

"A minor miracle."—*New York Times*



# GOOD-BYE, **mr. chips**

JAMES HILTON

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY H.M. BROCK

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FOREWORD BY EDWARD WEEKS

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## PRAISE FOR MR. CHIPS

“A sentimental masterpiece.”

—*New York Herald Tribune*

“The tender, delicately wrought study of a beloved English schoolmaster. Before the reader is through he will have added Chips to his list of beloved book characters.”

—*Kansas City Star*

“An utterly charming story. . . Mr. Hilton has given us a tender, sweet story, the memory of which lingers.”

—*Boston Transcript*

“A tender and gentle story as warming to the heart and as nourishing to the spirit as any I can remember. . . . The most profoundly moving story that has passed this way in several years.”

—Alexander Woolcott

“A remarkably clear and sympathetic portrait of a delightful character.”

—*Saturday Review*

## FOREWORD

James Hilton was not only a very good novelist, he was a very good talker. Though he was English-born, he lived for the latter part of his life in California, and on my visits to the Coast I always looked forward to having a leisurely dinner with him, in the course of which we would compare notes about everything under the sun. I remember well our last meeting, for it occurred shortly after we had learned for sure that the Russians had perfected, far ahead of schedule, their atomic bomb. Jimmie was depressed by the news, for in his farsighted way he saw at once that this would involve us in the most dangerous armament race in human history.

I knew that he was at work on a new novel and at a favorable opening I asked how it was going.



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"I have made four beginnings," he said. "I think I have got a good idea and for about a week I'll start off each morning at the typewriter with a feeling of confidence. And then just after I have passed page fifty, it is as if the words 'So what!' suddenly stood out in capitals on the page. We haven't got the confidence we once had, now that we know about those bombs. It is a hard time in which to try to write fiction."

*Good-bye, Mr. Chips*, Hilton's most successful novel, and surely the most endearing portrait of a schoolteacher in our time, was written in another kind of desperation. In November, 1933, James Hilton was struggling to meet his deadline for a story for the Christmas issue of the *British Weekly*. He needed the fifty pounds (then two hundred and fifty dollars) he would be paid for the story; and he hadn't an idea. After a sleepless night, he rose and went for a bicycle ride in the foggy dawn. When he returned, ravenous, for

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breakfast he had his lead, and *Mr. Chips* was written in longhand and almost without alteration in the four days that followed. It was published with little notice in London, but when it appeared in the *Atlantic* the following April, the American acclaim woke up the English. Everywhere you went you heard people talking about Mr. Chips as if he were someone they had known. Bishop Wil'iam A. Lawrence spoke of *Mr. Chips* in a sermon at Trinity Church in Boston; William Lyon Phelps, the most quoted professor in New Haven, said it was "a masterpiece and ought to be so regarded a hundred years from now"; and Alexander Woollcott, who as the Town Crier had a more stimulating effect on readers at that period than any other single person, devoted a whole broadcast to *Mr. Chips*, which he called "the most profoundly moving story that has passed this way in several years."

To Jimmie Hilton the theme was as natural as

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breathing. His father was a headmaster, and at the boarding school where Jimmie was sent, he was happy. Had he cared more for athletics he might have been less observant of his teachers. But he was a roly-poly, good tempered, and no good at games. His mind was inquiring and responsive: he wrote poems about the Russian Revolution and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and broke all speed records for reciting the long Latin grace.

*Mr. Chips*, as Hilton drew him, is a composite; he has the wise and sweetening influence of Jimmie's father, the discipline and idiosyncrasy of his Latin teacher, and the unsparing devotion which the profession demands of all. And this was why people wrote him from all parts of the globe to say that they had been taught by the original Mr. Chips. He was thirty-three when he wrote this story, but it established him for life.

EDWARD WEEKS



## PREFACE

*Good-bye, Mr. Chips* was written in London during a foggy week of November, 1933. I am chary of using the word "inspiration," which is too often something nonexistent that a writer waits for when he is lazy; but, as a matter of record, *Good-bye, Mr. Chips* was written more quickly, more easily, and with fewer subsequent alterations than anything I had ever written before, or have ever written since.

It was first published in the Christmas number of the *British Weekly*, in December 1933; after which, with a certain wild abandon, I had it sent to the *Atlantic Monthly*—a magazine which I had long held as a secret pinnacle of ambition. The *Atlantic* printed the story in its

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issue of April 1934, and about the same time proposed its publication as a book. This publication took place on June 8. Four months later *Good-bye, Mr. Chips* first appeared as a book in England, from Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. Thus one may summarize that, having been written and first printed in its native land, it was discovered by America, and later came back to England with the success that America had given it. And now, again in America, it appears in this new and sumptuous dress.

If I recount these details with pride, I do so also with modesty, for I know how few are the writers to whom such romances happen, and that, with no matter how much or little merit, a portion of luck must be distilled. But I do take pride in the reception that America has given to my very English book; certainly no author could ever have enjoyed his correspondence more than I have during the past year. One

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feature has been the discovery of the original Mr. Chips in so many different parts of the world; and I believe those letters from readers have told the whole truth, and that my tribute to a great profession has fitted a great many members of it everywhere.

J. H.

WANSTEAD, LONDON

*March 1935*

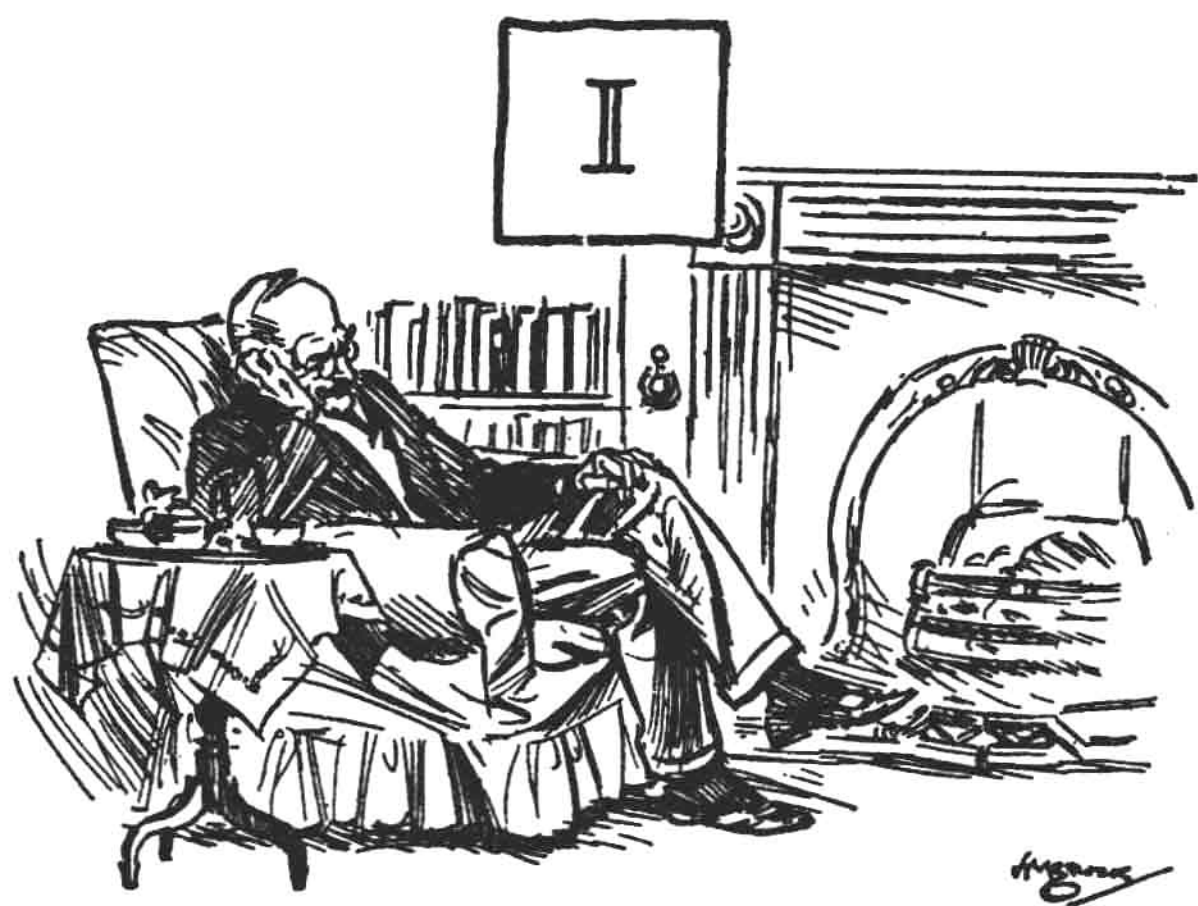
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GOOD-BYE, MR. CHIPS







WHEN you are getting on in years (but not ill, of course), you get very sleepy at times, and the hours seem to pass like lazy cattle moving across a landscape. It was like that for Chips as the autumn term progressed and the days shortened till it was actually dark enough to light the gas before call-over. For Chips, like some old sea captain, still measured time by the signals of the past; and well he might, for he lived at Mrs. Wickett's, just across the road from the School.

## GOOD-BYE, MR. CHIPS

He had been there more than a decade, ever since he finally gave up his mastership; and it was Brookfield far more than Greenwich time that both he and his landlady kept. "Mrs. Wickett," Chips would sing out, in that jerky, high-pitched voice that had still a good deal of sprightliness in it, "you might bring me a cup of tea before prep, will you?"

When you are getting on in years it is nice to sit by the fire and drink a cup of tea and listen to the school bell sounding dinner, call-over, prep, and lights-out. Chips always wound up the clock after that last bell; then he put the wire guard in front of the fire, turned out the gas, and carried a detective novel to bed. Rarely did he read more than a page of it before sleep came swiftly and peacefully, more like a mystic intensifying of perception than any changeful entrance into another world. For his days and nights were equally full of dreaming.

## GOOD-BYE, MR. CHIPS

He was getting on in years (but not ill, of course); indeed, as Doctor Merivale said, there was really nothing the matter with him. "My dear fellow, you're fitter than I am," Merivale would say, sipping a glass of sherry when he called every fortnight or so. "You're past the age when people get these horrible diseases; you're one of the few lucky ones who're going to die a really natural death. That is, of course, if you die at all. You're such a remarkable old boy that one never knows." But when Chips had a cold or when east winds roared over the fenlands, Merivale would sometimes take Mrs. Wickett aside in the lobby and whisper: "Look after him, you know. His chest . . . it puts a strain on his heart. Nothing really wrong with him—only *anno domini*, but that's the most fatal complaint of all, in the end."

*Anno domini* . . . by Jove, yes. Born in 1848, and taken to the Great Exhibition as a toddling