THE "BOYS' FRIEND", - the 'Green 'Un', as it was affectionately known to thousands, - was already an old paper when the 'Gem' was born in 1907. I have heard it alleged that the 'Green 'Un' was in its heyday when Hamilton Edwards was the Editor. Whether there is any foundation for the claim, I cannot say. But for me, as for most admirers of the work of Charles Hamilton, the halcyon days of the 'Boys Friend' were the YEARS OF CONQUEST, - the eleven or so years during which time the Rookwood yarns were appearing in the paper.

One rarely hears of the 'Boys' Friend' being much sought by collectors. This is almost certainly due to the size of its pages. The immense sheets take up so much space if laid out flat; yet, if the paper is folded, deterioration of the copy soon takes place. I think it is almost certain that there are comparatively few copies of the 'Boys' Friend' in existence today. It was not an easy paper to preserve in loose numbers, and, if it were bound, the volumes were far too tall for the average bookcase.

I am fortunate in possessing an almost complete set of the paper covering the YEARS OF CONQUEST, and it is over these issues that I propose to browse in this article, mentioning the Rookwood stories in particular and, here and there, the 'Boys' Friend' in general. I am somewhat handicapped by being

THE YEARS OF CONQUEST

A Review of the ROOKWOOD STORY,
together with comments on other stories
in the Boys' Friend.

by ERIC FAYNE

unable to refer to the paper by its initials, for obvious reasons.

THE OPENING YEARS:

It was early in 1915 that the "Boys' Friend" passed under the editorship of Mr. Hinton. For some time he had controlled the 'Companion Papers' which, at the beginning of 1915, comprised the Magnet, the Gem, Chuckles, and the Penny Popular. So the first Great War was less than one year old when the Green 'Un became a Companion Paper, and before the end of that year the "Greyfriars Herald" was added to the list.

Hinton set about making changes in the programme of the Green 'Un, and, with a great fanfare of trumpets, readers were urged to buy the first issue of the new Boys' Friend, and to read the adventures of a fine new schoolboy character, - Jimmy Silver of Rookwood. There was no change in the size of the sheets or in the colour of same, - indeed, these remained the same throughout the entire history of the periodical. But there is no doubt that Jimmy Silver brought a long new lease of life to the Boys' Friend. Whether the change of editorship was brought about by the fact that the paper was in deep waters, I cannot say. More likely, the shortage of staff at the Fleetway House was the main cause.

Some collectors have asserted that the characterisation in the Rookwood tales was superior to that at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. I do not agree with this view in the slightest, and I cannot find any grounds for such an assertion.

I have always considered that, from the characterisation viewpoint, Dr. Chisholm was outstanding, as an extremely well-written pedagogue of the stubborn and somewhat pedantic type, as the series went on. Mornington, too, was a fine piece of character-painting, especially in the 'Erbert stories. But Jimmy Silver was a typical, happy-go-lucky schoolboy, without the gifts of either Harry Wharton or Tom Merry; Arthur Edward Lovell was something of a junior Coker, in his way; Tubby Muffin was just a stupid fat boy.

Nevertheless, the stories were first-class work, and the series, as a whole, was much more consistently handled than either Greyfriars or St. Jim's during the YEARS OF CONQUEST. This was, of course, due to the fact that Mr. Hamilton himself wrote almost all the Rookwood stories. The subs, only occasionally, were allowed to step in and mar the picture. Again, the Rookwood canvas was not nearly so wide as St. Jim's in particular and Greyfriars to a lesser extent. This, in my opinion, was a great advantage. The Rookwood picture was not overcrowded, and, though there were countless yarns featuring Mornington, it was always Jimmy Silver who made the main pivot of the stories.

A good many of Mr. Hamilton's best plots were first used at Rookwood. Some were and are completely peculiar to Rookwood, even to this day. Others were repeated in the Gem or the Magnet, years later.

The opening stories were not remarkable. In February 1915, Jimmy first appeared in a railway carriage, going to school with a number of his future companions. He was put into the End Study with Lovell, Raby, and Newcombe, who did not welcome him. Eventually, he rescued Lovell from a pit into which the latter had fallen, and everything in the garden was then lovely.

Higgs was the bully. Smythe, the dandy, was captain of the lower school, and controlled junior sport with no success. Jimmy defeated the bully in a fight, and became captain of the Fourth in very quick time. Finally, he became Head of junior games and Rookwood became a great cricket and soccer school.

THE YEAR 1916:

These early stories made pleasant reading, without being in any way notable. Rivalry with Cecil Pankley & Co., of Bagshot School - the Bagshot Bounders - played a large part in a great many. The Colonial Co., - Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn - arrived in a neat series. Lattrey came upon the scene. His father was a moneylender who had a hold over the Head, and, in consequence, Lattrey could not be expelled. A milestone was reached with the arrival of Mornington. Though the early tales in which he appeared were nothing to speak of, he was to feature in some of the finest stories in juvenile literature.

THE YEAR 1917:

The Erroll series, though the theme seems a trifle hackneyed today, was superb. Kit Erroll was brought to the school by a man who called himself the boy's father. But 'Erbert, Mornington's protege, recognised the man as 'Gentleman Jim', an old acquaintance of his in "Dirty Dick's". Mornington persecuted the new boy, until the real Captain Erroll, the junior's genuine father, turned up unexpectedly, to tell how his son had been stolen ten years earlier. After that, Mornington and Erroll became firm pals.

Erroll was distinctly reminiscent of Talbot of St. Jim's, while his

friendship with Mornington had an uneasy path that reminds the reader of that between the Bounder and Redwing.

Jimmy Silver was now firmly established, and it was impossible to imagine the Boys' Friend without Rookwood. The issue for July 7th 1917 was still priced at One Penny for 12 large pages. Jimmy Silver was on the cover in "The Shadow of Shame", in which the rascally Lattrey made Jimmy believe that his cousin, Bob Silver, had deserted from the army. (The same issue contained a new series called "Crusoe Island", by Maurice Everard. Everard's stories of Frank Polruan ran side by side with Owen Conquest's for a long period. Herbert Britton gave a Redclyffe story, "The Missing Notes", a complete story of Bob Travers, the Boy Boxer. Duncan Storm's serial "The Secret City" was an adventurous affair about Cy Sprague, an American detective, and Lal Tata. Richard Randolph was represented with a series of caravanning stories, "The Rival Caravanners". Quite an attractive and varied programme).

Then, in successive weeks, in the Rookwood series, came "Saving a Scapegrace" (a Mornington story); "Smythe's Terrible Uncle"; "Left in the Lurch", in which Jimmy and Erroll played for Bulkeley's First Eleven and defeated St. Jim's; "Mornington's Foe"; "The Missing Heir", a very fine story in which Mornington discovered that 'Erbert was the missing heir of Mornington and, consequently, the possessor of the Mornington fortune.

The issue of the Green 'Un for August 18th was a very memorable one, for in that number began "Frank Richards' Schooldays", a grand run of stories which was destined to remain in the paper for a long time. On the cover of this issue was the opening of a new serial by Duncan Storm, "The Boys of the Bombay Castle". Probably some readers liked it. The Rookwood tale was "Brought to Heel", continuing the Mornington-'Erbert series. Frank Richards' Schooldays began at St. Kit's, and told how Frank's father had lost his money, and how Frank was to go to live with his uncle, Mr. Lawless, in Canada. It was described as "No. 1 of a great new series of stories dealing with the school life of the famous author who has written no less than 500 tales introducing Harry Wharton & Co.", - by Martin Clifford. Though this series was re-printed more than once, this first story was never repeated.

The Rookwood stories continued - "Game to the Last"; "A Terrible Temptation" (the latter a grand story in which Morny was tempted to push 'Erbert over a cliff); "Mornington's Vengeance"; "The Downward Path"; "Raising the Wind" (all continuing the Mornington-'Erbert theme).

September brought "A Discredit to the School", a Tubby Muffin story; "Bob Travers at St. Jim's" by Herbert Britton. (Who was he?) The Cedar Creek story was "Rounding up the Rustler"; and a new series, "Crusoe Island", by Maurice Everard, commenced.

Then, in the Rookwood list - "The Rookwood Refugee" and "The Winning Goal", a Clarence Cuffy story. The last issue also contained "The Bagshot Mystery" by Herbert Britton, introducing the Conquest characters.

Continuing the Mornington series came "A Thief in the Night", plus another Herbert Britton tale "The Courtfield Champion", showing Bob Travers in association with Solly Lazarus.

October 27th gave pride of place to "Mornington's Triumph", and the

Herbert Britton story in this issue was "The Bluffing of Ponsonby", telling of Bob Travers at Highcliffe. The Vere Beauclerc stories were now in full swing at Cedar Creek.

The Rookwood tale for November 3rd, by a "sub" writer, was called "In Another's Power" in which Knowles, the prefect, was arrested for murder. "Bob Travers at Greyfriars" was the Herbert Britton effort, and "The Schoolboy Author" is a title which speaks for itself about Cedar Creek.

November 13th gave "Gentleman Jim's Secret", in which Erroll's old enemy came to Rookwood as a school porter; the closing Herbert Britton story was "The Return to Redclyffe".

November 17th brought "The Impostor's Downfall", sequel to the previous Rookwood tale; plus a new series of short stories told by Rookwood juniors, No. 1 being "The Making of Morley" by Jimmy Silver. Then "A Fool and His Money", a Smythe story, followed by "Foiled at the Finish" and "Brought to Terms", Lattrey tales.

The Xmas Number for 1917 was the last Double Number in the history of the paper. The full-sized cover picture showed "Frank Richards' Christmas", telling of Frank's first yuletide with his uncle, Mr. Lawless; "Jimmy Silver's Guest" was Lattrey; "The Boys of the Bombay Castle" had a long instalment; Tales of the Dormitory presented "The Christmas Mail" by Conroy; "The Ghost of Grasmere Grange" was a complete Xmas story, introducing Pankley & Co. of Bagshot, the author remaining anonymous; "De Courcy's Chum" was a Highcliffe story, once more with no author's name; and the Maurice Everard series completed the bill of fare. A fine Xmas Number of the Green 'Un. The following week saw "Mornington's Last Plunge", a sequel to the Xmas story, and then came "Algy of the Third" in which Jimmy's cousin becomes a third-former at Rookwood.

THE YEAR 1918:

The opening issue of 1918 saw the paper reduced to 8 pages and very small print. The fine Rookwood story was "Under the Shadow", the first of a magnificent series in which Lattrey blinded Mornington by throwing at him a snowball containing a stone. The series continued with "Condemned by the School", "Expelled by the Form", "Rebellion at Rookwood", "Sticking it Out", "The Fourth Against the Head", "The Rebels' Raid", "Hard Pressed", "From Out of the Past", "The Last of Lattrey", "Outcast and Hero". It was a long and very fine series, in the last story of which Lattrey redeemed himself by rescuing Mornington in a train crash.

The end of March brought "The Scamp of the Third" in which Mornington returned, followed by "Put to the Proof" in which Lattrey was forgiven and came back to his form.

Now the price of the paper rose to 1½d, and in "Algy's Pal" we met Bertie de Vere, an old friend of Algy Silver, followed by a sequel "Betrayed by His Chum". Then came "The Schoolboy Investors", a story by a substitute writer.

May brought the start of a series in which Bulkeley's father was arrested, and Rookwood lost its captain. The titles speak for themselves:- "A Blow for Bulkeley", "The Shadow of Suspicion", "Rivals for the Captaincy", "Rough on Rookwood", "Brought to Light", and, finally, "Foul Play" in which Knowles, the new

captain, tried criminal methods to prevent the return of Bulkeley. Herbert Britton was now back in the Green 'Un with a new series about Redclyffe, introducing Jack Jackson, new boy. Rather weak stuff.

Mid-June brought another "substitute" effort, "The Scare at Rookwood". The Green 'Un was now described as "The All-School-Story Paper", and there was some truth in the claim. For instance, the June 22nd issue contained "Getting Even with Carthew"; "Lord Todgers", a Cedar Creek tale in which Chunky Todgers thought he had entered the peerage; "The Outcast of Redclyffe" by Herbert Britton, and "The Boys of the Bombay Castle", the serial about a school afloat. June 29th, in "The Hidden Hun" told of Rookwood bombed, and this was the start of a fine holiday series, which continued with "The Rookwood Caravanners", "The Sorrows of Sergeant Kettle", "Tit for Tat", "Cuffy and the Caravanners", "The Caravan Cricketers"; "The Haunted Caravan" (introducing Billy Bunter), "The Caravanners' Guest", "Jimmy Silver & Co's Victory", and "Rivals of the Road". The closing story of the series introduced Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The caravan horse was Robinson Crusoe. A grand series. (While the holiday series was in full swing, a new Bombay Castle serial began, "The Boys who Beat the Kaiser".) Mr. Hamilton must have been in holiday mood with a vengeance, for the Cedar Creek boys, led by Frank Richards, were on holiday and enjoying some exciting adventures in the Rocky Mountains, accompanied by Chunky Todgers and the Chinee, Yen Chin.

Back at Rookwood, the stories continued on unique lines. Rookwood had been bombed, and the new term opened with the school under canvas. The opening story of the series was "Rookwood Under Canvas", and the series continued with "Done in the Dark", "For the Scapegrace's Sake" (an Algy Silver story), "Peele on the Warpath", and "Settling with the Sharper", the sharper being Joey Hook. (The Cedar Creek chums were now on the closing stages of their holidays, during which time they had discovered a gold-mine.) "Jimmy Silver's House-warming" told of the celebrations of the Rookwood chums when their school, repaired after the bombing, was ready to receive them again.

An excellent series by Owen Conquest now began, which told of the disappearance of the Fistical Four, kidnapped and hidden in the vaults by an old boy of Rookwood, Baumann who had adopted the name of Captain Lagden. The titles:- "Lovell's Disappearance", "A Baffling Mystery", "The Vanishing of Newcome", "The Missing Trio", "The Kidnapping of Jimmy Silver", "The Secret of the Vaults". It was Mornington who brought the kidnapper to justice and rescued the chums.

(A barring-out series was now running at Cedar Creek. Mis Meadows, the headmistress, had been dismissed, and Mr. Peckover put in her place). The Boys' Friend was exceptionally attractive at this time. Now came two indifferent Tubby Muffin stories, both by a substitute writer, "Tubby Muffin's Benefit", and "Tubby Muffin-Musician". After these came two stories in which Tommy Dodd was shown to be possessed of a rascally double, "The Mystery of Tommy Dodd", and "Pardoned by the Fourth". There was no Xmas Number in 1918. The last issue of the year brought "The Christmas Captives" followed by "The Mystery of the White House", both "sub-written and well below the usual Conquest standard.

THE YEAR 1919:

For January 11th there was a new serial, "The Boys who CAUGHT the Kaiser", far-fetched stuff by Duncan Storm. The Rookwood story was "Tubby's Little Trick".

The New Year treat was a fine original series in which the masters of Rookwood went on strike, and various substitute masters were engaged with exciting results. The titles were "Jimmy Silver's Sentence" (Jimmy was sacked, and Mr. Bootles refused to agree to the expulsion); "Dismissed from Rookwood", (the fourth-form master being dismissed, although it was proved that Jimmy had been innocent of an attack on the Head); "Backing Up Bootles", "Masters on Strike", "The School Without Masters", "The Rumpus at Rookwood", "Stormy Times", "The Master with a Past", "Schoolmaster and Cracksman", and "Jimmy Silver's Campaign". A fine series which had no counterpart in either the Gem or the Magnet.

(March 19th brought another new serial by Herbert Britton, "The Scapegrace of Redclyffe".) Putty Grace - called Putty because he was "so soft" - now arrived at Rookwood in a brilliant series in light vein, "Putty of the Fourth", "The Scamp of Rookwood", "Sold Again", "Rookwood's Hero", and "Tubby's Triumph". This series was succeeded by a "sub" story "Lovell's Great Aunt", but a fine new series by the genuine Conquest started on May 10th. Bulkeley was guilty of an indiscretion and was sacked from the captaincy. Here are the titles of a grand set of tales:- "The Fall of Bulkeley", "The Strike of the Prefects", "The Blackleg of Rookwood", "Captain Tubby Muffin", "School versus Captain", (the new captain was Carthew), "The Fifth Form Prefects", and "Bulkeley's Chance".

On June 21st, the Boys' Friend was increased to 12 pages once again. A glance through the issue is indicated. First came a sub-writer's Rookwood story "The St. Jim's Match"; a cricket article was contributed by H.T.W. Hardinge, the famous Kent cricketer; some verse under the title of "Rookwood Personalities", illustrated by G.W. Wakefield, the subject of the week being Tubby Muffin; a fine Cedar Creek story of Frank Richards & Co. kidnapped, entitled "The Rescue"; a Duncan Storm serial "Skull Island"; and a chat page, "In Your Editor's Den". This issue was followed by "The Tyrant of Rookwood", a poor substitute story.

(On July 12th a new serial commenced, "The Sports of St. Clive's" by Arthur S. Hardy. It was attractively and profusely illustrated by R.J. Macdonald.) A new Rookwood series began with this number, in which Jimmy Silver resigned the captaincy and Mornington succeeded him. Here are the titles:- "Jimmy Silver's Day Out", "Jimmy Silver's Resignation", "Mornington's Bad Start", "Jimmy Silver's Way", "Fagging for the Fifth", "Turning the Tables", "Jimmy Silver's Trial" (the latter a sub story), "The Giddy Goats", "The Right Sort", "The Mystery of Mornington", "Captain and Slacker", "Saved by His Chum", (the latter introduced the Gem character, Tickey Tapp, once again in connection with a gambling den), "A Surprise for the School". In the final story, Mornington resigned the captaincy and Jimmy was re-elected.

October 11th brought a sub-story, "Lying Low" followed by "Rookwood to the Rescue" and "A Dual Secret". November saw a new series, the titles of which speak for themselves; "Lovell's Minor", "Looking After Teddy", "The Trials of Teddy", "A Disgrace to His Form", "Barred by the Third", "Teddy's Last Chance". Then came two moderate single stories, "The Mystery of Mossoo", in which the French master dyed his hair, and "The Form Master's Double", a tale of Mr. Manders.

Now, the Xmas Number, 1919. "The Ghost of Rookwood School" proved to be Lattrey; J. Rutherford, who played for Arsenal, wrote on "Corner Kicks"; Gordon Wallace gave an instalment of his serial "The Double Horseshoe Ranch"; Frank Richards & Co. of Cedar Creek were "Snow Bound"; the serials, "Sports of St. Clive's" and "Skull Island" each had an instalment. Not a great Xmas number.

THE YEAR 1920:

The new year started with a light story "Carthew's Tea-Party", followed by a "sub" story, "Backing Up Bulkeley". Mid-January brought a new Rookwood series featuring a relation of Smythe's. The titles, - "The Nameless Stranger", "The Boy without a Memory", "Smythe's New Pal", and Charlie of Rookwood". (By this time the Boys' Friend had adopted a rather unusual plan, by serialising Conan Doyle's novel, "Rodney Stone". It is impossible to judge whether it was a popular move with the readers of the Green 'Un.)

February brought a couple of amusing stories of Rookwood rivalry with Bagshot School, - "With Pankley's Compliments", and "Singeing Pankley's Beard". (Duncan Storm now weighed in with yet another Bombay Castle serial, "The Schoolboy Adventurers".) Another light Rookwood tale was "Tubby's Golden Dream".

Now Peele blackmailed Lovell over the latter's minor, Teddy, and we had two stories, - "The Whip Hand", and "Peele Meets His Match".

(On March 20th, Maurice Everard was back with another serial, "The Boy King of Roatura".) A moderate Rookwood series was now due, "Bagging Beresford Baggs", "Mornington's Enemy", "Arthur's Uncle", "Arthur's Aunt", "Arthur's Cousin", and "Exit Arthur".

(May 8th brought a new serial "The Star of the Films" by Tom Bridges.) Now came Tubby Muffin over his claim that findings are keepings - two stories - "Tubby Muffin's Treat", and "The Tribulations of Tubby".

Whitsun brought "A Stolen Name" in which Peele, caught out of bounds, gave the name of Jimmy Silver to a rascal named Tigg. Sequel to this was "Saving a Scamp". June 5th saw the start of a superb series in a cricket setting, in which Mornington was expelled. Titles, "French Leave", "Last Man In", "The Rookwood Rebel", "In Hiding", "Sacked", "From School to Shop", "Mr. Bandy's New Boy", "Hard Times".

Now came the summer holidays, with Mornington still sacked, and, in a "Jamboree" number of the Boys' Friend, Owen Conquest contributed "Jimmy Silver & Co. at the Jamboree". Then we had the final story of the Mornington series, in which Morny rescued the Head from drowning, "Back to the Old School". (Two new serials were now running, "The Golden Trail" by Sidney Drew, and "Redskins and Rustlers" by Gordon Wallace).

August brought a Putty Grace series, Putty was an impersonator of the Wibley type, "The Other Mr. Bootles", and "Putty's Plight".

With September came a series in which Lovell was compelled to leave Rookwood, owing to money troubles at home, "The Man in Black", "Fallen Fortunes", "Parted Chums", "The Mysterious Tenant", "Putty Grace to the Rescue".

October presented "At Grips with the Sixth", in which the chums found themselves at war with Knowles, the prefect, and the sequel, "The Rookwood Secret Society". Then came a couple of weak "sub" stories, "Muffin, the Mischief Maker" and "Sir Tubby of Rookwood".

"Early November saw the "Boom Number" of the Green 'Un. First and foremost, a Boxing book was given away with the issue. Four new serials started, which looked rather ominous, but was not, - yet! The serials were "The League of the Star and Crescent" by John Margerison; "The Adventures of Grant, chauffeur,

detective" by Edmund Burton; "The Boy with Fifty Million", a story of Don Darrell, by Victor Nelson; "The Missing Scout Master" by Ross Harvey. Frank Richards & Co. of Cedar Creek were "Roping in the Rustlers".)

In the "Boom Number" a new Mornington-Erroll series commenced, introducing "The Kid", a waif, who turned out to be the long-lost child of Dr. Chisholm. We were told that, later, Cyril Chisholm would come as a pupil to Rookwood School. It was a good series; but the finish took some swallowing. The titles, "The Phantom of the Past", "Betrayed by His Chum", "The Waif's Sacrifice", Mornington's Atonement", and "After Many Days".

Christmas brought two stories, "Cheering up the Captain" and "The Phantom Abbot of Rookwood". The "phantom" turned out to be Captain Digby, Mr. Bootles' nephew. (In the Xmas number there was a new serial, "The Miner's Eleven", while the Xmas adventures of the Cedar Creek chums were related in "Frank Richards' Christmas Story".)

THE YEAR 1921:

New Year, with the chums still on holiday with Jimmy Silver, was the occasion of "Gentleman Jim's Christmas Visit".

Back at Rookwood for the new term, we heard some more about the Rookwood Secret Society, - "Trouble for Four", "Rough Justice", "Borrowed Plumes", and "The Death of the Secret Society". A very jolly series.

Now we come to the series in which Mr. Bootles inherited a fortune, and left Rookwood for good, - "The Mystery of Mr. Bootles", "The Rookwood Millionaire" "The End Study to the Rescue", and "Tubby Wants Adopting". (Duncan Storm was now back with a new Bombay Castle serial, - "The Adventures of Jim Handyman".)

With the departure of Mr. Bootles, Rookwood lost a sound character, and in March started a fairly long series in which various new masters tried their hand with the Fourth with amazing results, until Mr. Dalton, the boxing "beak" came along and settled down for good. Opening story was "The Amazing New Master". This long series was followed by "Wrongfully Accused" in which Jimmy was accused of smoking, and the sequel was "Carthew's Great Catch" in which Jimmy got his own back on the officious prefect. (By this time, the sands were running out for the Cedar Creek stories, and this fine series ended in mid-summer, 1921. The departure of Cedar Creek left a gap which was never filled in the Green 'Un.)

A special Summer Number, August 6th, brought the first story of a Mornington series, "Jimmy Silver's Holiday", in France this time. It was followed by "Mornington's Folly".

In the Autumn came the stories of Morcom, "The Rookwood Charity Boy", and in "The Forbidden Fight", Morny became the enemy for a time of the new boy.

Christmas saw Rookwood unable to go on holiday, owing to quarantine for influenza. Mr. Manders was left in charge, with hilarious results, but it was a poor Xmas series.

THE YEAR 1922:

With Dr. Chisholm still away with influenza, Mr. Manders became temporary Headmaster, and a barring-out series followed. (The price of the Boys' Friend was now increased to twopence, for which the reader received 16 large pages.)

An interesting series in March told of the arrival of a guest of the Head. His name was Lucian Durie, but Erroll recognised him as a criminal, though the Head refused to believe the junior. The titles, "The Head's Guest", "Five at the Boat Race", and "Lagged at Last". Now Gunner joined Rookwood, and the first Gunner series followed. Gunner was not a very attractive character, being a replica of Grundy of St. Jim's.

The summer was made joyful by a grand cricket series with Mornington in the stellar role. The titles of the series, "Left Out", "By Hook or Crook", "Judgment of the Fourth", "Barried by the Form", "Mornington's Confession", "Playing for His Side". The series ended with Mornington expelled.

The summer series told of a holiday tour with a horse and trap. The first story was "Lovell's Business Deal", the deal being the purchase of a horse and trap. The horse, by the way, was named "Trotsky". During the tour, the chums had some adventures with Grundy of St. Jim's.

The holiday series closed with a story in which the chums met one, Eric Gilmore, who turned up at Rookwood for the new term as a master. In two grand stories, "The Mystery Man at Rookwood" and "The End Study's Triumph" the Gilmore puzzle was solved to our satisfaction. Now came a fine long series in which Mornington came back to Rookwood disguised as a red-headed boot-boy, Sandy Smacke. The opening story, "Jimmy Sees Fair Play". A splendid set of stories.

The Xmas number contained "The Phantom Prior", who turned out to be Mr. Spencer, the secretary of Mr. Silver. In this seasonable series, Mr. Silver's Rembrandt was stolen by the secretary, who was unmasked by Mornington.

THE YEAR 1923:

The Fistical Four, arriving back late at Rookwood for the new term, found their End Study had been stolen by Peele and his friends. A bright little series, commencing with "The Study Stealers". Now came a Raby series, in which this character was accused of cowardice, and refused to accept his old chums after he was proved innocent. Opening story, "The Boy who Ran Away".

In the Spring of 1923 started the longest series ever written of any of the three Hamilton schools. "Jimmy's Canadian Cousin" was Hudson Smedley, a rancher from the Windy River Ranch, and the Fistical Four went to Canada with him. The long series, of no less than thirty stories, ran right through the summer and autumn of 1923, - so long, in fact, that one began to wonder whether Rookwood was a thing of the past for Jimmy. It was a superb series, every one of the thirty was a real gem.

Towards the end of the year, the chums came home, bringing with them Texas Lick, a Canadian schoolboy, who appeared in "Texas Lick at Rookwood" and a few more stories before he played the lead in the Xmas series "Texas Lick's Ghost Hunt".

THE YEAR 1924:

Texas Lick yearned for his own country and resolved to get himself sent back to Canada in a few bright tales. Then, after a few "singles", came "The Fourth Form on Strike", the first episode of an exciting series in which the Fourth barred out on the island in the river, on account of the dismissal of Mr. Dalton.

"True or False" was a good set of stories in which Mr. Greely recognised a criminal in Monsieur Gaston, the new French master at Rookwood. The Frenchman betrayed himself by freeing Peele from a safe in which the lad had accidentally shut himself. (This plot was used in a Levison story, in blue-cover days in the Gem. An excellent plot, too, and worth repeating.)

In the early summer "The Heroism of Clarence Cuffy", which was not so heroic as it seemed, made the framework for an original series.

The holiday series, which started with "The Rookwood Ramblers", told of hilarious adventures with a motor-scooter, which Lovell had purchased and insisted upon riding. At the close of the holidays the chums came upon "A Chalet in the Wood", and met the genuine Rutland. Back at Rookwood they found someone who claimed to be Rutland, but was really a rascally impostor named Packington. This was followed by "Lovell Lends a Hand", and in a happy series Lovell tried to save the weak Gower from going completely to the dogs.

"The Rookwood Bargain Hunters" was the opening story of a bright little series in which Putty Grace came into conflict with Prefect Carthew. "Lot Fifty-Four" was a mysterious trunk, which Lovell bought while in obstinate mood. The adventures in connection with the trunk were diverting for the reader. "Asking for Trouble" started an excellent and novel series, in which Jimmy, in a weak moment, renewed the abandoned footer fixture with Oakshott School, and came into conflict with the unscrupulous Chilcot of Oakshott.

In early December, "Gunner's Hamper" caused a sensation in a couple of yarns, though it proved only to contain fossils.

In the Xmas series, "Lovell's Christmas Adventure" caused him to snowball the Head, for which he was ordered to spend the vacation at school. He redeemed himself, naturally, and Xmas 1924 was spent at Jimmy's home, the Priory. It was over this Christmas that Harry Wharton of Greyfriars, on bad terms with his pals and with Mr. Quelch, had been to Monte Carlo with the Bounder. Quarrelling with Bounder, Harry returned to England and spent some of the vacation at the Priory as the guest of Jimmy Silver. In consequence, the Boys' Friend and Magnet stories ran in intriguing connection for a week or two.

THE YEAR 1925:

Back at Rookwood on January 17th, we found a sinister new Maths master "Up Against the Fistical Four". That master was soon unmasked as a counterfeiter, in a brilliant series.

(The Boys' Friend at this time was running a serial "The Captain of the Fourth", by Frank Richards. It is interesting to note that an earlier story, that of Harry Nameless, which Mr. Hamilton, under the name of Clifford Clive, had written for Hinton's ill-fated paper "School and Sport", had been re-printed in the Boys' Friend, as a serial, during 1924. At the close of the re-printed Harry Nameless story, in which the nameless boy had proved to be Harry Wilmot, cousin of Aubrey St. Ledger, Mr. Hamilton contributed a sequel, "The Captain of the Fourth", which was running its course in the early months of 1925 in the Green 'Un.)

In February we found "Jimmy Silver in a Fix". Rookwood had been accustomed to regard the footer game with St. Kit's (see previous paragraph) as a walk-over, and Jimmy had promised Gunner a place in the team. Then Jimmy

discovered that St. Kit's, under the junior leadership of Harry Wilmot, now had a first-class team. How Jimmy found a solution to his difficulty made excellent reading.

"Rallying Round Rawson" was the opening yarn of a series concerning the scholarship boy, Rawson, who now found himself compelled to leave Rookwood. His worries were ended, however, by the sale of a very valuable stamp.

"Going for Greely" introduced a grand series, in which Mr. Greely was dismissed from Rookwood by an impetuous and stubborn Dr. Chisholm. Mr. Greely had been tutor to Sir Edward Hansom, the father of Hansom of the Fifth, and the baronet bought the Manor House and made it into a school with Mr. Greely as Headmaster. Greely found he had bitten off more than he could chew, but the clouds rolled by and he returned to Rookwood.

"What Gunner Knew" - or thought he knew - was that Mr. Dalton's brother was a tramp. A jolly little series. "Tubby Muffin's Wonderful Offer" was an invitation to some Rookwooders to spend the summer vacation on his uncle's yacht. It made the background for a tip-top, exciting series, though the yacht, the "Silver Cloud", proved to be a floating boarding-house, on which the chums were expected to pay for their board and lodging. A sinister individual - Ulick Lee - made life thrilling for the guests - he was seeking some diamonds which had been hidden on the vessel.

Autumn brought "No Luck for the Fistical Four" in which series the chums fell foul of the Head, owing to the machinations of a study-ragger. "A Chip of the Old Block" was Marcus Manders, the unsavoury nephew of Mr. Manders of the Modern Side. Some interesting stories appeared before Marcus was given the "Order of the Boot".

The final Christmas - Xmas 1925 - was not spent at the Priory, but at Lovell's home in Somerset, where "Jimmy Silver & Co's Christmas Jape" brought Lovell into conflict with an irascible uncle of Arthur Edward's.

THE LAST YEAR OF CONQUEST. THE YEAR 1926:

Peele was "Up Against His Form-Master" in a series in the New Year. Then "Tubby Puts the Screw On" - the screw being a spot of blackmail on Bailey of the Fifth Form. Novel series.

The final series of Rookwood tales was a good one, and unusual, too. The opening story, "The Price of Friendship" found Jimmy and his pal in conflict. Owing to Lovell's obstinacy, Jimmy felt obliged to resign the captaincy, and, as the series went on Lovell replaced his old friend as captain of the form. But Lovell had no gift of leadership and the series ended with everything calm and bright.

ANTI-CLIMAX:

With the departure of Rookwood from the Green 'Un, after a stay of eleven years, few could have doubted that the end was in sight for that grand old paper. Why Rookwood went is something that only the Amalgamated Press, and probably Mr. Hamilton, could tell us. At any rate, the Boys' Friend carried on for something under another year, getting into deeper and deeper water. A glance at one of the last issues is sadly enlightening.

Comic pictures, the adventures of Chick and Chubby, the Chirpy Chappies,

appeared on the front page. Within was a serial "His Convict Father", with no author's name, but probably a re-print. Next came another serial, "The School for Backward and Troublesomes", also anonymous.

Then came a whole page of comic pictures. Another anonymous serial was "Under the Greenwood Tree". A complete tale of Deadwood Dick was "The Ghost Rider". Another complete story was "The Captain's Ride", a story of the Captain, the Cook and the Engineer. The bill of fare ended with yet another whole page of comic pictures.

Obviously the paper had passed under new editorship, but with such a programme, the paper was doomed. It disappeared completely, leaving only memories of a magnificent history, with the last minutes of 1927.

MEDITATION:

Such, then, was the ROOKWOOD STORY. Taken as a whole, it was a superb and magnificent story. Can we lament the fact that it ended in 1926? My own view is that we cannot, though I dearly loved Rookwood.

During the YEARS OF CONQUEST in the Boys' Friend, our author had been writing weekly stories of Jimmy Silver and, for the greater part of that time, of Cedar Creek as well. But, though he is a genius, he is not a magician. He had to eat and sleep during the YEARS OF CONQUEST. And, while he wrote Rookwood and Cedar Creek, he had not too much spare time for Greyfriars and St. Jim's. So the YEARS OF CONQUEST were also the years of "sub" writers in the Gem and the Magnet. At least, that's how I look at it. I may be wrong.

With the passing of Rookwood, Frank Richards was able to give much more of his time to Greyfriars and the Magnet. I repeat that I loved Rookwood, but when I browse over the long list of magnificent Magnet series between 1926 and 1940, I find I cannot regret the passing of the YEARS OF CONQUEST! Can you?

First Rookwood Story "The Rivals of Rookwood"; No. 715, 20th Feb., 1915.

Last Rookwood Story "Tubby the Protector"; No. 1298, 24th April, 1926.

584 stories in all.