

# Film Children Earn Fortunes



Youngsters of "Our Gang" comedy troupe enjoy an Easter party. Left to right: "Spanky" McFarland, Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer, Darla Hood, and Billie "Buckwheat" Thomas.

## But Relatives Row Over Money

(Continued from page one.)

Reverberations of the battle over dollars still go on, as you know if you have been reading the recent Taylor murder investigations.

Virginia Lee Corbin sued her mother for an accounting of the funds she earned as a minor and seems to have had little but a fractious disposition and nervous trouble to show for a film career as a child. Virginia Brown Faire is another; Peggy Montgomery, famous as Baby Peggy, lives on a small income, trying to beat her way back to a place in the movie sun. From these and other cases one can but conclude that the fruits of child stardom are often extremely illusory, viewed in terms of lifetime satisfaction.

As for present advantages, the threat of kidnaping always is hanging over a child star. Bodyguards, iron bars on windows, restricted habits, heavy costs to be paid out of the child's earnings, make life not so agreeable nor so natural as one would like it to be for a child. Shirley Temple and Jane Withers have been the objects of threatening notes, and many other child actors who have not publicized the matter have been similarly terrorized.

"School days, school days, dear old golden rule days," are not for the child movie star. There is little chance for the free and easy democracy of the classroom, one of the important foundations for future citizenship, in the life of a film star. A tutor or the studio classroom takes the place of this. A public school is out of the question for a child star; first, because he would attract too much attention to make normal routine possible; and second, because his movie work takes so much of his time that special schooling is the only thing practicable. Aggressive playmates in the ordinary school would cultivate his friendship and toady to him because of his fame; and other children, resenting this, would be unpleasant to him, perhaps jealous or cruel. His very importance destroys the possibility of forming natural friendships.

The studio school is one maintained on the lot by the film company itself and administered by a teacher selected by the local board of education but paid by the studio. The studio teacher is responsible for the studies of all children of school age acting on the lot at any given time. Since many of the child stars are kept constantly at work in the films, this means the studio school is the place where such stars as Shirley Temple, Jane Withers, Freddie Bartholomew, and Sybil Jason receive their classroom education. Of course, many of these receive private tutoring, but have to attend the studio school to comply with the state law.

The school law for the studios in general provides that children under 6 cannot remain on the lot for more than six hours a day; over that age the limit

## Big Money for Little Stars

● Topping the list of the juvenile stars of Hollywood is none other than 8-year-old Shirley Temple, whose income is a half million dollars a year. She's the prized performer of Twentieth Century-Fox. In his suit for an accounting in October, 1936, Jack Hays, her former director, estimated the child's earnings since 1932 had been one million from films and another million from royalties. In 1934 she was getting \$1,000 a week and her mother was getting an added \$250 a week.

### Others in the big money are:

**VIRGINIA WEIDLER:** Paramount. Ten. Court approved contract Oct. 4, 1934, \$50 to \$250 a week over seven-year period.

**DEANNA DURBIN:** Universal. Fourteen. Court approved contract July 2, 1936, \$150 to \$1,250 a week over seven-year period.

**JUDY GARLAND:** M-G-M. Fourteen. Court approved contract Oct. 15, 1936, \$200 to \$1,000 over seven-year period.

**MAUCH TWINS, ROBERT AND WILLIAM:** Warner Brothers. Thirteen. Court approved contract April 1, 1937, \$350 to \$2,250 a week over seven-year period.

**BONITA GRANVILLE:** Warner Brothers. Fourteen. Court approved contract March 11, 1937, \$300 to \$2,500 a week over seven-year period. She is a Chicago girl.

**EDITH FELLOWS:** Columbia. Thirteen. Court approved contract July 23, 1935, \$150 to \$1,000 a week over seven-year period.

**FREDDIE BARTHOLOMEW:** M-G-M. Thirteen. No complete contract data available, but he was supposed to be making \$1,500 a week in 1936 when his parents attempted to regain his custody.

**SYBIL JASON:** Warner Brothers. Nine years old. Court approved contract May 23, 1937, \$250 a week.

**JANE WITHERS:** Twentieth Century-Fox. Ten. Court approved contract Dec. 18, 1934. Salary \$1,000 a week.

**SPANKY (GEORGE R.) McFARLAND:** Eight. Contract approved March 18, 1937, was for only one year at \$200 a week. A year before the court approved a contract calling for \$400 to \$1,000 over six-year period. Apparently the first contract had been dissolved.

**CARL "ALFALFA" SWITZER:** Eight. Court approved contract March 28, 1934, \$50 to \$275 a week.

**DARLA HOOD:** Five. Court approved contract Oct. 21, 1935, \$75 to \$750 a week over seven-year period.

**BABY PATSY DORIS MAY:** Three. Court approved contract Dec. 13, 1937, \$30 to \$200 a week over five-year period.

**BOBBY BREEN:** Eleven. Singing star of Sol Lesser Principal Productions. Nets \$1,000 weekly from radio, picture work, recordings, records, personal appearances, and commercial tieups. He is under a seven-year contract, with salary for film work rising with the yearly options.

is eight hours. Half of this time must be spent in studies.

At best the whole set-up makes for an unnatural environment for the typical movie child. At worst his life becomes one round of lawsuits among bickering relatives, all trying to get control of some share of his earnings. The case of the

battle between Freddie Bartholomew's aunt, Miss Mylicent Mary Bartholomew, and Freddie's mother, Mrs. Lillian May Bartholomew, in which the aunt retained custody of the boy, is well known; but there have been others.

After a long-drawn-out court fight Mrs. Elizabeth Fellows,



Mrs. Martha Holt with her two children, David and Betty, the first of whom has found a place in the films.



Baby Patsy Doris May of "Our Gang." She's in the custody of her grandparents.

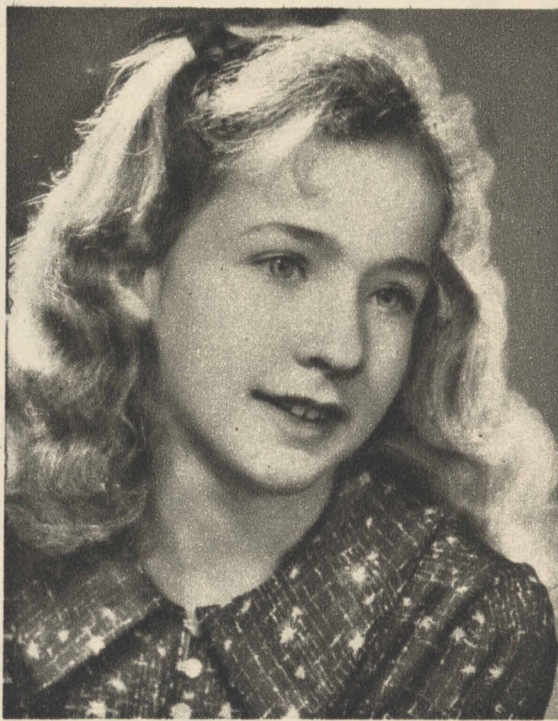
grandmother of Edith Fellows, 13-year-old actress, won the custody of the star from Mrs. Harriet G. Fellows, the girl's mother. In the testimony the bitterness of the child against her mother was brought out.

Patsy Doris May is another child star whose custody by grandparents has been sustained by the courts. The father, James Dittmore, a steel worker, contested the validity of the custody; but the grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Ross May, established that Dittmore had abandoned the baby after the death of the mother.

Naturally such bickerings can result only in the child's hating one group of relatives as

against another. It goes without saying that the court battles are the result of attempts by one party or the other to gain control of the child's earnings and reflect a selfish disregard of the child's true interests.

Miss Birdina Anderson, who has been the studio school teacher at Samuel Goldwyn's studio for a number of years, has a low regard for child stars' parents and guardians, believing that the majority of them are interested only in exploiting the children. Miss Anderson's motive may be absolving the studios from blame for abnormal development of child stars, but her experience in such matters carries weight.



Bonita Granville of Warner Brothers, equally skilful in "mean brat" or sympathetic roles.



The youthful Deanna Durbin of the unusual voice, a featured player of Universal.

"The studios are to blame," she says, "only because they need children in pictures and pay the boys and girls large salaries. The money attracts parents with eligible children to Hollywood. The parents will do anything to attract the attention of casting directors to their offspring, and it's the children who suffer."

What Miss Anderson finds so pathetic is the failure of young people who were sensational child stars. She believes this is due to the fact that they were withheld from normal development by parents who wanted to exploit them.

Some effort is made by the courts to protect children from their parents. The studio has



Young Mickey Rooney, boy actor of the movies recently seen in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's "Captains Courageous."

to make the contract with the child's legal guardian. Whether



Jackie Moran of Paramount, whose work in "Valiant Is the Word for Carrie" classed him as an artist.

## Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Mae Tinée: I saw a preview of "Parnell" in this city, and I found only one fault, and that was, why didn't the director put a full black beard on Mr. Parnell? He wore a full black beard when I saw him and John Dillon in Clinton, Ia., in 1880. His photo showed a beard at the trial in London.

Dillon, Davitt (with one arm gone), fiery Tim Healy were perfectly pictured just as I recall them at that time and as I

saw Dillon and Healy in the funeral procession that followed the remains of Griffith in Dublin in 1922. Had the director put a beard on Gable I could find no fault with the picture. I met Davitt in Seattle in 1891, and his face was familiar to me as I saw it on the screen.

Your statement as to the actors—very good. Yours respectfully, A. H. M.

Editor's note: Mr. Gable refused to wear a beard. And so you saw Parnell in 1880! How interesting! And what a beautiful "engraving" hand you write! Your letter gave me genuine pleasure. Do write again.

Mae Tinée: Thoughts after seeing "Romeo and Juliet":

BASIL RATHBONE as Tybalt: As cold and relentless as the shining blade he unsheathed so readily.

JOHN BARRYMORE as Mercutio: Jest-ing at all, even death.

REGINALD DENNY as Benvolio: Full of the joy of living and wanting others to live.

ROBERT WARWICK and C. AUBREY SMITH as Montague and Capulet: So rich and noble with their fine robes and glittering escort, yet so small within that they held to an ancient quarrel and thereby helped to cause their children's death.

EDNA MAY OLIVER as the Nurse: So loving, yet so blind to what was in her darling's heart. Knowing nothing of the love that conquers death as she prated of the charming lord whom Juliet must wed.

HENRY KOLKER as Father Lawrence: Doing all that lay within his power to help those most ill-fated lovers' plight, and failing when a hand more strong than his finished their tale.

And the lovers: NORMA SHEARER as Juliet: Wrapped in her shining cloak of innocence. Blessed and damned alike by her great love.

LESLIE HOWARD as Romeo: Pawn in a game which he played gallantly to its bitter end. Loved and loving. Fighting his duel with Fate that no man ever won.

William Shakespeare fashioned, wrought, and made these immortal characters. Peter Tschaikowsky's tragic genius told their story in deathless music. The screen

gave all its finest in acting, setting, and mechanisms to again bring to glorious life the most beautiful love story ever known. PATRICIA SLOAN.

Editor's note: Hall!

Dear Mae Tinée: I simply must pay a belated sincere tribute to Gary Cooper for his portrayal of the character of Wild Bill Hickok in that interesting film, "The Plainsman." . . . I realized that the motion picture first, last, and always is the real medium for the presentation of our western dramas.

We thrilled to them in our younger days when the silent films were forging ahead, and we have not deserted them in our English cousins that we are still frontiersmen—but no one can rob us of our admiration for our western films! In this



GARY COOPER  
Lauded for portrayal of Wild Bill.

we are truly American; it is, in fact, our most American trait.

CARL A. JOSSECK.

Editor's note: There you have said something!

Dear Miss Tinée: I learned long ago that "one's man's meat is another man's poison," and presumably that ancient maxim applies to women, too.

Hence I cannot understand the frothing-at-the-mouth fury of your correspondents, who usurp your editorial functions and flagellate you verbally because they do not agree with your excellent critiques. Oddly enough (perhaps not so oddly, after all), they are far more caustic—even vitriolic—than you are in your comments on plays and players which and who do not measure up to your standards. Conversely, they are far more fulsome in their "raves" over favorites. I wonder why they can't profit by your example in the practice of temperateness. As a matter of fact, I am glad to note that your experience and ability render your advice to discriminating movie lovers highly valuable. I am glad to say that I have never failed to profit by taking that advice. (I am not egotistically classing my judgment with yours, but it is pleasing to be able to agree with one who knows.) Yours appreciatively, ELOISE ROWLEN.

Iowa City, Ia.  
P. S.—Recently you mentioned a "present incumbent." Isn't the phrase a bit tautological?

Editor's note: I looked tautological up—and right you are.

the guardian is an aunt, an uncle, or the child's real mother or father, the guardianship has to be established in court. The court specifies that the guardian must make periodic accounting of the child's earnings from time to time. This tends to protect the child's interests.

Child stars, or their guardians, also have to worry about a factor that doesn't bother other children. They have to pay income tax; that is, their guardians pay it for them. The child is allowed the usual deductions for dependents, and in many cases this is the whole family, including the brothers and sisters and father and mother and any other hangers-on.

Actually the only person justifiably dependent on the child star is the mother, whose necessary presence on the set deprives her of earning opportunity outside. Many studios compensate for this by paying the mother a stipend, too. Mrs. George Temple, Shirley's mother, is said to get \$250 a week for this sort of work.

The child star is allowed deductions just like an adult actor. He can deduct fees for agent, advertising and publicity, and other typical expenses for which grown-up players make deductions.