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BACK TO SCHOOL - AND SPORT

by Laurie Sutton

In the 1981 C.D. Annual there is an article of mine ("New Light on Some Old Stories") published with an Editorial Comment appended. Such Comment, while acceptable in the monthly C.D., where the author can reply in that publication, is surely out of place in the Annual, where it is left isolated on permanent record - particularly when the Editor is in error. Since my article was submitted early in the year, I suggest that the correct procedure would have been to refer it back if any of my facts were disputed.

Regarding the four S. O. L's that I stated came from the 1921-22 "School and Sport" (which the Editor denies, in arguing that they were reprints from the 1924-25 Boys' Friend) I do not possess these B.F. 's, and obviously the Editor does not possess the S. & S. However, it would seem from Danny's Diary that the St. Kit's stories ran in the B.F. between Sept. 1924 and May 1925, although not continuously. I cannot see why the S. & S. stories (written only three years earlier) should have received minor re-writing. The altering of Lovell to Wilmot was a simple editorial job, so what else was needed, other than perhaps a slight altering on occasions of the commencing and concluding paragraphs (not required in the S. O. L.) and the provision of Hamilton's own ending to the rebellion in place of the sub writer's effort.

However, I will list the titles of the 8½ S. & S. stories that Hamilton wrote, with their S. O. L. reprints. With this evidence, to assert that the S. O. L.'s came from the later B. F. reprints is like saying that the Gem reprints of the 1930's came from the Popular rather than their original Gem source.

<u>School & Sport</u>	<u>Approx. Words</u>	<u>S. O. L.</u>	<u>Approx. Words</u>
1. The Nameless Schoolboy	25,000)		
2. Parted Chums	25,000)	64. Parted Chums	50,000
3. Sent to Coventry	25,000)		
4. How Harry Nameless Found His Father	25,000)	70. The Boy Who Found His Father	50,000
5. Who Shall Be Captain?	25,000)		
6. The Foes of the Fourth	25,000)	136. Who Shall Be Captain?	50,000
7. The Tyrant of St. Kit's	19,000)	188. Up the Rebels	(Unable to confirm)
8. The St. Kit's Rebellion	21,000)		
9. Barred Out (Hamilton's contribution - 6 chaps.)	10,000)		
Nos. 7-9, Total =	50,000		

Now, regarding my statement (which the Editor doubts) that C. H. wrote only the first six chapters of S. & S. No. 9 I was not aware, either when I spotted the sub, or when I wrote my article, that the total word count of Nos. 7, 8, 9 practically confirms this fact, particularly when one reads the final paragraph of No. 9, chap. 6 - "The St. Kit's barring-out had begun! And nobody at St. Kit's - not even the rebels themselves - could surmise how it was going to end." Does anybody doubt that that paragraph was intended to conclude a week's episode, rather than appear in the middle of an instalment? Further examination suggests that a 25,000 word instalment was spread over S. & S. No. 7 and the first four chapters of No. 8, where chap. 5 commences: "St. Kit's cad!" - a new theme of inter-school rivalry, very appropriate to start a weekly instalment, even though not out of place for an inner chapter. Chap. 5 of No. 8 to the end of chap. 6 in No. 9 make up the remaining 25,000 word instalment.

On the suggestion that Hamilton left Hinton high and dry in the middle of a serial, if this means in the middle of a weekly instalment I have already indicated that he did not. If it means that Hamilton was guilty of "slightly shabby treatment" in leaving a series unfinished, I would have thought that after supplying some 200,000 words without payment (the equivalent of some 13 Magnet or 14 Gem stories of that period) even Hamilton would have to give an ultimatum. Whatever the circumstances (which none of us knows) I would have thought that it was not Hamilton who was guilty of shabby treatment.

Regarding Hinton, we are informed that as he had done some sub writing himself, it is not clear why he should engage another sub to finish off a Hamilton story. Well, who said that he did? Certainly not I. In fact, I made clear that there were two sub writers involved with St. Kit's, and it has never been established whether E. R. Home-Gall was the first or the second of these; therefore, Hinton himself could well have been the first, and the one to

finish off the Rebellion series. In fact, as Home-Gall has also revealed that he was never paid by Hinton, it seems unlikely that he was the first sub, writing no fewer than twelve stories without payment.

An interesting point is that after S. & S. No. 7 Hamilton's pen-name of Clifford Clive was dropped from the title heading, which surely suggests that C.H. supplied his last contribution with the instruction to Hinton not to use his pen-name for any substitute St. Kit's tales. No. 8 should have been the last Hamilton story had not Hinton spread 50,000 words over three weeks instead of two, so that Hinton was actually a week premature in dropping the author's name.

In case anybody still doubts my statement that the S. & S. Rebellion series was finished by a sub writer, I must give one or two examples of that writer's style in concluding S. & S. No. 9.

Here is the Head (Mr. Carker) speaking:- "Oh, do you?" Mr. Carker's unpleasant voice was heard. "You wish Dr. Cheyne were back here again, do you, Mr. Lathley?" he said grimly. "Then allow me to inform you that in all probability your wish will never fructify. I heard this morning that Dr. Cheyne is very ill indeed; dying, in fact." "Dr. Cheyne - dying?" said Harry, in a whisper. "Yes," rapped out Mr. Carker, "dying - probably dead by now. At any rate, in the critical state he's in, he'll die as soon as he hears of the havoc you've caused in the school, you - you young criminal!" Harry Lovell's eyes flashed. "Criminal!" he cried. "You dare to call me a criminal!"

Here is an example of the author's descriptive writing: 'His way led him across the high bridge which spans the River Wicke. As the junior approached in the early morning, with the birds twittering, and the cocks crowing in the farmyards around him, Harry could not help recalling the circumstances of his first crossing of that bridge, when he had dived from it to save his cousin Algy, who was drowning. Now everything looked very peaceful in the early morning light - the sheep grazing in the meadows, through which the broad river ran ...' 'Be this as it may, Randolph Carker ...' 'But judge of his utter astonishment when ...'

An episode that I like is when Lovell and Algy hold the desperate Mr. Carker at bay in his study. Algy leaves by the window to get the night train to London in order to summon his father. Lovell is left to guard the cowering Carker, who hesitates to tackle the boy, who is armed with a weapon. What is the weapon that terrifies the savage Head? A gun, a knife, or a red-hot poker? Well, actually, it's the Head's cane! However, Harry relaxes for a moment: 'Suddenly, with a spring like a tiger, Mr. Carker was upon him. The Fourth-form junior had been so deep in thought that the other had seized his advantage, and a chair as well. Before Harry could dodge the infuriated Carker had raised it above his head and brought it down with tremendous force on the Fourth-form captain. Instinctively Harry put out his elbow to break the force. It did so a little, and probably saved his life, but all the same, that savage blow was not entirely warded off.'

In case anyone is interested, Algy's mission was successful, for he brought back not only his father, but Lovell's father, and also the "dying" Dr. Cheyne, both of whom happened

to be staying with Algy's pater at the time. Dr. Cheyne had, of course, made a miraculous recovery from his injury.

I think that is quite enough to convince anybody with no more than a casual acquaintance with Charles Hamilton's writing. I can only assume that the Editor has never read this particular issue of S. & S., or that he read it a very long time ago. Either way, he was hardly justified in querying my statement, the accuracy of which he will surely now acknowledge.

(Eric Fayne adds: My footnote to Mr. Sutton's article in the Annual was not intended to be a criticism of an interesting, speculative essay. The footnote, concerning the St. Kit's stories, comprised last minute thoughts as additions to the article. My comments were mainly on the Boys' Friend, to which Mr. Sutton made no reference at all.

I was in error in stating that half the Boys' Friend serials had appeared in School & Sport. From Mr. Sutton's lengthy protests in this issue of C.D. it is evident that all of them had come from Hinton's defunct paper. I apologise to Mr. Sutton and to my readers. The error was partly due to what Hamilton himself said over thirty years ago. He stated that he wrote two new stories of St. Kit's for the Boys' Friend. From this it was assumed that the last two serials in the Friend had not come from Hinton's magazine. The matter has been mentioned more than once in C.D. down the long years, and I do not recall that either Mr. Sutton or anyone else ever questioned it.

I stated that I never had any reason to doubt that the Boys' Friend serials were in any part otherwise than by Hamilton himself. That was quite true. But I never cared much for them, and it is many years since I read them.

I find that Hamilton introduced St. Kit's into two Rookwood yarns - "Bound by a Promise" and "The Match with St. Kit's". Jimmy Silver, who had always found St. Kit's a walkover at games, promised a place in the team to Gunner. And then Silver discovered that St. Kit's had a great new team, led by the staunch Harry Wilmot. (Surely, in this case, Hamilton did not write of Harry Lovell and have the name editorially changed to Wilmot?) It is possible that these Rookwood stories may have been the "new St. Kit's stories" to which, many years later, Hamilton referred.

In his main article, Mr. Sutton mentioned certain surnames which were familiar in the Hamilton saga. I have an idea that Wilmot was not entirely peculiar to St. Kit's.

The real interest is: Who sold the St. Kit's stories to the A.P.? One would think that, as Hinton never paid for them, he could not have sold them. If Hamilton sold them to the A.P., as I think probable, would he have included even a small part written in by some sub author? It is a mystery to which any solution seems unlikely nearly sixty years later.)

In the Editor's footnote to my article on "School and Sport" in the February C.D. the question is asked whether, if Hamilton sold the St. Kit's stories to the A.P. he would have included even a small part written in by some sub author? The Editor adds that it is a mystery to which any solution seems unlikely nearly sixty years later. Well, I am able to clear up that mystery right now, after borrowing S.O.L. 188 ("Up the Rebels") from the Hamiltonian library of the London O.B.B.C.

S.O.L. 188 confirms my revelation that Charles Hamilton wrote only the first six chapters of "S. & S." No. 9, and that the Rebellion series was concluded in that paper by a sub writer. I suggested in my C.D. Annual article that Hamilton might have supplied his own ending for the S.O.L. reprint (or, as it transpires, earlier, for the 1925 Boys' Friend weekly). The conclusion is S.O.L. 188, following on from Hamilton's stopping point in "S. & S." No. 9 (end of chap. 6) comprises 25,000 words - the identical length of the previous eight weekly episodes published in "S. & S.". The probability surely is that Hamilton had already written the ninth weekly episode for "S. & S." but held it back in order to put some pressure on H. A. Hinton to honour his obligation regarding payment for the stories.

Incidentally, there is considerable abridgement in S.O.L. 188 of the "S. & S." published part of the Rebellion series, as a total of 75,000 words (three weeks of "S. & S.") was too long for even the enlarged 96-page S.O.L. Despite this, they got it wrong, for the story ends on page 90, and there is a 5-page "fill-up" of a Rookwood short story.

However, the reprinted part of the S.O.L. was not re-written in any way from the "S. & S." original. For obvious reasons, the name of Harry Lovell was altered to Harry Wilmot at the time of the first reprint in the Boys' Friend. The Headmaster, Dr. Cheyne, became Dr. Chenies, and the Fourth Form master, Mr. Lathley, became Mr. Rawlings. The latter change was evidently because St. Kit's also had a master named Mr. Rattrey, and Rookwood, of course, had a junior named Lattrey. It is surprising that the St. Kit's Mr. Rattrey was not re-named, but he played only a minor part in the stories.

It is quite clear that it was Hamilton who submitted the St. Kit's MS to the A.P., if only from the fact that it included his own ending to the Rebellion series. In any case, Hinton would have been too well known at the A.P. so soon after his sensation departure, and Hamilton's style and quality would have been immediately recognised in the stories by editorial staff. It does not necessarily follow, though, that it was Hamilton's idea to use St. Kit's in the Boys' Friend weekly - they might even have been suggested at first for the B.F. Library.

Going back to the Editorial Comment to my C.D. Annual article, and the question as to "whether the powers at the A.P. knew in 1924 that they were publishing serials which had already appeared in a defunct rival paper" I personally have not the slightest doubt that they were aware of this fact; doubtless they were informed by Hamilton that Hinton had not paid for the stories, thus giving the latter no claim on their ownership. With Hinton's unique method of publicising "S. & S." at the end of 1921, the A.P. must have been very much aware of their former man's activities - in fact, they made their knowledge public. Is it conceivable that nobody of importance at the A.P. purchased a copy of "S. & S."? Or, having done so, that nobody detected Hamilton's class in the main feature? And there was class in the St. Kit's stories, whether or not our Editor cared much for them (perhaps in comparing them with "The Boy Without a Name?").

Finally, may I say that the reason why I have not queried earlier references to "S. & S." in the C.D. is the quite simple one that, although I have possessed the "S. & S." issues for 15 years, I have only read them during the past two years.

I trust that I have now succeeded in shedding some light on the mystery that has always surrounded that rare publication, "School and Sport".

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