



The Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL chats with some of his correspondents

THE cry is, "Still they come!" From all parts of the English-speaking world—as well as from remote parts of the globe where the English language is rarely spoken—cheery letters come to me from enthusiastic readers of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

Many of these letters I have replied to in the course of my daily duties. Many others, glowing with expressions of goodwill, bear no address, but it would be churlish of me to miss this opportunity of thanking the writers very cordially for their good wishes, bright suggestions, and delighted approval of the healthy fare provided by THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

QUEER QUERIES

Lots of my correspondents show an insatiable thirst for information. Their letters consist almost solely of questions. These they fire off at me with the rapidity of a machine-gun in action.

One reader in the Transvaal has sent me six pages of questions. Were I to attempt to answer them all in this article, I should need to double the size of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!

As a matter of fact, I do not pretend to be able to answer them all. To do so, I should need to be a walking encyclopedia, and to possess the ability of "Datas," the Memory Man! I frankly confess I cannot give the colour of the hair and eyes of every fellow at Greyfriars. Neither can I give a

list of their home addresses, their pet hobbies, their favourite books, and so on and so forth. I could give these particulars in isolated cases. Billy Bunter, for example. His hair is of a nondescript hue; his eyes are blue-grey; his home address is Bunter Court; his pet hobby is eating; and his favourite book is Mrs. Beeton's Cookery Book! But I could not extend this information to embrace every one of the three hundred boys at Greyfriars! My Transvaal chum will, I feel sure, readily understand this. He must be very keenly interested in the Greyfriars boys, or he would never have subjected me to such a bombardment of questions!

A POETIC TRIBUTE!

There are poets in our midst! This is proved by a letter in rhyme, which was sent to me by a reader who styles himself "Robert the Rhymer," and who lives at Horsham, in Sussex.

"Bright stories in the ANNUAL,
It is a treat to scan you all!"

That is the ingenious way in which "Robert the Rhymer" starts his poetic tribute; and he goes on to say:

"You give such grand variety
That people in Society,
And folk of humble origin,
All love to delve and forage in
This book of mirth and merriment—
A truly grand experiment!"

It was also a successful experiment—the launching of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL. This is our sixth year of publication, and, although there are many rivals in the field, our bumper volume is still voted the brightest and best.

I wish I had space to quote the whole of my Sussex chum's poem. There must be something inspiring in the atmosphere of his native town, for one of our greatest poets first saw the light of day at Horsham. I thank "Robert the Rhymer" for his effusion, and I hope that this, our latest and greatest edition of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, will inspire him to fresh efforts!

A TYPICAL LETTER

I am reproducing the following letter, because it is typical of many hundreds which have come to hand:

"Dear Editor,—I have perused THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL for 1924 from cover to cover, and it is better than a banquet—though I hardly think Billy Bunter would say this!

"There are so many grand stories in the volume that it would require the judgment of Solomon to decide which was the best. Personally, I must award the palm to "A Great Man at Greyfriars," which deals with Mr. Martin Clifford's visit to the old school, and gives many interesting glimpses of the personality of the popular GEM author.

"The adventure stories, the articles, the coloured plates, the poems—all are absolutely A1.

"One of the greatest charms of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL is that it is always seasonal. It is a boon companion by the Christmas fireside, and also under a shady tree on a sweltering summer day. It caters for all tastes; it covers a wide range of topics. In a nutshell, it is far and away the best book ever published for boys and girls. I do not intend to flatter; I am giving you my honest opinion.

"I hope the good old ANNUAL will flourish for many years to come. Fifty years hence, I hope to be buying it for my grand-children; and, eighty years hence, for my great grand-

children! You will observe that, like most of your readers, I am a cheery optimist!

"Yours loyally,

"A LOVER OF GREYFRIARS."

These are the sort of letters that warm the cockles of an Editor's heart. I receive them daily. The office files are bulging with them. But I never grow weary of such letters, since they act as a spur to my resolve to make each edition of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL better than the last.

CANDID CRITICS

There is another side to the picture. Not every letter I receive is couched in terms of praise and appreciation.

Never was a story written, or a poem penned, that escaped the attentions of that outspoken gentleman known as the Candid Critic.

Now, criticism is a very good thing—when it is helpful criticism. But when merely destructive, criticism is worthless.

One of my critics suggests that the ANNUAL would be much improved if it were twice the present size, and half the present price. I don't doubt it! But if my friend understood anything of printing and publishing expenses, he would realise that THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, at its present size and price, gives better value than any of its contemporaries. If I were to tell him the cost of a coloured frontispiece alone, it would probably take his breath away!

Many other criticisms have come my way, some helpful, others rather stupid. Sensible criticisms are always assured of getting a sympathetic hearing. As for the other sort—well, there is always the waste-paper basket!

The vast majority of the letters I receive, however, are written in strains of the highest approval.

I can assure my world-wide army of reader-chums that no effort shall be spared to make THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL better and brighter, and more and more attractive, as the years roll by.



My Postal Order

Billy By Bunter

O UR postman's name is Mr. Pim,
 Because he "passes by";
 He glares at me in manner grim
 With cold and steely eye.
 But though he brought me "nix" to-day,
 My postal order's on the way!

He brought a letter for the Head,
 And two for Mr. Twigg;
 But when I asked for mine, he said:
 "There's nothing doing!" Pig!
 But still, unless it's gone astray,
 My postal order's on the way!

I tried to raise a little loan,
 And tackled Bull and Brown;
 The former gave a dismal groan,
 The latter gave a frown.
 They treated me with scorn; but stay!
 My postal order's on the way!

I've been expecting it for years.
 Why is it thus delayed?
 I sometimes harbour ghastly fears
 That it has been mislaid.
 Yet still my heart is bright and gay—
 My postal order's on the way!

It may not come next week, or year,
 That "tip" from Uncle Bertie;
 In fact, it may not reach me here
 Till Nineteen hundred and thirty.
 But never mind the long delay—
 My postal order's on the way!

Hallo! The postman is in sight!
 He comes in my direction;
 An envelope, both neat and white,
 He shows for my inspection.
 My heart beats high with hope. Hooray!
 My postal order's come to-day!

