

THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL

by ROGER M. JENKINS

The publication of the first number of the Holiday Annual in the autumn of 1919 (dated 1920) was one of the greatest acts of faith that the Amalgamated Press ever undertook. When it is remembered that the Magnet, Gem, and Boys' Friend were each selling at 1½d a copy at the time, it was a very bold venture indeed to launch an annual selling at six shillings, which represented a year's subscription to any one of those three papers. Audacity sometimes pays off, and the Holiday Annual began a twenty-two year run, which only the paper shortage in the second world war brought to an end.

"The object of the Holiday Annual," said the editor in the first number, "is primarily to give amusement and entertainment, by means of cheerful, healthy fiction and verse, to the boys and girls of Britain." There are a number of amusing anecdotes about parents presenting the volume to their children at Christmas, at the same time expressing the pious hope that it would provide more elevated reading than that to be found in the Magnet and Gem and other penny dreadfuls. Whether any parents could have been quite so imperceptive is doubtful, but it makes a good story, and underlines the fact that the Holiday Annual was certainly a quality production.

It would have been a very churlish schoolboy indeed who could have found fault with the 1920 volume which is now a collector's item. Charles Hamilton wrote new Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood stories, illustrated by C. H. Chapman, Warwick Reynolds, and W. W. Wakefield respectively, with Shields and others lending a hand. Warwick Reynolds undertook the cover picture (a scene from the Rookwood story) and all his illustrations are noteworthy for the character and individuality of the features. "Ructions at Greyfriars" told how Bunter inveigled the Famous Five into assisting him in a rather risky impersonation, a story which was echoed later in Magnet 1136. "The Wandering Schoolboy" told how Gussy retired from St. Jim's for a while and visited Greyfriars and Rookwood. At the end he promised the Head never to behave in such a manner again, but sad to say he did, in Gems 753-8. "The Rivals of Rookwood School" dealt with Lovell's unreasoning dislike for a new boy, Loring, an idea later used in the Gem Torrence series and the Magnet Carlow series. (Never did Rookwood again merit an 18 chapter story in the Holiday Annual.) For good measure there was also a reprint of the Heath series from Magnets 173-4, but what some collectors may find more interesting is a futuristic story of St. Jim's in 1950 entitled "Out of Bounds" in which Smith minor is annoyed because the Head puts the moon out of bounds, and he takes the ether plane to Mars.

The 1921 annual was "The Greyfriars Holiday Annual," and this change became permanent. To emphasise the point, there was an account of the editor's visit to Greyfriars, the first of a long run of such fantasies. There were also

extended lists of the characters in each of the schools which, if not always accurate, were certainly well illustrated. Three more specially written stories appeared, the first entitled "Billy Bunter's Butler" being one of the most hilarious stories to appear in the Holiday Annual. Chunkley's magnificent stores had just been opened in Courtfield, and Bunter invited some friends to take tea with him there. The bill came to £12.10s.6d., and all Bunter could contribute was a humble tanner. He postponed the inevitable ragging by saying that his father would be sending a butler from Bunter Court with the money, and he then phoned Chunkley's and hired a first-class butler for a few hours. "Jimmy Silver's Rival," explaining why Jimmy Silver decided not to fight Tommy Dodd was an unusual and not particularly enjoyable story, whilst "All Gussy's Fault" was used to advertise the Benbow stories in the Greyfriars Herald. The reprint on this occasion was "The Master's Secret; or How Tom Merry Came to St. Jim's." This story came from $\frac{1}{2}$ d Gems 11, 13 and 14, telling how Tom Merry left Clavering College and arrived at St. Jim's in a velvet suit. The St. Jim's stories were all illustrated by Macdonald who was back from the Navy.

1922 saw more echoes from the Benbow, this time in the Greyfriars story "The Rivals of the Remove" in which Drake and Rodney, now at Greyfriars, pretended they couldn't play cricket and then blackmailed their way into the team, a story with a pleasant air and a dramatic ending. Equally entertaining was "The Two Heroes," Gussy the genuine one and Baggy Trimble the counterfeit. St. Jim's again commanded a massive reprint, no less than 35 chapters from Gems 361-3, telling how Marie Rivers appeared on the scene and how the Professor returned to attempt to co-erce Talbot into rejoining the gang. There was also a third St. Jim's tale, "Glyn's Latest," which was specially written. The Rookwood story, "Who Did It?" was, alas, by a substitute writer, but other attractions were a Ferrers Lord story, a tale of life on the Bombay Castle, and one of Michael Poole's St. Katie's stories, this time about the wedding of Mr. Blunt, or "Jolly Roger," as he was called. Michael Poole had a carefully contrived atmosphere at St. Katie's, but little idea of story-telling - the boys' plot was successful at every turn, and consequently it all seemed quite pointless.

1923 had quite the nastiest Greyfriars story ever to appear in any Holiday Annual. "A Shadow Over Greyfriars," the only story to be specially written by Charles Hamilton in this year, told how there was a cricket week at Greyfriars, with teams from Rookwood and St. Jim's staying at the school. Bunter was in a spiteful mood, and set about removing articles from jackets in the changing room in order to arouse mutual hostility and suspicion among the teams. It was Drake, now only a visitor to Greyfriars, who solved the mystery. Rookwood and St. Jim's were represented by reprints, "The Mystery of the Priory" being taken from the famous double number of the Boys' Friend, No. 810, an account of Private Silver's desertion from the army, and "The Captain of St. Jim's" from Gems 317-8 being an account of the celebrated occasion when Tom Merry was voted into that high office for a short but memorable career.

The Greyfriars story in 1924 was a most unusual contribution: "A Great Man Visits Greyfriars" told how Martin Clifford visited the school, and the surprising

consequences of this visit. It is of interest to collectors as an insight into Charles Hamilton's own views about himself as an author:

"I've read a lot of his stuff," said Wibley. "There's no doubt that chap is clever. The way he strings a story together shows the dramatic gift. Some men write a story as if it were a furniture catalogue or an almanac. This man Clifford has an eye to a situation - he makes the characters explain themselves - before you've got a dozen lines into the story you know the fellows as if you'd met them. He ought to be writing plays really, but I suppose a man has to live!"

Even more cutting were the remarks of people like Hacker who began by discussing Martin Clifford's works and then turned the subject to his own, and remarked that he too would have become an author if only he had the time, but would have written on more serious topics. There is no doubt that this is the sort of conversation Hamilton must often have endured, and collectors can see this story as fascinating, though it is possible that youthful readers would not have appreciated its ironies and would have preferred a more conventional tale. Also specially written was "Morny's Master-Stroke" which related the trouble Jimmy Silver encountered when he threw a snowball into Tommy Dodd's study, thinking what a happy surprise it would be if it landed on his tea-table. A different sort of surprise occurred, as it landed on Manders who was snooping around. St. Jim's was represented by a reprint. "The Schoolboy Treasure-Hunters" was one of the many reprints of Gems 173-5, dealing with the famous trip to the South Seas searching for Spanish doubloons. Cedar Creek was represented by a reprint of "How Father Christmas Came to White Pine" (which bears more than a slight resemblance to a Bret Harte story) and P. G. Wodehouse contributed a tale of school life. Finally, it is worth noting that the success of Billy Bunter's Weekly in the Popular led to the introduction of Billy Bunter's Annual as a sub-section of the Holiday Annual itself.

1925 saw Bunter in a more amusing aspect once again. Mr. Bunter had made some money on a Stock Exchange deal and presented the "Bunter Cup," a fifty guinea solid silver item, to be played for by the junior teams. The awkward stipulation was made that Bunter himself had to play in every match. The descriptions of comic football matches and the way in which Fish, Skinner, Snoop and Stott flattered Bunter so long as his money lasted were written in Charles Hamilton's most sparkling vein. Unfortunately, "Getting Quits With Greyfriars," a Rookwood story, was one of the worst types of imitation. There were also two reprints, "The Rival Editors" from Magnet 306 about the Greyfriars Herald, and "The Bishop's Medal" from Gem 313 giving an account of the way Cousin Ethel persuaded Figgins to enter for a difficult examination, and the hostility he encountered as a result, a story in Charles Hamilton's best dramatic vein. It is interesting to compare P. G. Wodehouse's story, "Jackson's Dip," with Michael Poole's "St. Katie's Big Splash." The first story was only a brief episode, but it was written in a limpid amusing style that carried the reader easily through it, whereas Michael Poole's story was composed in a turgid style, which was scarcely improved by the way the author himself repeatedly commented on the events he described so that his obtrusive remarks robbed the story of all involvement and interest.

1926 was a year in which Charles Hamilton exercised his rarely-used vein of fantasy in a story entitled "Lucky for Parkinson." Parkinson, who shared a study with Trevor, was one of the great scholars of the Remove, but his one ambition was

to play in the junior eleven. He was reading in German the story of Peter Schlemihl, who was offered all the treasures of the earth in return for signing his soul away to the Man in the Grey Coat, and Parkinson began to see a way to achieve his life's ambition. Although he was not, in the end, called away to the nether regions, he was in point of fact never mentioned again. The other Greyfriars story, "The Form-Master's Substitute," was a reprint of Magnet 389, dealing with Wibley's impersonation of Mr. Mobbs: Ponsonby & Co. were more than astonished at the changed attitude of the master who had always toadied to them hitherto. The Rookwood tale, "Pulling Carthew's Leg" was an imitation, but there were two genuine St. Jim's stories again, "Grundy's Great Idea" being a reprint of Gem 465 about an anonymous letter which was sent to Mr. Linton, and "The Scientist of St. Jim's" being specially written: this was an account of Glyn's latest invention, the death ray. In addition there were also Cedar Creek and St. Katie's stories, a school yarn by P. G. Wodehouse, and contributions by Sidney Drew, Alfred Edgar, and others.

1927 was an annual with some endearing features. The only new item contributed by Charles Hamilton was "What Happened to Bunter," relating how he threw a small portmanteau at Mr. Quelch in mistake for Walker, and then decided to visit St. Jim's and later Rookwood to escape the inevitable flogging. Even if the theme was similar to the series in Magnets 737-9, it was a fine display of Bunter's character in the mid-twenties, and a most readable story. Equally entertaining was "Lord Eastwood's Experiment" from Gem 127 telling how Gussy's noble father decided to give him a cheque book and a bank balance of £50 to teach him the value of money, an experiment that ended in sad failure. Much more dramatic was "Nugent Minor's Bad Start," a reprint of Magnet 100, a famous double number which gave a vivid account of the trials and tribulations faced by a spoilt boy at a public school. The P. G. Wodehouse story "Out of Bounds" was too long and discursive to be successful: there was little humour in it, and the machinery of the plot creaked ominously at times. The two Rookwood stories were by substitute writers, but there was a Cedar Creek reprint, and Dr. Birchmall featured in Billy Bunter's Annual.

1928 was the last and funniest of the early thin paper Holiday Annuals. "Battling Bunter" was an account of the trouble that ensued when Bunter annexed a theatre ticket belonging to Bob Cherry, while "The Arm of the Law" related how Messrs. Gammon and Gobble, solicitors of Wayland, threatened D'Arcy with legal proceedings, being unaware that he was a minor. Both these stories were specially written for the Holiday Annual. For the first time since 1924 there was a Rookwood story by Charles Hamilton: "Tea With Manders" was from No. 815 of the Boys' Friend, and told how that pleasant gentleman invited the Fistical Four to tea in order to keep them out of a football match; it was a party that ended with the host chasing his guests down the corridor with a cane. This was an early Rookwood story, but the remarks of Mr. Bootles were attributed to his successor, Mr. Dalton, in order to bring it up to date - an unsatisfactory device that was often resorted to. The other Rookwood story was an imitation, but "How Horace Coker got his Remove" was, of course, by Charles Hamilton, being a reprint of Magnet 145. This was an historic occasion, and the story had many amusing incidents, but it did not wear quite so well as some others chosen for reprinting; perhaps it had

dated a little, and Coker's character had altered as well.

From the collector's point of view, the Holiday Annual lost most of its interest after the 1928 issue, which was the last of the thin paper numbers. After this, all issues were printed on thick, almost cardboard-like paper which made them look fat and promising volumes, but in point of fact the amount of reading matter was considerably diminished. Henceforth it was to be impossible for one school to be represented by two really long stories.

1929 added insult to injury by reducing the number of pages from 360 to 280, a deprivation which the use of thicker paper no doubt concealed from all but the most enquiring readers. Its main attraction was the specially written Rookwood story "A Rift at Rookwood." By the time this was written (probably early in 1928) Owen Conquest had not lost his touch with the Hampshire school, and this story, telling how Lovell refused to recognise that his gammy leg must keep him out of a football match and how his refusal to face facts led to a rift in the end study, was a splendid character drama which represented the finest Rookwood story ever to appear in the Holiday Annual. The main Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories had to be represented by reprints. "When Billy Bunter Forgot" was taken from Magnet 160, and was the classic account of how he lost his memory after diving into an empty swimming-bath and became truthful for a while, while "Tom Merry's Minor" - a monkey - was a reprint of Gem 296. The oddity was "Chequemate," a three chapter storyette about a cheque for £50 which Mr. Bunter sent to Billy to display and then return - Bunter borrowed considerable sums on the strength of it before the truth came to light. It is a possibility that this amusing story was a left-over from the days of the Greyfriars Herald in the early 'twenties.

1930 was the beginning of the second decade of the Holiday Annual, but the gilt was wearing off the gingerbread. The only specially written story was "Gussy's Latest Stunt" which started off well. Skimpole had given up Socialism and Determinism in favour of extremism, and had given away the spread in the study cupboard and D'Arcy's new spring overcoat to a passing tramp, on the basis that all jam tarts, ginger pop, and coats would soon be nationalised anyway. In order to appease D'Arcy's continuing wrath, he began to convert him to the new creed, after which the story ceased to be amusing and turned a little sour. "The Greyfriars Adventurers" was a reprint of Magnet 179, better known as "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," a rather eventful single story, while "Pleasing Dear Thomas" featured that ineffable ass Clarence Cuffy. It was taken from Boys' Friend 1083, at the fag-end of the Rookwood saga, a triviality of only four chapters. It was by the real Owen Conquest, but it could not hold a candle to the previous Rookwood story.

1931 was even more disappointing. The two main schools were represented by reprints of the very early days. "Troublesome Tom" was from $\frac{1}{2}$ d Gem No. 5, and "Mark Linley at Crossroads," telling of his anxiety about winning a money prize at an examination, was from Magnet 180. The Rookwood story "French Leave," featuring Lovell in one of his obstinate moods, was probably specially written and seemed contemporary, with Carthew on a motor-bike. "Sturgis Forgets," a tale of Greyfriars in the future, was another of Charles Hamilton's intermittent series of

science fiction stories.

If 1931 was disappointing, 1932 was a wash-out so far as Hamiltoniana was concerned. The Rookwood and St. Jim's stories were imitations, and the Greyfriars piece, "The Vanished Eleven," was an old red Magnet story, No. 338, written in a most sombre vein: the Remove cricketers were kidnapped, and Vernon-Smith stopped the driver by pushing a pen-knife into his neck towards the jugular vein. The only consolations were an amusing fantasy at the beginning about an old boys' re-union when they were middle-aged; "A.D. 1999" about St. Jim's in an electronic age; and for Brooks fans there was "Rivals of St. Frank's," an amusing little tale about a stolen picnic hamper. It is interesting to note that eton jackets were "out," as both the Magnet and Gem had given them up in illustrations.

1933 was rather like 1931, being based on uninspiring reprints. "Saved from the Sea" was from Magnet 301, dealing with a mysterious boy with a strange secret whose ship foundered on the great rocks beneath the Shoulder, and "A Yankee at St. Jim's" was from Gem 294 dealing with Fisher T. Fish's visit to the Sussex school. Neither reprint was worth writing home about, and to make matters worse both Rookwood stories were by substitute writers. Considering that the Rookwood saga ran for eleven years in the Boys' Friend, it is one of the mysteries of the Holiday Annual why such little use was made of this enormous mass of material.

1934 represented a turning-point in the career of the later Holiday Annual. First of all, its price was reduced from six shillings to five (how attractive those days of deflation appear nowadays!) though it is true that the number of pages fell from 280 to 256. The Hiking series in the Magnet was a very topical piece of advertising for the Holiday Annual in question, and although the main schools had only reprints to represent them, both stories were outstandingly good for a change. "A Schoolboy's Honour" from Magnet 303 was about the triangle of Wharton - Hazeldene - Marjorie Hazeldene: Wharton came to Hazeldene's assistance for Marjorie's sake, and then Hazeldene deserted him when trouble arose. This was character drama of a high order. The Gem reprint was from No. 799, the first from the Indian Summer period. "Spoofed" related how Trimble pretended he was leaving the school in order to avail himself of the opportunity to auction his belongings for the high prices which it was the custom to pay at such leaving sales. Both Rookwood stories were imitations, but Ken King turned up for the first time, by way of a change.

The Hamiltonian section of the 1935 Annual saw a further upward trend. The reprint from Gem 751 "The Stony Seven" was the last of a very amusing series in which the juniors attempted to raise the wind, the climax being when Gussy donned false whiskers and attempted to pawn his gold watch. Lord Eastwood, who was visiting St. Jim's that day, had the gratifying experience of seeing his son escorted back to the school by a police sergeant. This was one of the really classic moments in the Gem. Magnet 992 provided the Greyfriars story "The Footprint in the Sand," an average sort of tale, but at least not too old, whilst Boys' Friend 987 was the reprinted Rookwood story, "The Boy Who Wouldn't Budge," a tale of the Bootles era, describing how Mornington refused to own up when his friend Erroll

was being punished for his misdeeds. The specially-written story, "Billy Bunter's Booby-Trap," has special memories for me. Some years ago, when an anthology of school stories was being published, Charles Hamilton was looking for a short Greyfriars story as his contribution, but he could not find one short enough to suit the editor of the volume. I suggested "Billy Bunter's Booby-Trap," and this was in fact adopted. It is only an episode, and the Famous Five are mere foils for Bunter; in fact, it is very similar to the plots of the T.V. series in this respect, but it goes with a swing and there is an irresistible hilarity about it, even though Bunter ends up with a flogging. Incidentally, it was the first time since 1928 that Charles Hamilton had written a Greyfriars story specially for the Holiday Annual.

1936 saw a long Greyfriars story specially written, entitled "The Dunce of Greyfriars." The 1928 annual had related how Coker was promoted from the Shell to the Fifth form. This time Coker exasperated Prout so much that a demotion took place, and Coker had to attend English lessons with the Second form. The Rookwood story was by a substitute writer, but there were two reprints. "The Spoofer" from Gem 765 was about Baggy Trimbles' pretence of having lost his memory, and was as entertaining as the Coker story. "Billy Bunter's Bust-Up" was from an unhappy period of the Magnet so far as Bunter was concerned: his character was almost at its worst when this story first appeared in Magnet 148. He wrote to the Christmas Dinners Association attempting to swindle the charity of money to finance his own spread, and though there were amusing parts in the story it was not a happy episode. The only other items of note were a Rio Kid story and "Handforth's Windfall," three chapters by E. S. Brooks in one of his happier veins about furniture that got smashed up in Study D during one of Handforth's fights. This constituted his second and final contribution to the Holiday Annual. Possibly the fact that St. Frank's stories were appearing in the Gem brought Brooks into the world of Hamiltoniana for these two occasions.

1937 was a bumper number of the Holiday Annual, since apart from a short nature story by Clive Fenn it was filled with Hamiltoniana from beginning to end. It was perhaps a pity that the Greyfriars story was dredged up from red Magnet days: "Squiff of the Remove" was from Magnet 343, and dealt with the arrival of the boy from Australia who pretended that he did not know how to play cricket, an amusing enough story. "Mr. Ratcliff Has a Busy Day" was specially written, and bears some resemblance to "Morny's Master Stroke" of 1924: both dealt with a severe housemaster who refused to rescind a sentence of detention on the afternoon of an important match, and how tricks were played to keep the housemaster too busy to notice that the detention was broken. "Mr. Ratcliff Has a Busy Day" brought the Rookwood juniors into the plot, and was a noteworthy contribution to the annual. "Carthew Goes Too Far" was reprinted from Boys' Friends 1257-8, and provided a good long Rookwood story with a complicated plot and plenty of dramatic action. The Rio Kid and Packsaddle enabled two western stories to be added to fill up the complement. It was good to see the substitute writers confined to short items, many of which they handled satisfactorily.

1938 continued the emphasis on Hamiltoniana. An old Magnet reprint was used once more, "Mutiny on the Spindrift" being from No. 267. It was of course set

at sea, and possibly it was not a very happy choice. To make up for this, "Jack Drake's Capture" was specially written and the setting was Greyfriars; this nine chapter story was a neat piece of deduction, though not particularly distinguished. The Gem double number No. 724 "The Shadow over Eastwood House" made a very reasonable story: it dealt with Lord Eastwood's secretary, Bloore, who was poisoning his master. (There is no doubt that the noble earl was very unlucky with his staff over the years.) Another pair of Boys' Friends reprints made up the quota of school stories, "Lovell on the Warpath" coming from Nos. 1232-3 of that paper. Lovell had a half-crown with a hole in the middle, to which he attached a piece of elastic. When dishonest people bent down to pick up the coin, Lovell jerked it away. One of the coin's claimants was an unpleasant man who later turned out to be a temporary mathematics master, and from the episode many events flowed. The Annual had Cedar Creek and Rio Kid tales as well, by way of contrast.

1939 had two Magnet reprints, the only time this occurred. "Billy Bunter's Fearful Affliction" was from Magnet 715, a classic story about his pretence of blindness, while "The Mystery of the Christmas Candles" was from Magnet 723, a Christmas double number revolving around Hurree Singh. The Gem reprint was also from this era, "Grundy's Gunpowder Plot" being from No. 717: tales of the St. Jim's parliament were never very interesting to most readers, one suspects, and this was counterbalanced by a specially written tale, "They Called Him a Funk" showing D'Arcy on his high horse. Geo. E. Rochester had a long tale in this annual, and there was Cedar Creek too, but the vintage Rookwood story showed Owen Conquest at his best. "Algy Silver's Pal" came from Boys' Friends 879-90 and told how he fell under the influence of a new boy in the Third form until an unexpected occurrence made him view his new pal in a fresh light. Worries about young brothers and cousins are not the best material for stories as a rule, but this particular Rookwood tale was well constructed and told with conviction. The only disturbing note was struck by a third reduction in the number of pages, from 256 to 232. Since the 1939 annual was published in the autumn of 1938, the war-time paper shortage can have had no connection with this.

1940 witnessed, for the first time, the inclusion of two Rookwood stories by the genuine author. From Boys' Friend 1194 came "The Amazing Proceedings of Timothy Tupper," relating how the page cheeked everyone from the Head downwards when he thought his father had come into a fortune, while "Public Benefactor Number One" was a highly entertaining idea Lovell thought up for evading preparation for good: a crib on a disc of cardboard, on elastic, which could be jerked into the palm of the hand when required and would return out of sight when not needed was a brilliant idea, but unfortunately Mr. Dalton was not so green as Lovell thought. This came from Boys' Friend 1138. Magnet 776 provided "Sir Fulke's Warning," the first Christmas at Mauleverer Towers, while Gem 695 provided "Fighting the Flames," a mediocre tale of the school fire brigade. "The Case of the Beak's Black Eye" was the last school tale to be specially written for the Holiday Annual by Charles Hamilton; an eight-chapter piece, it dealt with the way Ferrers Locke came to St. Jim's to save D'Arcy from being expelled for giving Mr. Selby a black eye, a crime of which he was not guilty. Like the previous year's story about Jack

Drake, the mystery was perhaps solved too quickly to make the tale very memorable. "The Ferndale Recruit" was by Charles Hamilton, and dealt with a football match between working lads in Lancashire, a rather unusual subject. Cedar Creek and the Rio Kid filled the bill this year.

1941 was the end of the line, so far as Charles Hamilton's continuous association with the Amalgamated Press was concerned. The paper shortage caused the Magnet to close down in 1940, and the Schoolboys' Own Library followed a month later. The 1941 Holiday Annual, which of course appeared in September 1940, thus outlived all the other Hamiltonian publications by a few months. No doubt there had been an early purchase of the thick, cardboard-like paper, probably of no use for any other publication, and this saved the Holiday Annual for one more year. By way of consolation, the contents were nearly all by Charles Hamilton. "Jimmy Silver Does the Trick" was from Boys' Friend 830, a more juvenile type of story, in which Jimmy Silver forced Hansom to give written admission of the superiority of the Fourth form. "Billy Bunter's Busy Day," on the other hand, was more mature fare, coming from Magnet 942 and telling how Bunter locked himself in the Head's study and used his power of imitating voices to cause quite a bit of trouble. Equally amusing but witty as well was "Skimpole the Star Gazer" from Gem 976, in which some wondrous sights were seen through his telescope before it was taken back on the mercenary grounds that the instalments were unpaid. A very long Oakshott story as well as the usual Rio Kid and Cedar Creek tales completed the volume. Charles Hamilton's severance of all connections with the Amalgamated Press after the Magnet ended probably prevented a specially written story for the 1941 volume. No doubt also the readers were aware that for the first time in twenty-two years they were not invited to renew their acquaintance with all these schoolboy characters within the pages of the weekly and monthly publications of the Amalgamated Press.

Why the Holiday Annual was not continued after 1941 with the old thin paper is one of those mysteries we shall never be able to solve. The stock of stories to reprint was practically inexhaustible; The profits from the Holiday Annual were magnificent (each artist received a cheque running into three figures for his contribution to an annual); and the demand was great, as the letters that arrived in September 1941 showed - there were hundreds begging for a 1942 annual. Perhaps it was decided that the annual could not be maintained without the ballast of the weekly and monthly papers in which it could be advertised; perhaps it was thought that the stock of available paper could be used even more profitably elsewhere; perhaps the summary dismissal of the editor and artists when the Magnet ended prevented any more annuals from being assembled. Whatever the reason, the sentence of doom was pronounced, and the Holiday Annual disappeared quietly, though not without its mourners.

It had some unique features: the gossip about the characters and the schools; the amusing poems, many of them parodies of famous works and bearing the mark of Charles Hamilton himself; and, especially, the mock histories of the schools which induced the youthful reader to believe that they were genuine ancient foundations, not fictitious ones. It is touches like these that the post-war Mandeville annuals so lamentably omitted. There was another unique feature of the

Holiday Annual: it was the only Hamiltonian publication of the Amalgamated Press issued in permanent form, and many collectors must have blessed the stiff covers that preserved the books so well and for so long.

The article began with a quotation from the editorial of the first number. Perhaps it would be appropriate to look at the editorial in the last number. This was in verse, and the last two stanzas ran as follows:

Of Greyfriars, its heroes and glories,
I deal in the Editor's Chair;
St. Jim's has its share in the stories
And Rookwood must also be there;
Three schools with a fame of their own,
All over the world they are known!

Again new adventures pursuing
They're here for your special delight!
And if you would see what they're doing,
Read on - and I wish you good-night!
For now I've a moment to spare
To sleep - in the Editor's Chair!

The unconscious irony in the metaphors about night and sleep makes it a sad proceeding to lay down the last Holiday Annual and return it to the bookcase. The annual had enjoyed a long innings, and perhaps it is consoling to reflect that nearly every performance had been a creditable one. Towards the end there was a definite attempt to appeal more strongly to the Hamiltonian faithfuls, and in 1941 it ended with a bang, not a whimper. In many ways it may prove to be Charles Hamilton's most enduring epitaph.