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*THE ADVENTURES OF HERLOCK SHOLMES:
A HISTORY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY*

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One of the most interesting aspects of the history of Sherlock Holmes in parody and pastiche is the story cycle. The first began to run in *Punch* as early as 1893, and rather more recently the late August Derleth pastiched all five Sherlock Holmes short-story collections with his tales about Solar Pons of Praed Street. Robert L. Fish's stories of Schlock Homes, now in their sixteenth year, continue to appear from time to time in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. Yet the numerically greatest of all Sherlock Holmes parody cycles, devoured avidly by hordes of British schoolboys between 1915 and 1925, has gone virtually unread in the United States; and even its very existence has been unknown to all but a handful of Baker Street Irregulars. Yet this parody cycle about Herlock Sholmes and Dr. Jotson numbers fully one hundred stories. It was published in the British boys' papers popular during the first half of the twentieth century, and was authored principally by the most prolific writer in the English language. This is its history.

It is not, however, a comprehensive appreciation of the Herlock Sholmes stories as parodies of Sherlock Holmes. Originally it was the intention of the authors of this monograph to provide one, in an attempt to assess the quality of the stories both as satire in general and as Sherlockian parodies in particular. But however acute the discernment and descriptive ability of a critic may be, for the reader such an appreciation is an unsatisfying substitute at best for the stories themselves. In the past, unfortunately, the magazines in which the tales appear have been in very short supply in the United States. But at last this scarcity of text has begun to ease. Announced for book publication in the late summer of 1976 is the first subset of eighteen parodies in the cycle—*The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes*, edited by Otto Penzler and published by The Mysterious Press (P.O. Box 334, East Station, Yonkers, New York 10704). It is the first step in closing the gap, and hopefully not the last.

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The school-story is a familiar and standard theme in popular British literature, whether it takes the form of the classic innocence of Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky & Co.*, the sentimental nostalgia of James Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, or the comically delinquent behavior of their more recent successors, the girls of St. Trinian's and Nigel Molesworth, the Curse of St. Custard's. Today the school-story is in something of a decline. But at one time it was the principal feature of the boys' papers that were produced in tremendous quantity between the last decade of the Victorian era and the outbreak of World War II. Only the mysterious cases of Sexton Blake, that other famous sleuth of Baker Street, rivalled it for popularity. A sizeable industry existed to produce school-stories, as fodder for boys (and girls) who did not attend a posh public school like the legendary Rookwood or Greyfriars or St. James's, but who were enthralled by what they elected to believe were the marvellous adventures and misadventures that transpired in those glorious places on virtually a daily basis.

The heart of this industry was Britain's largest and best publisher of boys' papers, London's great Amalgamated Press Ltd. In its golden age, it was dominated until his death in 1922 by Alfred C. Harmsworth, the illustrious publishing magnate who became Lord Northcliffe in 1905. From its Fleetway House in London came a stream of comic and boys' papers on a weekly or biweekly schedule, in volumes that stagger the imagination. The output was prodigious, while the literary quality remained often surprisingly high. *Marvel*, *Union Jack*, *Pluck*, *Boys' Friend*, *Boys' Realm*—tales of mystery and detection; of adventure, exploration, and sports; of war, espionage, and foreign intrigue: all coexisted happily side by side for the delectation of the young. But always the school-story: the chums of Redclyffe, of Chilcote, Rookwood, the great St. Jim's, a dozen or more others. They poured forth, in those early years of the twentieth century, in what must have seemed like an unceasing torrent.

What few people realized at the time, however, was that the greatest part of these Amalgamated Press school-stories flowed from but a single pen. This trifling monograph is essentially the story—

—albeit only a small part of that fascinating story—of one of the most prolific writers in the history of the English language: Charles Harold St. John Hamilton. It is also essentially a long-overdue Sherlockian tribute to Charles Hamilton, who in his writings did most everything not only in a big way, but in a rather modestly faceless way as well. Few people, especially in the United States, are aware that Hamilton in his lifetime wrote, in the estimate of *The Guinness Book of World Records*, about seventy-two million words, the equivalent of a thousand full-length novels, with his incredible output masked behind twenty and more pen-names. Few Sherlockians, in either the United States or Great Britain, are also aware that in the process Hamilton created what is almost certainly the largest Sherlock Holmes parody cycle ever written—*The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes*, by "Peter Todd".

Charles Hamilton was born in Ealing, Middlesex, on August 8, 1876. Though not of particularly elevated family, he was privately educated at Thorne House School in Ealing, an experience that apparently made its mark upon his career. To be the most prolific writer in the language one needs start young, and Hamilton did. A keen reader at an early age, he became a writer as well in 1885 at the tender age of nine. By 1890 he was already contributing copy, abundant amounts of it, to the Trapps-Holmes (sic!) boys' papers: yeoman service, with stories and serials of adventure, romance, sports, travel, crime, and humor. It was quite clear to him that he was to be a professional writer. But even so, his two most fateful steps were still to come. In 1895 he wrote his first story for Harmsworth Brothers, soon to become the Amalgamated Press (or more familiarly, the AP); and in 1902 he wrote his first school-story, of Redclyffe School, in the Trapps-Holmes paper *Best Budget*. The die, as they say, was cast. As he was eventually to become the best-loved of all school-story writers, so the school-story became his favorite and principal theme. In his lifetime Hamilton created over one hundred of these schools, with a total of about five thousand stories. So well did he write them in his seeming haste that well over three thousand of them have been reprinted in other publications, and al-

most three-quarters of the famous *Schoolboys' Own Library* was comprised of reprints of Hamilton stories.

By 1907 Hamilton was settling into a steady pattern of work for the Amalgamated Press, turning out school-stories under his own name and, more importantly, under the pen-name of Martin Clifford for a bright new paper called *The Gem Library*. Created by Amalgamated Press managing editor Harold J. Garrish and edited by Percy Griffith, *The Gem* began life as a companion paper to *Punch* and *The Magnet*. Initially it had a varied weekly fare: one week an adventure story, the next a detective story, the third a school-story, and so on. But before long the school-story took over completely, and Hamilton found himself writing the main story every week. No small task to do that, and to do it as creditably as Hamilton did, with his still-popular stories of Tom Merry & Co., and the dandyish Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the great Gussy. But in 1908 Garrish and Griffith sprang a new idea upon their faithful author: to produce still another weekly boys' paper. It would have its own school, and of course its own special author—which of course (once more) would be Hamilton in yet another literary incarnation. But it would be an unprecedentedly difficult task for a single man to produce the entire contents of two weekly papers, and Griffith was unsure whether it was really possible. Did Hamilton think he could do it? He did. Years afterwards, Hamilton recalled that the prospect of his trying to do it occasioned a great amount of glee in Griffith's schoolboyish sub-editor, Herbert A. Hinton. But Hinton, who had joined the Amalgamated Press in 1905, was eventually to realize that Hamilton's depths of prolificity were still unplumbed, and place even further burdens upon him.¹

The new paper was called *The Magnet Library*, and from its first number on February 15, 1908, it rapidly became something of an institution in Great Britain. Soon the principal member of what became known as the Companion Papers, it lasted thirty-two years, until through no fault of its own it met its demise in 1940, after an unbroken stream of 1,683 weekly issues. Hamilton wrote approximately 1,380 of them, under his new pen-name of Frank Richards. It was a

¹ Including once, under plea of urgency, requesting Hamilton to write an entire 18,000-word story in a single day. Hamilton did it, and never forgot—or tried to repeat—the experience.

pseudonym that was to become the most famous name in the history of British boys' fiction, certainly much better known than his real name. And equally famous and inseparable from that pen-name was the school that Hamilton created for his new paper: Greyfriars.

Greyfriars School had had its first mention a year before in a Hamilton story written for the March 19, 1907, number of the *Trapps-Holmes Smiles*, but only in name and with different characters. Now it sprang to life full-grown in Hamilton's 20,000-word stories for *The Magnet*. Greyfriars was a public school in Kent ("the garden of England"), established and maintained for the sons of gentlemen. Originally it had been a Franciscan monastery dating from 1472, but had been taken over by Henry VIII during the Dissolution and converted to its educational purpose soon thereafter. It boasted its own ghost, the Black Monk. Somewhere within the grounds and buildings was reputed by tradition to be the lost treasure of the old friars, often sought after but never discovered. It was a soccer school, competing energetically with Rookwood and St. Jim's. Hamilton's stories featured the exploits of Harry Wharton and his friends (including the soon-to-be immortal Billy Bunter) of the Remove Form. Greyfriars was not really like a true English public school, of course; but the great majority of *Magnet* readers had never attended one and did not know the difference. Perhaps it would not have mattered: it was all such lovely stuff that the suspension of disbelief was willing indeed.... a halcyon world, mused *The Manchester Guardian* in a reminiscent mood some years ago,

in which the winters were cleaner and colder, the summers hotter, and the autumns crisper than we knew them.... jam tarts and doughnuts at Greyfriars evoked the flash of white flannels and the merry sound of bat against ball, bicycle rides through lanes incredibly leafy, and even picnics by the sea.

It was Hamilton's most inspired creation. *The Magnet* prospered accordingly, attracting a legion of faithful readers who pounced gleefully upon each new number every Monday. So affairs rolled along contentedly for seven years. In 1911 Percy Griffith had left the AP, and had been succeeded by the youthful Herbert Hinton, who was not without ideas of his own. One in particular proved to be fateful.

In later Greyfriars stories the boys of the school had their own school newspaper—*The Greyfriars Herald*, edited by Harry Wharton, the Head Boy of the Remove. Its contents were supposedly written by various boys at the school—Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and others—and extracts had appeared in *The Magnet* from time to time. The latter had proven one of the most popular features. Now, in 1915, Hinton had a bright and quite novel idea: the Amalgamated Press would put out *The Greyfriars Herald* as a separate weekly publication.

And of course the workhorse Hamilton would have to write some of its twenty pages weekly, in addition to his continuing assignments for *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. And of course he did. *The Greyfriars Herald*—one ha'penny Every Monday—made its debut on November 20, 1915. "The Monday on which our little journal first makes its appearance throughout the land will indeed be a red-letter day for us at Greyfriars," Harry Wharton editorialized in the first number: "Hitherto we have been complimented in certain quarters on the merits of *The Greyfriars Herald*, but few of us ever dreamed that our work would be scanned weekly by thousands and thousands of our fellow-comrades throughout the Empire." It was snapped up eagerly by *Magnet* readers, many of whom had the distinct and pleasing impression that they were perusing a real school magazine. They were not, of course, but it was a harmless and pleasant fiction in which to indulge themselves. Hamilton's identity this time was buried even further under one particular pseudonymous Greyfriars boy, another creature of his fertile imagination.

This schoolboy was called Peter Todd, and had first surfaced in *The Magnet* years earlier. As with all his other characters, Hamilton had given Peter Todd a distinct personality and background of his own. A halfback on the football team, Todd—the elder son of a Bloomsbury solicitor—read lawbooks in his spare time and fancied himself very much as a real-life Sherlock Holmes. So when Todd made his own literary contribution to *The Greyfriars Herald*, what was more natural than a parody of Sherlock Holmes? There it was in the very first number, under the collective title of *The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes*: "The Adventure of the Diamond Pins", Written by

Peter Todd. It was about 1,500 words long, it was not bad at all, and it was only the beginning. "D's the detective of whom Peter Todd / Writes wonderful stories, mysterious and odd" ran the magazine's little ditty several issues later.

By the fourth story the series began to pick up and get into stride, and Hamilton established a pattern for the other parodies to follow. He knew his Conan Doyle well, of course, and occasionally would base a parody closely upon a particular canonical story—a title like "The Freckled Hand" or "The Yellow Phiz" needs little explanation. But Hamilton had further uses for the character and stories as well. Herlock Sholmes also served as a versatile vehicle for some clever satire, much of which was probably lost upon the schoolboys who comprised the greater part of his audience. Hamilton had a breezy, punning style as a parodist, a zany gift for appealingly ludicrous names, and a sharp eye out for the commonplace annoyances of everyday life that could be turned into material for burlesque. He focussed his ire upon current events and popular styles and fads, gleefully blistering such bizarre creatures as Americans, pettifogging politicians, and especially government bureaucrats. At first, wartime topics like shortages, food rationing, and special government powers and red tape were among his favorite targets, but after the war he was never at a loss for others. For him, cubism in peacetime art was as unpalatable as American tinned meat had been in wartime, and the pompous self-importance of a prominent opera singer was as much fun to deflate as an air raid warden's had been. Hamilton was a man of no uncertain views, and the Herlock Sholmes parodies gave him the opportunity to vent his opinions and tastes. What mattered most was the barb, and from the beginning he kept it honed.

But even the beginning of *The Greyfriars Herald* was the beginning of the end. The Great War was well underway, making it not a particularly propitious time in which to launch a new publishing venture. Soon afterwards, in early 1916, Hinton took a commission in the Guards and went off to war for the duration. One of them should go, he told the rather older Hamilton, and the AP could better afford to lose its editor than its author. Unfortunately, there was little sympathy between Hinton's wartime replacement and Hamilton. He had had difficulty sometimes with Griffith, and often arguments with Hin-

ton; but with this John M. Pentelow, "the stop-gap", there was real trouble. Nor had *The Greyfriars Herald* been receiving all the public support that it deserved and needed in those perilous times. But all this scarcely mattered, really. Ultimately *The Greyfriars Herald* fell victim, like so many other publications of the day, to the paper shortage created by the war. Greyfriars boy Dick Penfold bade it all a fond goodbye in his poem "A Farewell Fling" in the last number of March 18, 1916:

Farewell, my merry little mag,
My comrade and adviser!
You've got to stop and shut up shop,
Through that confounded Kaiser!

* * * * *

Farewell to you, friend Herlock Sholmes!
Adieu, dear Doctor Jotson!
It must be odd for Peter Todd
To have no plans or plots on!

Only eighteen issues had appeared. But each one had contained a Herlock Sholmes story (illustrated by AP editor and artist Lewis R. Higgins, who was to die prematurely three years later at the age of thirty-four), and Hamilton had written them all.

There were a number of Herlock Sholmes parodies left over when *The Greyfriars Herald* ceased publication, but while Hamilton continued to write for the other AP boys' papers, no more adventures of Herlock Sholmes appeared for some considerable time. Though *The Greyfriars Herald* was defunct as a separate publication, however, items were once again published in *The Magnet* as extracts from it; and finally, in the 460th number of the paper on December 3, 1916, Herlock Sholmes returned in "Herlock Sholmes's Christmas Case". Five more of Hamilton's parodies were published in *The Magnet*, until for some unknown reason the series began to shift back and forth between it and *The Gem*. Very likely the parodies were merely inserted when space demanded them. *The Gem* had a run of eight stories between April 14, 1917 ("The Red Tape Mystery") and July 21, 1917 ("The Missing Margarine"). Herlock Sholmes returned to *The Magnet* the following month in "The Mystery of the Dustbin" and remained there for eight of nine further installments. As a departure from the norm,

the final installment, "The Case of the Missing MS." (*Magnet* no. 564, November 30, 1918), was not by Todd; instead it was a rather slight affair, poking fun at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by one of his comrades at St. Jim's, Monty Lowther.

By that time Hamilton was a very busy writer indeed. Once the end of the war brought about an easing of the paper shortage, the presses of the AP began to work back up to full pitch. Hamilton himself quickly reached an astounding quantitative level, turning out about one and a half million words of copy a year by the mid-1920s, for a comfortable annual remuneration for those days of about 2,500 pounds. But payment for the Herlock Sholmes parodies themselves was not particularly high—at most perhaps two guineas apiece, half that for the later shorter ones in *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. Perhaps Hamilton did not think them worth the return, since generally they would have required more imagination and effort than the other *Greyfriars Herald* extracts. So after these twenty-four parodies were spun out in relatively quick succession, Herlock Sholmes was left to languish for another year and a half.

In the meantime, of course, the troops had been mustered out, and the Amalgamated Press staff who had gone to war returned to their jobs—notably Herbert Hinton and George R. Sawways, a young man who had begun by contributing rhymes and verses to supplement his income as a stockbroker's clerk and had subsequently been taken under Hinton's editorial wing around 1913. The Penfold poem "A Farewell Fling" quoted earlier was one of his many products. Sawways pressed for the resurrection of *The Greyfriars Herald*, Hinton was receptive to the idea, and Hamilton himself was not unwilling. Thus to the surprise of the boys' fiction-reading public, *The Herald* was revived in 1919, with its numbering commencing once more at No. 1. This time *The Greyfriars Herald* looked far more a professional paper than its first series had, and had contents more in line with those of other boys' papers. It was now published every Tuesday, and the price had gone up to a penny ha'penny per copy.

For thirty-two issues the paper's pages were devoid of Herlock Sholmes stories, but then in the issue of June 12, 1920, Peter Todd published "The Missing Cricketer". It was the first of thirty con-

secutive "ripping" stories of "the World's Worst Detective", as Todd took to calling him, to appear in the new *Greyfriars Herald* series. The stories were illustrated once again (as they had not been while they bobbed back and forth from *Magnet* to *Gen*), this time by a quite talented AP staff artist who has succeeded in remaining anonymous. After the 62nd number of the paper on January 1, 1921, however, a new parody series began to run in its pages—*Narsipan of the Japes*, written by G. R. Sawways. Two more Sholmes stories appeared, in January and February, and then the series shifted over to a less important AP paper, *The Penny Popular*, for a couple more in March and April.

The Greyfriars Herald was changing, too. It had already become *The Greyfriars Boys' Herald* and was about to drop the "Greyfriars" from the masthead altogether, with its contents becoming exactly like those of any other boys' paper. *Greyfriars Herald* extracts continued to appear in *The Magnet*, however, and for five further installments (now bylined "Dr. Jotson") Herlock Sholmes found a home again. On January 14, 1922, "The Lost Persian" appeared in the 727th number of *The Magnet*, bringing the series to a close again for a time. Two and a half years later it surfaced once more in *The Popular*, for ten more intermittent installments between late July 1924 and early February 1925. Then both Peter Todd and Dr. Jotson fell silent. In all, ninety-one Herlock Sholmes stories had been published.

Most, if not all, of them were by Charles Hamilton. He enjoyed detective stories, and had created several other sleuths of his own, notably Len Lex, "the Schoolboy Detective", in *Modern Boy* and Ferrers Locke in *The Magnet*.¹ But Herlock Sholmes was his favorite, and he did not neglect to announce his authorship and claim his creation in days afterwards. Reviewing the more famous of his many pen-names—Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, Owen Conquest, Ralph Redway—he wrote: "And nobody at all, as far as I know, ever knew that these authors were also 'Peter Todd', who chronicled the adventures of that wonderful detective, Herlock Sholmes."² But for even his own origin-

¹ Parodied later in *The Magnet*, probably by Sawways, as Terrors Shocks.

² *The Autobiography of Frank Richards*, London: Charles Skilton Ltd., 1952, p. 39.

al detective characters Hamilton acknowledged his debt to the literary geniuses of the past, especially Arthur Conan Doyle:

In many respects, of course, Ferrers Locke, like all the marvellous detectives of these days, could trace his descent back to Sherlock Holmes: and through Sherlock Holmes, to Auguste Dupin. All such detectives are, in fact, the sons of Sherlock, grandsons of Dupin: and great-grandsons, perhaps, of Zadig. There were giants in the earth in those old days, who laid waste many fields, and left nothing for their successors but gleaning. Frank [Richards] claims more originality for his "School-boy Detective", who appeared in the pages of *Modern Boy*. But no detective since Conan Doyle has been much more than a variation on the original theme. Edgar Poe produced him, possibly with a spot of assistance from Voltaire: Doyle popularized him: since then innumerable writers have been busy turning the old coat, with more or less success. 1

But while Hamilton created the character of Herlock Sholmes and the series—"somewhat irreverently, I must confess"—and certainly wrote (at least) the great majority of the individual stories, it has never been altogether clear whether he actually wrote all of them. He once claimed to have done so, but on another occasion he also claimed to have written every Greyfriars story in *The Magnet*, a rather sweeping statement. It is inarguably incorrect, an instance perhaps of unrestrained parental pride, and so may be the former claim as well. The evidence on either side of that question is inconclusive, and the most that can be done here is simply to set forth the theories. One of them contends that Hamilton did in fact author the entire series, and its proponents include no less authoritative a figure than Eric Payne, the knowledgeable editor of *The Collector's Digest*, a British journal dedicated to studies of boys' fiction.² Mr. Payne is actually a fairly recent convert to this theory, setting out his view after a re-examination of the shorter parodies published in the second *Greyfriars Herald* series, *The Magnet* and *The Gem*. Based upon an asserted consistency of content and style, this view holds that all the individual stories were from Hamilton's own

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

² See his article "Polished Nonsense" in *The Collector's Digest* of July 1974, pp. 19-22.

pen.

This would disallow the rival theory, which maintains that Hamilton did create the series and author most of the stories, but that several other Amalgamated Press writers also made contributions to the series. Two writers in particular have been believed to have done so. The first of these is the previously-mentioned G. R. Sawways, who has claimed to have written several Herlock Sholmes stories before leaving the Amalgamated Press and striking out on his own as a free-lance writer in 1921. A similar claim was made (and has been supported by Sawways) by William E. Stanton Hope, a substitute writer who had started with the AP as an office boy in 1904 and ended as an editor before going free-lance after military service during the war. Without impugning the sincerity of either writer, however, neither claim is necessarily correct. Both could well have written and submitted some Herlock Sholmes stories that never actually saw publication during their stay at the AP. Certainly most of the parodies in the series, into 1921, do read incontestably like vintage Hamilton.

That is less true, on the other hand, of the total of seventeen parodies—twelve in *The Popular* and in *The Magnet*—published between March 26, 1921, and February 9, 1925. It is the authorship of these seventeen Herlock Sholmes stories which poses the greatest challenge, for in truth these do not read particularly like earlier Hamilton, neither in content nor in style. There is an additional anomaly contributing to the doubt: while the story in the March 26, 1921, number of *The Popular* was under Hamilton's usual pseudonym of "Peter Todd", all of the other sixteen, commencing only a few weeks later, appeared under different bylines: most were by "Dr. Jotson", while one was authored by "Herlock Sholmes" himself. Could Hamilton have objected to the use of his "Peter Todd" pen-name by another writer? It seems possible, even if it is only conjectural. But the unusual brevity and uncharacteristic subject matter of that earlier parody, "The Case of the Missing MS.", which was signed by "Monty Lowther" instead of Peter Todd, does little to relieve one's suspicions.

Troublesome and untidy it all is. If the "Dr. Jotson" stories are not by Hamilton, and both of the authors of this monograph are inclined to believe that they are not, then in all probability they are not by Stanton Hope either, for he had already left the Amalga-

ated Press some considerable time before. Some of them may have been written by Sawways, but if so then for much the same reason as Stanton Hope it is improbable that all of them were. One other possible contributor who has occasionally been considered in the past is William L. Catchpole, a young man who had joined the AP after a brief career as a screenwriter, replacing Sawways as a writer of *Greyfriars Herald* extracts in *The Magnet*. Catchpole wrote many small pieces in the latter and in other AP papers, until their demise in 1939 and 1940, and could have been responsible for especially the parodies published in *The Magnet* in 1924 and 1925. But this too is conjecture, and it seems unlikely that the whole question will ever be settled to everyone's satisfaction.

At any rate, Herlock Sholmes lay fallow for a good many years after that last story in February 1925. Not until the 1,651st number of *The Magnet*, on October 7, 1939, did the sleuth reappear; and when he finally did, in "The Disappearance of Dunn-Browne", it was instead as Sheerluck Homes. Behind the byline of "Peter Todd" this time was concealed not the identity of Charles Hamilton, but of a less talented Amalgamated Press writer named Hector Hutt. The parody was a short affair, below the quality of the earlier Hamilton stories. Three more by Hutt were published, the sleuth's name changing to Sheerluck Jones, but it hardly mattered. When the final one, a dismal item entitled "The Ruffstuff Rhythm Boys", came out on January 13, 1940, in the paper's 1,655th number, *The Magnet* had not much longer to live. *The Gem* had already succumbed to declining circulation and had been absorbed into a lesser AP paper, *Triumph*; and while *The Magnet* managed to falter along under the increasingly tighter paper restrictions for a few months more, the end was clearly in sight.

When it came, it was truly the end of an era for Charles Hamilton. He was in his mid-sixties now. For more than forty years he had worked for the Amalgamated Press (since 1921 quite placidly under his favorite editor, C. Maurice Down), until he actually thought of himself as the veritable Frank Richards. And now, quite suddenly, it was all gone: "The AP cheque, which had come along so regularly, for so many years, that it seemed to Frank as fixed and immutable as

the laws of the Medes and Persians, had suddenly, silently vanished away, as if it had been a Hunter of the Snark suddenly confronting the Boojum."¹ To make matters worse, Hamilton discovered that if his income had disappeared, taxes certainly had not; and in short order he found himself close to poverty in a country that was now too pre-occupied with its own wartime struggle for sheer survival to give much thought to such things. Worst of all, perhaps, the end of the boys' papers abruptly destroyed Hamilton's principal means of escape from a world for which he really did not care. It was to the *fin de siècle* days symbolized by Greyfriars and St. Jim's that his heart really harkened:

....to Frank Richards the closing years of the Victorian era were a Golden Age. The good old Queen still reigned: symbol of peace and security. Wars, certainly, occurred: but they seemed to occur chiefly in the newspapers. It seemed possible, indeed easy, for human beings to live in peace with one another. Bonaparte was forgotten: and Hitler not yet heard of. 2

When World War II came to an end five years later, Hamilton was living out a meager existence in obscurity. This unfortunate and wholly undeserved situation was not to last, however, and now the fame that had never come to him in the heyday of *The Magnet* began to bloom. Old readers remembered the stories of the Greyfriars School chums, and clamored for them once more. The attraction of it all was a heightened longing for the nostalgic atmosphere which George Orwell had remarked upon shortly before the time of the papers' demise: "The clock has stopped at 1910. Britannia rules the waves, and no one has heard of slumps, booms, unemployment, dictatorships, purges or concentration camps."³ The London publishing houses of Charles Skilton, then Cassels, and finally Howard Baker moved to supply the demand and began to publish old serial runs of *The Magnet* in book form. Then the august British Broadcasting Company based a televis-

¹ *The Autobiography of Frank Richards*, p. 180.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ George Orwell, "Boys' Weeklies", in *A Collection of Essays*, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954, p. 307.

ion series upon them, and for some years Greyfriars stage productions became something of a Christmas custom in London and elsewhere in the British Isles. Charles Hamilton had arrived.

The focus of it all was upon a remarkable Hamilton creation who went by the name of Billy Bunter. Bunter was one of the Greyfriars boys who sprang to like in the earliest days of *The Magnet*. A most unlikely hero, very rapidly the obese and bragging Bunter—"B is for Bunter, in need of a muzzle / Who eats not to live, but lives just to guzzle"—rivalled Sexton Blake as the single most popular character in boys' fiction. *Magnet* stories became oriented more and more around the Fat Owl of the Greyfriars Remove, with their classic illustrations by C. H. Chapman, until eventually *The Magnet* was permanently subtitled "Billy Bunter's Own Paper". His name crept into the British lexicon to denote the kind of fat boy who was overly fond of tuck, always expecting a postal money order (that seldom arrived) from titled relatives of dubious existence, and exclaiming "I say, you fellows!". Bunter's fans were everywhere, and his throaty "Yaroo!" bellow of panic was heard throughout the land. Rather than killing off the British public's appetite for Bunter, the cessation of Greyfriars stories during the war had only served to whet it.

As Billy Bunter's fortunes prospered in postwar Britain, so did Charles Hamilton's. And with the surge of attention, new publications were called for. One of these was *Tom Merry's Own*, a handsome annual written mainly by Hamilton and published for the Christmas season each year between 1949 and 1954 by Mandeville Publications Ltd. *Tom Merry's* had its ancestry back in *St. Jim's* and *The Gem*, rather than Greyfriars, but in the second and fourth volumes Herlock Sholmes and Peter Todd reappeared again to make their final bows to a reminiscent and affectionate public. In the same year as the last Herlock Sholmes tale by Hamilton, "The Case of the Perplexed Painter", he published his autobiography; and characteristically enough, it was entitled *The Autobiography of Frank Richards* and was narrated in the third person. He was in his mid-seventies now, and while his youth had long since gone, and his health and eyesight were failing, still his spirit seemed undimmed. His work was acknowledged at last and

enjoyed by many once again, and the acute physical deprivation that had been his lot during the war was over. He lived quietly for nine more years, passing away on Christmas Eve of 1961 at the venerable age of eighty-six. His death received great attention in the British press and news media, and was mourned by many throughout the English-speaking world.

But even that last parody by Charles Hamilton, in *Tom Narry's Own* of 1954, did not prove to be the end of Herlock Sholmes. Before his death in 1961, Hamilton lived to see something extremely rare, if not unique, for an author—to behold his own parodies parodied. A number of imitations appeared in print. Two were by Eric Payne, soon to become the editor of *The Collector's Digest*, and were published in that journal's *Annals* for 1960 and 1961: respectively, "The Boy Who Lost His Foot" and "The Tragedy on Little Side". And in May 1960 *The Collector's Digest* published "The Case of the Missing Treaty", an entry in the good-humored Greyfriars Cup Competition of that year, from the pen of a Hamiltonia collector named Roger Jenkins. These three parodies of the Herlock Sholmes stories by Charles Hamilton brought the number of tales in the cycle to an even one hundred—a record which is not likely to be broken for some time.

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A Note on Sources

There is no public or private library in North America known to possess all of the issues of the various British boys' papers in which the Herlock Sholmes parodies were published. The Hess Collection of juvenile literature at the University of Minnesota Library probably contains the largest single number of the issues in question, as well as other Amalgamated Press publications and some research materials relating to the history of British boys' fiction and the writings of Charles Hamilton. Other partial runs of the issues in question will be found in the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Metropolitan Toronto Central Library in Canada, and the Sherlock Holmes Collection of John Bennett Shaw in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In Great Britain, these magazines are in considerable demand by many collectors of boys' fiction as well as of Sherlockiana. The principal dealer in this field is Frank Vernon Lay (52 Oakleigh Gardens, Whetstone, London), to whom inquiries by American collectors should be addressed.