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COLLECTORS DIGEST

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№ 182

FEBRUARY 1962.

IN MEMORY of
FRANK RICHARDS.



A MAN AND HIS CHILDREN.



FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 16

Number 182

FEBRUARY, 1962

Price 2s. Od.

SPECIAL ISSUE
TO THE MEMORY OF
FRANK RICHARDS

E D I T O R I A L

OUR TRIBUTE:

This issue of COLLECTORS' DIGEST is dedicated to the memory of Frank Richards. It is our tribute to him, and we hope it is a fitting one.

Our usual regular features are suspended this month, together with advertisements.

My grateful thanks to readers who sent me along many hundreds of press cuttings concerning the passing of our author.

I have to offer my apologies to large numbers of you - in the past month or two I seem to have done so much apologizing. In recent weeks your letters have flooded in to this office. The death of our old friend caused readers to unburden their grief to Collectors' Digest - a thousand letters, in fact, since early December. I assure you that every letter has been read and re-read, but it became a sheer impossibility to get personal replies away. I can only beg your tolerance and understanding.

A MEMORIAL TO FRANK RICHARDS?

Many of our readers are anxious that some sort of memorial should be raised to Frank Richards' memory. This is a sentiment which will find an echo in all our hearts. The point, of course, is what form it could take. Some have suggested a plaque, a statue, the foundation of a scholarship at some public school. If any reader has ideas of his own on the subject we shall be pleased to hear from him, and to give space in our columns if we think it might prove feasible.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST believes that the finest memorial to Frank Richards - and one within the scope of O.B.B.C. organisation - would be a donation to the Playing Fields Association. If the press and the B.B.C. would give aid with publicity, there may well be large numbers of people who would like to contribute. Our clubs, of course, would have to form a committee of people whose enthusiasm is not of the here today, gone

to-morrow variety. It would mean plenty of work and organisation.

If a sufficiently substantial sum could be raised, it might well be possible - and that, of course, would be the big aim - for the P.F.A. to purchase land - maybe in his beloved Kent - for a playing field to be named the "Frank Richards Playing Field." There, undoubtedly, a commemorative plaque could be placed.

Is it not possible to imagine our old friend looking down with a happy smile at generations of boys playing the game on the Frank Richards Field? Could anything be more appropriate to the memory of the men who served so well the youth of the nation?

That is merely the view of this magazine. We hope that all branches of the O.B.B.C. will consider it and - whatever is decided - act speedily.

In the meantime, each one of us can do our bit - small or large - to keep alive the memory of his work. Let us support his books - buy them for ourselves, and give them as presents, according to our means. (I gave scores of Bunter books as prizes in my school, and I still give them to friends and relatives as presents.)

Messrs. Charles Skilton are publishing soon a fine new, bigger edition of "The Autobiography of Frank Richards." Let us give it our full support - a great backing. Buy it - advertise it as we can - ask our libraries in our home towns to stock it.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST readers form a nucleus for keeping alive the memory of Charles Hamilton and all his great schools. Let us prove that we are also a powerful nucleus.

If we fail, then who will remember with the passing of time? It is up to us.

THE EDITOR.

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 "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man
 fallen this day in Israel?"

(11 Samuel 3. 39)

AVE ATQUE VALE

By ERIC FAYNE

HAIL AND FAREWELL. Some years ago I wrote an article, under that title, for Collectors' Digest Annual. Within a few days of that publication of that Annual, I received the following letter from Frank Richards:

"I feel that I must write just a line to tell you how much I have enjoyed reading your article in the C.D. Annual. It was like re-living a writing life of thirty-three years over again, in one pleasant hour.

Many thanks, my dear boy, for that happy hour."

That was all. Just a few words - yet how much he said in those few words. I have always treasured that letter. It was so typical

He was a sensitive man. A few words of praise for his work delighted him; a few words of adverse criticism would dishearten him greatly. He did not suffer fools gladly. In spite of his inherent kindness, there were times when he would deflate a critic who, from ignorance or pomposity, had written something stupid.

He had the reputation, a few years ago, of being difficult to approach. Many thought that a visitor to Rose Lawn might receive a cold reception. I am quite sure that this was a false picture. True, with an elderly man who was still working hard, it was expedient to discourage casual callers. But I know many people who visited him, and I have yet to hear of anyone who was not received with courtesy, kindness, and understanding. My personal contacts with him over twenty years have left me a memory I shall ever cherish.

Am I putting a foot out of step when I say that I shall remember him as A Very Gallant Gentleman? I think that the thought may cause a chuckle in that Heaven to which all good writers go.

What a wonderful life! Always doing the very thing he wanted to do! Writing for young people. And writing for young people till the time when life's chapter closed.

He was easy-going. He wrote easily - and people who write easily can be read easily. The charm of the man himself inevitably percolated into so many of his stories. He made money easily - and he spent it just as easily. He never prepared for the rainy day - possibly because his world was one of sunshine, and it never occurred to him that there could be a rainy day.

Between the wars he enjoyed a four-figure income. Some years he earned over £3000 with his writing - a lot of money in the days when a pound was worth a pound. This does not mean that he was particularly well paid for his work - but so long as he had plenty on which to live he did not bother about that side of the matter.

In 1947, when he wrote his first post-war Greyfriars story, "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School", he informed his new publisher most emphatically that his charge was 30/- per thousand words. He would accept nothing more. His publisher, like most publishers, was a straightforward man. With difficulty he managed to persuade the author to sell the story on a royalty basis.

It is pleasant to be able to record that "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" sold in its tens of thousands. At the time of his death, this story alone had brought its author well over £1000 in royalties.

Probably there is but one writer in a thousand writers who is

able to live, and live well, on the results of his writing alone. Frank Richards was one who could and did. All the same, his high income was due entirely to his prodigious output.

In the past few weeks, many newspapers have stated that "at the peak of his career he had an output approaching 25,000 words a week." That, of course, is the understatement of the century. In 1939, when he was between sixty and seventy years of age, he was writing, every week, 55,000 words of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and probably a serial instalment or two in addition. In earlier times, his output was far higher.

The usual way for an author to prepare his manuscripts for a publisher is to type them in black, on quarto size paper, in double spacing, leaving ample margins. Frank Richards' manuscripts, though models of their kind, were entirely unconventional. He always typed in purple on foolscap size paper, in single spacing. This undoubtedly was for the sake of speed. Foolscap paper and single spacing meant less waste of time in changing paper - and time meant everything to an author with an output like his. His Rookwood stories, and others of similar length, were usually completed at one sitting.

Furthermore, he never typed a manuscript more than once. His stories came as he wanted them the first time. His accuracy was amazing - and, of course, his memory. Messrs. Cassell's, who publish the Billy Bunter books, say of him: "He was thoroughly businesslike, utterly reliable, and always on time."

For a great many years, then, he earned what the average man would regard as a high income. Yet, in 1940, when the Magnet came to its abrupt and regrettable finish without warning, Frank Richards found himself suddenly without income, with no chance of making an income, and, apparently, with very little saved.

Inevitably, the thought occurs to one that a man who had enjoyed a large income for so long should never have found himself in this position. He should have had ample saved to that he could retire comfortably until the time came when he could sell his stories again. But it is all too easy for us to adopt a "holier than thou" attitude in a matter of this kind.

Certainly Frank Richards was rueful over what happened, but he was intensely human, and, if he could have lived some of the pre-war years over again with the knowledge of what was to come, it is a question whether he would have lived them any differently.

In his stories he always presented gambling in any form as "a mug's game." He wrote plenty of stories in which the "bad hats"



TOM MERRY

CHARLES HAMILTON'S FIRST GREAT SCHOOLBOY LEADER

gambled, and, invariably, gambling, whether on the gaming tables or on horses, led to misery, ruin and disgrace. He taught that gambling was evil in every way.

In consequence it was something of a shock to learn that the man who condemned gambling so soundly in his stories, was, in private life, a gambler himself.

We know that in his early presentation of Frank Nugent the author was putting himself on paper. His niece has told me that "Frank" was always his favourite name for a boy. But, for a long time, I have believed that in sketching the character of Ralph Reckness Cardew of St. Jim's, Martin Clifford was portraying himself as he knew himself. The Cardew whimsicalities were the Hamilton whimsicalities. The fellow who knew the evils of gambling yet could not resist it was the author tapping out himself on the Remington. It was "Pretty Fanny's way," as Martin Clifford made Cardew say. It is a most odd circumstance that, in later years, when the author no longer got a kick out of gambling, or, perhaps, had learned one of life's hard lessons, Cardew became less of the fascinating character study which he had been years earlier.

In 1921 or thereabouts Charles Hamilton lost the copyright of most of the famous characters he had created. This loss was to cost him dearly more than twenty years later. He must have regretted to the end of his life that he had parted with the rights to control his own brain children.

We can only guess at the hardships which, between 1940 and 1945, came to the author who had, till then, enjoyed a large and steady income.

He may well have thought that the days of Greyfriars and St. Jim's were finished. During the war he typed a very large number of stories about a character whom he called "Jack of All Trades," probably with the idea that they might make a long series in some paper when the war was over.

But Billy Bunter came back - and so Jack was never to win the popularity which the author may, at one time, have envisaged. Several stories of this character were published, and in the last of them Jack was shown being carried away in a foreign steamer. We waited for a sequel which never came. The mystery of Jack of All Trades was never solved. It is likely that the solution lies in a great heap of unused manuscripts in the Grand Old Man's study.

It is, of course, quite impossible, to pass any opinion here on the attitude and actions of the Amalgamated Press. Evidence shows quite clearly that Charles Hamilton was the firm's star writer over a

great many years. He "made", without question, many of their publications, including the Gem, Magnet, Popular, Schoolboys' Own Library, Holiday Annual. His Rookwood stories sold the Boy's Friend for eleven years, and he also contributed Cedar Creek to that paper. His hundreds of stories in Modern Boy were the mainstay of that periodical.

We know that during the war years, and for a few years after the war ended, Charles Hamilton was bitter about his old publishers. As success came to him again, his attitude softened and mellowed, and it is pleasant to know that the hatchet was buried at last.

Fame soon came to him. As a young man, and in middle age, he had been beloved from a great distance for the work he did. He had been seen "as through a glass darkly." Now, late in his life, the searching limelight of real fame was turned upon him. Fame, as I commented last month, came to him when the peak of his powers was passed.

But he still had plenty to offer the nation's youth - and the nation's adults who remembered. He saw thirty Greyfriars stories published between stiff covers, as well as a number of Tom Merry books, plus, of course, a dozen or more Annuals.

Television carried Billy Bunter into a million homes. Frank Richards saw his beloved character portrayed by the perfect Bunter - Gerald Campion. We are told that the Billy Bunter programme was the only television show that the author ever watched.

He saw his Greyfriars transferred with equal success to the stage. He saw his own name quoted often in hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles published all over the world.

He died in harness. There are at least three more of his stories still to be published by Messrs. Cassell's. They are "Bunter the Caravanner," "Billy Bunter's Bodyguard," and "Big Chief Bunter." There may even be more.

It is a comfort to know that he did not suffer at the end. He did not linger. The man of millions of words, thousands of stories, hundreds of wonderful characters, a dozen ever-lasting schools - the man whom generations upon generations had loved - the man who was the greatest juvenile writer of the century was called from his sleep to a higher life in the early hours of Christmas Eve, 1961.

Years ago, Charles Hamilton almost always ended his story with the title of the story. We can do no better ...

CHARLES HAROLD St. JOHN HAMILTON - Prince among school story writers - THIS IS YOUR LIFE - AVE ATQUE VALE.

* * * * *

THE FUNERAL OF FRANK RICHARDS

"Wharton Lodge glistened white under a mantle of snow. It was a snowy Christmastide. Wells, the butler, stood at the open doorway of the Lodge, looking out into the bright, cold, keen December morning. Wells looked plump and comfortable and cheerful."

That, of course, is an extract from one of Frank Richards' Christmas stories in the Magnet. It seemed a strange irony of fate that, at Christmas time, the last word should have been written in the book of this great man's life-story. For Frank Richards always wrote so wonderfully about Christmas. His best loved stories told of ancestral halls, log fires, holly, mistletoe, wind whining in the wide chimneys, jollity and happiness at Yuletide - with the snow flakes falling softly outside, covering the countryside. Nobody ever doubted that Frank Richards loved Christmas.

And it was at Christmas that he died.

The weather on the day of his funeral was something which might have come out of one of his stories. It was hard, bitter - with stinging white roads - snow and ice everywhere. The funeral cars were due to leave Kingsgate at 2.30, to reach the crematorium at Charing at 4 o'clock - a journey of some 30 miles. Whether they would ever make the journey I did not know. That day, all day, I felt strangely that I was playing a minor part in one of his stories.

It was dry, but freezing hard. Frost and snow hung on the gaunt branches of the trees. The footpaths were slippery, the roads were like an ice-rink. Friends told me that I was mad to set out - that I should never get there - and, if I got there, I should never get home again that night. But somehow I knew that I must get there - to be with him at the finish.

The discomforts of that long journey, through the fairy-land that was Kent on a snowy day in mid-winter, were never very much in my mind as the different trains jogged along, carrying me slowly but surely on my way. I thought and thought - of the old Christmas stories.

I thought of the time when Jimmy Silver was snow-bound on the rail journey to the Priory - I thought of the Famous Five in a train crash in the snow when they were on their way to Scotland. I'm sure I heard Tom Merry say "Keep smiling."

It was after three when I reached the cottages, the small church, the village green that was Charing. I asked a rustic the way to the

Crematorium, and he pointed, way out to the hills.

The countryside was a magnificent sight. The roads, the banks beside the roads, the hedges, the fields, the trees, the five-barred gates - all were clothed with snow. Frost, frozen snow and ice - everywhere - as far as the eye could see.

On the right-hand side, at the summit of a steep hill, stands the crematorium. It is situated, far back from the roadway in the midst of rolling park land. It is a modern building, but it looks like a lovely old country mansion from the distance.

I thought of Wharton Lodge. I went through the large, open, high iron gates. I walked up the wide, snow-covered drive. It was quite a walk to the house. On either side of me was vast, sweeping park land, dotted with lovely old trees. Trees, majestic and beautiful in their glittering whiteness, lined the drive. A bird landed on a branch, and a shower of icy flakes of snow tumbled around in the pale sunset.

It was not difficult to see the Famous Five among the trees. Bob Cherry kneading snowballs; Inky, muffled up against the bitter winter of a country which is so different from his native Bhanipur; Frank Nugent breaking a long icicle from a low-hanging bough; Johnny Bull growling "I told you so!" Harry Wharton, the youthful host, with his dark eyes gleaming with happiness to have his pals with him.

Billy Bunter was not there, of course. He would be fast asleep in a chair before the fire in Wharton's den.

I walked on. Two men were brushing snow away from the front of the building. Wells and Thomas, perhaps - or two gardeners.

A gentleman came out of the house. Kindly, sympathetic - I tried to think it was Colonel Wharton.

"The waiting room is on the right," he said. "It is warm and cosy there ---"

It was, too. A bright gas fire was burning. Vases of flowers stood on the table. There were comfortable chairs.

I did not sit down. I went to the window. I could watch the long drive, with the iron gates in the distance. Presently I went into the carpeted hall. I exchanged a few words with the clergyman who would conduct the service.

The daylight was fading in the sky when the funeral cars arrived. The members of Frank Richards' family joined me in the waiting room. I talked in low tones to Mrs. Harrison, Frank Richards' sister - sweet, gentle, kindly. The facial likeness between the brother and sister is striking. She had received a letter from her

brother on the day after Boxing Day. With it came the telegram announcing his death. This brother and sister always exchanged letters twice a week.

I said: "Your brother was a very wonderful man."

"Yes," she echoed softly, "a wonderful man."

I met Mrs. Wright, Frank Richards' niece, who had spent many holidays with her much-loved "Uncle Charlie" at his home by the sea. She and her family had been with him last summer - it seemed like yesterday - the weather was so different then ...

I spoke for a moment or two with Miss Edith Hood - "Deedy" - who had looked after Frank Richards' welfare for thirty years. She will miss him most of all. For these three ladies a light had gone out - a light which would never shine again.

We were called into the peaceful Chapel, with its rows of pews.

Before us, on a most beautiful table of carved wood stood the coffin. The mortal remains of the greatest boys' author of all time. On the coffin, the flowers of his nearest and dearest....

The service began. Not an intimate service, but simple, peaceful, restful, solemn, dignified

For a while I felt a grief surging within me that, for this man who had entertained and guided millions, there were not hundreds of his old boys present when "The End" was written at the close of the book.

Suddenly - and I can't explain it - I felt that I was there to represent the millions who had loved him down the years. I, who had followed his stories for so long - I, who had been an insignificant unit among the millions all over the world who found joy in his stories - I was here alone with him at the end, representing them all.

The clergyman's voice came softly: "Let us kneel and pray."

We knelt. For a moment I gazed at the coffin, surmounted with its glorious flowers. I lowered my head. I don't think I heard the prayers which were being said ... I was thinking of Tom Merry, dear old Arthur Augustus, Harry Wharton, Henry Samuel Quelch, the Rio Kid, Putty Grace....

When I raised my head the coffin had sank out of sight. Silently the mortal remains of this great man had left us while our heads were bowed. But his spirit lives on - his influence for all that is good.

Out on the verandah all the beautiful floral tributes had been placed. The winter darkness had fallen, the artificial light on the verandah was not good. We walked among the wreaths, and read the cards. In low voices we talked together for a while...the family which was mourning the loss of a good man ... and I, who was representing millions.

At last, under the shadowy trees, through the whispering countryside, I crunched away through the snow, the way I had come

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST - on behalf of the members of all branches of the Old Boys' Book Clubs and of its readers all over the world - expresses deepest sympathy to Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Wright, Miss Hood, and the family of the late Mr. Charles Hamilton.

* * * * *

THE FLOWERS

From Billy Bunter and all your new friends at the Victoria Palace.

In loving memory, Rona B.

In deepest sympathy - Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, Helen and Martin Cory, Jeen and Sheila.

A Token of our love and respect from the Old Boys Book Club, Northern Section.

With deepest sympathy - Bruce Park, Bettina and Edith.

The Directors of Fleetway Publications.

In gratitude for enchantment in youth, help in middle age. Maurice McLoughlin.

With deep affection and sincere appreciation from Deedy (Miss Hood).

In beloved memory of one whose like we ne'er shall see again, from Merseyside Section O.B.B.C.

In loving memory from Una (his niece) and Brian.

In affectionate memory from the members of the London Branch of the O.B.B.C.

From Rev. and Mrs. A. Pound and Mr. and Mrs. J. Corbett, in fond memory from four old readers.

In fondest memory from all members of the Midland O.B.B.C.

Norman, Kathleen and Mary Franks, Folkestone.

In grateful and loving memory from Eric Fayne.

In loving memory from Dolly (sister).

In affectionate memory from members of the Northern Section of the
O.B.B.C.

Sincere remembrance and many thanks for happy memories from Charles,
Ella and Virginia Skilton.

With sympathy, P. and S. Geldard.

With sincere sympathy from Dr. and Mrs. R. Wylie-Smith, Cullingworth,
Broadstairs.

Dr. Edward E. Oddie, 48 Riverway, Christchurch - I first met Billy
Bunter in 1912.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mrs. Una Harrison and Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright (sister and niece
of Charles Hamilton) wish to thank all those branches of the Old Boys'
Book Club who so kindly sent flowers in memory of Mr. Hamilton. Their
sympathy was deeply appreciated.

* * * * *

A FAMILY MOURNS

The Packman Family mourns the passing of "Frank Richards." We
shall never forget the wonderful evening spent with him in 1949. The
autographed photograph he gave us at that time will always be one of
our most treasured possessions.

Others may and will rightly laud his praises; for us, it is
just "God Bless You, Charles Hamilton."

Sorrowfully,

Leonard, Josephine and Eleanor
Packman.

* * * * *

COLLECTORS' DIGEST is privileged and proud to present to its readers the following article by Mr. Hamilton's niece.

CHARLES HAMILTON

A BACKGROUND NOTE ON HIS EARLY DAYS

by his niece

UNA HAMILTON WRIGHT

Did Charles Hamilton go to a Public School? How was he educated? What was he like as a boy? Countless times have I been asked these and similar questions by those who love the work of the Grand Old Man of Schoolboy Fiction. I am sure such queries occur very naturally about one whose life's work was devoted to giving innocent pleasure to youth and to sweetening the pill of education.

When asked about his school days Charles Hamilton would reply that he was like the man in Who's Who who entered his school as Eton and his education as "self". For fear of hurting the feelings of old friends he would decline to specify which school it was, as many of his characters owed some of their traits to his classmates and masters.

As a boy my Uncle loved literature and he loved languages. Very early his predilection for Latin showed itself and he soon discovered that his Latin master was only one chapter ahead of the class in Kennedy's Primer and so he took it upon himself to get two chapters ahead and catch the master out with an awkward question for which he was not prepared. He was a voracious reader and when he was only 11 he had learned the whole of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" by heart because he liked it. He mopped up all the tales of the Wild West which in those days did duty for the space fiction devoured so heartily to-day, and he used to read for hours to his little sister. When he ran out of printed material he would invent his own Wild West stories and then he created a farm in Canada. His very own farm with a specimen of every known type of animal on it, for when his sister asked had it a giraffe? oh yes, it had a giraffe. And did it have a camel? oh yes, it had a camel. Reminscent of Old MacDougal's farm, in fact. But the interesting point that emerges is that even when so young his imagination was equal to anything demanded of it.

His imagination could, on occasion, make life a little disquieting for his younger brother and sister when they played the family game of

"burglars". The idea was to rush upstairs into the dark, armed with a poker, and to rattle this weapon in the empty grate of each of the bedrooms at the top of the house. My uncle would make the most eerie noises in the dark thus providing convincing evidence of the supposed intruder and the little ones would hurtle downstairs, terrified, to land in a heap on the hall floor.

On the other hand there were certain tasks that his imagination would not tackle. One of them was Mathematics in any shape or form. He used to say that he simply could not add up a column of figures and get it right, and that if he were to add it up more than once he would get a different answer each time. One of the earliest luxuries he afforded himself was an accountant to "sort the figures out". For this reason Income and Super Tax were always malevolent mysteries to him. Perhaps it explains the delight he took in gambling when on the Continent - it was all a matter of luck whether the numbers were for you or against you, no matter whether they were the numbers on a Roulette Table, the figures in a Tax Return, or arithmetical exercises in a schoolbook.

As one of a group of boys at school my Uncle was never the leader but always popular as a "trusty" follower because he was ever willing to do odd jobs and stooge for those who planned the schoolboy exploits. His brother, Dick, two years older but in the same class, used to include him in his own group of bigger boys as a sort of favour and he was known as "Dick's young brother", who could be counted on to offer an intelligent suggestion when required and to shut up in the meantime. Dick was very gregarious and always had a gang of boys about him, but Charles would dodge them if he could politely, and find a quiet spot and read a book, not, as he would explain, because he did not like Dick's friend, but because he found the people in books more interesting company.

As a child my Uncle was well known to be polite and courteous and all through his life he set a high value on good manners. I think he set out, consciously, to be a good little boy. He sought to please and valued the approval of his elders and I cannot imagine him ever losing his temper. He could not bear arguments and quarrelling and was known as "Charlie the peacemaker". He used to say that nothing on this earth was worth quarrelling about, and that life was too short anyway. He valued the gift of life very highly and hated to see people "wasting" their lives doing things they found unpleasant. School was a place for making the acquaintance of the greatest minds our various civilisations had produced, not for hard grinding at indigestible facts for examination purposes. He saw education as an enlargement of one's knowledge of people and their thinking processes, not as a cramming course.

After he left school my Uncle's formal education was continued by a private tutor in the shape of a highly cultured elderly lady who taught him Italian and polished up his Latin. She became a friend of his family and he enjoyed an intellectual companionship with her which lasted many years. She provided an outlet for all those creative ideas of his which were too highbrow to be used in boys' fiction.

The home influences on Charles Hamilton's early life are interesting. "Bugs" - as he was known to his brothers and sisters - was the sixth in a family of five brothers and three sisters living in Chiswick and his father died when Charles was only seven. Of Scottish extraction and very proud of it, his father was stern and strict and very much master in his own house. None of the womenfolk were allowed to cut their hair in a fringe because such fashions were frivolous. He was "nae mean but carefu" - nothing might be discarded that could possibly be mended, and there was a saying in the family when anything was broken that "Father would mend it with his glue-pot". His family were in such awe of this Moulton Barrett type father that their mother used to advise them before they embarked on some childish exploit "Wait till your father's been in and gone out again". My Uncle used to tell a sad story about how, when a school friend confided that his father had just died, he replied "I wish mine had", much to his friend's horror.

My Uncle's mother - my grandmother - was kind and gay by temperament and a good hostess - a gift kept in suspense until her widowhood. She came from a well-to-do landowning family in Oxford - a family famous for its teetotal sympathies. When as a young man my Uncle was asked by a relative to sign the pledge, he said that he had better sign two pledges in case he broke one. After my grandfather died a weight seemed to have lifted from his family and the women went and had their fringes cut.

Childhood should be a happy state, my Uncle used to say. He loved children and could always be relied upon to entertain the younger ones at family parties. To hear a baby cry would literally hurt him, "I don't suppose" - I remember his saying on one occasion, "that that ignorant young woman (the baby's mother) really means to be cruel to that poor child, but she shouldn't leave it to cry like that." He believed that no effort should be spared to make childhood completely happy, and he also believed that children were happy being good provided they were amused. Any child that came into his life was to him a little challenge to be made as happy as was humanly possible. I think he sought to make up in other children's lives for that which was missing from his own early years - those austere years when, by Father's (cont'd on page 39)

The Magnet

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No. 1,432, Vol. XLVIII

EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending August 3rd, 1935.

HARRY WHARTON
Charles Hamilton's Greatest Character Study

Memories of Charles Hamilton

by ROGER JENKINS

I first wrote to Charles Hamilton in the dreary October of 1943, having seen a paragraph in the Evening Standard about the authorship of the Magnet and Gem stories. It must have been a long, enthusiastic letter, laboriously written in a schoolboy hand, but it probably pleased its recipient, for almost by return of post. I received four sides of quarto paper typed with the well-known purple ribbon. The letter was full of fascinating information which most collectors now know so well: how he had written his autobiography, had accidentally sent it for salvage, and was then engaged in re-writing it: how he was surprised to hear that the British Museum had copies of the Gem and the Magnet, and that I was the only reader who had told him of making an expedition there to inspect them; how most of his own collection had gone for salvage in 1940, but he still had a few numbers, and if there were any I particularly wanted....! Needless to say, there were, and I was soon in possession of the Caffyn series from the author's own collection, a notable act of generosity to a correspondent who was a complete stranger to him.

We all know that the end of the Magnet was a great blow to Charles Hamilton and, young as I then was, I could sense this in his letters. He seemed extremely pleased to realise that his old readers had far from forgotten him: "It was very pleasant to read your letter over again today." "I don't think I have ever forgotten a correspondent!" "It is not the easiest thing in the world to begin life again at seventy, and every time I get a kind friendly letter from an old reader it helps."

Naturally enough, when the war ended the letters grew shorter and fewer. Not only was his circle of correspondents increasing, but he was writing stories for publication again: his days of leisure had disappeared, and I think that as a result no one was happier than he was. Yet the letters always remained friendly, informative, cheerful and optimistic, even in his seventies and eighties. He was continually looking forward to the future with quiet confidence. As I now re-read the file of letters I have had from him, I am more than ever

impressed by this. Despite all his difficulties he never despaired.

In the winter of 1952 I paid my one and only visit to 'Rose Lawn'. In a quiet room overlooking a quiet avenue sloping down to the sea, I spent nearly two hours in engrossing conversation. Wearing skull-cap, dressing gown, and carpet slippers, he sat in an armchair opposite mine, chuckling over mutual reminiscences from his work, all the while filling his pipe from a large jar of tobacco, and continually striking matches which he dropped all about him. At the other end of the room was his desk, on which stood his typewriter and pens - one of which I had to fetch so that he could autograph my copy of the first Rookwood story. It was indeed one of the most delightful afternoons I have ever spent, and the enjoyment was heightened by the fact that I knew that a repetition of the visit was unlikely; I know now, alas, that it is impossible.

During the late 1920s, Charles Hamilton suffered an accident to his eyesight which put an end to his foreign travels. He frankly acknowledged that his work improved by leaps and bounds as a result. I had vivid proof of his defective vision when I visited him, for he asked me to come within a foot of him so that he could see me. "I shall memorise your features," he explained, "so that when you sit talking in the armchair opposite I can imagine you there." He told me that as a result of his extreme short-sightedness his characters seemed to come to life more than ever as he typed the stories. When he sat at his desk he could not even see the wall clearly, and so he visualised his characters. He could hear the intonation in their voices and see the expression on their faces as they uttered the words he typed. When an author so utterly believed in his characters, it was not strange that his readers should find them equally alive and credible.


It is sad to think of the tragedy that befell him at the end. Charles Skilton has phrased it so well that I need do no more than quote him verbatim:-

'Earlier this month I suggested that a new edition of his autobiography was called for by persistent demand and could be revised up to date. By return of post, still in his own typing, he accepted with pleasure, but stated that a dreadful calamity had overtaken him suddenly, and that he was blind. He would write again shortly. Alarmed, even in these circumstances, by not hearing again, I telephoned last week-end. There was no reply. Frank Richards, the author on whom publishers never called in vain for a total of sixty million words of copy, was writing no more.'

It is unlikely that we shall ever see another children's author who can approach Charles Hamilton both in output and quality. We can only feel thankful that he has left behind so much that we can all enjoy.



Mr. C. H. Chapman's contribution to this Memorial Number.


COPY OF LETTER SENT TO FRANK RICHARDS3rd DECEMBER, 1961.

Dear Frank Richards,

On Saturday next, December 9th, the Northern Section of the Old Boys' Book Club, will hold their twelfth Annual Party in the room where a meeting has been held every month since April, 1950.

On behalf of all the members of the Club I would like to send you our 'loyal greetings', as they say on the wireless, and also our heartfelt love.

You, dear Frank Richards, can quite truthfully be called 'The Founder of the Feast.' Nothing is more certain that, without your wonderful and delightful writings over the past sixty years and more, there would never have been such clubs as ours and all the happy times we have had would not have been.



In our opinion, you have brought more joy, pleasure and happiness into this world of ours than any other person now living.

So please accept, still once again, the very best wishes of us all for your continued good health and well-being. We all look forward to reading about "Billy Bunter the Caravanner", which is promised for the Spring, and many more adventures of our Grefriars friends.

Yours most sincerely,

GERRY ALLISON.

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BUNTERIUS NOSTERBy Max M. Lyne

It is no secret that in the last dozen years of his long life, F.R. turned again to one of the subjects that had dominated his own school days. Latin does not normally stand high on the list of a schoolboy's 'likes'; it is a stern and uncompromising language, and its literature is deficient in jokes. F.R., however, had a liking for Latin and a proficiency in the use of it. He also felt that the average schoolboy would have the same liking and proficiency if its literature could be made more attractive. After all, we had recently seen the publication of Pinoculus in Italy, and Winni-ille-Pu in this country: why not Bunteri Stultitia? How far he had gone in the composition of his Latin epic his literary executors will no doubt tell us in due course. One instalment of it had appeared in a recent issue of the Latin newspaper Acta Diurna, and others would no doubt have followed if F.R. had lived longer.

As far as I know, F.R.'s first venture into print as a Latin author was in 1958, with a lively translation of Sir Joseph Porter's song in H.M.S. Pinafore. Nobody who has never tried to turn Gilbert's lyrics into Latin can properly appreciate the difficulty of this exercise. F.R. scored a bull's eye with his first attempt; not only was it rollicking Latin, but it went perfectly to Sullivan's tune. The editors of Acta Diurna, in which this gay contribution appeared, would have welcomed more from the same pen.

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G A T E W A Yby W. H. Gander (Canada)

In the year 1910, a lad of twelve discovered a door that led into Frank Richards country and the world of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and later of Rookwood. That it was a side door did not matter a great deal: it was THE EMPIRE LIBRARY. He would have done better to go through one of the main gateways: THE GEM or THE MAGNET. But a half-penny was easier to come by in those days than was a penny.

That was in England, in Croydon, which is not so very far from Frank Richards country. In Canada, in 1911, the main gateways were discovered. (They had been known earlier, but not acutally discovered.)

During the years since, that lad, a lad no longer, has wandered in and out of Frank Richards country, sometimes at will, but sometimes the coming out was due to his location, where THE GEM and THE MAGNET and other "gateways" could not be obtained except on subscription.

It is now more than 25 years since he last entered by way of THE GEM and THE MAGNET, and he has no intention of ever leaving that entrancing land again. The Frank Richards country is a wonderful country, not the less so because it is in a part of England of which I (to change the pronoun) had personal knowledge.

And now Frank Richards, the man who created that wonderful world and country, has left us. The everyday world is the poorer for his passing, but we have from him a priceless legacy, a legacy of stories that are not only entertaining but also inspiring: I am sure that no-one can read Frank Richards' stories without being not only entertained but also inspired to aim at least a little higher in everyday living.

I have personal memories formed by the kindly and informative letters that Mr. Richards wrote to me during the last war, but what I have written here will serve as my tribute to a man who endeared himself to many thousands of readers. To others, better qualified and better informed than I am, I will leave the writing of more lengthy tributes.

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FRANK RICHARDS
An Appreciation

by
Thomas Arnold Johnson

The greatest master of schoolboy fiction has gone. I was indeed fortunate in being one of the very few to meet Frank Richards personally.

Never shall I forget this great experience.

I had written a Suite of pieces for piano based on Greyfriars School and its boys, and had dedicated it to Mr. Richards, who was delighted with the contents.

He asked me to make a private recording for him in order that he could play the pieces over whenever he had the desire to do so. Having made a set of records, I journeyed to his home on April 5th, 1948 in order to deliver them personally, as he was afraid they might

get damaged in the post.

A pleasant afternoon it was that I spent with this grand person. We discussed music (an art which he took a deep interest in), his books and many other subjects, during which time his pet cat Lady Jane sat on my shoulder. He spoke about music and lyrics he himself had written and discussed the Greyfriars boys at great length. He referred to them as if they really did exist, and his reply to my question as to what had become of dear Alonzo Todd, he remarked, "Ah yes, poor Alonzo - of course you know that he was always a rather delicate boy. I must bring him back to the school on a visit one day. He is with his uncle Benjamin you know." I do not think Alonzo ever did return, however, but he seemed to have an affection for this character despite the fact he no longer appeared in the stories. He told me that Alonzo was a great favourite with the more thoughtful readers.

From 1948 until the middle fifties, I corresponded with Mr. Richards regularly, and still possess about 50 of his most valuable and interesting letters.

His kindness and generosity I shall never forget, for he willingly gave candid and helpful criticism of my literary work during those years.

The master has gone, but his work and his dream children still live on and are likely to do so for many years.

It is indeed nice to know that the sunset of his life was made happier and richer by his many friends both here and abroad and by the knowledge that he was remembered, honoured and loved by millions of people both young and old.

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IN MEMORY

By Julius Lennard

Goodbye, old friend. In man's life there comes a time when God writes Finis to a life, and now God has called you Home. It is not that you were different from other men that we remember you, yet how could we who lived in your ever-young world ever forget you?

I think if we could have said one thing as the curtain went down for the last time it would be "Thanks for all those happy hours you gave us over the years. Thanks for Harry Wharton and his merry chums. Thanks for all the others, but thanks a million for the

laughable, lovable character Billy Bunter. You have gone, my friend, but the memories you leave behind in our hearts will live on for ever." "Not for an hour, not for a day, not for a year but for always."

So as we say our last goodbye, maybe with tears in our eyes, a tugging at the heart-strings, and a little sigh at the passing of an old friend, we pray that you find an everlasting peace.

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CHARLES HAMILTON - THE MAN

By W. O. G. Lofts

About eighteen months ago, I stood outside the house in which Charles Hamilton was born; I gazed at the very old and small building with avid interest and wondered what the present inhabitants would have thought, if they knew, that in this very house, some 86 years ago, the greatest and best loved of all school story writers once lived.

I took quite a few photographs and a film of this ancient house and also of places of interest in the close district - including a school. I believe that they are of historic interest. Surely Charles Hamilton - who created Billy Bunter deserves a place in English Literature. Like Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Oliver Twist and Sherlock Holmes, he is immortal.

Probably many other collectors. are better qualified than myself to write in tribute about his writings, and on this point I couldn't agree more with Roger Jenkins who wrote some years ago 'that Charles Hamilton was probably the greatest writer since Charles Dickens.' Although the majority of collectors are aware of Mr. Hamilton's tremendous output, I feel sure that they have not as yet heard half the story. In his early years, our favourite author had an output that was almost unbelievable, and this information, and other data is awaiting publication for a future 'Collectors' Digest.'

Although I have met personally a considerable number of authors in recent years - it was never my pleasure to meet Charles Hamilton. We certainly corresponded a great deal, and one of the main points which always impressed me, was his extreme courtesy in replying to correspondents. Apart from receiving several hundred letters a week, in recent years he suffered from failing eyesight.

Extreme kindness was another strong factor with Mr. Hamilton. Only a very short while ago, he not only autographed a copy of a

Bunter Annual for the son of an editor friend of mine (connected with a rival to his creation Ferrers Locke), but also wrote a small message in Latin for him. This he hoped would be of some assistance to him, in starting a term at his new school in the 'second.'

Thanks a million Mr. Hamilton for the countless hours of pleasure you have given me with your writings - especially Greyfriars. Most certainly other enthusiasts like myself will never forget you.

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V A L E

By Stanley Smith

On Black Boxing Day, when the wireless announced the death of Frank Richards, I knew that my deep sorrow was echoed in the hearts of almost everybody who heard the sad news. There can be hardly a man over thirty in the British Isles or the Commonwealth who does not know of Frank Richards - or, if he does not know the actual name, knows of the wonderful characters that he created. Frank Richards did far more than most people have ever been able to do - he gave happy hours to millions. And he will continue to do so! Although the very old man - and I quote his own words there - who had suffered disabilities that would have finished off most of us long before, has now passed on to a well earned rest, the stories and the world that he created will never die. Frank Richards, in his life time, passed into the ranks of the immortals. Writers who create people who become more famous than themselves are few and far between. Frank Richards was one. He becomes a member of that select band - Cervantes, Mark Twain, Conan Doyle, Shakespeare and Dickens are some of his companions - who brought forth greater than themselves. We mourn Charles Hamilton, but we know that Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest and the rest will be always with us.

I have tried to find the right words to express my feelings. I know that I have completely failed.

Eric Fayne said it so well:-

And now he has gone. God bless him. God Rest His Soul. Maybe he is in a special heaven, surrounded by all those characters which he brought to life. They will never be forgotten. Neither will he.

THE PASSINGBy A. G. P.

(The Rev. A. G. Pound)

"Frank Richards" is no more,
 And for the present I have no desire
 To feed myself on those familiar scenes
 Which he conceived: the ivied greystone walls,
 The Rag, the quadrangle, the playing fields,
 The Priory, River Sark and Friardale Woods -
 Wherein we witnessed Wharton's changing moods,
 The Bounder's daring, Coker's clownishness,
 And the Fat Owl's fantastic escapades -
 In such, just now, I cannot seek delight
 - "Frank Richards" is no more.

"Frank Richards" is no more
 Oh yes. No doubt I shall in time return
 To Magnet, Schoolboys' Own or Bunter Book,
 And find enjoyment, in late evening hours,
 With all those "men" who are forever young,
 With all those jests which are forever fresh
 But it can never, never be the same
 For I have met their maker in the flesh,
 And with his going I have lost a friend
 - Yes, like so many, I have lost a friend.
 "Frank Richards" is no more.

"Frank Richards" is no more
 His spirit passed - not in the blaze of day -
 When the Remove was out-of-doors, at games,
 Or classroom-confined, under Quelch's eye -
 But in the dark of night, when all was still.
 Nor yet in Summer - when the adventurous Five
 Journeyed up-river or in rural lanes -
 But in midwinter. On that Holiest Eve -
 When men are late awake, and worshipping -
 Silently, unperceived, his spirit passed.
 "Frank Richards" is no more.

continued...

"Frank Richards" is no more
The cheery soul that was Charles Hamilton
Has gone, as all souls go, to meet his God -
Immortal gathered to the Immortals' Realm.
And we are left with figments of his Thought,
In volume, paper and in memory -
To treasure, till we, too, are taken hence
For even the youngest-hearted must grow old,
And by each teller the last tale is told,
And, with the light gone, all is strangely cold,
- "Frank Richards" is no more.

"Frank Richards" is no more.

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COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS



A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Girl Chum. Specially published at the earnest request of readers of the "Gem" Library.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

FAMOUS SERIES No. 16

Cousin Ethel was perhaps Charles Hamilton's most successful girl character. "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" was not really a series. It appeared as a serial in 1910 in the "Empire Library", and was reprinted as a serial in the Gem two years later. Every Gem reader loved Cousin Ethel.

MY TRIBUTEBy Maurice McLoughlin

How many of us in middle age must have felt a cord that reached back to our youth snap when we heard of the death of Charles Hamilton, or Frank Richards as most of us knew him.

How many of us must have remembered the thrill of a "Magnet" or "Gon" lying clean cut on a Newsagent's counter? The debt that we owe to this man can never be measured in words of tribute; each of his readers has his own Hamiltonian memories which defy expression. He gave us a world which reason told us was a fiction but in our hearts became a reality. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, "Gussy", Tom Merry, Jimmy Silver and the immortal Bunter - which of us would have denied their existence to ourselves. Their adventures each week were part of our lives and with the death of Charles Hamilton many must feel a part of their lives has gone forever.

There have been attempts in the past to belittle the work of Charles Hamilton; notably the frequently quoted Orwell Essay. Yet how many school stories have established such affection among their readers? Of the characters in school fiction fifty years ago how many are so widely remembered as those of Charles Hamilton? They have been translated from Magazine to book form; to television and the stage. Can such characters be the cardboard types that Orwell and the intellectuals would have us believe? I would hazard a guess that when George Orwell is no longer a memory the character of Bunter will be fresh in the minds of all English speaking peoples.

Although Frank Richards has gone, his characters have not; they will be with us and our children for many years. As a boy when I eagerly read the "Magnet" each week I had no thought that I should play any part in the adventures of the characters of Greyfriars School. In later years when I was commissioned to dramatise these characters and bring them to life on the stage for the first time I had no need to grope for them, they were still with me. The most stimulating tribute in my work with them was when Charles Hamilton wrote to me on reading the script that he was "amazed at the fidelity with which I had reproduced the "Greyfriars set-up" and that I "must have steeped myself in Greyfriars lore." But then how many of us are not steeped in Greyfriars lore? I feel honoured that together with the 'C.D. editor, Eric Fayne, and so many members of the O.B.B.C. I have played some part in perpetuating the Greyfriars dream that became our reality.

GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS

By Brian Doyle

How deeply shocked I was to hear of the death of Charles Hamilton on T.V.; it really spoilt the Christmas holiday for me and, I should think, for many others.

Many will say, perhaps: "What a pity he left no children to carry on his memory, no sons to write as he did." But we all know that no one could write as he wrote; and as for that family...I'm reminded rather of the closing passages of that great school story by James Hilton "Goodbye, Mr. Chips". Here is a brief quotation (with names more familiar to us substituted):

(Old Chips is dying peacefully in his bed and tells two visitors he has overheard them saying it was a pity he never had children).

"I thought I heard one of you saying it was a pity I never had - a pity I never had - any children...eh?...But I have, you know...I have..."

The others smiled without answering and after a pause Chips began a faint and palpitating chuckle.

"Yes - umph - I have," he added with quavering merriment. "Thousands of 'em...and all boys..."

And then the chorus sang in his ears in final harmony, more grandly and sweetly than he had ever heard it before, and more comfortingly too. ...Blundell, Bolsover, Brown, Bull, Bulstrode, Bunter... Cardew, Carthew, Cherry, Clive, Coker...come round me now, all of you, for a last word and a joke...Manners, Mauleverer, Mellish, Monteith, Merry, Morgan, Mornington...my last joke...did you hear it?... did it make you laugh?...Silver, Singh, Skimpole, Skinner, Snoop, Stott.... Wharton, Wibley, Wingate, Wynn...wherever you are, whatever has happened, give me this moment with you...this last moment...my boys... my boys....."

And soon Chips was asleep.

And how right the "Daily Mail" was when it said in its Leader on the 28th December: "The vast untidy expanse of English letters has a place for all and sundry. The mighty figures hold the centre of the stage, but the Bunters and their ilk have a good right to frolic at their feet."

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JACK HUGHES WRITES FROM AUSTRALIA

The evening of December 27th became a sad one. Just at sunset the newsagent's man had thrown two papers on to my lawn as he travelled quickly by on his bike.

The first I opened was the latest (for us) issue of Knockout, and I saw that the Rookwood story concluded with a final "The End", instead of the customary "continued."

Then to the evening paper: and on page three the thick double column heading "Billy Bunter's author dead."

Quite frankly I must admit to a feeling of acute personal distress and memories came flooding to mind...

That first for me Gem in 1932; my hero worship of Tom Merry for so many youthful years. I can never deny that there was an influence for good exercised on my character through reading the Gem. The excitement of discovering the truth of the identity of Martin and Frank, and subsequent personal letters from this dear man, letters carefully preserved. The disappointment of a missed visit to Broadstairs in 1955 owing to heavy snow storms.

The continued enjoyment for me through the years of reading yesterday's Gems and Magnets; the delight in the magic of St. Jim's and Greyfriars. Now with Frank's going, I wonder at the future of Bunter. Could publishers Cassells be asked to secure permission to publish in their Bunter series the great Magnet and St. Jim's series of the past? This would be a fitting memorial to the genius of the greatest of all school story writers.

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TRIBUTE FROM "DOWN UNDER"

By Syd Smyth

I was very sad to read in our morning paper of dear old C.H.'s death. I had no idea, and thought it was just another half baked reporter's usual twaddle about Bunter but, when I read it, I was wishing I had been right. I'm afraid it was on my mind all that day, at least. C.H. had been a very large part of my life since my teens and hardly a day went by without some sort of thought about his writings. After 1945, as you will have experienced too, he became a real person through his letters and articles in C.D. and also per personal correspondence.

He seemed indestructible with his splendid output of books and

scripts, etc. which would have done credit to a much younger man. He was a wonderful old man. His character came through during the next decade or so, and, although always something of a mystery (even to his contemporaries and fellow contributors) a pleasing picture was presented of a man intensely proud of his writings for younger people and ever willing to discuss his well-loved characters with his admirers. He was a man sure of his ground and confident of his talent. This, combined with a bulldog - like asperity towards half baked criticism of his writings, made it an easy task for him to demolish his critics. Not that his work was above criticism. Not at all. But let it be criticised by those who are deeply read in the best of Hamilton (as it has been many times) but not by the all too familiar chuckle-headed reporter who can't get past the lowest denominator catch line. Even clever George Orwell couldn't get away with a specious half-baked presentation of a poorly rehearsed joke. Alright for the entertainment of the non-Hamiltonian, but useless for the specialist.

To me it was a final poignancy for C.H. to die on Christmas Eve. How can we read those marvellous Christmas series now without sadness. He painted to me, out here in hot Australia, the perfect atmosphere of a seasonal English Christmas as well as having the characters present we couldn't do without.

So we have to say our farewell to Charles Hamilton. He left a legacy to everyone of us.

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A TRIBUTE TO CHARLES HAMILTON

By Jack Corbett

On Christmas Eve a great man died, this silent, holy night,
His spirit heard the angels sing and rose in heavenly flight.
A man we love, Charles Hamilton, whose world of schoolboy lore
Gave happiness to millions, with stories by the score.

He made a world within this sphere, where right always prevailed,
Where fun and frolics had their place, where evil always failed.
The characters so deftly drawn, are real and true to life,
They live with us for evermore, in times of peace and strife.

continued ...

The master hand wrote stories grand, in bright or sober mood,
 The manliness of Wharton in self sacrifice or feud.
 The happy, gay Bob Cherry, or the cynic, Vernon-Smith,
 The languid Lord Mauleverer, are real, not just a myth.

The Falstaff of this schoolboy world, a harmless rogue, just Bunter,
 Made millions laugh as he would say "I'm hungry as a hunter".
 And there are many more we know, like D'Arcy and Tom Merry,
 These characters inspired us all, and time will never bury.

Alas! the gates of Greyfriars, of Rookwood and St. Jim's
 Have gently closed in silence and the light within now dims.
 In sadness now we meditate on golden hours long past,
 And O, to think that master hand has really penned its last.

Yet those of us who own rare books of "sere and yellow leaf",
 Can enter still that golden sphere for hours or minutes brief.
 So now we say with gratitude, goodbye our author friend,
 You gave more than you realised and made the world your friend.

We cannot now express our thoughts in speech or written word,
 We simply murmur "Thank you" and pray that you have heard.
 There is a treasured place for you in countless hearts today,
 Your "family" will just live on, they cannot fade away.

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TRIBUTES

FROM HOME AND ABROAD

GEOFF HOCKLEY (New Zealand): Probably like many others the thought of Frank Richards passing away had never even occurred to me - he seemed to be going on for ever. I was shocked and saddened when I read the news of his death. My most affectionate memories of his work are of the days of the red Magnets, when the week seemed like a month while I waited for the next issue - especially the series which culminated in "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out", which, by the way, I'd give pounds to read again.



C. H. CHAPMAN

KINGSGATE
- 22-6-61. -

60
- FRANK RICHARDS -

PETER HANGER (Northampton): In spite of his great age the news of Charles Hamilton's death came as a great shock to me. I expect the O.B.B.C. will plan some permanent memorial to him, and I would like to join in somehow or other.

W. H. EVANS (Monmouth): The Supplement touched me so deeply that I was in tears. It was a grand tribute to a wonderful author. I am not one who remembers him by Bunter or Coker, but by his human true-to-life stories about Mark Linley.

TEX RICKARD (Canada): Rarely has one man's genius,
Kept pulsing
For so long
The Youth in himself,
In his works
And in his many friends.

DON WEBSTER (Kew): In one's lifetime there comes a Red Letter Day. Mine came in 1912 when a copy of the Gem was passed on to me. The Magnet naturally followed. In my opinion Frank Richards was unsurpassed as a writer of school stories throughout the last 60 years, and his loss to the youth of that era is irretrievable. I doff my cap to him in respectful memory.

"He was a man, take him for all in all.
We shall not look upon his like again."

ROSS STORY (Worthing): Another part of "old England" has gone - and will never be replaced. The only consoling thought is the fact that his stories will be remembered long after the present-day stuff has receded into limbo.

H. WEBB (Bury St. Edmunds): It has seemed like losing a personal friend. It was his books among other things that helped me when I lost my small son Dennis three years ago.

ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby): The master has gone. It's unbelievable. No more new stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. What a loss to us who loved him and his stories. During his long life he has given happiness to countless thousands of boys and girls, and to not a few adults. I only hope that we who have admired him so much can do something to keep alive his memory.

GEORGE McROBERTS (Cregagh): I remember the old Magnet from its very first number. I feel that I have lost a very dear friend, and I am sure that many of your readers will feel the same.

FRED BOTTOMLEY (Tottenham): It is hard to believe we have lost him. One sort of imagined him going on for ever, writing his grand stories. I think it is disgraceful that one who has, during his lifetime, brought such pleasure to so many people was not given an honour or recognition of some kind. He was undoubtedly the greatest writer of school stories ever. Thank you, Frank Richards, for all the happiness you gave us.

ROBERT MORTIMER (East Molesey): I was saddened by the news of his passing. He was old in years and we knew he could not last for ever, but, as you say, his passing has left a gap that can never be filled. He will never be forgotten, and we collectors will treasure more than ever the fruits of his work.

RON HODGSON (Mansfield): We must be thankful that he was spared to us so long, and he must have died a contented man, knowing how happy he has made countless thousands of people the world over for such a long time. His name will never fade.

JOHN ROBYNS (Southwick): I cannot help but feel his death personally, for he was a tremendous influence for good in my early life - and when one was so alone and adrift as I was when a boy, such influence was of extreme value. In addition to this, I have been in sprightly correspondence with him for some years and he was so interested in my children. In fact he wrote "Billy Bunter's Barring Out" for Elaine, my eldest daughter, when I told Frank Richards of the joy she derived from reading the original "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out" so many times. In red Magnet days he meant so much to me - and I am grateful to him for years of great happiness.

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere): All of us owe a debt of gratitude to a man who has not only entertained us for a lifetime, but has also contributed to a code of behaviour as portrayed in the reluctance of his schoolboy characters to do the wrong thing.

JOHN JUKES (Bournemouth): When I consider the untold hours of pleasure his work gave me I am left with a sense of gratitude for his labours.

LES ROWLEY (Warsaw): The winds round Wharton Lodge must surely be sounding a mournful requiem at the passing of Frank Richards, and the house party at Eastwood House will be quiet in its remembrance of Martin Clifford. I cannot agree with some of the dismal johnnies who are already bemoaning the passing of an era. The Hamilton era is by no means past, and I feel that our beloved author would have been the last to have wanted us to bemoan his leaving us. He has left, for us of the past generations - for those of the present - and, let us hope, for those of future years, a vast store of laughter. Nevertheless there is a gap which cannot be filled, and the real "boys" of Greyfriars and St. Jim's - that is you, me, and the others, will feel an acute sense of loss.

F. STURDY (Middlesbrough): Vale Hamilton. Without doubt irreplaceable. Unique in his field. At the exact moment on Boxing Day when the death was announced on television I had the much neglected Tracey series on my knee. A coincidence and a sad moment.

ERIC LAWRENCE (Wokingham): His like we shall never know again, the mould from which he was made must surely have been broken. A great loss to the world of youth.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I was profoundly affected by the news of Charles Hamilton's passing. It was an event which, we all knew, must happen sooner rather than later. I think we all may have prayed that he might be spared to give just one more novel or just one more Annual.

JOHN STOKES (Dublin): I have learned with very deep sorrow of the passing of Frank Richards, the kindly, gentle, wise old man to whom so many of us, both old and young, owe so much. I shall always remember him with gratitude and affection, not alone for the many hours of happiness he gave me through the written word, but, also, for many acts of personal kindness and generosity. May he sleep in peace.

J. YORKE ROBINSON (Herne Bay): It was with a deep feeling of personal loss that I heard of the death of Frank Richards. My 15 year-old daughter, who shares my love of the old papers, was greatly moved when the news came through. I still remember what pleasure his stories gave me as a schoolboy. Happy days - beautiful yarns.

FRED GRIFFIN (New York): To me, Frank Richards was the finest writer of boys' stories of this century. His passing will be mourned by all his old and new readers alike. He was the personification of eternal youth.

W. J. A. HUBBARD (Kenya): The sudden passing of Mr. Charles Hamilton comes as a profound shock to all book lovers and, in particular, to the admirers of the school story of which he was so brilliant an exponent, for he almost seemed immortal. His literary ability in his own sphere was remarkable, and as a character painter he had few equals and scarcely any superiors. To my mind, however, his greatest achievement was that for many years he gave countless hours of pleasure to millions of people all over the world. That was an achievement of which any great author might well be proud.

RONALD HUMMELL (Holloway): He was truly the king of school story authors, more people than ever would have acclaimed him had his work been published in hard covers between the wars. We shall not see his like again, of that I am sure.

GEORGE BURGESS (Romsey): So we have lost at last the best friend of our youth. Thank you for the lovely Supplement in memory of our dear pal. There will never be another Frank Richards.

STANLEY NICHOLLS (Australia): No doubt we feel now as people do whose loved parent has died at a fine old age. The advance of years was seen, and the end known to be imminent. But when it came we felt the blow as keenly as if it were unexpected. Frank Richards' memorial is in the hearts of his readers. I'm sure you feel as I do that it is the kind of monument he liked best.

ARTHUR V. HOLLAND (Australia): I feel that I have lost a very dear friend. For over fifty years he has given me many hours of pleasure. But to live on in the hearts of those who love us is not to die. The name of Frank Richards will be very precious to a countless number throughout the world for many years to come. It has been said that "Whom the gods love die young!" This applies to Frank Richards, for he died a boy at heart. God be with him.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): Frank Richards, our dear kind friend - one of the greatest authors that ever lived - has gone. I am not ashamed to confess that I sat down and sbbbed like a kid. There is a gleam of light in the fact that his great work will live on. I thank God for this, for, often in the past, Frank Richards' stories have helped me to win through when the outlook was dark. Yes, we have lost a great friend. God bless him.

DR. R. WILSON (Glasgow): The death of our beloved and revered Frank Richards must have caused many a pang in the hearts of his devoted admirers. I think we all had decided that, like Greyfriars characters, he would grown no older. Many eloquent tributes have been and will be paid to his memory.

JACK COOK (Newcastle-on-Tyne): With the passing of Frank Richards we have lost not only a good writer but a guiding hand, a prompter of all that was good; a man who, through his writings, became the friend of thousands. God bless him in his new life.

KENNETH KIRBY (South Africa): The great batsman has played a long and brilliant innings and has retained his own peculiar brand of wizardry to the end. My son, Oswald, and I, from South Africa, welcome this opportunity to pay tribute to the great departed. We owe to him, not only many hours of the highest pleasure spent in the magic world which he created, but a profound inspiration towards a higher code of behaviour. Harry Wharton and Billy Bunter will never cease to form part of our daily conversation nor are they by any means an insignificant part of the link which binds us in spirit to the Commonwealth we have left in name - that Commonwealth which Charles Hamilton clearly valued so highly. His prompt and charming replies to our inportunate letters are cherished heirlooms.

CHARLES VAN RENEN (South Africa): My entire family was deeply distressed to learn of the passing of our dear old friend, Charles Hamilton. For the past fifteen years we have spent many, many winter evenings together in that most beloved of worlds - Hamiltonia. We mourn his loss very sincerely. We find it hard to realise that that grand old man, the creator of that world of happiness, has passed on, but we find consolation in the thought that he has left for us such a wealth of happiness in the shape of his immortal stories. For the countless happy hours he has brought to his fans throughout the world for longer than half a century, his soul will surely rest in peace.

BILL STORY (Toronto): The unparalleled dean of prolific and inimitable school adventures has left us, but his most cherished memory, it may be safe to predict, will continue to live on ad infinitum, for the joy and delight he gave us. I have experienced untold delight from his wonderfully told tales. He was a man unique in his era.

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh): He opened the gates of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood to us, for which we are eternally grateful. God Rest His Soul.

HARRY BROSTER (Kinver): The memory of Frank Richards will be immortalised in his most popular character, Billy Bunter. The loss to the entire OEBC world is as great as that of Herbert Leckenby. Both inspired, one with his writings, the other with his leadership. That leadership has been handed on to a worthy successor; the writings of Frank Richards will be with us for all time.

(cont'd from page 16).. edict, bread at teatime might be eaten with butter or jam but not both. My Uncle, of course, found a way round this, he had one piece dry and one piece with both butter and jam.

His love of children led my Uncle to feel sympathy with lame ducks and underdogs generally, and many is the tale of woe that has been assuaged with a generous "tip". To contemplate suffering made him suffer and his ready hand was there to help in any plight that came to his attention.

His character was established early in childhood and all his life he remained a "good little boy" seeking to please, ready with advice and help when he felt they were needed. He never became middle-aged or pompous; ever meek and at one with youth he would always reply to my childish question "Uncle, how old are you?" - "No, my little dear, you should ask your Old Uncle how young he is".

A Tribute to FRANK RICHARDS

By J. R. MURTAGH New Zealand

When the news of the death of our beloved Charles Hamilton broke into our Xmas celebrations here in New Zealand, I felt a sense of deep personal loss for I've loved and grown up with the characters he created since I first came to know them over 38 years ago at the tender age of eleven.

The world is much poorer for Frank Richards' death, but let us not be too sad at his passing. Let us rather be thankful that he was spared to us for so long and that he kept his health and enjoyment of life to such a ripe old age. Could any of us wish any more for ourselves? Let us always remember that Frank Richards will never really be dead while the characters that he created live on.

I feel that there will be a very special place for Frank Richards beyond the veil, for has he not brought happiness and joy to millions of youngsters and many not so young for over half a century.

It is gratifying to me to find that leading newspapers in this country have marked F.R.'s passing with Editorials. The Editorial in New Zealand's leading daily paper the 'Dominion' published in Wellington, our capital city, was headed: "Farewell to Bunter, Merry & Co." Here are a few extracts from it:

"What a grand bunch of chums Frank Richards created and to many of the fathers and grandfathers of today's schoolboys, the news of Frank Richards' passing will have brought back warm memories of their own youthful reading and the associations they formed vicariously with the boys of Greyfriars through the pages of those treasured weeklies the Gem and the Magnet.

Now alas the shutters have gone up on the Greyfriars tuckshop for good. It has sold its last cream bun, dispensed its final bottle of pop."

Another N.Z. paper headed its Editorial: "Farewell to Billy Bunter".

"Most of us can remember with nostalgia those intriguing yarns in the Magnet. With what delight have youngsters for more than 50 years read about Billy Bunter's pained cry of 'Yaroo!' when subjected to corporal punishment, or his dark mutterings about 'rotters' when one of his pet schemes for obtaining some grub went astray.

Perhaps the great consideration in Richards' writings was that his stories were harmless and healthy. It is a pity there are not more outpourings like his nowadays. The Greyfriars adventures were infinitely more absorbing than some of the comic-book trash produced now.

The Greyfriars boys were not prudes or snobs. They were fundamentally decent youngsters with those dashes of adventure and mischief to set them apart from the Little Lord Fauntleroy of other stories. And although they were written for the young they still maintained an appeal for the older, whose boys-at-heart spirit relished the uninhibited joy of living in the tales." This editorial concludes "There will be no more new adventures about the obese Bunter - he died with Frank Richards."

I venture to contradict the writer of the above final line. Bunter and the others did not die when Frank Richards passed on any more than our children die when we pass on. Frank Richards' characters were his children and will continue to live on so long as we and others like us read the stories that Frank Richards left behind to perpetuate his memory.

We in our little circle are the very fortunate ones for we have an almost limitless fountain of the great master's writings to draw from; also new articles are appearing all the time in C.D. and S.P.C. about our beloved characters.

No, the boys of Greyfriars and all the others are not dead - they will live on much longer than any of us or our children but we are the fortunate ones - we have lived in a period of time when these stories were published and when the writer lived. They have been a very pleasant part of our lives. Let us be thankful for that and remember that Frank Richards lives on through the many characters he created.