

# The COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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# DIGEST

DECEMBER 1958

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**W**uleticle  
**C**reetings to all  
 Collectors

Bob  
Whiter.

# HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

I am indebted to Eric Fayne for the following very interesting item of news which appeared in the London "Evening News" recently.

Round about Christmas time I can picture some Londoners, at least, making their way along Shaftesbury Avenue. I should very much like to have the views of anyone who sees the production.

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It's Absolutely Ripping.....BILLY BUNTER IS THE STAR by Bill Boorne

I say you chaps, here's some absolutely ripping news - Billy Bunter, the fat sneak of Greyfriars School, the Owl of the Remove, is to make his first appearance on the stage this Christmas. He will be seen - matinees only - at the Palace Theatre in "Billy Bunter's Mystery Christmas."

Thirty-five-year-old Gerald Campion, who lives in Chelsea, is married with a daughter of 13 and a son of 10, will be Billy Bunter on the stage, as he has been in more than 80 television programmes about him. This will be the first time Gerald Campion has been in the theatre since "Boys in Brown" at the Duchess some 11 years ago. And the last time he was at the Palace, in 1939, he was a call-boy for "Chu Chin Chow."

Billy Bunter will line up with the Famous Five - Harry Wharton; Bob Cherry; Frank Nugent; Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

I asked actress Bernalette Milnes, who is putting the show on with her husband Michael Anthony, if there would be any girls in the show.

She was almost shocked. "Girls?" she said, "the boys at Greyfriars never have anything to do with girls."

Mr. Frank Richards (real name Charles Hamilton) who lives at Broadstairs, and though approaching 90, is still writing, created Billy Bunter 50 years ago. He appeared for the first time in "The Magnet" (girls used to read it surreptitiously, too!) in February, 1908.

And as Martin Clifford, the remarkable Mr. Hamilton, who turned out some 1,500,000 words methodically and painstakingly year after year also wrote the famous stories about St. Jim's and Tom Merry in another boys' magazine, The Gem.

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# THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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FROM "THE SURPRISE" No. 23, AUGUST 6, 1922



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## HAMILTONIANA

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\*Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

The "Daily Sketch" of December 18th devoted the greater part of a page to an interview with Frank Richards by Herbert Kretzmer. Here are a few extracts:

Referring to the play at the Palace Theatre, Frank Richards said: "Haven't been to London since the war. I shall never go to London again - not even to see old Bunter on the stage. Old Bunter" he chuckled nodding his head "Who'd have thought he'd last so well? Makes me laugh sometimes it really does." "I'm a very old man, I can't last much longer. But" he prodded his pipe defiantly into empty air - "it's absurd to worry about death. When death comes, why, I'll feel like I'm changing trains in a long journey. That's all there is to that."

"I think a lot about God and the life to come. I've written a book on religion. Nobody wants it, all they want is Bunter. They won't let me be serious."

There was also the interesting statement that Miss Edith Hood had been his housekeeper for 30 years.

Herbert Kretzmer finished his statement like this: "I said good-bye to this marvellous and alert old man, who built a school out of the imaginings of his unique talent and filled it with boys who can never die - because they had never really lived."

"Good-bye" he said, sitting very quietly by the fire. "Goodbye, my boy, goodbye".

(Well let's hope the grand old man was wrong in one respect - when he said "I can't last much longer". We can't have him changing trains yet. H.L.)

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BILLY BUNTER'S MYSTERY CHRISTMAS: The play at the Palace Theatre is creating a lot of interest. It has twice been mentioned on sound radio. On December 19th there was an interview with the lady producer. She said it would be quite up to date with a plot concerning the theft of atomic plans.

Then on December 23rd Barbara Hooper had a word or two with Gerald Campion who had just finished a dress rehearsal watched by an audience of children. Miss Hooper asked if Bunter wasn't dated. Mr. Campion emphatically denied that declaring that Bunter was as popular with the present generation of children as those of 50 years ago. He gave some amusing extracts from letters he had received to prove it.

He also told of a correspondent who had asked for the loan of some of his garments for a fancy dress affair. The request came from an elderly lady.

Many of our members will be going to the Palace Theatre. If I get any of their opinions in time I'll try and get them into this issue.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters on interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue).

No. 22. TO BIND OR NOT TO BIND

That is the question which most of us have asked ourselves from time to time. We have, of course, ample proof that copies carefully done up in parcels will retain their pristine freshness in amazing fashion, but the great destroyers are rusting pins, which rot the paper around them, and leave unsightly marks wholesale.

In my own collection I have two thousand copies bound so far, and, slowly but surely, I am wading through the remaining two thousand and more - slowly, on account of the cost; surely, because I am certain it is the only method of preserving them.

The papers lose their individuality and charm when they are bound. The tendency arises to regard the bound copies as cherished possessions over which to gloat through the glass doors of a bookcase. Once your papers are bound, they cease to be intimate friends. You accord them a dignity which they never had when they accompanied you to bed, or when you sprawled with them on a settee or took them as companions on a train journey.

It is a mistake to put too great a number to a volume. The larger the volume, the less intimacy you have with the contents. I have a volume which contains 73 Gems - a book which is as unwieldy and unfriendly as a volume of the Larger Oxford Dictionary. I have two fat volumes, each containing 50 Megnets. To nurse one of these before the fire is, literally, to have Mr. Prout or Billy Bunter on your lap.

It is my practice at present to have my Gems and Magnets bound by hundreds - 3 volumes to the hundred. The cost is about £5 10s for the binding of the three. Even here, the books are too big - they would be far more satisfactory if bound in 4 volumes to the hundred - but that would bump up the cost. My advice to binders is, if you can possibly afford it, keep your volumes fairly small.

The

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your friends; plug Blake as you never plugged him before. Mention him at every opportunity you get, Aim at getting as many new readers as humanly possible immediately. Think up new ways of getting your news-agent to display the Library - for the only reason Blake is not as well known today as he used to be is because he is lumped in, on the book-stalls, with children's picture papers like ROBIN HOOD and BUCK JONES.

Do all this - and Blake will go on, gaining strength with every issue, and above all you will still be able to buy a copy of the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY every month.

OTHERWISE - IT'S GOODBYE, SEXTON BLAKE!!!!

Think it over. It's in your hands. Act TODAY! Tomorrow may be too late.

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## HAMILTONIANA

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Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

In a recent report by the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education it was stated that school children today were getting too fat. So, as no doubt you've noticed, the newspaper columnists seized on the Owl of Greyfriars for an appropriate headline. For example, the Daily Herald's - "Children Becoming a Lot of Billy Bunters". Useful chap, Billy.

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THE BUNTER SHOW: The play at the Palace Theatre seems to have been a success, though the general opinion among Hamiltonians seems to have been that it was hardly Greyfriars.

Nevertheless, as Larry Morley points out, Peter Noble stated in "Movie Merry Go Round" on January 18th, that the play was such a success that it is to be made into a film with Gerald Campion in the part he has made his own. Further developments will be watched with interest.

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RESULT OF QUIZZLE NO. 2: Solution to clue down: Colonel Wharton.  
Hidden words: The Terrible Three of St. Jim's. First correct solution was received from R. J. GODSAVE, 35 WOODHOUSE ROAD, LEYTONSTONE, LONDON, E.11, to whom 5/- has been sent. 10 points earned for London club. Points total:- London 20 points.

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