



*How the Ninth
Birthday of the
Holiday Annual
was Celebrated!*

By THE EDITOR

THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL has grown out of its infancy, and is now a healthy and flourishing youngster of nine.

With each successive birthday, the popularity of our ANNUAL has grown more and more pronounced, until it is now practically world-wide. "Remember, remember, the First of September!" is the slogan of thousands of British boys and girls; for on that day—or thereabouts—THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL makes its welcome appearance.

When this, the ninth volume, had been prepared for press, and the mountainous labours of our authors and artists were completed, it was proposed to hold a great celebration at Greyfriars School, in Kent, to commemorate the ANNUAL's ninth birthday.

Why, you will ask, was Greyfriars chosen as the venue of the celebration? For two reasons. In the first place, this volume, to give it its full title, is THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL. The schoolboy journalists of Greyfriars—Harry Wharton, Dick Penfold, Billy Bunter, and others—were among its pioneers. They have a sort of proprietary interest in the ANNUAL, and they are entitled to claim some of the credit for its production and popularity.

Secondly, there were to be over one hundred guests at the birthday celebration; and I could not possibly entertain so large a party at my suburban villa, or in my editorial sanctum. A spacious and commodious meeting-place was required; and Greyfriars, with its ample accommodation, its fine facilities for catering, and so forth, made an ideal place for a gathering of the clans.

A certain day in July was set apart for the celebration. And everything went off in splendid style. Glorious weather favoured our project; and, to quote Bob Cherry, the sunny-faced optimist of the Greyfriars Remove, "everything in the garden was lovely!"

Greyfriars Invaded!

I WAS the first guest to arrive, having risen with the lark in order to travel down to Greyfriars.

When I arrived, Harry Wharton & Co., the heroes of the Remove Form, were punting a football about in the Close. They "spotted" me at once, and their reception was so cordial and overwhelming that I was almost swept off my feet! Schoolboys simply swarmed around me, and I became

aware of a babel of voices.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" I heard Bob Cherry exclaim, in his dulcet tones. "Here's the Editor of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL, you fellows!"

"Jolly pleased to see you, sir!" said Harry Wharton heartily.

"Delighted!" chanted Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull.

"The delightfulness, on this very suspicious occasion, is terrific!" chimed in Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Indian junior, in his weird English.

Everybody seemed to be trying to shake my hand at the same time.

Judging by the way it was seized and shaken, I think it must have been mistaken for a pump-handle!

"I say, sir, you're looking awfully fit!" remarked Billy Bunter, the plump Falstaff of the Greyfriars Remove. "Do you train on jam tarts?"

There was a laugh at this.

"The idea of celebrating the ANNUAL's ninth birthday is perfectly ripping!" Bunter went on. "I hear there's going to be a banquet, and a cricket-match between the Remove and the HOLIDAY ANNUAL staff, and a concert to wind up with. I suggest we cut out the cricket and the concert, and devote the whole day to banqueting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fear it is too late to alter the arrangements now," I said, smiling. "In any case, some of us would not care to devote the entire day to feasting. We are not all blessed with the digestions of ostriches!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"I suppose we shall be seeing lots of familiar faces to-day, sir?" said Harry



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Wharton. "Will Mr. Frank Richards, the MAGNET author, be coming?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Martin Clifford, of the GEM?"

I nodded.

"Those two gentlemen, together with Mr. Owen Conquest, who writes the Rookwood stories, will be travelling down together," I said.

"Hurrah!"

"There will also be a large company of authors and artists who have helped to prepare the HOLIDAY ANNUAL. All will arrive in the course of the morning."

"Oh, good!"

"And now I must have a few words with your headmaster," I remarked.

Escorted by a happy crowd of schoolboys, I made my way to the Head's study.

Doctor Locke received me in his charming and courteous manner, and we chatted pleasantly on a variety of topics.

From the Head's study window we saw the other guests arriving at intervals.

When Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest—that renowned trinity of school-story writers—entered the school gates, they were immediately besieged by a crowd of fellows, many of whom flourished their autograph-books. The three authors were swallowed up from sight in the eager press of schoolboys. The scene was reminiscent of a Rugby scrum.

"Such is fame!" murmured the Head, with a smile. "Your writers, my dear sir, are held in high esteem at Greyfriars. If they expected a day's freedom from writing, I am afraid they will be disappointed. They will be kept busy signing autographs until they get writers' cramp—or until somebody

else arrives, and enables them to escape from their admirers!"

Fortunately for the three authors, a fresh diversion was soon created by the arrival of Tom Merry & Co., the cheery schoolboy heroes from St. Jim's. They came trooping in at the gates, Tom Merry and Harry Manners and Monty Lowther heading the procession.

All "the old familiar faces" were there. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the elegant swell of St. Jim's, immaculate as ever from the summit of his shining silk "topper" to the soles of his patent-leather shoes; Fatty Wynn, who seemed to be growing outwards instead of upwards, and whose eyes were sparkling in anticipation of the banquet; Baggy Trimble, another fat fellow, whose circumference seemed to have expanded since last I saw him; Jack Blake, the sturdy Yorkshire junior; George Figgins and Reginald Talbot and Bernard Glyn—all these, and many more, I was able to recognise from the Head's study window.

When the St. Jim's crowd came in sight there was a sudden rush of feet in their direction, and Frank Richards and his fellow-authors were able to make good their escape. They slipped unobtrusively away, and vanished smiling into the building.

And Still They Come!

MORE arrivals! Jimmy Silver & Co., the bright and breezy band of Rookwood heroes, were the next to invade Greyfriars. They had come by motor-coach from the famous Hampshire school, and a loud tantara on the coaching-horn announced their arrival.

Glancing over the Head's shoulder as we stood at the window, I was able to distinguish Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome—the famous Fistical Four of the Classical Side.

Then I saw Tubby Muffin, as fat and fatuous as ever, rolling through the gate-

way of Greyfriars with chubby hand outstretched, and smiling as broadly as a ventriloquist's doll.

Trotting along in Tubby's wake came the three Tommies—Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle—the leading lights of the Modern Side. Then there were Valentine Mornington, and Kit Erroll, and Teddy Grace, and all the other heroes who figure weekly in Owen Conquest's inimitable



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stories of Rookwood. The Greyfriars fellows hurried forward to greet them.

Dr. Locke turned to me with a smile.

"I feel tempted to misquote Shakespeare," he said. "When visitors come, they come not in single spies but in battalions!"

"Very true, sir," I responded. "St. Jim's and Rookwood have sent large parties; but the influx is not yet complete. All the HOLIDAY ANNUAL contributors, both authors and artists, will now be on their way to Greyfriars. There will be fully a hundred guests."

"Excellent! I will make it my pleasure to see that everything possible is done for their entertainment," said the Head.

We strolled out into the Close together; and Dr. Locke, no longer a majestic and



Doctor Locke, no longer a majestic and awe-inspiring personage, shook hands warmly with many of the guests.

awe-inspiring personage, but a kindly and genial host, shook hands warmly with many of the guests, with each of whom he stopped to have a brief chat.

Then the little army of authors and artists arrived, and there were more greetings, more handshakes, more autograph-hunters hungry for signatures; and the old Close of Greyfriars presented a most animated spectacle, in the brilliant summer sunshine.

Amid all the gay commotion I could hear Billy Bunter's voice, peevish and petulant.

"I say! Why don't they cut the cackle, and come to the hosses? All this polite palaver—'How d'you do?' and 'Delighted to meet you!'—fairly gets my goat. There's a cold lunch laid in hall, and I'm jolly peckish! If the Head knew the first thing about entertaining, he'd say, 'This way for the cold chicken and salad! Pile in, everybody!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter seemed to be the only disgruntled person in the whole of that vast assembly. Bunter did not regard the Head as an efficient host. He considered that the whole of the arrangements for the HOLIDAY

ANNUAL's birthday celebration should have been placed in the capable hands of William George Bunter!

Billy's idea of entertaining would have been to provide one colossal banquet, on a scale hitherto unsurpassed, so that the guests could feast from the rising up of the sun unto the going down thereof! No doubt Bunter would have been able to stay the pace, and so would Fatty Wynn and Baggy Trimble and Tubby Muffin; but an hour's banqueting would have been quite sufficient for the average guest, with an average appetite!

Eventually, a move was made in the direction of the dining-hall, much to Billy

Bunter's relief; and the cold collation was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

There was no speech-making, and no toasts were honoured. Those cheery functions were being deferred till the banquet in the evening.

I sat at the same table as Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest. And so infectious was the schoolboy atmosphere all around us that we forgot, for a time, that we were staid and sober adults, and chatted away as merrily as high-spirited fags. And we ate our lunch with the healthy and hearty appetites of youth; though I am afraid that our combined appetites fell far short of Billy Bunter's!

King Cricket!

THE cricket-match between the Greyfriars Remove and the Staff of THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL was the next item on the day's programme.

Harry Wharton put his strongest side into the field; he was resolved to leave nothing to chance.

Wharton knew that most of our authors and artists were sadly out of practice, owing to the fact that their professions gave them

little leisure for cricket. But Wharton was aware that Frank Richards knew a thing or two about batting; that Martin Clifford was capable of skittling out a side with his weird "googlies"; and that Owen Conquest was no duffer at the game.

I had been requested to captain the HOLIDAY ANNUAL team, and when I won the toss it was regarded as a good omen for us.

We speedily made the discovery that run-getting was no easy matter, against the dead bowling of Hurree Singh and Tom Brown, backed up by wonderful fielding.

Going in first with Frank Richards, I managed to hit up a dozen runs before Hurree Singh spreadeagled my wicket; though, judging by the ovation I received on returning to the pavilion, one would have imagined I had scored a century, at least!

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now together, and they batted very steadily, until Frank Richards was smartly run out.

With the score at 40, Bob Cherry brought about Martin Clifford's downfall with an amazing catch at mid-on. The batsman made such a terrific and powerful drive that we held our breath, almost expecting the ball to go clean through Bob Cherry! But Bob stood his ground, and held and hugged the whizzing sphere. It must have seemed like catching a cannon-ball! Loud applause, in which Martin Clifford joined, greeted Bob's great effort.

A Feast for the Gods!

THE banquet to which we sat down in the historic dining-hall of Greyfriars was a wonderful affair. I ought to have engaged Billy Bunter to give you a full description of it.



When everybody else had finished and whilst others were exercising their tongues, Bunter was still exercising his fangs!

Being such an authority on foodstuffs and feasting, Billy would have given a masterly description, which would make your mouths water. He would have described the banquet course by course, mouthful by mouthful. He might have spelt the names of some of the French dishes wrongly; but no matter. Bunter's version of the banquet would make thrilling reading!

The Head and all the masters were present; the authors and the artists mingled and chatted with the merry throng of schoolboys. Seldom had the old dining-hall witnessed such scenes of revelry and rejoicing.

From time to time, I glanced towards the table at which Billy Bunter was seated. Bunter was busy! He had eaten a large lunch and a tremendous tea; but he was in great form for the banquet. His little round eyes sparkled behind his spectacles; his face was beaming like a full moon.

When everybody else had finished, and the speeches were in full swing, Billy Bunter was "still going strong." I don't believe he heard a word of what was said. Whilst others were exercising their tongues, Bunter was exercising his jaws!

Considerations of space will not permit me to reproduce any of the speeches; but lots of complimentary things were said about THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL; and it was a happy touch of Bob Cherry's when he said that he hoped to be present at the ninety-ninth birthday celebration of the ANNUAL!

After the feast, an adjournment was made to the concert-hall, where there were many amusing incidents.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was restrained by violence from inflicting a tenor solo upon the audience! Jack Blake declared that it would constitute a breach of the peace. So Arthur Augustus, owing to circumstances over which he had no control—his chums were sitting on his chest!—remained mute.

Some capital songs were rendered, and Billy Bunter, none the worse for his orgy in the dining-hall, enlivened the proceedings with an exhibition of ventriloquism.

That self-same gift of Billy's has on previous occasions brought tribulation and

trouble in plenty to him—when used for Billy's own ends! On the present occasion, however, his exhibition brought him nothing but applause and good-natured banter. Stay, though. It brought back his appetite! The scarcely-finished feast belonged to the very dim and distant past, it seemed to him—just a faded, hallowed memory! So, faint with hunger, Bunter at last desisted. Talent replaced talent. Never had such an exhibition of entertaining art been displayed. But all good things have an end.

The hours sped by all too swiftly and there

were mutual farewells in the twilight Close.

To the strains of "Auld Lang Syne," chanted by juniors, and played by fags on their mouth-organs, the great company of guests passed through the school gateway in the deepening dusk. And thus the curtain was rung down upon one of the happiest days of our lives—a day which I shall often recall, with a wistful smile, as I sit at my desk in the great publishing house which is the home of that most popular of boys' books—THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL!



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