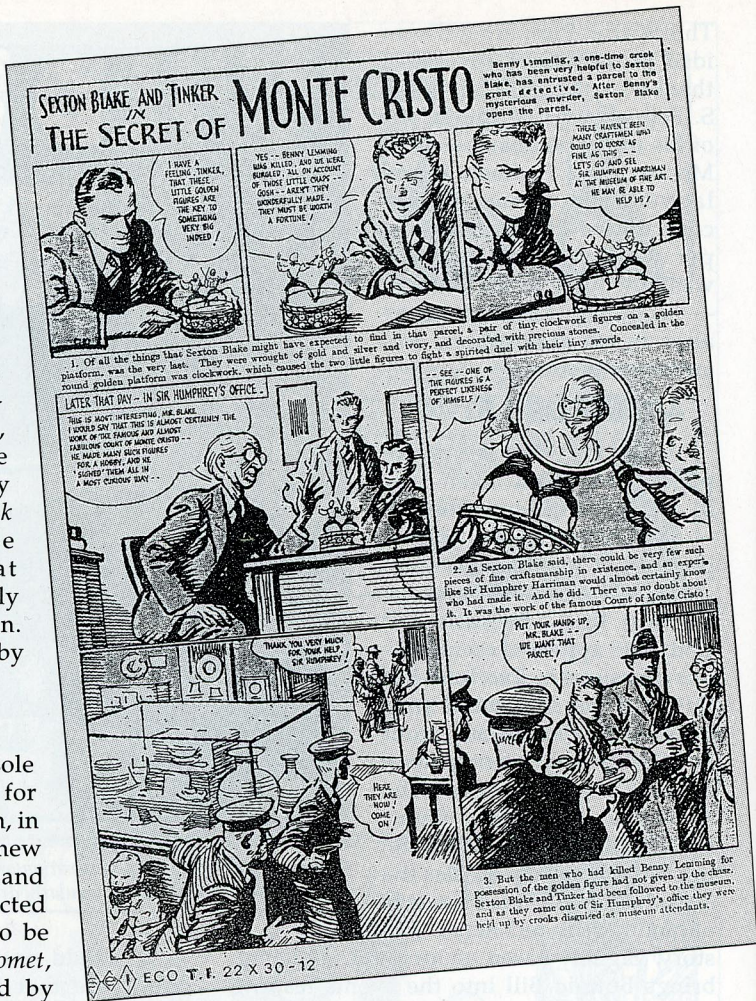
This exciting serial strip for *Knockout* comic (1949) was the only 'Sexton Blake' strip Parker ever drew.

One of the highlights of the annual was the extra long historical tale, usually involving magical and 'fairy tale' ingredients. Parker illustrated these stories with an extraordinary blend of action, humour and evocative atmosphere. The popularity of *Knockout Fun Book* amongst readers can be judged by the fact that copies from the 1940s rarely turn up in Fine condition. They were read to death by their original owners.

## COMPANION

For a decade, Parker's sole work for boys' comics was for the pages of *Knockout*. When, in 1949, *Knockout* gained two new companion comics, *Comet* and *Sun*, it was only to be expected that his talents would also be used for them. *Sun* and *Comet*, both originally published by J.B. Allen of Chester, began their Amalgamated Press days as eight-page photogravure comics. Immediately after the takeover, Parker was to be found contributing spot illustrations for an Arthur Catherall serial, 'The Island of Hungry Ghosts', in *Comet*, while his 'Patsy and Tim' strips were reprinted in *Sun*.

In the early days of the 'companion comics', Parker was used solely as a spot illustrator, notably on 'The New Adventures of Monte Cristo' (*Sun*; 1951), written by Frank S. Pepper under the 'John Morion' pen name, and again utilising the 'secret identity' formula; and 'Tough Tempest, Crime Buster' by Jacques Pendower (*Sun*; 1951).



In 1952, both comics underwent a change of format. In a bold and unprecedented move for mainstream British comics, the size was reduced to resemble the American 'comic book'.

At the same time, the front and back pages, and — a little later — the centre pages were printed in full colour instead of the usual red and green. As they were still printed in photogravure by Rembrandt printers of Watford, they looked superb and certainly stood out on the bookstalls.

At this time, the editors of *Comet* and *Sun* decided to use Parker's talents on picture

Parker had drawn for *Knockout*, only this time it was in full colour, albeit mechanically tinted. Parker made the series his own, drawing over 100 instalments. Towards the end of its run, the strip's colour pages were taken over by another character and 'Max Bravo, the Happy Hussar' was less happily reproduced as a black-and-white wash strip.

In 1962 this great strip was reborn, beautifully re-presented in full colour, in *Swift* (after Amalgamated Press/Fleetway had taken over that comic from Hulton publications). Not only did each episode contain new title illustrations drawn by Parker, but each one was actually painted by him in glowing colour. Eric Parker obviously enjoyed working on this strip, relishing the opportunity it gave him to portray, so realistically and authentically, the gorgeous uniforms and flamboyant historical figures of the era.

## NELSON

For the companion comic, *Comet*, Eric Parker was once again back in the same era, but this time on the other side of the Channel. On 4th June 1955, he began a long strip biography of England's greatest naval hero, 'Nelson'. Once again he showed how well he could re-create that particular historical period. The strip was printed in colour on the two centre pages and on the back page — three colour pages a week for 21 issues. It is a magnificent piece of work, very exciting and lively, presenting an important part of our history in a vivid, totally accessible way. The strip was reprinted less effectively in



strips rather than spot illustrations. At first, he contributed only the occasional strip, but this time on the other side of the Channel. On 4th June 1955, he began a long strip biography of England's greatest naval hero, 'Nelson'. Once again he showed how well he could re-create that particular historical period. The strip was printed in colour on the two centre pages and on the back page — three colour pages a week for 21 issues. It is a magnificent piece of work, very exciting and lively, presenting an important part of our history in a vivid, totally accessible way. The strip was reprinted less effectively in

But then, in *Sun* No 263 (1954), a three-page, full-colour adventure strip series began, entitled 'The Happy Hussar'. This was an imaginatively conceived story of a young peasant who dreams of becoming Field Marshal of France and who joins the Ninth Hussars as his first step to achieve that goal. It was as exciting as anything



The adventures of 'Max Bravo, the Happy Hussar' began in the colour pages of *Sun* comic in February 1954 and continued until February 1957.

black-and-white in the pages of *Thriller Picture Library* as 'The Sea Lord' (No 235) and later, in 1962, in the pages of *Valiant* under the title, 'To Glory We Steer'.

'Claude Duval' was a long-running English Civil War strip that at this time occupied the centre and back colour pages of *Comet*. The strip had been drawn from its inception in 1953 by Fred Holmes but, owing to the latter's illness, Eric Parker took over the strip on 29th October 1955, and made it very much his own, giving it a totally new look. Claude Duval, a real-life seventeenth century highwayman but transformed for the comic strip into a Royalist Cavalier, was forever foiling the dastardly plots of the Roundheads led by

the super-villainous Puritan, Midas Mould. Duval's exploits were full of historical colour and Parker made the action zip along in true swash-buckler style.

On 26th October 1957, Parker took over 'The Terrible Three' serial strip that had been running in *Sun* for a year. The exploits of these St Jim's schoolboys, the creations of Charles Hamilton (alias Martin Clifford/Frank Richards) of 'Billy Bunter' fame, had appeared in the pages of *The Gem* story-paper for thirty years prior to the Second World War and were now given a new lease of life in comic strip form in the pages of *Sun*. Parker captured the feel of public school life — as it appears in fiction, at any rate — admirably in his best black-and-white wash technique.

## LIBRARIES

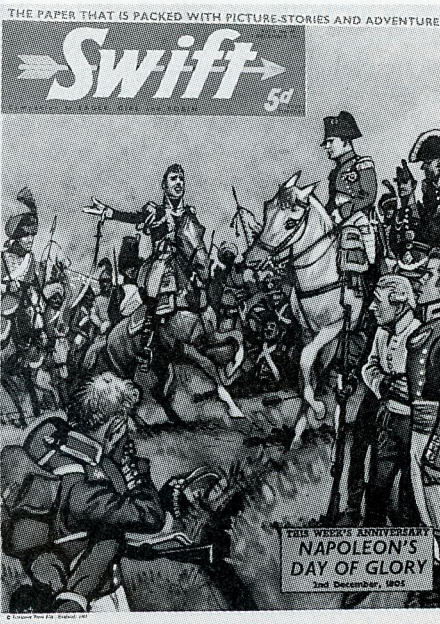
In the early 1950s, the Amalgamated Press introduced a series of 64-page, pocket-sized comic 'libraries', containing complete strip adventures in each issue. The first title in the series was the *Cowboy Comics Library*, the first two issues of which appeared on 6th May 1950. For issue No 2, Parker drew 'The Tough Tenderfoot', a 'Kit Carson' adventure. In all, he contributed to fifteen issues.

The format was a great success, and in November 1951 the company launched a companion title, *Thriller Comics Library*. Early issues reprinted some of the old *Knockout* picture serials, including two by Eric Parker. 'The Secret of Monte Cristo' (No 14), a reprint of his 'Sexton Blake' strip, had the leading characters' names changed and a great deal of re-drawing by Reg Bunn. The result was most disappointing. 'The Children of the New Forest' (No 38), however, was a

far better adaptation of the original strip, with Parker drawing a number of new panels for the library as well as a new title-page.

Parker's next three contributions to the library were all new. 'The Snare' (No 43), from a story by Rafael Sabatini, was a tale of the Peninsular War and gave Parker another opportunity to display his skill at depicting military history. His next library entry was 'The Four Feathers' (No 67), an adaptation of the well-known story by A.E.W. Mason. Parker based the strip on the Alexander Korda film, and the strip version carries the same strong narrative power and authentic atmosphere. The third new Parker strip, 'Trumpeter Sound' (No 79), dealt with the tragic events leading up to the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' at Balaclava. These three *Thriller Comic* issues rank among the very best of Parker's black-and-white strip work, and issues will cost the collector around £10-£15 each.

Parker provided full-colour covers for Nos 82 ('The Swordsman') and 85 ('Dick



This cover for a 1961 issue of *Swift* illustrates a subject dear to Parker's heart — the Napoleonic Wars.



The first instalment of Parker's much-reprinted strip biography of Nelson as it appeared in *Comet* in 1955.

Turpin for Justice and the Right'), and his two 'Highway Days' episodes from *Sun* were reprinted as 'Ho For the Highway' in No 89, but it wasn't until No 180 that his next original strip appeared in the *Library*. 'Around the World in Eighty Days', his strip version of Jules Verne's famous tale, appeared shortly after Mike Todd's lavish film production, although it bore no relation to the film. Another reprint came eight issues later when part of a 'Max Bravo' strip from *Sun* became No 188, 'Max Bravo, War Eagle of France', for which Parker also painted the cover.

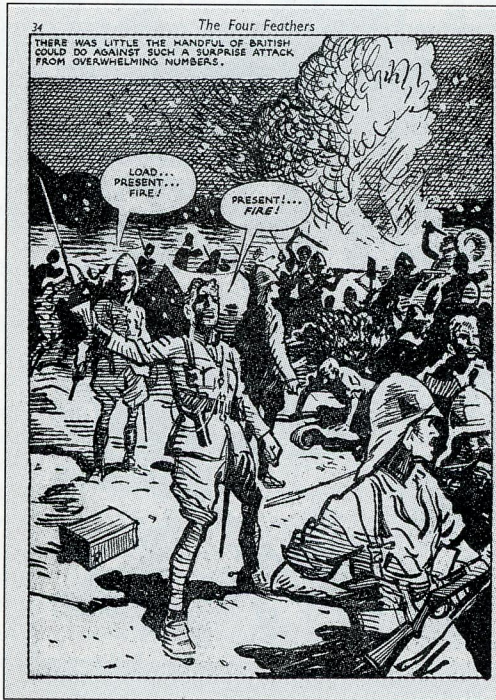
### MASTERLY

Then came Parker's last original work for the library, a fine adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, retitled 'The Bloodhound' (No 208), for which he also painted the cover. None of the individual frames stand out particularly, but it is a quite masterly piece of picture strip narration. Parker's final contribution to the library was the

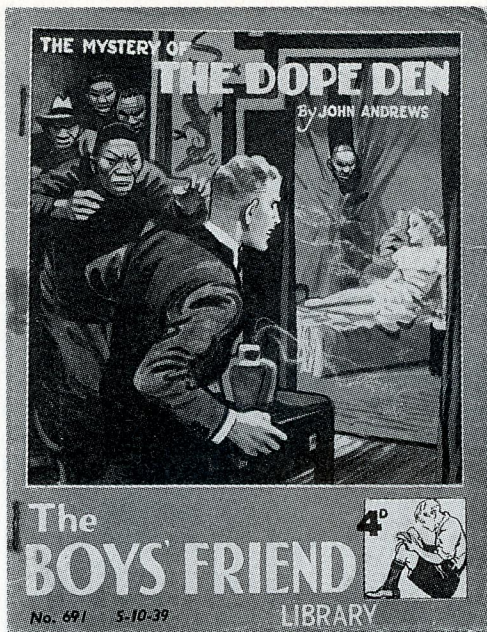
forementioned 'The Sea Lord' (No 235), a greatly abridged version of his 1955 *Comet* strip of the life of Lord Nelson.

From the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, Parker was also working on no fewer than five newspaper strips: 'Pepys' Diary' for the *Evening News*; 'Making a Film' for the *Daily Express*; 'An Age of Greatness' (Elizabethan England) for the *Daily Globe*; and — his only two narrative newspaper strips — 'Paula' for the *Daily Express*, and 'Our Gang' for the *Sunday Pictorial*.

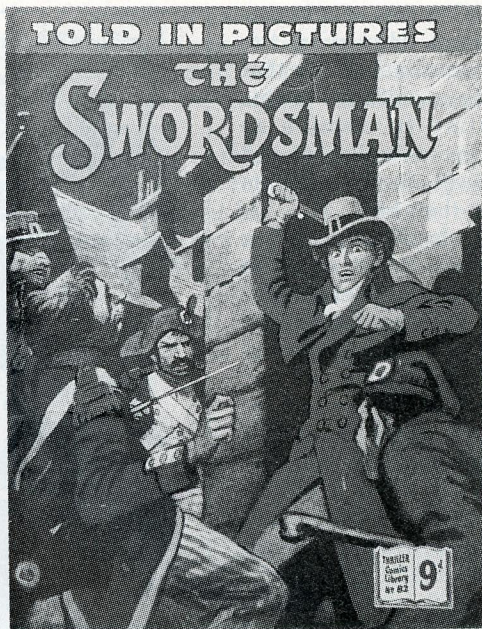
Despite his heavy workload for *Knockout*, *Comet*, *Sun*, *Thriller Comics* and his newspaper strip commitments, Parker still found time to contribute strips and spot illustrations to a variety of other publications during the 1940s and '50s. These included a full-colour strip for Odhams' 1949 *Children's Wonder Book* (a simplified 'Sexton Blake'-type adventure); full-page, full-colour advertisement for Walls ice cream — 'The Adventures of Tommy Walls' — in Hulton's *Eagle*; as well as full-colour political adver-



Eric Parker drew a dramatic version of A.E.W. Mason's *The Four Feathers* for *Thriller Comics Library* No 67.



*The Boys' Friend Library* (left) was just one of many Amalgamated Press story papers which could boast covers by Eric Parker. On the right is one of the few covers which he painted for the companion *Thriller Comics Library*.



tisements for the Conservative Party. It should also be pointed out that some of his finest historical spot illustrations are to be found in a number of *Daily Mail Children's Annuals* from this time. Such was Parker's prolific output that the enthusiast never knows when he is going to come across a Parker illustration in a book or periodical of the period.

## PIRATES

The most successful comic of the latter days of the Amalgamated Press was undoubtedly *Buster*. It began in May 1960, and, in its early days, carried a full-colour historical adventure strip on one of its large-sized centre pages. The first of these was an adaptation of Rafael Sabatini's famous story, 'The Sea Hawk', the tale of a Cornish gentleman who becomes the leader of a band of Barbary pirates. The strip was well drawn by Patrick Nicolle (the subject of a future article in this series) and, as a bonus, carried an extra-large title-page picture by Eric Parker.

On 20th August 1960, 'The Sea Hawk' was replaced by another full-colour strip in the same format — and drawn entirely by Parker — entitled 'The Three Rollicking Rogues'. The three rogues (known as 'The Three Bravos' in the first episode) were obviously based on Dumas' famous musketeers, and there was much humour and excitement in the strip. The large-sized panels gave Parker plenty of scope — and he made full use of it. Like 'The Sea Hawk', each episode had, with its title, an extra-large frame, and it is one of the most attractively laid out of all strips. The reader has only to look at these large, colourful pages to be captivated by them.

It has to be admitted that, apart from 'The Three Rollicking Rogues', Parker's strip work during the early part of the 1960s is disappointing. 'The Conway Cousins' (radio favourites) was an uninspired, half-page, black-and-white strip that appeared in *Junior Express*, while 'Daughter of Lorna Doone', printed in full colour in *Princess* during 1963/4, was well

below his usual standard. However, the occasional covers that he contributed at this time to comics as diverse as *Valiant* and *Swift* show his talents at their best.

In 1960, Eric Parker was offered the post of Art Director for I.P.C.'s children's magazine, *Look and Learn*, a position especially created for him. His main job was that of 'pictorial realisation', which meant designing and pencilling-in rough strips and illustrations which were then sent to Italy or Spain to be completed and 'finished' — often with the result that the life was taken out of them!

## NEW

By the mid-1960s, *Knockout*, *Comet*, *Sun*, the *Cowboy Comics* and *Thriller Comics Library* were no more, and there were very few western, detective or historical adventure strips around — nothing that was suitable for an artist like Eric Parker. Then, on 18th September 1965, a new comic arrived on the bookstalls. Perhaps better described as a boy's magazine, *Ranger* was forty pages (half of them in full colour) of fact, fiction and adventure strips, printed on large-size, quality paper.

The magazine was the brain-child of Leonard Matthews, the old *Knockout* editor and the man who, more than any other, was responsible for bringing some of the very best adventure artists into comics.



This *Three Musketeers*-type strip from *Buster* shows Parker in great form, exhibiting his talents for knock-about comedy and authentic historical detail.

Matthews intended *Ranger* to be an amalgam of the old boy's paper, *Chums*, and *Eagle*. He succeeded admirably but unfortunately the venture was not viable commercially and the paper folded after only forty issues.

Parker contributed many spot illustrations to *Ranger* and, on 2nd April 1966, his 'Around the World in Eighty Days' strip (originally *Thriller Comics Library* No 180) began to be serialised. But his best work for the weekly was a full-colour factual feature entitled 'Scrapbook of the British Soldier'.

This series began on 23rd April 1966, and was devised, written, drawn and painted by Eric Parker. Earlier, in *Buster*, Parker had contributed a factual military series, 'Then and Now', but it was nothing like this. Now Parker had been given his head and he used his knowledge of military history and regimental regalia to produce some quite outstanding work.

Fortunately for readers, when *Ranger* ceased publication, the magazine was incorporated into *Look and Learn*, and Parker's 'Scrapbook' feature went with it. The 'Scrap-book' was so popular that it ran for over a year in *Look and Learn*, from issue No 232 to No 297.

## ACCURACY

Shortly after 'Scrapbook of the British Soldier' finished, Parker painted another full-colour series entitled 'Scrapbook of the British Sailor'. It began in *Look and Learn* No 312 and continued until No 375. The historical accuracy of these two series, combined with Parker's unerring sense of composition and colour, make them the best of all his factual work. A third series — 'For Valour', a history of medals — began in *Look and Learn* No 394.

These three series reflected a lifetime's study. Parker was acknowledged as an authority on military history and, during the 1950s, had painted covers for *The Soldier*, official organ of the British Army.

At the time of his death in March 1974, Parker was engaged on another full-colour series, again written and painted by himself, to be entitled 'A Thousand Years of Spying'.

The originals of these pictures show the remarkable vivacity and vivid colour sense that always marked his work. There is no sign whatsoever of any flagging ability. Right up to the end of his life, Eric Parker's work was full of liveliness, movement and atmosphere, the hallmarks of this stylish and most influential of comic artists.



MY BOOK OF THE BRITISH SOLDIER

BY ERIC R. PARKER

## MARLBOROUGH THE MAGNIFICENT

WHEN Louis XIV of France determined to occupy Vienna in 1704, the Duke of Marlborough was in the Netherlands with 18 infantry battalions and eight cavalry regiments. It was hundreds of miles to the Rhine, where the French were preparing for their attack on

Vienna, but Marlborough daringly decided to march there, shielded by another French army, he crossed the Rhine at Bonn, and the Marquis of Frankfurt, and looked up with the army of his ally, Prince Eugene of Savoy. Together they defeated the French at Blenheim on 13th August. In the centre of this picture you see a commanding officer, mounted, watching his troops pass in the great march from the Netherlands. The junior officer is armed with sword and pike, and the drummer on the right wears the regiment's reverse colours—green coat and red facings.

On the left is a portrait of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, an ancestor of Sir Winston Churchill. Marlborough won fame for the nation and the army with his victories, notably Blenheim in 1704, Ramillies in 1706, Oudenarde in 1708 and Malplaquet in 1709. One of the reasons for his great success is that he took great care of his men, ensuring that they were properly clothed and fed. On the right is a member of the Foot Guards, wearing a stiffened sprigged mince cap, which was the new badge for grenadiers. His buffshod are laced with tulled rope.

BEFORE the great battle of Blenheim, Marlborough and Prince Eugene attacked the town of Donauwert, which was overlooked by the heights of Schellenberg, occupied by the enemy. The attacking force included the Foot Guards, who were incensed as dragoons (mounted infantry). They were armed with swords, muskets, bayonets and a pair of pistols, and wore the new three-cornered hat—called a tricorne—and stout jackboots. During the attack, the Swiss Guards dismounted, drove the enemy from their fortifications and then, remembering, put them to flight.

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'My Book of the British Soldier' — later 'My Scrapbook of the British Soldier' — from the shortlived '60s comic, *Ranger*. It continued in *Look and Learn*.



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